

## Chapter-30

### Ministry of Information

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Now a day, free flow of information and right to information determine the magnitude of freedom. Development is inseparably linked with information and communication technology. People are empowered when they have access to information. Moreover good governance depends upon the free flow of information. So it is must to ensure free flow of information for constructing a welfare state. Ministry of Information has been playing a crucial role in this regard by involving people in the overall development activities and empowering them through greater access to information. Ministry of Information plays an important role in making people aware about various development programs undertaken by the government. Right to Information Act has been enacted to establish Digital Bangladesh and to implement Vision-2021 by ensuring free flow of information. That is why the accountability and transparency of the Government to the mass people has been increased. Mass people well equipped with information, can easily take part in the economic activities and also in the decision making process that pave the way to rule of law.
- 1.2 The Ministry of Information, through the mass communication media outlets like radio, television, films, press publications, advertising and various other forms of communication, plays an effective role to help the people realise their right to access to information. The Ministry puts focus 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 the society.
- 1.3 In accordance with the SDG-5, appropriate actions for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls and SDG-16.10 for achieving targets of fundamental freedoms and right to information have been included in the ministry's action plan.

#### 2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry of Information

- ❖ Formulate and implement Government Publicity policy—both domestic and external;
- ❖ Carry out media coverage of programs, tours, press briefing/conference of the important persons of the state both at home and abroad;

- ❖ Carry out activities relating to publicity programs of the Ministries/Division, Bangladesh Missions abroad and coordinate activities with regional and international media organizations;
- ❖ Keep liaison between the Government and the press by informing government of the opinion/expressed published by the media and resolving problems relating to press;
- ❖ Broadcast and preserve all the policies and programs of the government along with all national and international news;
- ❖ Certify Cinematographic films for screening, make print and archive newsreels, documents and films support, Making and screening of films/movies of good taste and prevent vulgarity and piracy in movies and confer National Film Award;
- ❖ Formulate, implement and update legislation on newspaper and its publication; ensure enforcement 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 relating to satellite television and national/commercial/community radio;
- ❖ Assist in development of mass media industry and its artists, conduct, research and training on mass media and make publications.

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

**3.1 Mass awareness and Right to Information protection:** The Bangladesh Betar broadcasts 1 and a half hour program daily on women's advancement. The Bangladesh Television broadcasts 25 minutes program daily and an additional 50 minutes program bi-weekly. Further, different programs are made focusing on women development, including open 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 different program.

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

4.1 Women Empowerment is one of the most discussed topics in today's world. This is a very significant element of the total economic and social development. Advancement of women is the key to the progress of family, society and nation. There are three approaches given preference for women empowerment such as: Collective Development, Economic Progress and Raising Awareness. 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.

4.2 **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. There are some activities to motivate the guardians to educate their daughters through Inter-personal communication. Inter-personal-communication activities will make women not only self-dependent and conscience but also increase their ability as a decision maker.

4.3 **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.

4.4 **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 radio shows targeted 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. This can also facilitate employment for women in mass media.

- 4.5 **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, culture, and values of Bangladesh. Languages and contents of those movies are gender sensitive.

#### 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.	Ensuring Right to Information	❖ 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.
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 behavior against women.
3.	Establishment of BTV's development channel and expanding Betar's FM and Community Radio programmes	❖ The Development channel of Bangladesh Television has established to broadcast educational and awareness building programs. Some initiatives have been taken to increase the activities of FM Radio and Community Radio regarding their growing popularity. BTV broadcasts daily 30 minutes programme emphasises women empowerment

Serial No.	Priority spending areas and programs	Benefits for women's advancement (direct and indirect)
1	2	3
		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 has created through use of ICT in 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 2019-20			Revised 2018-19			Budget 2018-19			Actual 2017-18		
	Budget	Women Share		Revised	Women Share		Budget	Women Share		Actual	Women Share	
		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent
Total Budget	523190	161247	30.82	442541	136036	30.74	464573	136938	29.48	321861	88441	27.48
Ministry Budget	989	461	46.63	929	451	48.55	1166	437	37.52	4654	139	2.98
Development	285	260	91.24	250	250	100	522	361	69.15	159	22	13.86
Operating	704	201	28.56	679	201	29.57	644	76	11.86	4494	117	2.6

Source: RCGP database

## 7.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

A project titled "Advocacy and Communication for Children and Women (5th phase)" has been contributing to realize children's and women's rights. The main objectives of this project are to bring change in the social and behavioral pattern for reducing the discrimination and to raise awareness for protecting the rights of women and children. Women are encouraged to participate in the development activities through Drama, Songs, Gomvira (Folk song), Spot, Jingle, Talk Show, Field Based Report, Outdoor Programs, Debate Competition, Ami Mina Bolchi (I am Mina), Weekly Drama, Direct Phone-in Programs, Trainings, and other special day programs broadcasted on BTV and Betar. 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, expressing views and creating opportunities for women and girl children to increase their ability to make decisions;
- ❖ Publicity to stop disgraceful, negative and violence against women;
- ❖ Create equal opportunities for women in 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.