

## PRESS RELEASE

### Launch of world's first 'TAKING STOCK' assessment: Examining government transparency in marine fisheries of Bangladesh

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

Today, **30 March 2022**, the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) launched the findings of its inaugural TAKING STOCK assessment focusing on Bangladesh's marine fisheries sector – the first in [a series of national studies](#) of government transparency in global fisheries management set to be published over the coming years.

Conducted as part of the FiTI's [TAKING STOCK programme](#), the assessment examines the level of information that Bangladesh's national authorities publish on government websites regarding the country's marine fisheries sector. This is done in line with the requirements of the [FiTI Standard](#), the only internationally recognised framework defining what fisheries management information governments should publish online.

Beyond simply investigating what is and is not published online by the government of Bangladesh, the assessment also considers if information is freely accessible, up to date and easy for people to find – all important factors for properly understanding the current state of the sector.

#### **How transparent is Bangladesh's marine fisheries sector?**

The assessment shows that the Bangladesh government strives to factor public access to information into the way it manages the country's marine fisheries sector. Significant time, energy and resources are devoted to publishing information online, ensuring sound levels of transparency around some areas of marine fisheries, such as small-scale fisheries.

Information is generally made available through dedicated government fisheries websites in addition to key documents like the Department of Fisheries' Annual Reports and the Yearbook of Fisheries Statistics of Bangladesh.

Such efforts are noteworthy: strengthening transparency is a catalyst for increasing awareness and appreciation of Bangladesh's marine fisheries, which play a crucial role in sustaining the economic, food security and nutrition needs of millions of people across the country.

However, despite these positive findings, the assessment demonstrates that large amounts of information remain publicly unavailable and the quality of what is published online is often in need of improvement.

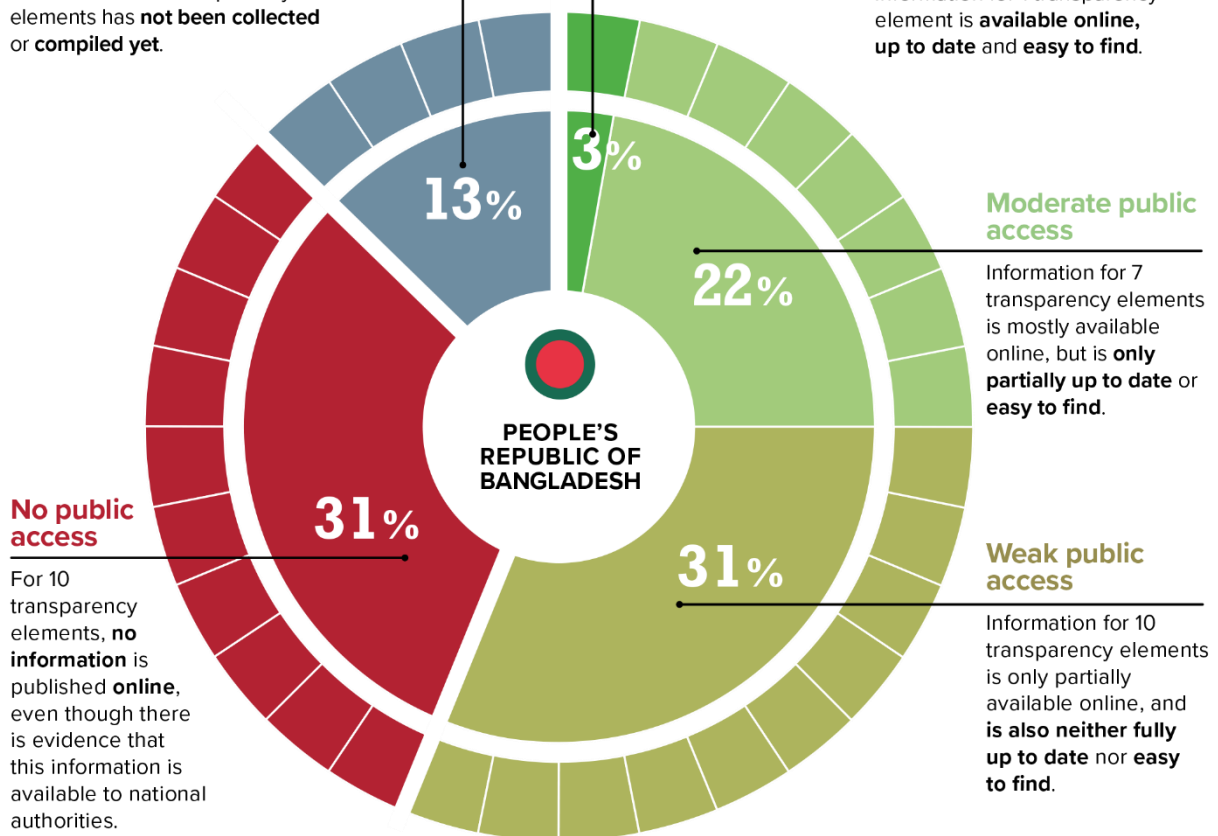
For example, the assessment highlights that information that is published online by the Bangladesh government is often either outdated or difficult to find. This includes information about national policies guiding the fisheries sector, specific fisheries management plans, as well as reports on public sector development projects.

