

ANNUAL REPORT
2017



*working for
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 gender equality and where the media is free.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year News Network has given more focus on promoting safety of journalists and freedom of religion by developing professional capability of the journalists working in different print and electronic media. Besides, the organisation has signed a three-year long project agreement with the European Union to support the human rights defenders for protecting women's and girls' rights.

UNESCO funded "Awareness, Advocacy and Action: Promoting the Safety of Journalists in Bangladesh" project was implemented in three districts (Faridpur, Satkhira and Sylhet) of the country, where journalists face intimidation and attack quite frequently. A total of 60 journalists participated in the programme and 50 percent of them are somehow victim of violence. They also received life threats for their professional work.

The High Commission of Canada in Bangladesh assisted a project titled "Programme for Supporting Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion". The project was aimed at building capacity of journalists so that they can deliver quality report on the issue. The project was implemented in Khulna, Jessore and Rangpur, which are known to be vulnerable districts in terms of religious intolerance. A total of 111 local journalists including 74 news reporters and 35 editors participated in the programme .

The European Union supported project will be implemented in eight districts adjacent to Indo-Bangla international border from January 2018 and continue till December 2020. The project initiatives are to improve the professional capacity of human rights defenders, including rural journalists working for print and electronic media, staffs of local Civil Society Organisations, NGOs and rural religious leaders.

News Network has received a total of BDT 22,467,859.61 (USD 270,697) as grant in 2017 from the funding agencies and the expenditure stood at BDT 743,153 (USD 8954).

Shahiduzzaman
Editor, News Network

Partners of the Year





Satkhira, 18 October 2017: Journalists working from Satkhira district are seen in a News Network training-workshop on Safety of Journalists, supported by UNESCO.

PROJECTS AND EVENTS OF THE YEAR 2017

Projects	Supported by	Status
Awareness, Advocacy and Action: Promoting the Safety of Journalists in Bangladesh	UNESCO	Completed
Programme for Supporting Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion	High Commission of Canada	Ongoing
Programme for Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh	European Union	Start from January 2018

Progress

Awareness, Advocacy and Action: Promoting the Safety of Journalists in Bangladesh

News media in Bangladesh is vibrant these days. Journalists often play a bold role in exposing corruption and wrongdoers of the society. Their brave reporting in one hand is appreciated by the mass and on the other hand, their work also exposes them to threats on their life, harassment and insecurity. Safety of journalists has become a great concern for many. According to media rights groups, at least 30 journalists and bloggers have been killed in Bangladesh since the independence in 1971. In most cases, the



Sylhet, 25 October 2018: Group photo of participated journalists and guests in a closing session of a News Network training programme on Safety of Journalists was organised in Sylhet divisional headquarters.



Faridpur, 17 October 2017: Journalists in a training- workshop on safety of Journalists was organised in Faridpur district town are discussing on their group presentations

killers and attackers went unpunished. In most of the cases, the motives of killing and attack were not clear¹.

Violence against journalists and media workers has increased globally. International media monitoring organisation Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has identified 20 deadliest countries for journalists² and Bangladesh is one of these countries where freedom of press and freedom of expression is under serious threat.

Against such a backdrop, News Network with the support from UNESCO took an initiative to improve the capacity of the journalists to face the challenges in terms of safety and security.

It has organized three sensitization and training workshops for journalists in Faridpur, Satkhira and Sylhet. The objectives of the programmes were:
(i) Raise awareness on safety measures when reporting from danger

1 <https://cpj.org/killed/asia/bangladesh/>
2 <https://www.cpj.org/killed/>

zones; (ii) Analyse cases of violence against journalists to examine how they might have been avoided; (iii) Educate journalists about the risks of investigative journalism and political reporting; (iv) Educate journalists on existing resources in Bangladesh for journalists facing hostility; and (v) Train journalists to report on crimes against journalists. A total of 60 journalists participated in the programme.

Lesson learned

Journalists in Bangladesh are exposed to risk and threats from ruling elites particularly those who work in remote districts are much more vulnerable. News Network has found that about 50 percent participants have experiences of attacks and life threats. In many cases they haven't received any cost for treatment and legal support from their respective media organisations. Journalists' Union has a bigger role to play to raise voice against such violence. But in most cases, they are not supportive. The Union is divided in three groups locally and nationally. The journalists need collective efforts from the relevant stakeholders to defend themselves and ensure safety to promote freedom of press.

On the other hand, now a day fake news has become a serious threat to the values of journalism profession in Bangladesh. It also confusing the people and creating troubles in the society.

Programme for Supporting Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion



Khulna, 5 February 2017: A participant journalist of a three-day training-workshop on 'Religious Tolerance Issues' receiving his certificate from Lokman Hossain Miah, Divisional Commissioner of Khulna. News Network with the assistance from Canadian High Commission to Bangladesh organised it in the city. Twenty journalists, working for local and national media participated in the programme.

Since independence of Bangladesh in 1971, numerous incidents of religious intolerance and violence in the name of religion took place compromising peace and stability. Mainly minority religious people are the sufferer of those incidents and many of them have left to neighboring countries for life. However, news reporting and documentation of such migration is far from adequate. A major issue to note is that the understanding among the rural media people on freedom of religion is not up to the mark. Their attitude and belief system buoyed by political divide influences their reporting in this regard. As a result, their reporting become opinionated rather than based on facts and reality. First of its kind for journalists, this project supported local journalists to promote freedom of religion and peaceful coexistence of people of all religions through:



Rangpur, 24 December 2017: Journalists are participants in a workshop on Religious Tolerance Issues was organised in Rangpur divisional headquarters, supported by Canadian High Commission in Dhaka.

