

International Journal of Social, Political and Economic Research

**IJOSPER**

ISSN: 2667-8810 (Online)

[ijosper.uk](http://ijosper.uk)

OPEN  ACCESS

Original Article

Received Date: 05-01-2022

Accepted Date: 04-04-2022

<https://doi.org/10.46291/IJOSPERvol9iss1pp26-48>

## **‘Right to Information Act 2009’ to Tackle Corruption in Bangladesh: Citizens’ Perception**

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### **Abstract**

Bangladesh is a democratic country and to ensure democracy the presence of good governance is a must. One of the most colossal hinders in case of ensuring such governance is Corruption. Today in Bangladesh there is freakish corruption at all levels. The root factor behind corruption is secrecy. If we want to assure transparency, and accountability in government there is a need to crack the corruption by breaking the deep dark chain of secrecy. Right to Information Act, 2009 in that case is an effective weapon to fight against corruption as it creates an opportunity for citizens to cooperate with the officials and institutions to look over the activities of the government. This paper examines the effectiveness of the Right to Information Act, 2009 as a tool for combating corruption in Bangladesh and citizens' perception of this act. Content analysis, case study, and survey research method has been used in this paper. The respondents for the survey were categorized on the basis of registered citizens of two districts in Bangladesh. The results argue that the RTI act can be an effective weapon to battle against corruption in Bangladesh and ensure the right to information for every citizen can accumulate all the development demands. Citizens have also agreed that ratification of the RTI Act in Bangladesh is a bright sign which is dedicated to setting up transparency and accountability in the public and other institutions. It is also seen that there is still lacking cases of knowing the act among the citizens. They don't know how to use the act properly.

Keywords: Corruption, Information, Right to know, Accountability, Citizens' perception.

### **1. Introduction**

The word corruption is originated from the Latin word “corruptus,” that means “corrupted”. In general, Corruption involves abusing of entrusted power for private gain in both public and private sectors which is the greatest foe of good-governance and

causing great harm to society and the nation. As a Bangladeshi we living in a country where each and every organ of the country, activity and functions is related with corrupt practices. No matter, how many numbers of institutions and organizations we create, they themselves become slave of corruption. The rate of corruption in some sectors is so high that it may seem that good governance cannot exist in this country. If it cannot which is the snake in the grass that supports such corrupt practices? The Answer is SECRECY. Secrecy is the root factor of corruption; unaccountability and it is a great enemy to good governance. Question arise how can we uproot the chain of secrecy. The simple answer is that through right to information. As we know, Information is the magic lamp and at International era it is recognized that information is essential for development. For that reason, many countries have enacted Right to Information Act. In that direction government of Bangladesh too, introduces a new era of good governance through the enactment of Right to Information Act 2009. Article 39 of the Bangladesh Constitution establishes freedom of speech, thought and conscience as one of the fundamental rights and to ensure freedom of speech, thought and conscience the journey towards RTI started, when the Bangladesh Press Council first demanded the freedom to publish government information in 1983. However, the real development of RTI took place during the time, when there were lots of discussions and debates on the accountability and transparency of a system, which ensures people access to information in various forums — after being ranked as one of the most corrupted countries in the world for successive years. Different organizations have been advocated for citizens' access to information afterward till the Bangladesh Law Commission drafted a right to information act in 2002, which was never enacted. Later on, in the year 2006, a strong advocacy movement was initiated by civil society actors in Bangladesh. It demanded an act, ensuring people's right to access government held information, which ended up in an initiative taken by the Caretaker Government in response to the popular demand. As a result, the Right to Information Ordinance was enacted in 2008 .The parliament finally passed 'The Right to Information Act' in 2009. RTI law is the great achievement for the citizens of Bangladesh and now it is being considered as a great tool for ensuring access to information in all the activities of public-private sector of different departments, organizations, agencies and institutions that touch the life span of the citizen. Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, has stated that: The enactment of the Right to Information Act is an epoch-making incident in the history of Bangladesh. It will greatly

help to establish accountability and transparency in every sphere of society and the administration, the government will continue to work to safeguard the people's right to information because this act is a potent weapon to fight against corruption, arbitrariness and misuse of power. Most importantly it breaks the chain of secrecy. Present paper is also an endeavor to discuss the role of RTI in case of eradicating corruption to ensure participation of people in democratic process and the citizens perception about it.

