

THE
CARTER CENTER



Advancing Women’s Right of Access to Information (AWRTI) Bangladesh: Strategies for Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in Bangladesh

Request for Applications

Terms of Reference

Context

The Carter Center partners with governments, civil society, and international and regional bodies to enhance governance and transform lives through a meaningful right of access to information and justice for women. Women in Bangladesh face disproportionate challenges in exercising the fundamental right of access to information, which hinders economic empowerment and the promotion and protection of other human rights. Although the Bangladesh Right to Information (RTI) Act went into effect in 2009, the benefits of meaningful access to information for women have not fully been realized.

To address these challenges, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded funding to The Carter Center in 2023 to support the Advancing Women’s Right of Access to Information (AWRTI) in Bangladesh Activity (the Project) in target districts. Under this project, the Center is working to implement three mutually reinforcing objectives, with a focus on assisting the most marginalized women:

- A strengthened legal and policy environment enables more sustainable access to information for women;
- National and target local government leaders more effectively and equitably provide information to women in target districts; and
- Through civil society organizations, information liaisons, and youth in target districts, advance women’s right to access information.

Given Bangladesh’s large pool of skilled academics, there should be a steady supply of policy briefs to inform the government and lead to evidence-based policies in the RTI landscape. The Carter Center seeks to build connections with research institutions and other organizations in Bangladesh to produce original research to inform future policy interventions in RTI and document the impact of greater RTI. The Center also seeks to support research that identifies where and how open, transparent, and accountable governance efforts can have the greatest impact on women’s lives.

Objective and Scope

As the Center takes the next step in its programming -- expansion into new districts -- it seeks local, established research and academic institutions to generate evidence-based, problem-solving approaches and public dialogue to foster transparency, accountability, and integrity. This will be done through social and behavioral quantitative and qualitative research aimed at identifying gaps and strategies that will lead to improved access to information, especially for women and other marginalized communities. The research should produce white papers for national and local governments on key RTI issues and provide related political economy analysis to identify areas for potential future action. Priorities for research will include areas where open, transparent, and accountable governance efforts can have the biggest impact in terms of services and needs of women. This research should be disseminated within the government through briefs and other appropriate means to inform the adoption of evidence-based policies, including assessments to improve any RTI-related strategic plans.

Women researchers are strongly encouraged to apply.

Illustrative topics for focus include:

- Examining the barriers that women and Dalit communities face when attempting to exercise their right to information, and how to overcome them;
- Examining the effect of access to information on the socio-economic opportunities and prospects of women and marginalized communities;
- Strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of the Information Commission in strengthening transparency and accountability, including through the effective design and implementation of strategic plans;
- Exploring future directions of RTI laws and the benefits and risks of technology in enhancing access and ensuring accountability;
- The potential challenges and benefits of digital ID systems, which run the risk of further excluding people if these systems are not carefully designed and deployed;
- Investigating the current eGovernance infrastructure and related issues through an eGovernance readiness assessment, analyzing existing systems, addressing data protection issues, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and identifying areas for improvement;
- Identifying examples of the most effective transparency- and ATI- related interventions in making usable information available about climate change, and how they may be adapted to the local context;
- Exploring the relationship between women's access to information and their involvement and influence in governance and civic engagement

Research Duration:

The Research and associated deliverables should be completed within five (5) months of signing the award.

Geographic Scope:

Research proposals must prioritize giving specific focus to the following districts: Moulvibazar and Sylhet, Satkhira and Khulna, Rajshahi and Naogaon, Khagrachari and Rangamati, Netrakona, Dinajpur, and Dhaka District.

Reporting:

The selected applicants will work under the technical direction of the Chief of Party and coordinate administratively and submit deliverables to the Project's Senior Grants Officer.

Application Process:

Applications are due by **August 11, 2024, at 5:00 PM EST**. Applicants should submit their application materials at the following link: <https://filerequestpro.com/up/the-carter-center-bangladesh-research-partnerships-request-for-applications>

For any questions, direct emails to ruleoflawbangladesh@cartercenter.org

Schedule of Expected Activities and Deliverables:

As part of its efforts to support a steady supply of policy briefs to inform the government and lead to evidence-based policies, the selected applicant will deliver to the Project:

- An initial draft of the proposed research methodology, including, as applicable, sampling and data collection tools. A final draft will be delivered after incorporation of Project feedback on the initial draft. Products will be submitted in English.
- An assessment of existing research in the format of a literature review and findings from meetings with relevant partners for background information. Note that any meetings with government officials must be facilitated by the Project. Product will be submitted in English.
- A progress report informing the Project of relevant activities, progress, challenges, and findings. Product will be submitted in English.
- Initial data (including raw data), and preliminary research findings, prior to final analysis, upon completion of research activities. Product will be submitted in English.
- A user-friendly and concise final product containing a final analysis designed to support government policymakers, such as the Cabinet Division and the Information Commission, by helping inform their adoption of evidence-based policies. This may be a policy brief, white paper, or other document targeted to a policy-making audience. An initial draft will be submitted for review and comment by the Project, and a final version will be submitted taking feedback into account. A second draft and round of feedback may be required, depending on extent of initial feedback. Initial (and potentially second) draft will be submitted in English. The final product will be submitted in English and Bangla.
- As appropriate and by invitation only, present findings to relevant groups such as RTI working groups or relevant government officials such as legislators.
- An initial draft and final version (incorporating feedback) of a final report of no more than 20 pages, to include: an executive summary; a brief description of the research approach and methodology, including any limitations and sampling approach; key findings and analysis of the desk research and fieldwork; and a conclusion and recommendations for programming. Products will be presented in English and Bangla.
- The successful applicant will also design and deliver to the Project a PowerPoint presentation, and a two-page policy brief summarizing the contents of the product created for policymakers. Products will be presented in English and Bangla.
- The presentations will be shared with Government, Donors and other Stakeholders

Illustrative Deliverables Schedule (to be determined based on the nature of proposed research)			
Deliverables			Payment schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Methodology • Literature review and background information 			20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress report 			15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathered (including raw data) and preliminary research findings 			30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final product/document for policymakers • Draft and final versions of final report, PowerPoint and 2-page policy briefs 			35%

Evaluation Criteria: 100 points max

Soundness of proposed methodology and technical approach, and degree to which they calculated to produce a practical evidence-based information for policymakers regarding access to information	30 points
Relevance of proposed topic to priorities set forth in this RFA	30 points
Qualification of proposed research team	20 points
Demonstrated history of quality research relevant to topics of access to information	10 points
Economic proposal	10 points

Applicants must submit the following:

1. Proposed methodology and technical approach (Attachment A).
2. Two written example(s) from previously conducted research on a topic relevant to the illustrative topics for focus set forth above.
3. CVs of proposed research team members; demonstrated capacity to conduct sound research on topics relevant to access to information.
4. Economic proposal (budget), not to exceed \$20,000 (Attachment B).

Attachments

Attachment A: [Attachment A Proposal Template.docx](#)

Attachment B: [Attachment B Details Budget and Gantt Chart Template.xlsx](#)