Strengthening the professional capacity of local journalists/news reporters working for local, national print and electronic media from project districts; and Organizing opinion exchange meetings with media gatekeepers (publishers, editors and news editors) of local media houses to discuss issues and their impact and publish items with respect to freedom of religion and human rights.

The project implemented in Rangpur, Khulna and Jessore. A total of 74 reporters and 28 media gatekeepers were sensitized on freedom of religion and they received professional improvement training. The project activities will continue till April 2018.



Rangpur, 26 December 2018: A participant journalists of a training workshop on Religious Tolerance Issues receiving her certificate from Muhammad Wahiduzzaman, Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur district

Lessons learned

- Local journalists, including news reporter and media gatekeepers are less aware of religious values and tolerance. They also lack of capacity to produce and publish quality news item on the issue.
- Local people less aware on religious tolerance and values of coexistence. Moreover, most of them are confused and victim of misinterpretations of religion.
- Local administration and law and order agencies, political elites and CSOs need to be more responsive to protect religious minority groups and their assets.

- Project need to expand in other parts of the country vulnerable to religious intolerance and expose to high migration of religious minority groups.
- Local journalists can play defender's role at the frontline and promote religious freedom, if they are well sensitised and skilled.



Rangpur, 27 December 2017: Group photo of local media gatekeepers, including editors, executive editors and news editors are seen in closing session of an interaction meeting on Religious Tolerance Issues

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



The Constitution of Bangladesh recognises basic human rights for all its citizens and upholds the concept of 'equality before the law' in terms of protection of women rights. The Government of Bangladesh ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations against Women and passed the Women Development Policy 2011 to

ensure strong protection for women and girls' rights. Yet, women and girls in Bangladesh are deprived of their Constitutional rights in accessing justice and gender-based violence is a very common phenomenon. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), four out of five women or 80 per cent of Bangladeshi women are victims of some kinds of violence in 2015 that included domestic violence, acid attack, rape, trafficking, child marriage, illegal divorce, physical and mental torture for dowry and forced prostitution to name a few. Domestic violence is the most common form of violence and its prevalence is higher in the rural areas. Eve-teasing, suicide, attempt to suicide and even killing for protesting incidents of eve-teasing often make headlines. Unacceptable social attitude among a section of the society and officials towards women and girls, weak enforcement of women-friendly laws and regulations, slow but insufficient judicial protection, inadequate social protest and protection, poor family environment, poor and inadequate intervention from human rights defenders (HRDs) and weak voice of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are the major impediments in ensuring women's and girls' rights.

The project 'Programme for Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh' is a 3-year project and started its activities in January 2018. The project is funded by the European Union and implemented by the News Network in partnership with Udayankur Seba Sangstha (USS) in eight districts along the Indo-Bangla international border.

The overall objective of the project is to provide support to Women Human Rights Defenders and/or Human Rights Defenders (W/HRDs) working for women's and girls' rights in Bangladesh.

Specific Objectives

To recognise 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;

To support and protect WHRDs at risk due to their work for the promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of women's and girls' rights.

Financial Statement &
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NEWS NETWORK

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017

PARTICULARS		AMOUNT IN BDT.
RECEIPTS:		
OPENING BALANCE (01.01.2017)		
Cash in hand	99.00	
Cash at Bank	46,428.17	
		46,527.17
<u>FUND INFLOW</u>		
Fund received from:		
UNESCO		661,423.10
European Union		21,806,436.51
Sale of publication		92,041.90
Bank Interest		2,488.44
Subscription from the Executive members		2,100.00
GRAND TOTAL BDT.		22,611,017.12
PAYMENTS:		
Program cost		661,615
Administrative support cost		101,688
Total expenditure		763,303.00
Closing balance (31.12.2017)		
Cash in hand	99.00	
Cash at Bank	21,847,615.12	
		21,847,714.12
GRAND TOTAL BDT.		22,611,017.12

CERTIFICATE GIVEN BY THE AUDITORS'

We have audited the accounts of NEWS NETWORK Road-02, House-08, Dhanmondi Dhaka Registration no. FDR-922, dated 20.3.1995 for the year ended 31 December 2017 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 01 January 2017 was Tk. 46,527.17 .
2. The foreign donation amounting to Tk. 22,467,859.61 was received by the organization during the period.
3. The balance of unutilized foreign donations by the organization at 31 December 2017 Tk. 21,806,436.51,
4. Foreign donation amounting to Tk. 743,153 has been utilized for the project purposes,

NAME OF THE PROJECT:	1. Awareness, Advocacy and action promoting the safety of journalists in Bangladesh. 2. Programme for Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girl's Rights in Bangladesh.
FUNDING AGENCY:	1. UNESCO 2. European Union (Fund received EURO 226,240 equivalent BDT. 21,806,436.51 during this year but Project will be effect from 01.01.2018 as per NGO Bureau Approval Ref no. 03.07.2666.665.68.147.17 dated 06.12.2017

Name of the project (s)	Budget for this year	Amount spent this year	Difference
Awareness, Advocacy and action promoting the safety of journalists in Bangladesh	743,153	743,153	0
Total Taka	743,153	743,153	0

Total expenditure in BDT. 743,153 (Equivalent USD 8,954 / EURO 7,741)

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.

22 MAR 2018

Dated:



Krishnendu Deb Roy
Partner

Pinaki & Company
Chartered Accountants

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

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF NEWS NETWORK

President

Arifur Rahman Siddiqui, Ph. D

Vice-President

Kaiser Ali Talukder, Ph. D

Secretary General

Shahiduzzaman

Finance Secretary

Jalal Ahmed

Members

Shahriar Hossain, Ph. D

Rasada Akther

Sanchita Sharma

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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