## **2. Objective of the Study:**

Corruption is one of the biggest obstacle for development. No matter how large your country is or how much money a government have if you don't stop the practice of corruption and destroy the root of secrecy; the dream of establishing transparency , good governance and achieving development will just be an illusion. Right to Information act in that case is worldwide known as the key tool to tackle corruption, ensuring transparency, establishing accountability and good governance in the society. The objectives of this research are to understand why this act is considered as a landmark legislation to uproot the chain of secrecy, destroying shackle of corruption, annihilate red tapism and aloofness that has long plagued Bangladesh's monolithic and opaque bureaucracy. Moreover, this study also focuses on finding the Citizens perception about Right to Information Act, 2009. By conducting this research, we will be able to know how ensuring right to information for every citizen through RTI act can be helpful to establish transparency and accountability both in the government and non-government institutions as well as how this act can be lethal weapon to break the deep dark chain of secrecy and tackling down the corruption. We will also have a good perception of citizens knowledge about Right to Information act. What they think about this act, is it a fruitful tool to stop corruption in their eyes or not. As a result, we can determine the effectiveness of that act and can take further actions to moderate it.

## **3. Methodology of the Study**

Both the qualitative and quantitative method of sociological science research has been used in this research paper to collect data. By considering the need, nature and objectives of this research paper two case studies are discussed and analyzed to understand the effectiveness of this act as a tool to tackle corruption. Survey research method has been used to verify the attitude of general public about this act. Population of the sample size

are 400 in number who are citizens of Bangladesh selected from 2 districts which are Gaibandha and Dinajpur. The quantitative analysis of the survey research is based on close-ended questions and the results is presented in numerical, percentages, tables, graphs and descriptive forms. The literatures in the paper cover journals, articles, pamphlets, books. Contents which are collected from Primary and secondary sources are analyzed to enrich the discussion of this paper. This paper has used the news and article published 2009 to 2020.

### **3.1 Sample Size**

The sample comprised of 400 adult male and female members who are registered citizens of Bangladesh. 200 of them are from Gaibandha and 200 are from Dinajpur districts including workers, working at the offices or the shop keepers and other people belonging to certain different occupations. Some of the samples are the students of various Universities different departments e.g. Mass Communication, International Relations, MBA, Commerce, English etc. In some questions number of the responders or sample size fluctuate based on question background, type and nature.

### **3.2 Sampling Techniques**

The sampling population is selected based on convenient sampling. Survey was conducted on the sample which was easy to access and was easily available.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Data Collection Mean**

To get the basic data for research questions, the method of survey questionnaire has been used. The structured questionnaire comprises of close-ended questions to get the basic information and the opinion from the target sample as a tool of data collection.

## **4. Literature Review**

A literature review is a discussion of published information of a particular topic or subject area within a certain time of period. It's a survey of scholarly knowledge on a subject which is used to identify debates, trends and gaps of the research as well as analyzes, synthesizes, evaluates to depict the crystal-clear pictures of the state of knowledge on the subject. So many scholars discuss and publish their research related to RTI act. Summary of some of the most significant researches related to RTI act are highlighted below:

In his research, Rahman, Aliur (2013) found that, the Right to Information is the key to all other rights. It is one of the most important instruments to empower those to whom power should belong in democracy – the people. Freedom of information can bring an inconceivable success to build up a transparent and healthy knowledge society. In Bangladesh it is utmost necessary to enhance the freedom of information for redressing the mistrust, indignity and human crisis from the society. Free flow of information is also very much helpful to reduce corruption and can promote towards an answerable public administration. In a democratic culture freedom of information and accountability are two fundamental preconditions or means for exercising the rights to the citizen. It is not possible to assure the peoples' rights and access to information by the government or the powerful authorities beyond showing the personal respect to the citizens.

Baroi (2013) carried out a study in two Union Parishads focusing on the implementation of RTIA in Bangladesh. He found that those who had good understanding of policy objectives had profound influence on implementation success of RTI Act. According to them this Act has given a crystal-clear opportunity to root out corruption and the dark chain of secrecy from the Bangladeshi government affairs and pave the way for governance reform, greater accountability and transparency in government subjects. The researcher also found that there was lack of initiatives to make RTI Act popular among common people that is why lack of proper understanding crates the negative result.

Chouhan (2013) conducted a study in the Gwalior city of Madhya Pradesh in India on the implementation of RTI act and its uses. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods in his study, he found that socio-economic condition plays an influential role in the implementation of RTI act in the Gwalior city. By analyzing he also tracks that due to lack of record keeping management, lack of consciousness, lack of electrical and population resources of the institutions etc. are hindering the implementation process of RTI act in the city. He also added that RTI is an effective tool to reduce corruption.

