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## **Bangladesh: “Information Is Power” - ARTICLE 19 and Partners Launch Mass Awareness Campaign on RTI**

**ARTICLE 19, Sushashoner Jonno Pracharavijan (SUPRO) and its network organisations have launched a major mass awareness campaign on the right to information (RTI) in 20 districts of the country, including the 12 most environmentally vulnerable coastal areas of Bangladesh.**

The campaign includes a series of local level activities such as debates on RTI issues by school and college students, workshops and meetings with local level public officials, and rickshaw parades in district towns displaying rickshaw plates with messages and slogans such as *“Information is Power”* and *“Free information is the key to development”* and others promoting the new RTI Law in Bangladesh.

With the participation of over three thousand students, the debating competitions generated huge interest amongst students, teachers, parents, and members of the school management committees on the right to information, its importance and links with good governance and access to public services.

For instance, students in the Bhabaniganj High School in the district of Noakhali, Laxmipur sub-district debated the need for greater access to information on local level issues in the education department. These included the need for transparency on registration fees and on government scheme for the subsidised distribution of education materials. Young boys and girls participated in the competitions with great enthusiasm. One such female student said: *“This competition is an empowering expression for promoting free flow of information.”* Another competitor commented that *“freedom of expression was at the heart to our movement for independence”*.

Tahmina Rahman, Director of ARTICLE 19 Bangladesh notes: *“ARTICLE 19 and our partners in Bangladesh, believe that raising massive public awareness on the right to seek, receive and impart information, to increase demand for information is the first precondition for the effective implementation of the Right to Information Law in Bangladesh.”*

These events and activities are the start of a year-long campaign promoting the right to information amongst the most vulnerable populations in Bangladesh. Throughout the year, ARTICLE 19 and its partners will organise events and promotional activities as part of its programme of work on access to information for greater participation and government accountability.

### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.