

Chapter-30

Ministry of Information

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At present we are living in an information based society. In other words we are roaming in information nets. Now days, free flow of information and right to information determine the magnitude of freedom one enjoys in a society. Development has lost its ancient meaning. Development is now more related to information and communication technology. Moreover good governance also depends highly on the free flow of information. Power and strength is piled where data base is rich. So it is a must to ensure free flow of information for constructing a healthy valued state. Ministry of Information has been playing a crucial role by involving people in the overall development activities and empowering them through greater access to information. All these things are expediting the economic growth of the country. Ministry of Information also plays an important role in making people aware about various development plans and programs formulated by the government which is vital in encouraging people's participation in national planning process. In vision 2021, ICT for development has been flagged as a major catalyst that will make Bangladesh a middle income country. Side by side it has increased the importance and responsibilities of media with a wide range of participation in socio-economic development.
- 1.2 The Ministry of Information, through the mass communication media outlets including radio, television, films, press publications, advertising and using various other forms of communication, plays an effective role in helping the people to have access to information. The Ministry is involved in bringing focus to people on issues of women and children development, environmental protection, health care and family welfare, eradication of illiteracy and issues related to women, children and other weaker sections of society. Mass people, being well equipped with required information, can easily take part in the economic activities and also in the decision making process that pave the way to establish the rule of law.
- 1.3 To ensure gender base equality and empowerment of women and girls in accordance with SDG-5 and to ensure basic freedom and right to information in accordance with SDG 16.10, ministry has taken appropriate programs under its SDG implementation.

2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry of Information

- ❖ Formulate and implement Government Publicity policy– both internal and external;

- ❖ Coordinate all matters relating to the activities/ programs of state VVIPs/VIPs and media coverage of their activities/ programs including press briefings/conferences both at home and abroad;
- ❖ Coordinate activities relating to publicity of the Ministries/Divisions and Bangladesh Missions abroad and with regional and international organizations relating to media;
- ❖ Keep the Government informed of the main trends in public opinion as reflected in the press and problems relating to press and liaison between Government and the press;
- ❖ Preserve and interpret policies and activities of the Government through press media; collect and release news from the national and international news media;
- ❖ Certify Cinematographic films for exhibition, make and preserve news reels, documentaries and films and assist in the production and display of decent films by taking steps against vulgarity and piracy in films and award of National Film Award;
- ❖ Formulate, implement and update legislation on newspaper and its publication; administration of the Cinematograph and Censorship Act, assist in the publicity of Armed Forces, formulate policies relating to Government advertisement and formulate and implement policies and legislation related to satellite television and national/commercial/community radio;
- ❖ Assist in the development of mass media industry and conduct research and training on mass media and publications documents thereto.

3.0 Strategic objectives of the Ministry and their Relevance with Women's Advancement and Ensuring Women's Rights

- 3.1 **Mass awareness and social empowerment:** The Bangladesh Betar broadcasts 1 and a half hour program daily on women's advancement. The Bangladesh Television broadcasts 50 minutes program daily and an additional 50 minutes program bi-weekly. Further, different programs are made focusing on women development, including yard meetings, community meetings, small & fragmented women gatherings, display of films, essay publication, documentaries and feature films. Women are equally involved in the production of these programs as artists and technical staff. These activities will contribute to the socio-economic development of women.
- 3.2 **Promotion and development of modern, effective and people-oriented mass media industry:** Production and broadcasting of good quality and popular TV and radio programs on women's rights, gender equity and shunning discriminatory

behavior against women will help motivate people. These are also supportive of women's advancement. Training courses also include modules on gender parity and issues relating to implementation of CEDAW Declaration other than those related to mass-media. In every such training program, participation of 20% to 25% women is ensured. Apart from raising awareness, these will create employment opportunities for women as artists and technical staff.

- 3.3 **Promotion, enrichment and preservation of national history, heritage and culture:** In promoting, enriching and preserving national history, heritage and culture, a large number of women used to participate in those activities.

4.0 **Roles and Responsibilities of the Ministry to Women's Advancement and Ensuring Women's Rights**

In all areas of development of a country role of women is indispensable. Development of nations is impossible if women are kept away from development activities. So Ministry of Information has taken various activities in order to create employment opportunities for women and their socio-economic development as well as protect them from any sort of discrimination. Following areas have been listed which will directly or indirectly increase opportunities for women.

- 4.1 **Transparency and accountability through promulgation of Right to Information Act:** Ultimate goal of all the activities undertaken by the Ministry of Information is to keep people well informed on government policies, programmes and schemes relating to public welfare; build awareness among the people on national history, heritage and culture; and ensure their right to access to information. In achieving these goals, Ministry of Information has already enacted Right to Information Act, community radio establishment and broadcasting policy, privately owned F.M. Radio, establishment and broadcasting policy, cable network operating and licensing rules. In those areas, status of women has been incorporated in a way so that women are being made more aware on their rights and public service through implementation of rights to information act.
- 4.2 **Socioeconomic development by creating public awareness:** Making films and documentaries, and broadcasting events on education, health, nutrition, women and children rights, poverty reduction, population control, preservation of the environment etc. are enhancing public awareness which reduces discrimination against women and increasing social status of women. It is possible to motivate the guardians to educate their daughters through Inter-personal communication. Inter-personal communication activities not only makes the women self-dependent,

aware, and ensure familial and societal development of women, but also increases their ability as a decision maker. In this field, media has played a dominant role.