Karim (2013) conducted a study in four upazillas of Mymensingh district based on questionnaire and non-formal discussion. In his research he found that that respondents are not pleased at RTIA because they face so many obstacles while using this act and noted that according to the opine of respondents 99 percent of the information are kept in dark from the public . they think Information Commission cannot initiate any programs to aware both the demand and supplier side. Therefore, it is another challenge to implement of RTI. At the same time, the survey on institutions revealed that half the

institutions are lacking information officers and an absence of awareness within institutions regarding their legal obligations is evident. According to him establishing Information Clinic at each ward in rural Bangladesh with good speed of internet, using available mass media and other forms of cultural communication to make people understand how this act can be effective for the citizens is important as most of them still have lacking about this act.

#### **4.1 Key Findings from the literature review**

After interpretation, analyzation and evaluation of above discussed researches the following matters are found:

##### **4.1.1 Right to Information Act Increases Transparency and Accountability:**

One of the major reasons that strengthen the chain of corruption is the lack of transparency. Lack of information doesn't provide citizens the opportunity to develop their potential to the fullest and realize the full range of their human rights. Individual personality, political and social identity and economic capability are all shaped by the information that is available to each person and to the society at large. If you prevent it, certainly transparency will be extinct therefore good governance will be elusion. So, no doubt, Freedom of information can bring an inconceivable success to build up a transparent and healthy knowledge society. In every country it is utmost necessary to enhance the freedom of information for redressing the mistrust, indignity and human crisis from the society. Free flow of information is also very much helpful to reduce corruption and can promote towards an answerable public administration and to prevail the right to know we must ensure effective implementation of Right to Information Act.

##### **4.1.2 Right to Information Act breaks the chain of Corruption:**

Lack of accountability in the workplace often stems for ineffective leadership, practices and Low morale mindset. The failure of citizens to consistently demand accountability from their leaders and duty bearers is a major cause of corruption and development. To overcome this problem Right to Information Act has given a crystal-clear opportunity to root out corruption and the dark chain of secrecy from any government affairs and pave the way for governance reform, greater accountability and transparency in government subjects

#### **4.1.3 Practice of Secrecy:**

A general trend is that every official document or file is under the official secrecy act. Therefore, 99 percent of them are kept in dark from the public. Which increases the practice of secrecy. As a result, information become unavailable for public which cause corruption.

#### **4.1.4 Lack of knowledge:**

A large portion of population still don't know about this act as a result they are neglected from their right to know. Moreover, those who know that this act exists; don't have adequate knowledge how to apply for information through this act. Government may focus on organizing educational programs to develop the understanding of the public, especially disadvantaged communities, regarding how to exercise the rights contemplated under the Act. It is observed that the awareness is least among the disadvantageous sections of the community such as women, rural population category.

#### **4.1.5 Lack of Personnel:**

The government recruit less employees as compared to their sanctioned strength. So, the public relation officers and other staffs are already overburdened with various types of work. when they are asked to do a difficult task, they do not work as effectively to provide information.

### **5. Corruption in Bangladesh and its Impact on Good Governance as well as Development:**

With Corruption scandals clouding Bangladesh 's government and dominating headlines of the papers over the last few years. No doubt Corruption is the biggest obstacle in the path of development. The worst victims of corruption in administration and governance are the common people. For example, Bangladeshi government in 2018-2019 fiscal year spend 176,320 takas for development. Which was the highest in the last six years. Moreover, Bangladesh approves over taka 2 trillion for development budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020. Had these resources been spent properly and without leakage at various levels, we would have solved many of our problems in education, healthcare, housing and other areas of social development. Corruption in Bangladesh is deep rooted and people are concerned in corruption —at the cutting-edge level of administration. It

indirectly affects the country 's economy and also all types of development of the citizens. It comprises all illegal activities. There is a conclusion given by TI global index Bangladesh is now 14 th most corrupt country in the world. Corruption is not only an enemy of development and good governance but also foe of democracy. The absence of answerability, transparency and participation in governance and administration and our people's sense of helplessness weaken our democratic process.

### **5.1. Types of Corruption:**

The following type of corruption are seen in Bangladesh:

**5.1.1 Grand corruption** -Grand exploitation, as per the name, occurs in the higher echelons of government with far-reaching consequences for the public. Resources used for communication, healthcare and other public services are diverted either directly into the pockets of government officials or used in a way that they profit from them. As a result, the public suffer, and the poorest in society disproportionately.

