

NEWS
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*working for
social change and
empowering people*

Annual Report 2023



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News Network

Road 2, House 8, Dhanmondi

Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh

Phone: +88 02 55166239

info@newsnetwork-bd.org

www.newsnetwork-bd.org

facebook.com/newsnetworkbangladesh

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Md. Nazmul Alam

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.



News Network promotes democracy, freedom of expression and freedom of press as well as human rights. We also encourage good governance, accountability, religious freedom, diversity for peace and inclusive society.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2023 was very important for News Network with significant achievements in its activities across the country. We implemented various training programmes on election reporting, freedom of expression, advocacy and rights and internet freedom during the period thrived with full-swing election campaigns for the 12th national elections. The beneficiaries were the media people, human rights defenders, academicians, bloggers, youth and representatives of civil society organisation (CSOs).

A good number of renowned international organisations like Inernews, EngageMedia, Counterpart International and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the programmes implemented during the period.

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International media line NGO Internews and the USAID provided funding assistance to a 15-month training project titled “Strengthening capacity of media to promote democracy”. The project covered 15 districts under eight divisions of the country, along with the capital city Dhaka, in order to improve the capacity of 400 journalists and 20 trainers on election reporting. Began in January 2023 the project ended in March 2024.

Besides, News Network implemented a seven-month project titled “Greater Internet Freedom Project in Bangladesh” with the support from Internews, EngageMedia and the USAID. Started in October 2022 the project ended in April 2023. The project activities were implemented successfully in three divisional headquarters. The project provided better understanding to 100 journalists, human rights activists, lawyers and bloggers on internet freedom, digital rights, and conducted media advocacy to rectify the repressive laws against freedom of information and freedom of expression.

News Network also implemented some noteworthy activities during the period under Counterpart International and the USAID’s supported project “Promoting Advocacy and Rights”. The project was aimed to sensitise and improve professional ability of journalists to promote good governance, inclusion of marginal people, environmental rights and urban pollution. About 40 journalists participated in these activities.

Shahiduzzaman
Editor and Chief Executive Officer
News Network

Partners of the Year 2023



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Internews
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EngageMedia

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A group photo of Dhaka based women journalists participated in a capacity building training programme in 2023

Projects of the year

Sl.	Project titles	Supported by	Remarks
1	Strengthening Capacity of Media to Promote Democracy	Internews and USAID	Will continue till March 2024
2	Greater Internet Freedom Project	Internews, EngageMedia and USAID	Completed
3	Promoting Advocacy and Rights	Counterpart International and USAID	Completed





A snapshot of training session on election reporting



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Strengthening Capacity of Media to Promote Democracy

Internews and the USAID supported the project signed in November 2022 which went into operation in the middle of the year 2024. The project's goal is to foster media independence in Bangladesh by enhancing capacity of journalists and building their skills in digital, hygiene, security and physical safety. The overall aim is to contribute to the country's (Bangladesh) development consistency with the government's Vision 2041, the Eighth Five-year Plan, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

