

"From Disparities to Empowerment:
Right to Information
at the Intersection of
Gender, Climate Action, and
Social Safety-Nets"



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Information at the Intersection of Gender,
Climate Action, and Social Safety-Nets"

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Introduction

Access to information is a fundamental right and a cornerstone for fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in governance. The Right to Information (RTI) serves as a transformative tool, enabling citizens to exercise their rights, engage in decision-making processes, and address systemic inequities. The Right to information is a foundation of democratic governance and sustainable development. In Bangladesh, the Right to Information Act (RTI), 2009, serves as a critical tool to promote transparency, accountability, and active citizen participation in governance. However, despite its potential, the effective implementation of the RTI Act remains a challenge. Strengthening this framework is vital for fostering good governance and empowering citizens to claim their rights because ensuring access to information enables citizens to monitor the actions and decisions of public authorities. By shedding light on governmental processes, it curbs corruption and fosters trust between citizens and state institutions. Also, in a country like Bangladesh, where socioeconomic disparities persist, access to information is a powerful equalizer. It allows marginalized groups to claim their entitlements to social services, education, and healthcare, addressing inequities. Access to accurate and timely information equips citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard in policies that affect their lives.

To understand the necessity and situation of access to information in various thematic sectors of Bangladesh and to identify existing challenges of implementation of Right to Information Act in these thematic sectors, three separate studies were conducted as part of a fellowship initiative under a project titled “Advancing Accountability and Transparency through Right to Information”. The project is being implemented by Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) in Moulvibazar, Nilphamari and Dinajpur districts of Bangladesh with an objective to advance accountability and transparency through the application and implementation of right to information mechanisms and to build a culture of requesting information from the government about services and expenditure to encourage good governance.

The above studies were carried out in the districts of Moulvibazar, Nilphamari, and Dinajpur districts. The studies were conducted by three students selected from the University of Chittagong, the University of Rajshahi, and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology. The titles of their studies were (1) Unveiling Gender Disparities: Exploring the Intersection of Gender and Right to Information which examined the unique challenges faced by women and marginalized gender groups in exercising their right to information. It underscores the role of RTI in dismantling barriers to participation and advancing gender equity in both public and private spheres (2) Empowering Citizens: Right to Information as a Tool for Climate Action,

explored how RTI facilitates transparency and accountability in climate governance. It illustrated how informed citizens can leverage RTI to influence policy decisions, monitor environmental impacts, and foster collective action for climate resilience. (3) *Enhancing Social Protection: An Analysis of Social Safety Net Programs and the Role of Right to Information*, analyzed the intersection of RTI and social protection systems. It investigated how access to information can enhance the efficacy of social safety nets, ensure equitable resource distribution, and protect vulnerable populations from exclusion and exploitation.

We are pleased to present this single publication which aims to bring together all the key findings from the three studies. This booklet explores three critical dimensions of RTI's impact: gender, climate action, and social protection. Through meticulous analysis, the reports shed light on how RTI intersects with these pivotal areas, empowering marginalized groups and highlighting its transformative potential to address systemic inequities and advance sustainable development goals. This booklet has three segments to highlight the findings of three studies separately.

The success of these studies is a testament to the dedication and expertise of the authors who contributed to their development. Their profound insights, rigorous research, and commitment to the principles of equity and inclusion have enriched this body of work. By delving into the nuanced intersections of RTI with gender, climate action, and social protection, the authors have provided a roadmap for leveraging information access as a means to achieve broader developmental goals.

Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) expresses its deepest gratitude to the authors Shahana Akhter Iren, Taher Uddin Raju and Poushe Paul for their invaluable contributions, which not only enhance our understanding of RTI's multifaceted role but also inspire actionable strategies for addressing pressing societal challenges. Their efforts will undoubtedly serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and advocates striving to build more inclusive and transparent societies.

RIB also extends heartfelt gratitude to National Endowment for Democracy (NED) for their generous support and for their commitment to advance knowledge on Right to Information (RTI) in Bangladesh. We are thankful to all those who contributed to the studies and completion of this work, whether through their guidance, encouragement, or inspiration. This endeavor is a proof to collective efforts and shared vision. We hope that this work fosters meaningful reflection, encourages dialogues, and contributes positively to the field.