**5.1.2 Petty corruption** - Corrupted petty practices are an everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens. who often are trying to access basic goods or services in places like hospitals, schools, police departments and other agencies.

**5.1.3 Political corruption**- Practiced by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth.

## **6. Survey Findings**

Quantitative techniques have been used for the analysis of the information gathered in the method of survey.

### **6.1 Data Presentation**

The quantitative analysis of the results of close-ended questions of the survey research is presented in numerical, percentages, tables and descriptive forms.



**Q.1- Are you known about The Right to Information Act, 2009?****Table No. 1**

<b>Are you known about The Right to Information Act, 2009?</b>	No. of Respondents	% of Yes	No. of Respondents	% of No	<b>Total Respondents</b>
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		
Gaibandha District	80	40%	120	60%	200
Dinajpur District	70	35%	130	65%	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>62.5%</b>	<b>400</b>

From Table No -1 we find that in Gaibandha and Dinajpur district only 40% and 35% people know about RTI ACT 2009, who are 80 out of 200 and 70 out of 200 in number. 60% and 65% of the people don't know about the act in both districts. Over all out of 400 people 150 people know about the existence of the act, who are 37.5% and 250 people don't know about this act who are 62.5%.

**Q.2-Are you know the important provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2009?****Table No. 2**

<b>Are you know the important provisions of the Right To Information Act, 2009?</b>	No. of Respondents	% of Yes	No. of Respondents	% of No	<b>Total Respondents</b>
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		
Gaibandha District	20	10%	180	90%	200
Dinajpur District	35	17.5%	165	82.5%	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>13.75%</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>86.25%</b>	<b>400</b>

Table No.-2 has bifurcated two parts which are Gaibandha and Dinajpur District. The No. of percentage in Gaibandha District is 10% who opine as Yes and 90% opine No , here the calculating respondent 200. The No. of percentage in Dinajpur District is 17.5% who say Yes and 82.5% say No , and also here the total respondents are 200. Overall, it is seen that in two districts the important provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2009 is known by only 13.75% people who are 55 out of 400 and 86.25% people don't know important provisions who are 345 out of 400.

**Q.3- Have you applied to find information under the Right to Information Act, 2009?**

**Table No. 3**

<b>Have you applied to find information under the Right to Information Act, 2009?</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>% of Yes</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>% of No</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		
Gaibandha District	08	4%	192	96%	200
Dinajpur District	15	7.5%	185	92.5%	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5.75%</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>94.25%</b>	<b>400</b>

From Table No 3 we find that the No. of percentage in Gaibandha District in case of applying to search information under the Right to Information Act, 2009 is 4% and 96% don't apply, here the calculating respondent 200. The No. of percentage in Dinajpur District is 7.5% who want information through this act and 92.5% don't use this act, and also here the total respondent is 400. Therefore, comparing two districts in case of applying to search information under the Right to Information Act, 2009 is only 5.75% people apply or use this act to find information and rest haven't not use this act yet.

**Q.4- Did you receive the information from the official concern through the Right To Information Act, 2009?**

**Table No. 4**

<b>Did you receive the information from the official concern through the Right To Information Act, 2009?</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>% of Yes</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>% of No</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		
Gaibandha District	08	100%	0%	0%	8
Dinajpur District	15	100%	0%	0%	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>23</b>

Table No.-4 has shown two districts Gaibandha and Dinajpur Districts. The No. of percentage in Gaibandha District is 100% who say Yes in case of receiving information from the official concern through this act and 0% say No, here the calculating respondents are 8. The No. of percentage in Dinajpur District is also 100% who say Yes

and 0 % is opine No, and here the total respondents are 15. Overall, in two districts, 100% citizens receive information from the official concern through the Right to Information Act, 2009.

**Q.5 - Did you face any problems in getting the information?**

**Table No. 5**

<b>Did you face any problems in getting the information?</b>	No. of Respondents	% of Yes	No. of Respondents	% of No	<b>Total Respondents</b>
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		
Gaibandha district	2	25%	6	75%	08
Dinajpur district	3	20%	12	80%	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21.73</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>78.27%</b>	<b>23</b>

Table No.- 5 has acknowledged two districts which are Gaibandha and Dinajpur. The percentage in Gaibandha in case of facing any problem while finding information, 25% responders replied Yes and 75% replied no. here the calculating respondent are 8. Where as in Dinajpur district 20% responders face problem, 80% don't. Overall, 21.73% citizens face obstacle in getting information and 78.27% don't.

