

RDRS Staff Retreat Report



Walking the Journey Forward
19-20 January 2026, Sikder Resort & Villa, Kuakata

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Overview of the Retreat

RDRS Bangladesh Annual Staff Retreat 2026 was held from 19th – 20th January 2026 at Sikder Resort & Villa at Kuakata, with the theme "Walking the Journey Forward". By integrating strategic sessions with engaging team-building exercises, the event promoted a culture of transparency and collective commitment to RDRS's mission in the changing development context. The retreat was attended by 31 staff members, alongside the Chairperson and a member of the Board of Trustees.

Inauguration and Context Setting

Retreat commenced with an opening address by Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, PhD, Executive Director, who framed the event as a dual-purpose forum for performance review and strategic prioritization for the upcoming year. He emphasized that the retreat serves as a vital platform for strengthening professional relationships within the "RDRS Family" in a conducive, collaborative environment.



ED of RDRS delivers the inaugural address at the Staff Retreat

Following the welcome, Faruque Ahmed, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, formally inaugurated the session. In his remarks, the Chairperson urging participants to "break the culture of silence" and ensure transparent communication is cascaded throughout all organizational levels. He emphasized that while many organizations are shifting toward microfinance, RDRS remains committed to its identity as a development-focused entity, requiring a strategic response to current funding challenges and priority community needs

Sabbir Ahamed, Member of the Board of Trustees, highlighted the necessity of empathy and respect toward both the communities served and the staff. He stressed that nurturing an environment where staff feel empowered to offer constructive critiques is essential for growth. He concluded by encouraging participants to balance productive strategic work with the spirit of the retreat to drive meaningful organizational impact.

Review of the Strategic Plan

Following the inaugural proceedings, Mamunur Rashid, Head of MEL, facilitated a substantive performance review of the 2023–2025 strategic period. The session centered on a data-driven analysis of funding allocations across four core thematic areas and an evaluation of total program participant coverage.

Microfinance Program's success is focus on fund mobilization, strategic growth, strong leadership and client-centric service delivery. However, the program faces critical operational limitation in implementing a Digital Financial System (DFS) and proper execution of software. The MF program is actively looking into alternative funding sources and high priority on standardized staff capacity building and retention strategies in order to maintain momentum.

Agriculture, Food Security & Climate Change, Emergency & Humanitarian Response success is in significant fund mobilization, reaching participants, and demonstrating technical excellence in climate-smart agriculture, climate risk insurance and disaster response. This thematic area struggling for Political unrest, Delayed decision from donors, NGOAB complexity, Pressure from the govt. and camp authority and Staff retention.

Key achievements of Social Development thematic area's included successful establishment of the RTTI as a self-reliant entity and the strategic transition of eye care services into a full-fledged hospital facility. The program demonstrated extensive reach through the enrollment of out-of-school children in primary education, expanded youth access to technical and vocational training, and the strengthening of Union Federations, provision of comprehensive maternal and adolescent health services, alongside targeted interventions for teens at risk of child marriage, improvements in WASH access and identification on incidents of violence against women and girls.

Overall, staff retention is a major challenge for RDRS, particularly within the Microfinance Program, as the loss of experienced and skilled staff continues to impact program performance.



Head of SD addressed the significant achievements reached under the current strategy

Recommendations and Actionable Points

- Achievement must shift focus from routine operational outputs to high-level strategic achievements. Success should be measured by how effectively interventions align with RDRS's core values and long-term strategic objectives rather than just program activities.
- To address the current innovation backlog, RDRS must transition from traditional models to more agile approaches. Innovation is prerequisite for institutional relevance and successful fundraising in a competitive donor landscape.
- Recognizing that traditional funding is shrinking, the organization must pilot innovative fundraising initiatives. This includes exploring social entrepreneurship, private sector partnerships, and multi-sectoral consortiums that offer unique value propositions to donors.
- Innovation should be rooted in deep community engagement. Staff must internalize local challenges and identify indigenous problem-solving strategies to ensure that program designs are demand-driven and culturally grounded.
- Implementation plans must remain flexible and adaptive to changing political and economic contexts. Adaptive modality is essential for upholding organizational values and responsive to field realities.



Team members pose together after the successful completion of intensive group activities

- Well-structured capacity development program is needed for long-term employees. Quality initiatives like technical, digital, and client-focused service areas are essential to enhance employee’s skills, program efficiency and organizational growth.