Unveiling Gender Disparities: Exploring the Intersection of Gender and Right to Information

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Research Focus and Context:

The research report titled "Unveiling Gender Disparities: Exploring the Intersection of Gender and the Right to Information" by Shahana Akhter Iren, is a research report on the intersection of gender and access to information in Bangladesh, specifically under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The Report investigates the gendered challenges and disparities women face in accessing information through the Right to Information (RTI) Act in Bangladesh focusing on the Nilphamari district.

The report investigates the impact of the Right to Information (RTI) Act on women's empowerment in Nilphamari district and highlights the persistent gender disparities in accessing information, despite the legal framework aiming to promote transparency and accountability. Using qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions, the study reveals that while some women have been empowered by the RTI Act, many still face obstacles, women especially in rural areas are still marginalized from fully utilizing the Act due to social, economic, cultural barriers, patriarchal norms, lack of awareness, and procedural complexities. It further explores how the Right to Information (RTI) has impacted women's empowerment, identifying gender disparities and barriers to access. While the Act has enhanced legal, economic, and health rights for few, substantial challenges remain. Cultural norms, patriarchal structures, and procedural hurdles continue to hinder many women from fully utilizing the RTI Act. Policy reforms are necessary to address these issues.

Objectives:

- Assess how RTI empowers women and reduces vulnerability.
- Explore gender disparities in information access.
- Identify barriers preventing women from accessing information.

Methodology:

The research uses qualitative methods, including In-depth interviews (IDIs), Focus group discussions (FGDs), and Key informant interviews (KIs), in Nilphamari district, which is one of Research Initiatives Bangladesh's working area. The data were analyzed thematically, ensuring reliability through member checks and secondary literature.

Key findings:

1. Women in the region mostly covered through NGOs interventions have a greater awareness of the RTI Act. They are utilizing it to assert legal rights, combat domestic violence, and improve their economic and social status. Case studies show that access to information has empowered women to challenge patriarchal norms and improve their living conditions.

Example on legal rights and protection- A female respondent shared: " earlier, I used to think that husbands torturing their wives was normal. But after I learned about the RTI Act and told my husband that I could take legal action against injustices. After hearing this, he stopped" (Saidpur Upazila, Nilphamari District).

The report highlights the case of Mina in Nilphamari district. Mina, a person with disability girl was subjected to sexual assault. After the case was reported to the police, she underwent medical examination. However, to delay the matter and to favour the perpetrator, Mina and her family were harassed in the name of re medical examination. This unnecessary medical retesting was avoided after her family used RTI to challenge an investigator's decision demanding such retesting. This saved her from further trauma after a sexual assault. The police also took the matter seriously after submission of RTI.

2. Significant gender disparities persist in accessing information, with women in leadership or with higher social status having better access. Marital status, education, and social standing also influence the ease with which women can obtain information. Cultural norms and poverty further exacerbate these disparities. Talking about cultural norms, a male community leader in Saidpur Upazila, Nilphamari observed "Women are afraid of society. In this patriarchal society a woman is viewed as a woman before being considered a human being"
3. Access to information has the potential to empower women in Bangladesh especially where organizations are working to promote it. The report provides real-life case studies and narratives where women successfully utilized the RTI Act to secure legal, economic, and health-related rights. The study finds that legal empowerment, economic self-reliance, and improved health outcomes are linked to women's access to information, leading to greater agency and participation in public life. For Example, women who use RTI have improved access to government training programs, leading to better economic outcomes. Women used RTI to access information about sewing training and equipment. A respondent stated: "I submitted an RTI to learn about training schedules and facilities. I got a sewing machine and now run my family through this. RTI is a powerful tool for poor people like us" (Saidpur Upazila, Nilphamari District).
4. A significant portion of the study also focuses on gender disparities in accessing information. Women's ability to access information is hampered by various factors, including lower literacy rates, limited social mobility, and a lack of political influence. One

female participant during FGD observed that “there are prohibitions in Islam that prevent women from going out. Women will handle domestic work while men handle everything else” (Female participant, Saidpur). However, there are instance of initiatives by women which brought changes, for example a women's leader used RTI to improve privacy and availability of nurses to handle female patients in a hospital. The female leader observed “I applied to the Civil Surgeon seeking information on rules to allow male nurse to handle female patients and why no privacy is maintained during medical examination of female patients. Later, hospital authority installed curtains and assigned two female attendants” (Nilphamari Sadar Upazila, Nilphamari District).

5. The report highlights that women in leadership positions or from more privileged backgrounds have a distinct advantage in utilizing RTI compared to marginalized women, aggravating the already existing gender inequalities. Example of Puja Bashfor's Advocacy efforts. Puja a Harijan community leader used RTI to fight wage disparities. After her application, authorities fixed salary inequities, ensuring women received equal pay for equal work.