**Q.6- Do you think that the Right to Information Act, 2009 Useful tool for public to gather information?**

**Table No. 6**

<b>Do you think that the Right To Information Act, 2009 Useful tool for public to gather information?</b>	No. of Respondents	% of Yes	No. of Respondents	% of No	<b>Total Respondents</b>
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		
Gaibandha district	150	75%	50	25%	200
Dinajpur district	120	60%	80	40%	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>67.5%</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	<b>400</b>

In Table No.-6 we see in district Gaibandha , 75% people think that RTI ACT 2009 is a useful tool for public to gather information and 25% people don't think so. In Dinajpur

60% people agree with the point and 40% don't. Overall, 67.5% think that this act can be effective tool to find information and 32.5% people don't agree with that point.

**Q.7- Whether there are constitutional provisions for safeguarding of RTI Act in the corruption?**

**Table No. 7**

<b>Q.7- Whether there are constitutional provisions for safeguarding of RTI Act in the corruption?</b>	No. of Respondents <b>Yes</b>	<b>% of Yes</b>	No. of Respondents <b>No</b>	<b>% of No</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
Gaibandha district	200	100%	00	00%	200
Dinajpur district	200	100%	00	00%	200
<b>Total</b>	400	<b>100%</b>	00	00%	400

Table No.-7 has related two district Gaibandha and Dinajpur. The No. of percentage 100% who say Yes and 0% is No., here the evaluating respondent 200. The No. of percentage in Dinajpur district is also 100% who say Yes and 0% is No., The regulate respondent is 200 too. Overall, all people believe that There are constitutional provisions for safeguarding of RTI Act in the corruption

**Q.8- Do you think transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries are increased by the RTI Act?**

**Table No. 8**

<b>Do you think are transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries has increased by the RTI Act</b>	No. of Respondents <b>Yes</b>	<b>% of Yes</b>	No. of Respondents <b>No</b>	<b>% of No</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
Gaibandha District	110	55%	90	45%	200
Dinajpur District	130	65%	70	35%	200
<b>Total</b>	240	60%	160	40%	<b>400</b>

In Table No. 8 we see 55% people of Gaibandha district think transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries has increased by the RTI Act and 45% don't agree with the point. 35% people of Dinajpur district don't think that transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries has increased by the RTI Act where as 65% citizens agree with that point. Above all, 60% of total population thinks RTI act increases transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries and 40% don't think so.

**Q.9- Do you believe that RTI Act is an instrument to prevent corruption?**

**Table No. 9**

<b>Do you believe that RTI Act is an instrument to prevent corruption</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>% of Yes</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>% of No</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		
Gaibandha District	180	90%	20	10%	200
Dinajpur District	155	77.5%	45	22.5%	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>83.75%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>16.25%</b>	<b>400</b>

From Table No - 9 it is found that 83.75% people think that RTI Act is an instrument to prevent corruption where as 16.25% people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 200 people 180 people agree that this act is a potent weapon to fight against corruption which is 90% and only 20 people don't think it is an anti-corruption tool which is 10%. In Dinajpur 77.5% people who are 155 in out of 200 people opine that this act can prevent corruption where as 22.5% people who are 45 out of 200 don't agree with it.

**6.2 Two Case Studies**

A case study is a research method that involves an up-close, in depth and detailed investigation of a subject of a study. It helps bringing the understand of a complex issue or object. It can increase experience or level up to the existing knowledge through previous research. It has been widely used in social sciences as a qualitative research method to investigate contemporary real – life situations and has provided a foundation of application of ideas and extension of methods.

### **6.2.1 Case study- 1**

Aleya Begum, a resident of Saidpur, in northern Bangladesh, wished to help a poor patient in her neighborhood to obtain free medical service from the local hospital which she knew was available for indigent patients. One day she took her to the Saidpur Government Hospital. To her great dismay she experienced not only refusal but very rude behavior from the hospital authority when she asked for free medicine for her patient. She was eventually forced to pay for the medicine. When Aleya Begum described her experience to her PAR group's weekly meeting, the group recommended that she makes an application under the RTI Act asking the Hospital authority for information on whether the government had provided the hospital with free medicine for distribution to indigent patients and, if so, the names of these medicine and how much medicine was provided by the government for free distribution in the previous month.