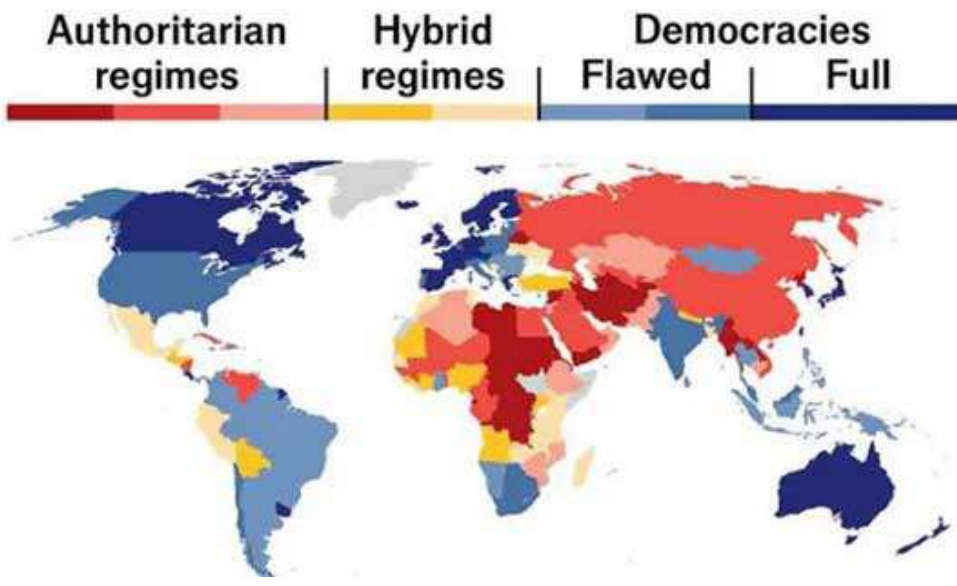


A group of journalists finding out the challenge of election reporting

To achieve the goals, activities were undertaken to improve the professional ability of national, regional, and local journalists across the country for maintaining highest ethical standard, accuracy, and objectivity to promote democracy and good governance in the country. Under the project some 20 training programmes were conducted in 16 divisions and districts across the country including the capital city Dhaka.

Some major activities of the project include developing a group of 20 trainers on election reporting and related issues and engaged them to train up 400 journalists and make them capable to cover the 12th national elections held in January 2024. The journalists were

Democracy index, 2023



Bangladesh has slipped two notches to rank 75th among 167 countries on the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2023

provided better understanding on rules and regulation of conducting elections, roles of election commission and the government, ethical issues of reporting, digital hygiene, security and physical safety, fact checking and verification etc.

The project also provided 100 small grants to selected trained journalists to publish in-depth reports to make people aware about their voting rights and inspire them to cast votes in time, promote democratic values, human rights and good governance. Till December 2023 they have produced about 93 reports on election and related issues which were duly published in various regional and national print and electronic media.

Some feedback of the trained journalists



Dipankar Roy
Khulna Correspondent
The Daily Star

“Elections are one of the most important prerequisites for establishing democracy. The media has a lot of responsibilities to make the elections free, fair and neutral. I first realized the idea while I took part in a 3-day training workshop on Election Reporting organized by the news network in collaboration with Internews. I learned the nitty-gritty of election reporting, electoral process, basics of journalism and ethical practices. I got a clear understanding of journalistic ethics and accuracy from resource persons who are skilled and well experienced in these

subjects. They demonstrated how to write correct, accurate, balanced and objective reporting while covering reports on election and related issues. I learnt from the training in details about election expenses, affidavit, amendment of RPO and also got some new ideas about Postal Vote, Tender Vote and Challenged votes. I hope learnings from the workshop will help me immensely while covering the upcoming national elections scheduled to be held in January next. Thanks to News Network as well as Internews for giving me the opportunity to take part in the programme”.

- Dipankar Roy, Khulna Correspondent, The Daily Star



Shaon Khan
District Correspondent
Jagonews.com, Barishal

“The 3-day training on election reporting was very important for me and I learnt many more things from the sessions that I did not know earlier. It was an appropriate and time befitting workshop as the national election is approaching fast. Through this training I learned many more things about the election and electoral process. I learnt the obligations of a journalist while gathering information during the elections. We learnt about many important things including election laws, rules and regulations, challenges of elections, obligations and personal safety. What I liked

most was the sincere teachings and hands-on learning by the resource persons. Sessions on rumour, fake news, verification and fact checking were some of the new subjects that was almost unknown to us. All sessions were very productive and I have learned a lot from the workshop. The resource persons were very professional and skilled who gave us fantastic guidance and constantly encouraged us to learn the nitty gritty of election and election process and practice the ethics of journalism. The programme was very useful, memorable, and thought-provoking. Things learnt from the workshop will help us greatly in our professional task, especially during the elections”.