Challenges and barriers: The report identifies multiple barriers, such as:

- Women face numerous barriers in accessing information, including patriarchal family structures, religious conservatism, cultural norms, and poverty. Family and social norms restrict women's participation in public life, creating a lack of awareness about their rights and making them dependent on male family members for information. For example, one female participant during FGD observed, “I applied to the agricultural office for information on seed distribution. They issued threats and tried to intimidate me, so I had to drop the matter” (Nilphamari Sadar Upazila).
- Bureaucratic challenges, poor treatment in public offices, fear of reprisal, threats, harassment, social stigma and safety concerns discourage women from utilizing the RTI Act. Additionally, the complexity of the RTI application process itself - such as the need-to-know specific government officers and the absence of help desks further alienates women, particularly those from rural and underprivileged backgrounds. Besides many women rely on male family members for external matters and face stigma for engaging in public life.

Conclusion and recommendations:

This report brings forth critical insights into how access to information can significantly influence women's empowerment in Bangladesh. However, it also highlights the deep-rooted challenges that prevent many women from fully utilizing the RTI Act, such as patriarchal cultural norms, illiteracy, and procedural complexities. To promote true gender equity in accessing information, the government must prioritize gender-sensitive policy reforms, streamline the RTI process, and actively involve women in decision-making. The research not

only sheds light on existing gender disparities but also provides actionable steps to promote inclusivity and transparency, empowering women to exercise their rights and become active participants in public life.

The report provides a series of recommendations to address these gender disparities, including (a) raising awareness of the RTI Act, (b) simplifying the application process, enhancing legal protections for women, and encouraging government transparency (c) collaboration between the government and civil society is essential to bridge the gender gap and ensure that women have equal access to information, which is crucial for their empowerment. (d) the report further recommends to devise mechanism to implement targeted campaigns and workshops in rural areas to educate women about the RTI Act and their legal rights. (e) Improving online functionalities, allowing for online appeals, and reducing procedural complexities that hinder women, can also be considered.

Enhance legal protections for women using the RTI Act to address safety concerns and prevent harassment or threats. Also, government agencies may proactively disclose information about public projects and services, reducing the need for women to seek information through formal applications. Establish mechanisms to track and evaluate the effectiveness of the RTI Act, focusing on gender disparities to inform policy reforms and improve implementation.

Empowering Citizens: Right to Information as a tool for Climate Action

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Research Focus and Context:

The research report titled "Empowering Citizens: Right to Information as a tool for Climate Action"- A Perspective from Moulvibazar, Bangladesh" by Thaher Uddin Raju highlights the significant climate vulnerabilities in Moulvibazar, a district in northeastern Bangladesh, where climate change and environmental degradation have severely affected local livelihoods, particularly for farmers and vulnerable communities. The report explores how the Right to Information (RTI) law can be an effective tool in climate action and can help to address climate change-induced vulnerabilities.

The report highlights the extreme vulnerability of Bangladesh to climate change, particularly in rural regions like Moulvibazar. Despite various government efforts to mitigate these challenges, climate-related issues persist. The study advocates for using the RTI law to improve transparency and governance, which in turn could enhance climate resilience. This research makes a compelling case for integrating the RTI law into climate action strategies. By improving transparency and access to environmental information, the law could play a vital role in reducing vulnerabilities, protecting livelihoods, and ensuring better governance in climate-affected regions like Moulvibazar. Report provides insight into how legal frameworks like RTI can intersect with climate policies to create more resilient communities in the face of climate change.

Objectives:

- Examine climate vulnerability in Moulvibazar.
- Identify the link between information gaps and climate vulnerability.
- Explore how RTI can be used to mitigate these vulnerabilities.

Methodology:

A qualitative approach was adopted, involving Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), Key Informant Interviews (KII) in Moulvibazar. Participants included community members, local leaders, and government officials.