On 28 September 2011 Aleya Begum, with the help of an RTI animator attached to her group, made an application to the Designated Officer (DO) of the hospital to provide the information mentioned above. Within a few days she received a call from that hospital and was asked to go see the DO. She was warmly received by the DO who praised her for her the initiative to help a poor patient and was promised to be provided with the information she sought. Within a few days, Aleya got the information she had asked for. Aleya Begum shared her experience in the PAR group's weekly meeting. She informed the group about all the medicines they were entitled to get free from the government hospital. They decided to publicize the list of free medicines to the local population. This experience significantly increased the interest and belief of the local population in the power of RTI law.

### **6.2.2 Case Study -2**

Mohammad Saud Khan is a nomadic river gypsy belonging to the Bede community in Munshiganj District. Saud Khan has been farming along the Padma River for a long time. But due to lack of proper agricultural facilities including seeds, fertilizers, and equipment, as well as natural calamities, the yield from his land was always very poor. He repeatedly sought help from the local agricultural officials. He was said that he would get financial support if money was officially sanctioned. His hope and trust in government quickly faded and he gave up on any possible assistance. In 2010 he joined as an Animator in the RTI project of RIB and came to know that in 2010, the

Government of Bangladesh had introduced an Agriculture Input Assistance Card to provide cash subsidy to poor, small and medium farmers. The program was meant to streamline the agriculture subsidy system for increased productivity. With a card, a farmer has the possibility to open a bank account with a paltry sum of 10 taka only, and the subsidy for irrigation assistance can be transferred to the account. Saud felt that he had been denied this assistance because he belongs to the lowly Bede community. So, after learning about the RTI Act, he decided to use it to access government information and fight corruption.

He applied to the DO of Upazila (Sub-district) Agriculture Office for rules to obtain a Agriculture Input Assistance Card and a list of the recipients of the card from his area on recent months. He received the information eventually – but not within the stipulated time period. However, Saud Khan was called to the Upazila Agriculture Office soon where he was informed that his name would be added to the list of beneficiaries. Subsequently he was informed that he had been granted Tk. 800 -- for one bag fertilizer and 2 Kg seeds -- as financial assistance from the government, and a few days later he received the money. He said, “I did not know until now that the RTI Act can be so powerful.” However, since Saud Khan had not received all of the information within the time limit under the RTI Act, he decided to file a complaint to the Information Commission. The Commission organized a hearing on 15 February 2011, where Saud Khan described his complaint in detail as well as the information he was seeking. He said that since he could not get the information, he requested from the Upazila Agriculture Office within the timeframe stipulated in the law, he had filed the complaint at the Information Commission. But just a few days before the hearing he got the information. The Upazila Agriculture Officer stated: “After Mr. Saud Khan applied for the information, we started collecting it. Because the RTI Act was new and we were not really aware of it, we did not furnish all the information in a proper manner. Now we are aware of it so we will furnish all information requested.”

The Information Commission admonished the Upazila Agriculture Officer for not caring to learn about the law when it was announced by the Government through many ways and asked him to put the information requested on notice Board of his office for all to know about it.

From above two incidents we can easily understand that how RTI act can be an effective weapon to battle against corruption in Bangladesh. As we see Aleya Begum and

Mohammad Saud Khan use this act to ensure their citizen right and stopping corruption. So, no doubt, The Right to Information Act 2009 has created the scope for citizens to get information from the government. With the help of it we can now expose corruption and also bring under justice to those officials who are or were not performing their duties as they should. You can demand with the help of this act, samples of materials used for the construction of roads, drains and buildings; can ask for work in progress or information related to any completed work ; may ask an inspection of government documents, maps for the construction, registers and records; may seek information related to the progress made on any complaint filed by you in the recent past.

For various benefits of this Law Day by day, the law is becoming popular. According to the annual report 2017 of Information Commission the total number of applications applied for various information was 8167, whereas in 2018 the number was 8660. In various ministry number of applications for information is 4207, in commission the number was 198, 42 applications were applied to bank, in NGO the number is 385. So, we can easily see how the using rate of this act is increasing and Bangladesh starts to find out the effectiveness and benefits of using this act. According to Transparency International index before introducing the RTI act Bangladesh was champion or position second, third in corruption but things got changed after the enactment of that law. Now position of her is 14 th in the ranking of corruption. So, it is a potent weapon to fight against corruption arbitrariness and misuse of power. With corruption being viewed as one of the biggest “obstacles in the efficient delivery of development resources to the poor in developing countries,” an empirical study concluded that the RTI negatively impacted corruption and its statistical impact on curbing corruption was quite significant. The study, conducted in four districts over a span of three years, found that the act “reduces corruption in an average by 22.6% per cent points”. The authors found that the act “explains approximately 50 percent of the actual decline in corruption in Narayanganj over the period 2011 to 2014”, which is rather a large impact considering is one of the most corrupt districts according to the TIB. The study concluded that the legislation makes significant contribution in controlling corruption, enhancing the quality of public goods and services, empowering citizens and by breaking the informational monopoly of public officials. It prevents corrupt public officials from misusing this information to advance their own interest. On the other hand, it provides the government with more power and public support for conducting top down audit of corrupt