- Shaon Khan, District Correspondent, Jagonews.com, Barishal



Doulot Akter Mala
Special Correspondent
The Financial Express

It was a worthy training programme ahead of the national elections. The interactive training programme was based on practical experiences of the trainers. Legal explanations of election related laws were well-explained to pick up easily. I appreciate such training programme to improve reporting skills of women journalists.

I just add to a point that the programme design might include some more hand-on sessions and exercises. Legal experts from Election Commission could be invited to reveal their experiences. Experiences of international journalists could be

cited to let participants know about global scenario of election coverage.



Swety Akther
Reporter/Sub-Editor
United News of Bangladesh
(UNB)

I would like to extend my gratitude to the organizers of this wonderful training programme. Not only the training was insightful, but the handouts given were also very elaborative and informative. I enjoyed and learnt a lot from the training in a comfortable environment. The style and the knowledge of two presenters were totally amazing. I really enjoyed the small group dynamics – especially as they were all lovely people. I am thankful for having the opportunity to attend the programme. I hope to apply everything I have learnt from the training in my career. Many thanks to News network and Internews.



Tamanna Menhaz
News Editor
TBN24 TV, Dhaka

The training programme on Election Reporting was an excellent one, informative and interactive. The way they presented a complex subject like election and the electoral process is brilliant. Their presentations gave a very clear understanding of the overall election process.

I had some preconceived notions about reporting on elections, and there were some ambiguities and unknown areas. This training has cleared up those obscurities. I believe my work opportunities would be increased because of the overall understanding of the election process. I work at the desk, so I do not have opportunities for field reporting. However, whether a report is complete, where there are gaps in the information, and what could be added to enrich the report. Besides, this training course will help generate new ideas for election news. At the same time, the training has sparked interest in learning more about new topics. I want to learn more about RPO, digital security, and fact-checking. I believe these topics are extremely important professionally.



Fardaus Mobarok
Senior Sub-Editor
The Business Standard

“The training programme was comprehensive and informative, providing us with a wealth of knowledge on covering election issues. The resource persons were highly skilled and experienced, and their deliveries were clear, concise, and engaging. Even though I have been working in the field of journalism for nearly 20 years, still I learnt a lot from this training programme. The sessions on new developments in election reporting were particularly helpful, as were the exercises on fact-checking and source-checking. Overall, I found

the training programme extremely valuable. It has given me the skills and knowledge I need to be a more professional journalist, and I am confident that it will help me to produce more accurate and informative election coverage in the future. Overall, I was very impressed with the training venue and the overall services that were provided”.

- Fardaus Mobarok, Senior Sub-Editor, The Business Standard

Greater Internet Freedom Project in Bangladesh



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EngageMedia

Nowadays people are increasingly becoming victims to internet shutdown and blockage. Very often, governments shut down the internet access, control the speed, block websites or restrict internet services in an apparent attempt to stop spread of discontent, disinformation and sometimes to maintain law and order situation.



A snapshot of a training-workshop held in Rajshahi on promoting internet freedom and understanding digital security issues

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In whatever way, all these restrictions ultimately lead to disruption to the freedom of expression and freedom of information which is a blatant violation of human rights law. Under this project News Network extended supports to build up capacity of journalists and human rights defenders to promote and protect internet freedom and digital rights.

Number of beneficiaries of the project was about 100 journalists, human rights activists, lawyers, bloggers and the representatives of CSOs.

The project was signed in September 2022 but it came into operation in January 2023. It was a part of a global initiative, supported by, Internews and the USAID, while the EngageMedia provided the technical support in implementing the activities in three divisional cities including the capital city Dhaka, Rajshahi and Rangpur.



Posters for internet users' security was develop under the project

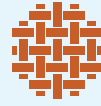
Some major activities of the project included conducting a research, capacity development of the beneficiaries and publishing articles, developing blogs and posters on digital rights issues to make people more aware about the subject and inspire them to come forward to protect and promote internet freedom. The project was implemented successfully and ended in April 2023.



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Promoting Advocacy and Rights

News Network has successfully implemented a media development and sensitize activities programme during the period under a project titled “Promoting Advocacy and Rights (PAR)”. Renowned international NGO Counterpart International (CPI) and US Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the project. Started in early 2023 the project was ended in March 2023.