Key findings:

1. **Climate Change Impact-** Moulvibazar is experiencing unpredictable rainfall patterns, increased frequency of floods, storms, and extreme heat, disrupting agriculture and fisheries. These climatic shifts have negatively impacted the livelihoods, health, and living conditions of the region's residents, especially farmers, tea garden workers, and slum dwellers. Reflecting on impact of climate change on livelihood, farmers in Adapasha reported that changing rainfall patterns disrupt their sowing calendars, leading to crop losses. Participants during FGD mentioned that sudden floods and storms frequently destroy their crops before maturity. The UNO during interview reported a decline in the working capacity of people due to climate change, with erratic rainfall damaging crops and frequent floods affecting livelihoods.
2. **Environmental Degradation -** Unplanned development, deforestation, and infrastructure projects (e.g., roads, bridges) are exacerbating environmental damage. Wetlands and forests are shrinking due to industrial projects, leading to a loss of biodiversity and increased vulnerability. A local resident during interview observed that widening of roads project resulted in the unnecessary cutting of century-old trees, which could have been avoided. Besides, poorly designed Chaitrakhal bridge obstructs water flow, harming local agriculture. Moulvibazar lost 11% of its tree cover between 2002 and 2023, according to Global Forest Watch. Unplanned development initiatives, like the construction of poorly designed culverts, have disrupted ecosystems and intensified vulnerabilities for 30 villages.
3. **Government Support -** The report highlights inadequate and non-transparent government social safety net (SSN) programs aimed at supporting climate-vulnerable populations. The selection process for aid recipients lacks fairness, with allegations of favoritism, and the support provided is insufficient to meet community needs. The chairman of Amtol union during interview mentioned about distributing dry foods and training for disaster preparedness but admitted these measures were insufficient to meet community needs. Reports of favoritism in selecting beneficiaries for government support programs, with multiple cards issued to some individuals while others were excluded. Respondents from Adapasha village raised practice of inadequate government relief distributions, with reports of favoritism and mismanagement in distributing safety net cards. One participant during FGD observed "when we go to the government offices to claim services or seek information, they do not give value to our concerns or requests. They behave like we are just women and we understand nothing. They can do this to us only because we are poor". Reports of some families receiving multiple safety net cards while others in desperate need remain excluded suggest systemic flaws in beneficiary selection processes.
4. **RTI Law Potential-** The RTI law is recognized as a potentially powerful tool for improving transparency and accountability in government responses to climate vulnerability. However, the law is underutilized due to lack of awareness among vulnerable populations

and challenges in its implementation, such as resistance from local officials. Local residents Rafikuzzaman and Prasanna Kumar suggested that RTI Act could be used to uncover decision-making processes in cases like tree felling for road widening or need for approval of solar project in haor areas. Rafikuzzaman further observed that “in some cases, submitting RTI request is risky too. It harms the unlawful interests of scrupulous people and they do not like it. It also involves a security threat, doesn’t it? Another participant during FGD observed, While an RTI-focused NGO campaign raised awareness among some groups, others, such as slum and settlement residents, remained unaware of the RTI law, indicating a need for broader outreach. “RTI can be used to seek information and support for small farmers for vegetable and livestock farming in this changed environment,” suggested Balram from Mathiura tea garden. Prasanna Kumar proposed utilizing RTI to protect local ecosystems. He said “spreading knowledge about the relevant laws and policies and ensuring accountability of the concerned authorities can save Lathitila, Lauachara, and other forests.” Respondents during FGD suggested using RTI to access environmental impact assessments, ensure transparency in beneficiary selection, and hold authorities accountable for disseminating timely climate information.

Challenges and barriers: The report identifies multiple barriers, such as:

- Despite the potential of RTI, several challenges remain. The study notes that many rural and marginalized communities are either unaware of the RTI law or face barriers in accessing information due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of support from officials, and security concerns when confronting powerful local interests.
- Despite having knowledge on RTI due to the work of few NGOs in the regions, many respondents felt it does not yield much benefits in dealing with climate change induced actions. They believe applicants profile is a concern and become a decisive factor if authorities would entertain or not.
- Another challenge which author faced was to conduct long interviews with local leaders and government authorities due to their busy schedule. A deeper conversation with them might bring a better result. Prior studies on RTI in Bangladesh are very limited and no study was found linking RTI and climate action to guide the study.

Conclusion and recommendations:

This research concludes that, if implemented effectively, the RTI law has the potential to significantly reduce climate vulnerabilities by enhancing transparency, improving access to critical information, and holding authorities accountable for environmental and disaster-related decisions. The study highlights the potential of RTI in holding authorities accountable and empowering citizens to access critical information for climate action makes a compelling case for integrating the RTI law into climate action strategies. By improving transparency and access to environmental information, the law could play a vital role in reducing vulnerabilities, protecting livelihoods, and ensuring better governance in climate-affected regions like Moulvibazar.