Strategic Priorities for the next two years

This session, facilitated by Md. Mujibul Haque Munir, Head of Social Development and provided a high-level analysis of the shifting political and economic landscape in Bangladesh. The presentation emphasized that technical solutions alone are insufficient; RDRS must understand the "political settlement"—how power and resources are allocated—to ensure project sustainability and effective advocacy. A critical focus was placed on the Dual Transition: Bangladesh’s upcoming LDC graduation and the shift toward a New Economy, which necessitates a move from basic service delivery to high-skill development and market facilitation.



Team members engage in intensive breakout sessions to prepare their group presentations

Recommendations and Actionable Points

- Establish RDRS as a primary local partner for global donors, leveraging its work experience and regional presence to secure direct international funding.
- Establish Enterprise Development as a core thematic area in the upcoming Strategic Plan.
- Strive to go beyond traditional aid by actively connecting rural producers to national and global value chains, maximizing new economic opportunities.
- Diversify RDRS’s revenues through social enterprises, climate-resilient funds, and private sector partnerships.
- Modernize internal systems and automate reporting and documentation to meet the high standards of transparency and efficiency required by global investors.
- Plan advocacy using evidence-based data and local power mapping to sharpen RDRS’s impact on national policy and government decision-making.
- To increase employee retention without significant financial investment prioritize internal career paths and non-financial recognition.

Safeguarding Issues

This critical session, led by the Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, PhD, Executive Director, focused on reinforcing RDRS’s "Zero Tolerance" commitment to harm and exploitation. The session moved beyond theoretical definitions to provide staff with practical tools for identifying, preventing, and reporting safeguarding concerns and emphasized that a safe organizational culture is the foundation of RDRS’s integrity and impact.

Key Directives & Ethical Considerations regarding Safeguarding

- Mandatory Reporting;
- Whistleblower Protection;

- Evaluate every situation by asking, "Is anyone at risk of harm?";
- Maintain Confidentiality.

Actionable Points for Staff

- Immediate Reporting: Flag concerns to the Safeguarding Focal Point without attempting to investigate independently.
- Continuous Awareness: New staff must receive mandatory induction, and existing staff should undergo annual refresher training to keep compliance standards high.
- Proactive Risk Management: Integrate safeguarding checklists into project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools to identify gaps in real-time.
- Uphold the Code of Conduct: Every staff member, regardless of seniority, is responsible for maintaining a safe environment and modeling respectful behavior.



Executive Director leads an interactive session on Safeguarding

Inspirational Guidance on Organizational Development

This strategic session facilitated by Board of Trustees Chairperson Faruque Ahmed and Member Sabbir Ahamed, provided high-level guidance on transforming RDRS through institutional branding, stakeholder engagement, and a culture of continuous inquiry. The leadership emphasized that the future of the organization depends on the collective behavior of its staff and a 360-degree approach to relationship building.

Key Strategic Directions

- Emphasized that staff must actively practice asking questions. Inquisitiveness is a key indicator of an individual's thinking level and critical analysis—essential for organizational innovation.
- RDRS must strengthen its engagement with national and international stakeholders. This relationship-building should be "360-degree" meaning it must be nurtured internally across departments and externally with the donor community and partners.
- Established a core mandate for all staff to consistently prioritize the interests of the organization over personal interests.
- Staff behavior is the primary selling point for RDRS branding. Every employee represents the organization; therefore, professional conduct, integrity, and values are the most powerful marketing tools available.



Chairperson and Member of the Board of Trustees provide inspirational guidance on organizational development

- Fundraising is no longer the sole responsibility of a specific unit; it is a shared organizational responsibility of every staff member.
- Move away from top-down management to a model where every employee acts as a leader and ensure proactive decision-making and accountability across organization.
- Focusing on expansion of social enterprises.
- Build institutional sustainability by focusing on transparency, accountability, and healthy governance.
- Enhance relationships with the community for internalize their needs and to develop next actionable strategies of RDRS interventions.

SWOT Analysis of Current Strategy

This Session facilitated by the Md. Salahuddin FCA, Director- Finance & Administration. Following an introductory briefing on the SWOT framework, participants were divided into four working groups to conduct an in-depth institutional assessment. The exercise focused on identifying RDRS's internal capabilities and external environment to inform future strategy.