### Not produced

Information for 4 transparency elements has **not been collected or compiled yet**.

### Strong public access

Information for 1 transparency element is **available online, up to date and easy to find**.



*The FiTI Standard is the only internationally recognised framework that defines what information on fisheries management should be published online by national authorities. For this assessment it is divided into 38 individual transparency elements.*

### Limited public access hinders wider transparency efforts

Achieving transparency and increasing public access to government information has been a policy promoted by the government of Bangladesh for many years, for example through the enactment of the Right to Information Act in 2009.

A key finding of this assessment is that Bangladesh’s ***national authorities indeed collate a wide range of important fisheries information, but often do not publish it online.*** The result is that no information is publicly available for almost one-third of the assessed areas of Bangladesh’s marine fisheries (i.e. 31%), such as fisheries subsidies and government revenues collected from large-scale fishing vessels. Bangladesh’s national authorities should take proactive steps to share such information with the wider public.

The assessment also shows that the ***Bangladesh government does not collect or compile any information for several important areas of marine fisheries management.*** This is the case for 13% of the assessed transparency elements, covering, for example, a comprehensive analysis of the health of fish stocks and estimates of the total population of Bangladesh whose income is derived from fisheries, including the number of women working in the sector. It is acknowledged that these gaps in knowledge may be the result of a lack of technical, financial or human resources. However, not producing such information is likely to undermine efforts to manage fisheries sustainably. This is particularly important in Bangladesh in light of well-established concerns about declining fish populations in the country’s waters, including those upon which the livelihoods of millions of small-scale fishers and fish workers depend.

***Overall, the assessment notes that while Bangladesh’s authorities place certain efforts on publishing fisheries management information online, the presentation and organisation of such information should be further improved in order to better facilitate public understanding of the status of Bangladesh’s marine fisheries – and consequently stimulate national debates around its management.***

Mr Sven Biermann, Executive Director of the FiTI International Secretariat stated that *‘this assessment represents an important milestone for Bangladesh’s marine fisheries sector. But the value of this assessment does not only lie in understanding what information is available online and where gaps exist. Fundamentally, and in very simple terms, public access to fisheries information is important for helping Bangladesh’s national authorities, its citizens and business partners to answer critical questions about the sustainability of the country’s fisheries sector.’*

He also noted that *‘our ambition is that this and future TAKING STOCK assessments will contribute to making government transparency the global norm in fisheries management. We are therefore conducting such transparency assessments for several other coastal countries in the upcoming years, including for the United States of America, Peru, Mexico, China, Russia and Indonesia.’*

The findings of Bangladesh’s TAKING STOCK assessment are published in a **Summary Assessment Report** – in [English](#) and in [Bangla](#) – as well as an in-depth **Detailed Assessment Report** in [English](#).

The TAKING STOCK assessment for Bangladesh was funded by PROBLUE, an umbrella 2.0 multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank.

For more information about the Bangladesh TAKING STOCK assessment and interview requests, please contact: **Mr. Will May**, FiTI Regional Coordinator for the Western Indian Ocean | Email: [wmay@fiti.global](mailto:wmay@fiti.global)

For more information about the FiTI's TAKING STOCK programme, please visit <https://www.fiti.global/taking-stock> or contact: **Ms. Nancy Ng Ping Cheun**, FiTI TAKING STOCK Coordinator | Email: [nngpingcheun@fiti.global](mailto:nngpingcheun@fiti.global)

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) is a global multi-stakeholder initiative that strengthens transparency and collaboration in marine fisheries management.

By making fisheries management more transparent and inclusive, the FiTI promotes informed public debates on fisheries policies and supports the long-term contribution of the sector to national economies and the well-being of citizens and businesses that depend on a healthy marine environment.

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