The report recommends awareness campaigns are needed to educate both citizens and officials about the RTI law and its applications for climate action. This could empower communities to access critical information, such as disaster forecasts, environmental assessments, beneficiary lists for government aid programs, disaster preparedness guidelines could help communities take proactive measures to protect themselves.

RTI can be used to hold authorities accountable for environmental impact assessments before development projects are approved. This could prevent further environmental damage and protect vulnerable ecosystems like wetlands and forests. Also, use of RTI will enhance transparency in the selection processes for government relief programs and better dissemination of climate informations are critical.

RTI could be used to uncover the types of agricultural and livestock support available to small-scale farmers, helping them adapt to the changing climate conditions. The report further calls for more research in different geographical areas to explore specific RTI interventions in climate action.

Enhancing Social Protection: An Analysis of Social Safety Net Program and the role of Right to Information

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Research focus and context:

The research paper, "Enhancing Social Protection: An Analysis of Social Safety Net Program and the role of Right to Information" authored by Poushe Paul, explores the intersection between social safety net programs (SSNPs) and the Right to Information Act (RTI) in the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. This qualitative study provides an analysis of how RTI law facilitates the community's access to information regarding SSNPs and enhances social protection, particularly for marginalized ethnic communities.

The paper highlights Bangladesh's significant progress in poverty reduction while acknowledging that poverty remains a persistent issue, especially in rural areas of Dinajpur. The region, home to both mainstream and ethnic populations, faces disparities in access to social protection programs, exacerbated by socio-economic barriers like low literacy and poor infrastructure.

The paper identifies a gap in the existing literature, noting that most research on SSNPs in Bangladesh adopts a quantitative approach, neglecting the socio-economic experiences of marginalized communities. This study seeks to qualitatively investigate how the RTI Act influences access to social safety programs, specifically in the rural areas of Dinajpur. The core issue addressed is the gap in access to information regarding SSNPs. The study points out that despite the availability of government programs, many people, especially in rural areas, are unaware of their entitlements. The lack of information dissemination leads to underutilization of resources, lower enrollment rates, and persistent socio-economic vulnerabilities.

The study justifies its qualitative approach by emphasizing the need to uncover personal and community-level experiences with the SSNPs and RTI law. This section underlines that most previous studies used quantitative methods, failing to capture the nuanced realities of marginalized groups in rural areas.

Objectives:

- Understand how individuals acquire knowledge about SSNPs.
- Explore how RTI helps to facilitate communities access to SSNP information.
- Analyze the impact of these mechanisms in enhancing social protection.

Methodology:

The research employs a qualitative study design in Dinajpur. The study uses in-depth interviews (IDI), key informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGD), and observations. The sample includes mainstream and ethnic community members, specifically those receiving allowances through SSNPs (e.g., maternity, disability, old age benefits and others).

Key findings:

1. The findings reveal that awareness and access to SSNPs have improved in some communities due to the work of NGOs. For example, organizations like World Vision, Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB), Pollisree have been instrumental in disseminating information, particularly among marginalized communities. Regular community meetings, workshops, and training sessions have been conducted to enhance knowledge on social protection. "One of the leaders of the ethnic community informed that, 'When I went to get this boy's birth certificate, it was such a hassle. Even after 15 days, I didn't receive it. I kept going back and forth. There were many discussions about these issues in our area, hence I encouraged many from the same area to submit information request under the Right to Information Act seeking redressal to the issue through citizens engagements. In this way information spread out and people got to know my name". However, there remains a significant gap between urban and rural areas. In many rural settings, knowledge of the RTI Act and SSNPs is still limited, resulting in lower participation and access to benefits.
2. The study also highlights the importance of socio-behavioral changes. Women, in particular, have taken on leadership roles in accessing information and ensuring their communities benefit from SSNPs, although younger men are less involved in these initiatives. The RTI Act (2009) plays a critical role in enabling marginalized and underserved communities to demand information, ensuring their participation in social safety programs. The study noted that ethnic community members and others benefited from increased transparency and reduced corruption, fostering better relations with public offices. For example, training provided through NGOs like Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) helped indigenous leaders and community members navigate the RTI process effectively.