4.3 Development of modern, effective and people oriented mass media: Mass media such as Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, private F.M. radio, Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha are able to disseminate information even to the remote areas of the country through introduction of modern technology and expansion of networks in information collection and broadcasting. A significant segment of radio listeners and television viewers are women, as a result, there are now more targeted radio shows on women's rights and well-being. Community radios in particular are catering to women's issues at the community level. Programmes on community education, health and society and rural development and rights of women ensure women's participation which is important for holistic human development and women empowerment. It is possible to ensure more women participation in mass media through arranging training programs and workshops on child and women development in the training activities of mass media activists. Trained and efficient mass media personnel can arrange effective talk shows, workshops, programs on education, health, nutrition, women rights for the development of women. This can also facilitate employment for women in mass media.

4.4 Preservation of national history and heritage and development of the national culture: Government grants is being provided for making films, short films, children's films that represent traditional heritage and culture, and artistic values of Bangladesh. Languages and contents of those movies are gender sensitive. Conditions have been imposed not to air such programmes that ignore women's issues and encourage discrimination against women. In this regard a gender guideline has been introduced for privately owned F.M. Radio and community Radio. Cable network operating and licensing rules prohibits to air vulgar jokes, dances, advertisements and indecent movies. All these initiatives help to uphold women's self-esteem and honour.

5.0 Priority Spending Areas and Benefits for Women's Advancement

Serial No.	Priority spending areas and programs	Benefits for women's advancement (direct and indirect)
1	2	3
1.	Implementation of Right to Information Act	❖ Implementation of the Right to Information Act would establish more transparency and accountability which would lead to good governance. Good governance gradually reduces discrimination against women and establishes women rights.

Serial No.	Priority spending areas and programs	Benefits for women's advancement (direct and indirect)
1	2	3
2.	Introduction of digital technology for broadcasting	❖ Efficient and reliable media is essential for pro-people development work. Introduction of digital technology enhances the standard of mass media which attaches more people to enjoy the programs on it. Now media promotes awareness irrespective of male-female on women's rights and gender equity which will discourage discriminatory behaviour against women.
3.	Establishment of BTv's development channel and expanding Betar's FM and Community Radio programmes	❖ Bangladesh Television broadcasts daily 30 minutes programme emphasises women empowerment through different programmes on women's education, health and awareness building in many areas. It indirectly affects women advancement. ❖ Above mentioned programmes are playing an important role in improving women's socio-economic condition, greater employment opportunities and at the same time decreasing the disparity between men and women.
4.	Improving the efficiency of mass media employees	❖ Efficiency of print and electronic media as well as cinema artists could be enhanced through modern training programs. Gender responsive trainings help media personnel to make reports elsewhere and finally women are the beneficiaries of these initiatives.
5.	Institutional and infrastructure development and use of information technology	❖ Employment opportunities for women in less hazardous work would create through different Infrastructure development activities. Ultimately it will increase their financial solvency as well as social empowerment.

6.0 Women's Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

(Taka in Crore)

Description	Budget 2017-18			Revised 2016-17			Budget 2016-17		
	Budget	Women Share		Revised	Women Share		Budget	Women Share	
		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent
Total Budget	400266	112019	27.99	317174	86586	27.3	340605	92781	27.24
Ministry Budget	1146	352	30.72	833	89	10.62	839	93	11.08
Development	524	306	58.37	176	42	23.86	173	48	27.65
Non-Development	622	46	7.42	657	47	7.08	665	45	6.76

Source: RCGP database

7.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

"Advocacy and Communication for Children and Women (4th phase)" project is has been contributing to realize children's and women's rights. Budget allocation of this project is 17 crore 75 lac BDT for this financial year (2015-16) .From the earlier evaluation reports of this project by the Ministry of Information and UNICEF, it is revealed that, this project has achieved its objectives and several changes are made

in many aspects of communicating children's and women's development issues effectively through print and electronic media.

8.0 Recommendations for Future Activities

- ❖ Broadcasting genuine role of women in society and ensuring free access to media, removing barriers to participate, express views and make decisions of women and girl children;
- ❖ Publicity to stop disgraceful, negative and primitive event for women;
- ❖ Create equal opportunities for women to the management of mass media and formal training programs;
- ❖ Integrate gender perspective in mass media rules and regulations;
- ❖ In light of these perspectives - law, regulation, broadcasting principle and code of conduct should be framed;
- ❖ Training is one of the most important stairs in women empowerment. More women should be encouraged to take part in the training programs of BTV, Betar, NIMCO, BCTI, PIB and other similar institutions;
- ❖ More research and evaluation should be conducted on the effects of women and girl children regarding awareness programs, news and information delivered through mass media.