Director of Finance and Administration leads a comprehensive SWOT analysis session

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innovative Ideas and program (i.e - Microfinance, Agriculture and Climate Change, Emergency and Humanitarian Response). ▪ Expertise across Climate Funding, Social Business and CSR/Cloud Fund Hunting ▪ Competitive Remuneration ▪ Carrier path of the employee ▪ Capacity Building and Learning environment ▪ Employee Friendly workplace ▪ Focus on branding, visibility, and professional communication ▪ Intensive presence in working area ▪ Good relationship with local government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership crisis/sustainability in leadership ▪ Ownership/commitment crisis ▪ Lack of female in the leadership positions ▪ Competitively less financial and non-financial benefits for the staff ▪ Inappropriate number of projects Weak Branding and communication ▪ Less strong in creating visibilities ▪ Less knowledge based activities ▪ Weakness in the implementation of compliance in MF and other programs ▪ Absence of right people in the right place ▪ Overhead is not common for all the partners ▪ Utilization of the resources, specially land is not at the desired level ▪ Lack of enterprises ▪ Inadequate communication with donors ▪ Lack of proper comm&nciation among different departments and programs ▪ No Succession planning

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Acceptance – Social Enterprise. ▪ Asset utilization – opportunity for private investment. ▪ Opportunity of Geographical Expansion – Especially urban low-income communities ▪ Undertaking Research Activities ▪ RDRS is the best in Project Implementation. ▪ Corporate Foundation Fund (i.e., Bill Gates Foundation) ▪ Consortium Building and Network Expansion ▪ Media Communications-RDRS Branding ▪ Annual Partners Conference ▪ Union Federation-opportunities to attract localized fund ▪ Market Linkage ▪ Commercial utilization RDRS property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Competition with unfair organizations ▪ Regulatory and government interference ▪ Declining foreign funding ▪ Change in donor priority ▪ Fast growing microfinance organization ▪ Political interference and Pressure ▪ Economic growth of Bangladesh ▪ Frequent changing political economy ▪ Increasing bank interest rate and low savings mobilization ▪ Dependency on the IT service provider ▪ Corruption ▪ Establishment of other organization in RDRS working area ▪ Operational and security threats ▪ Fundamentalism ▪ Lack of Field security ▪ Natural disasters

Outline Strategic Plan 2028-2032

This session facilitated by the Tarik Sayed Harun, Director - Microfinance. This session presented the outline for developing the next RDRS Strategic Plan (2028-2032). The facilitator provided a comprehensive framework for organizational transition, focusing on evidence-based planning, stakeholder inclusivity, and institutional sustainability.



Director of Microfinance facilitates a session to form a dedicated team for develop next Strategic Plan

Key Frameworks

- The session identified that a high-quality plan requires a details organizational assessments (capacity and finance), stakeholder feedback, sector trends, and a thorough review of historical performance and lessons learned.
- Strategy development will utilize a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and participatory workshops to ensure the plan is grounded in reality.
- A systematic 6-month planning timeline was presented, moving from initial committee formation and situational analysis to strategy formulation and finalization.

Session Outcome: Committee Formation

A formal committee was constituted at the close of the session to lead the rollout and development of the RDRS Strategic Plan 2028-2032. The committee is lead by the Mamunur Rashid, Head of MEL and includes all members of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

Conclusion

RDRS Staff Retreat was successfully completed with a combination of analytical sessions, meaningful team building activities, interactive ice-breaking session and vibrant cultural events. Ultimately, retreat revitalized the workforce, ensuring that every team member was inspired and aligned to lead RDRS towards a sustainable future.