3. The RTI Act has empowered citizens by facilitating access to information about government programs, leading to greater transparency and accountability. The study shows that citizens who are aware of the RTI Act feel more empowered and are better able to claim their entitlements. Beneficiaries in Dinajpur's municipal areas reported enhanced knowledge of SSNPs due to NGO-led initiatives. They accessed resources like vocational training and allowances, as evidenced by accounts of women successfully claiming maternity benefits and vocational training opportunities after applying RTI mechanisms. Participants noted changes in administrative behavior, with officials being more responsive due to increased accountability demands and reduced harassment when accessing SSNPs post-RTI interventions. However, some challenges, like reliance on mediators and regional disparities, persisted. In Nashipur Bagan Para, limited awareness and engagement with the RTI Act were evident. Only a few community members were aware of SSNPs or how to access them. This gap highlights the disparity between urban and rural implementation of the RTI. The paper stresses the need for more widespread awareness campaigns and improvements in administrative cooperation.
4. The findings highlight the stark disparities in access to information and social protection between semi-urban and rural areas. Some participants during FGD observed that "we knew about SSNPs, but we didn't understand how, where, or to whom to go for information. If someone scolded us, we would stop going further to ask. However, after filing requests under the RTI, we found that we were getting answers to everything and gaining information." RTI has empowered some communities when they used their knowledge to access their rights, but it also uncovers the continued challenges faced by marginalized groups. The role of NGOs is underscored as essential in bridging this gap, but the research suggests more needs to be done, particularly in rural regions.

Challenges and barriers: The report identifies multiple barriers, such as:

- There is corruption and lack of accountability, transparency but little knowledge and scanty use of RTI do not cleanse the system. Many rural and marginalized communities are either unaware of their rights under the RTI law and their entitlements to Social Safety Net Programs (SSNPs) or face barriers in accessing the same.
- Administrative barriers that discourage individuals from seeking information, information due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of support from officials, and security concerns when confronting powerful local interests, non-cooperation from the authorities and geographical remoteness makes it difficult to claim benefits or use RTI. Administrative mismanagement and harassment in accessing benefits are common, especially for rural and marginalized communities.
- Awareness and utilization of RTI and SSNPs are significantly higher in urban settings compared to rural settings like Nashipur Bagan Para. Ethnic communities exhibit limited understanding of procedures and rights, with a reliance on mediators.

- Inconsistent knowledge of the RTI Act across different settings with some communities entirely unaware of its existence. There is not much coordination among NGOs working in the region and most of NGOs works are project focused.

Conclusion and recommendations:

This paper discusses how access to information through the RTI Act can significantly enhance the effectiveness of SSNPs, particularly for marginalized communities in rural areas. While progress has been made in some areas, further efforts are needed to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their location or socio-economic status, are empowered to access their rights and benefits. The study concludes that the RTI Act has the potential to significantly enhance social protection by improving access to information about SSNPs. However, for it to be fully effective, there needs to be greater effort in educating and empowering rural and marginalized communities.

RTI can be a transformative tool for social protection. Paper for policy interventions and greater engagement at the community level, providing a clear pathway for future research and actions are needed. Emphasis has been put on community engagement and strengthening the capacity of local organizations to disseminate information aligning with global best practices in social protection and governance.

The study further provides recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of SSNPs through RTI implementation by highlighting that there is a need to increase supervision and monitoring of SSNPs at higher government levels. Improve the dissemination of information, particularly in rural areas, through billboards, leaflets, and community meetings. Expanding the RTI initiative beyond all regions of Bangladesh. Encouraging greater male participation in social protection programs and there is a need to address the issue of corruption and harassment faced by SSNP claimants. Similarly, NGOs and local organizations have played a critical role in spreading awareness and educating communities about SSNPs and RTI and women-led initiatives have shown significant impact in fostering awareness and participation in both mainstream and ethnic groups. This needs to continue at much larger scale and also coordination with government offices is also needed.

It has been seen that while stipends and allowances are appreciated, their amounts are deemed insufficient for covering essential expenses. There is a call for increased allowance amounts and better monitoring to ensure fair distribution. It has also been noticed that increased participation in community-led initiatives and RTI awareness sessions has fostered a sense of empowerment among marginalized groups. Behavioral changes, such as the willingness to seek information and engage with administrative processes, have been noted. Such initiatives need to continue with effective short term, mid-term and long-term action plan in place.

Through developing effective monitoring mechanism government must enhance transparency and accountability at all levels of SSNP implementation. Increase outreach and educational initiatives targeting rural and less-educated populations may also help. Government agencies and civil society organizations must address logistical and procedural barriers, such as harassment and the necessity of mediators, to make the RTI Act more accessible.