Journalists in Khulna attended in a training-workshop for improving their professional ability to promote good governance and produce reports on environment pollution, unplanned urbanization and social inclusion of marginalised people. The project “Promoting Advocacy and Rights” was supported by Counterpart International and the USAID.

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A group photo of participants (journalists), trainers, guests and organisers at the closing session of a training workshop on “Professional ability of the journalists to promote good governance” under the project “Promoting Advocacy and Rights”.

The activities of the project included better understanding and improving professional ability of 40 journalists, working for print and electronic media from the capital city Dhaka and south-western divisional city Khulna. It was aimed to promote good governance in some of country’s challenging areas like environment pollution, unplanned urbanization and social inclusion of marginalised people. The project also commissioned to selected journalists for in-depth reporting on governance related issues and those were published in various national dailies on time. The overall aim of the project was to make people more aware about their issues, rights and justice.

Financial Statement



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Receipts and Payments Account

For the period from January 2023 to December 2023

PARTICULARS	Details	AMOUNT
RECEIPTS:		
OPENING BALANCE (01.01.2023)		
Cash in hand	85.00	
Cash at Bank	60,635.81	
		60,720.81
Fund received from :		
Internews- Thailand	22,129,606.28	
Internews -USA	2,758,709.98	
Counterpart-International	1,274,580.00	
		26,162,896.26
Subscription from The Executive Members		2,100.00
Bank Interest		1,113.56
	TOTAL	26,226,830.63
PAYMENTS:		
Program Cost		15,517,838.98
Personnel Support Cost		7,052,997.50
Operation Support Cost		1,360,929.31
Capital expenditure		275,392.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		24,207,157.79
CLOSING BALANCE (31.12.2023)		
Cash In hand	183.27	
Cash at Bank	2,019,489.57	
		2,019,672.84
	TOTAL	26,226,830.63

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CERTIFICATE GIVEN BY THE AUDITORS

We have audited the accounts of **NEWS NETWORK**, Registration no. FDR-922, dated 20.03.1995 for the Year ended 31 December 2023 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 2023 was Tk. 60,720.
2. The foreign donation amounting to Tk. 25,984,696.00 was received by the organization during the period.
3. The balance of unutilized foreign donations by the organization at 31st December 2023 Tk. 2,019,672.84.
4. Foreign donation amounting to Tk. 24,207,157.79 has been utilized for the following purposes (shown project wise).

NAME OF THE PROJECT	
	1. Strengthening Capacity of Media to Promote Democracy. 2. Greater Internet Freedom Project in Bangladesh. 3. Media Engagement Capacity of Journalists.
FUNDING AGENCY	1. Internews, Thailand 2. Internews, USA 3. Counterpart International.

Name of the project (s)	Budget for this year	Amount spent this year	Difference
Strengthening Capacity of Media To Promote Democracy.	25,025,000.00	20,159,473.00	4,865,527.00
Greater Internet Freedom Project in Bangladesh	2,712,820.00	2,580,509.98	132,310.02
Media Engagement Capacity of Journalists.	1,274,580.00	1,274,580.00	0.00
News Network Own Fund	192,594.81	192,594.81	0.00
Total Taka	29,204,994.81	24,207,157.79	4,997,837.02

Total Expenditure in BDT 24,207,157.79 (Equivalent to USD 220,065.00/ EURO 199,137.53)

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: 09 MAR 2024

Pinaki Das
Pinaki Das, FCA
Senior Partner
Enrollment Number: 151
Pinaki & Company
Chartered Accountants

Registered Office: AHSANDELL, 2/A, Mymensingh Road (2nd Floor), Shahbag, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
Tel: +8802-448-63092, +8802-448-63093 & +8802-448-63094, Cell: +8801711-106302, +8801534-130750.
E-mail: pinaki_co@yahoo.com, info@pinakicabd.com website: www.pinakicabd.com

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

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.

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