Annexure

Annex 1: List of participants

SL	Name	Designation	Program
1	Faruque Ahmed	Chairperson	Board of Trustee
2	Shabbir Ahmed Chowdhury	Member	Board of Trustee
3	Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, PhD	Executive Director	Directorate
4	Md. Salahuddin FCA	Director	Finance and Administration
5	Tarik Sayed Harun	Director	Microfinance
6	Enamul Haque	Head	Agri & Climate Change
7	Md.Mujibul Haque Munir	Head	Social Development
8	Md. Mamunur Rashid	Head	Monitoring & Evaluation
9	Shaheen Parveen	Head	Human Resources
10	Touhidur Rahman Khan	Head	Internal Audit
11	Shammita Kabir	Head	Admin & GS
12	Md. Nurunnabi Shanto	Team Leader	Program Dev. & Partnership
13	Md. Ziaur Rahman	Sr. Coordinator	Human Resources
14	Ashik Ahamed	Sr. Manager	Training
15	S.M. Parvez	Sr. Coordinator	Estate & Legal Affairs
16	K.M.Rashedul Arefeen	Team leader	Social Development
17	Tapan Kumar Saha	Team Leader	Emergency & H. Response
18	Dr. A. K. M. Salah Uddin	Team Leader	Agri & Climate Change
19	Uttam Kumar Ghose	Coordinator	Internal Audit
20	Dabasish Mahata	Coordinator	MF-Monitoring
21	Md. Rafiqul Islam	Divisional Manager	Microfinance
22	Md. Abdul Hoque	Divisional Manager	Microfinance
23	Md. Mostafizur Rahman	Divisional Manager	Microfinance
24	Md. Rezaul Karim	Divisional Manager	Microfinance
25	Monazzil Riyad	Coordinator	Communications
26	Ramendra Nath Chakravorty	Manager	Admin & GS
27	Md. Mainul Haque	Coordinator	Microfinance
28	Md. Mahbub Hasan	Coordinator	Information and Technology
29	Begum Arefa Siddiqua	Sr. Coordinator	Finance and Accounts

30	Minhun Nahar	Coordinator	Human Resources
31	Most.Rumana Azim Ansari	Coordinator	Safeguarding
32	Juie Majumder	Manager	Program Dev & Partnership
33	Takvir Jannat	Sr. Executive Secretary	Directorate

Annex 2: Session Plan of RDRS Staff Retreat

Annual Staff Retreat - 2026 Walking the Journey Forward

Session Plan

Day One: 19th January 2025

Time	Session Title	Facilitator	Methodology	Expected Output
09:00-09:30	Inauguration & Context Setting	Chairperson and Executive Director	Inauguration by Chairperson of the BoT and Context Setting by the ED	Inauguration and shared understanding of objectives and strategies of the event
09:30-09:30	Review of the Strategic Plan	Head of MEL	Group work and Plenary	Identification of high-impact areas and critical gaps
11:00-11:15: Health Break				
11:15-01:00	Strategic Priorities for the next two years	Head of SD	Presentation of the Political Economy of Bangladesh, trends of the Development sector and departmental plans, group work and plenary	Finalize departmental plans for the remaining two years
01:00-02:010: Lunch Break				
02:00-02:15	Ice breaking/ Warm up activities	Md. Ashik Ahamed, Juie Majumder	Interactive group activity	Participant engagement and comfortable learning development
02:15-03:00	Safeguarding Issues	Executive Director	Lecture	Plan to strengthen RDRS safeguarding policies and practices
03:00-04:00: Refreshment Break				
04:00-05:30	Cricket/Football	Md. Mostafizur Rahman Sarker, Dabasish Mahata	Team-based cricket/ football activity	Improve teamwork, energy and participant engagement
06:30-08:00	Music	Md. Nurunnabi	Music-based interactive activity	Energized and engaged participants

Day Two: 20th January 2025

Time	Session Title	Facilitator	Methodology	Expected Output
09:00-10:00	SWOT Analysis of Current	Director - Finance	Facilitated discussion on internal/external	Consolidated SWOT matrix for future

	Strategy	and Administration	factors	strategic direction
10:00-11:00	Outlining Strategic Plan 2028-2032	Director-MF	Group work and Plenary	Roadmap and commitment to the next planning phase
11:00-11:30: Coffee Break				
11:30-12:30	Inspirational guidance on Organizational Development	Chairperson of BoT	Lecture, Inspirational talk and facilitated discussion	Increased motivation and alignment with organizational goals
12:30-01:30	Town hall Meeting	SMT		
01:30-02:00: Closing Session				
02:00-03:00: Lunch				
03:00-08:00: Free Time				

Annex 3: Pictorial Highlights of the Annual Staff Retreat 2026



Member of the Board of Trustee delivers the inaugural speech



Participants engage in intensive group discussions to brainstorm solutions



Teams finalizing their group presentations



Board of Trustees offering visionary guidance



Executive Director leads an interactive session on Safeguarding



Members of the Senior Management Team address queries from the participants



Team plan before rolling out the football session



Winning team receives their trophy



Participants share a joyful moment following the team-building sports activities



Participants perform at the evening cultural program