departments as a result RTI spilt all over the parts of the country and reduced the corruption in Bangladesh. It gives individuals, groups, and companies the right to be able to obtain information from public bodies while also obliging those public bodies to facilitate that access through responses to requests and the proactive publishing of information. There is wide agreement that a properly implemented and working right to information regime provides benefits to the public and to government departments. The public is better able to participate in the democratic process when they have information about the activities and policies of their government. Public awareness of the reasons behind decisions can improve support and reduce misunderstandings and dissatisfaction. Individual members of parliament are also better able to conduct oversight. Officials are more likely to make decisions based on objective and justifiable reasons when it is known that the decisions will eventually be made public. Public confidence in the government is improved if it is known that the decisions will be predictable and rational. Right to information can also improve the flow of information inside governments. Excessive secrecy reduces the ability of government departments to share information and reduces their efficiency which strengthen the chain of corruption. Many jurisdictions have reported that enacting right to information laws improved coordination and policy development. The adoption of right to information legislation has been found to improve the record keeping practices of public bodies so that the remains no way to engender of corruption. It's a matter of great hope Bangladesh is on the right track in case of implementation of this act. The government give emphasis on the following topics

- 1.The creation of Strong Information Commission Bangladesh.
- 2.Strict implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the only global initiative that provides a framework for putting an end to corruption.
3. Strengthening of the prevention of Corruption Act and removal of the restriction.
- 4.Independence to Anti-Corruption Commission
- 5.Citizens“ charters with penalty clause to ensure time bound guaranteed public services

6. Role of the Planning Commission in monitoring the expenditure of money, grants, subsidies, and laying stress on outcomes rather than outputs (statistical formality), etc.

### **7. Overall Analysis and Findings:**

RTI act has significant bearing on good governance and development. It is the key to all other rights. It is among the most important instruments to effectively empower those to whom power should belong in democracy – the people. Based on the facts, information, analysis and evaluation, the following matters are crystal clear that:

1. Right to information act 2009 in Bangladesh ensure Free and guaranteed access to information which enables citizens, the media and law enforcement agencies to use officials records as a means to uncover cases of corruption and maladministration. it is analyzed from the survey research that 83.75% people think that RTI Act is an instrument to prevent corruption where as 16.25% people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 200 people 180 people agree that this act is a potent weapon to fight against corruption which is 90% and only 20 people don't think it is an anti-corruption tool which is 10%. In Dinajpur 77.5% people who are 155 in out of 200 people opine that this act can prevent corruption where as 22.5% people who are 45 out of 200 don't agree with it.
2. RTI act switch up the rate of transparency which increases the rate of detection of corrupt practices and this can act as a deterrent to future corruption. From the experimental localities it is realized that 55% people of Gaibandha district think transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries has increased by the RTI Act and 45% don't agree with the point. 35% people of Dinajpur district don't think that transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries has increased by the RTI Act where as 65% citizens agree with that point. Above all, 60% of total population thinks RTI act increases transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries and 40% don't think so.
3. RTI act provides Opportunities to citizens to express their preferences for the quality and nature of services they desire from officials. From analyzing it is found that the No. of percentage in Gaibandha District is 100% who say Yes in case of receiving information

from the official concern through this act and 0% say No, here the calculating respondents are 8. The No. of percentage in Dinajpur District is also 100% who say Yes and 0 % is opine No, and here the total respondents are 15. Overall, in two districts, 100% citizens receive information from the official concern through the Right to Information Act, 2009.

