

## **"Empowering the Marginalized: Enabling access to justice through awareness and implementation of the Right to Information Act (RTI)"**

### **Project Timeline & Collaboration**

A pilot phase was conducted from January-December 2010 with the collaboration of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Germany.

### **Project objectives**

The project aims to initiate through different methods a process which leads to a higher awareness of the affected marginalized communities about different forms of exclusion and discrimination. These groups should establish a better access to information provided by government institutions and other organizations to improve their assertiveness to gain equal rights and services through the usage of the "Right to Information Act" (RTI-Act) in Bangladesh.

The following report is based on information which were collected and compiled through Project Coordinator Suraiya Begum and Field Coordinator Utpal Kanti Khisa. This report is mainly based on experiences and information provided by RIB staff members and the participants and animators of the groups involved. The main source of these information are PAR group exchange meetings, application submission and follow-up process, animator's skill training workshops and paralegal training workshops, coordination meeting and monthly meeting at RIB, coordinators field visit meetings in the community and central and local process documentation and other relevant events of the project.

Stakeholders in the project

Five marginalized communities are involved in the project:

- Bede (river gypsies) in Lohjong upazila in Munshigonj district in collaboration with GRAM BANGLA Unnayan Committee.
- Horijon in Kushtia sadar upazila in Kushtia district in collaboration with FAIR.
- Rishi in Tala upazila in Satkhira district in cooperation with PARITTRAN.
- Munda in Shymnagar upazila in Khulna (Satkhira) in cooperation with IRV.
- Rabidas in Saidpur upazila in Nilphamari district. In Saidpur there is no local partner NGO existent, so the project coordination is exercised by the RIB local office.

### **Activities**

- Group formation: One Participatory Action Research group is formed in every community.

□ Animator's appointment: One animator was appointed for each of these groups in the community. The animator was supposed to facilitate the process of group formation and to help group members to implement the "RTI Act" for the interests of these communities. The animators were received certain trainings to help them to reach these aims. These trainings include:

- Trainings in PAR and communication methods
- About RTI Act and rights
- About lobbying and media campaigns

□ Exchange with India: Conduction of learning visit and training exchange with Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) for RIB staff in India and Bangladesh. CHRI is supposed to visit Bangladesh to conduct trainings for the animators and grassroots people of the community groups.

□ Publications and seminars: At the turn of the year a handbook and a brochure about the "RTI Act", six newsletters about ongoing activities of the project, advertisements, the compliance survey and a manual about the achievements and challenges experienced in the project are planned to be published.

□ Local and National Seminar: At least five local and one national seminar was conducted.

□ RTI Centre: Setting up of five local RTI information centers to provide a logistic resource base for training, lobbying and campaigns.

□ People to People Exchange Visit: Conduct at least one meeting in each of the identified five communities to establish RTI-friendly constituencies and foster exchange between the people.

□ Survey: A baseline survey at the beginning and a compliance survey at the end of the project phase were make impacts of the project visible.