4. This act Empowered citizens to know what their elected officials are doing. It is found that the percentage in Gaibandha in case of facing any problem while finding information from officials, 25% responders replied Yes and 75% replied no. here the calculating respondent are 8. Where as in Dinajpur district 20% responders face problem, 80% don't. Overall, 21.73% citizens face obstacle in getting information and 78.27% don't.
5. Right to information is essential to run a democratic society and promote participation, transparency and accountability. It allows governments to mobilize new sources of policy ideas, information and resources. It contributes to build public trust in government, raise the quality of democracy and strengthen civic capacity. It also helps to strengthen representative democracy to ensure political accountability. Right to information is intended to foster a culture of openness - making government more accountable and enhancing public participation in the democratic decision-making process.
6. Right to Information Act is a citizen-friendly law that makes the public a confidence on the government, as well as increased government's accountability. RTI provides citizens the opportunity of being informed of what government does for them, why and how it does. From the survey method analysis we see in district Gaibandha , 75% people think that RTI ACT 2009 is a useful tool for public to gather information and 25% people don't think so. In Dinajpur 60% people agree with the point and 40% don't. Overall, 67.5% think that this act can be effective tool to find information and 32.5% people don't agree with that point.
7. Most of the people don't know about the existence of this act. therefore, they are neglected and cannot consume their citizen rights in some cases. While analyzing it is found that in Gaibandha and Dinajpur district only 40% and 35% people know about RTI ACT 2009, who are 80 out of 200 and 70 out of 200 in number. 60% and 65% of the

people don't know about the act in both districts. Over all out of 400 people 150 people know about the existence of the act, who are 37.5% and 250 people don't know about this act who are 62.5%.

## **8. Recommendations**

No doubt right to information act 2009 is an armour to protect society from the bite of corruption but to use this armour first you have to know how to use this act and other facts about it. In Bangladesh most of the people have no idea about this law. From the survey research method, it is found that out of 400 people only 150 people know about the existence of the act, who are 37.5% and 250 people don't know about this act who are 62.5% but those who use this act have a good experience. Aleya Begum and Mohammad Saud Khan are the lustrous example of that. So, awareness must be grown among the citizens about Right to information act and Through power of media, special programs about In RTI Act should be telecast. Newspaper films and documentaries can be great tools to create awareness among the citizens about this act. Moreover, following matters can be emphasized for effective implementation of this act:

There is a need of Planning for proper infrastructure system so that effective implementation of RTI can be ensured. It is important to note that with lacking in monitoring process often disturbs the smooth practice of this act and cannot be satisfactorily implemented until and unless the roles and responsibilities at all the execution and monitoring levels are clearly defined.

It is recommended that it is important to establish an RTI Implementation Cell. Which will be under the autonomous leadership of senior level bureaucrats. This Cell is expected to set up implementation measures to promote compliance by the Public Authorities and oversee implementation status.

Developing and organizing educational programs to promote the understanding of the public, in particular of disadvantaged, neglected and rural communities regarding how to exercise the rights contemplated under this Act, should be emphasized.

Storing the records and files should be given importance as the public authorities deal with large volumes of documentation that is varied in types and nature. The functioning of RTI act depends on availability of records in a timely manner because if you haven't any record how can you provide information. Therefore, there is a need to implement a record management system that should facilitate:

- a. Recycle bin of records in a timely manner;
- b. Fastest searching method and timely bound retrieval of records when in time of need;
- c. Monitoring of different type of records over its life cycle;
- d. Protection of records , data, information against risks such as disaster, fire etc.

Using information technology would be very useful in reshaping the processes, structure, operations as it increases the productivity and efficiency of the Public Authorities, which consequences improving the quality of service. So, this process should be given more emphasized.

Sometimes it is seen that information officers are not at home in giving information to the demand side as they have lack of knowledge about Right to Information Act. So, Training of Information Officers in case of dealing with the information seeker should be given priority. For that reason, providing necessary support to all Administrative Training Institutes for training and capacity building need to be given importance.

### **9. Concluding Reflections:**

The study argued that demand for information by the citizen is preconditioned by the awareness of their own right to information and the legislative framework upholding this right. It also finds that most of citizens are unaware of the RTIA. At the same time, the survey revealed that most of the institutions are lacking information officers and an absence of awareness within institutions regarding their legal obligations is evident. According to majority of the information providers, information commission is not strong enough to intervene. The study noted that building awareness among the citizens of the right, of the importance of conscious practice of this right and of the existing legal framework that protects this right appears to be the next challenge for effective implementation of the Right to Information Act. Using available mass media and other forms of cultural communication to make people understand how this act can be effective for the citizens is important as most of them still have lacking about this act. Awareness must be grown among the citizens about Right to information because RTI act is inherent in participatory democracy and a pre-condition for good governance and the realization of all other human rights. Moreover, this right has empowered the citizen regarding to seek information from the assigned person and organizations according the national and international legal recognition.

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