

CSO-NGO Sector with Self-esteem: Campaign on Grand Bargain and Localization

Mymensingh Divisional Workshop

8 September 2018, NGO Forum, Mymensingh

A day-long campaign and workshop titled “CSO-NGO Sector with Self-esteem: Campaign on Grand Bargain and Localization” was held in the Mymensingh NGO Forum Auditorium on 8 September 2018. The introductory segment was conducted by Mustafa Kamal Akanda, Assistant Director of the COAST Trust, while the workshop was conducted by Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director of the COAST Trust.

The chief guest of the program was Mahmud Hasan, Divisional Commissioner of Mymensingh. Also present among the guests were Khondokar Faruk Ahmed, Convener of the executive committee and Managing Director of Trinamool Unnayan Sangstha, Farhana Milki of FMB, and Abdur Rashid, Executive Director of ASPADA Paribesh Unnayan Foundation on behalf of CDF.



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Khondokar Faruk Ahmed of Trinamool Unnayan Sangstha inaugurated the program and thanked everyone for their participation. He expressed his sincere hope that this workshop would aid the local NGOs in their development endeavors. Farhana Milki pointed out that while a number of important topics were raised and discussed in the conference, this being a devastating time for the NGO sector, everyone needs to coordinate their work and be mindful of their self-esteem as well. Abdur Rashid, Executive Director of ASPADA Paribesh Unnayan Foundation, affirmed the need for NGOs to work along side the state apparatus. If everyone worked in unison with the knowledge and inspiration generated in the workshop, the goal of development will be in our reach, he said.

At the beginning of the workshop, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director of the COAST Trust, explained the motive, the goals and the background of the campaigning; a campaign that touches on NGOs, civil society, grand bargain, localization and self-esteem. He discussed the premise of the 1995 “Monterrei Convention”. According to his speech, sovereign states from around the world have met every five years from 1997 to 2016 for discussions on future developments. In the past, all development was considered affairs of the state alone. But now it is commonly conceded that state, the market, and the civil society with the NGOs, these three forces need to work together for sustainable development. This move has been identified as one from “Aid Effectiveness” to “Development Effectiveness”. From 2005 on, civil society has been deemed equal to the state and the market as partners in development. An executive body named “Global Platform for Effective Development Co-operation” has been built for their mutual assimilation. Finance ministers of Germany,



Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director of the COAST

explain a chief focus of the workshop, which is the discussion on the need of a mutual cooperation between the state, the market and the civil society. COAST Trust has been working as a vocal of the Bangladeshi civil society. He added that the discussions would focus on the equal footing of the state, the market and the civil society. The Grand Bargain, an initiative originally formulated by Ban Ki Mun, emphasized on the impacts of NGO and civil society. Thus, the Grand Bargain would also occupy a portion of the discussion.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury pressed the point home – “It is not a new kind of networking, it is a campaign”. He reviewed the proceedings of the conference and the campaign for localization.

Mahmud Hasan, Divisional Commissioner of Mymensingh, said in his turn, “No one is to be left behind from the wagon of development. Everyone must be responsible for their part. The total development of a state is an aggregate, and may almost always miss out on a lot of details. This is why the demand for localization is ringing around the world. Our development scheme should include all walks of people. This development must be effective and beneficial to the people.”

He emphasized on the role of NGOs as partners of the government in development projects.



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Principles of Partnership:

This segment was hosted by Shawkat Ali Tutul, Assistant Director, COAST Trust.

The Basis of Partnership Policy :

1. Humanitarian actions due to ethical obligation, increase of efficiency in the workings of partner NGOs, and accountability to the harmed population.
2. Acknowledging diversity as an asset of the humanitarian community and recognizing the interdependence among humanitarian organizations.
3. Commitment to building and nurturing an effective partnership.

Principles of Partnership:

Uganda and Bangladesh are the co-chairs of this platform, whose principal aim is to convert aid-effectiveness into development-effectiveness. In The United Nations World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul in 2016, a set of commitments titled “The Grand Bargain” was declared, which put as much emphasis on localization as on the state. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury went on to

1. Equality:

Equality requires mutual respect between members of the partnership irrespective of size and power. The participants must respect each other's mandates, obligations and independence and recognize each other's constraints and commitments. Mutual respect must not preclude organizations from engaging in constructive dissent.

2. Transparency:

Transparency is achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust among organizations.

3. Result-oriented approach:

Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action-oriented. This requires result-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.

4. Responsibility

Humanitarian organizations have an ethical obligation to each other to accomplish their tasks responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. They must make sure they commit to activities only when they have the means, competencies, skills, and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.

5. Complementarity

The diversity of the humanitarian community is an asset if we build on our comparative advantages and complement each other's contributions. Local capacity is one of the main assets to enhance and on which to build. Whenever possible, humanitarian organizations should strive to make it an integral part in emergency response. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome.

In the post presentation-discussion, Anjan Kumar Chicham, Executive Director of the Protibondhi Community Center asked, "A lot of us may have personal relations with political parties, how may this affect the scenario?" Rafikul Islam, Executive Director of Prosich stated, "To collect funds and compensate for programs, we sometimes have to reach out to the political parties. The state law explicitly forbids us to participate in politics, and yet we always have to go to these parties." Muhammad Enamul Haque, Executive Director of Shomaj Unnoyon and Proshikkhon Kendro, had an opinion contrary to keeping up with all the political parties, "As a part of the progressive front of the society, I cannot become entangled with reactionary or backward-looking politics. Cooperation should only be allowed with the progressive parties, otherwise our politics will not attain transparency and accountability.

In response to all these questions and asides, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said, "As we deal directly with the government, and are given the registration straight from them, personal relations with any particular party would engender bigger problems. So, we should keep a positive relation with them, but we should not become active partisans. This is to keep all of

us above controversy”. He added to this statement, “Of course we have to go to a number of people attached to the government, and they will come to our programs as well. But none of these should mean we are a part of the ruling party.” Barkat Ullah Maruf, Assistant Director of the COAST Trust opined that while it is only natural to hold personal political ideals, it is far from alright to become a worker of any party. On the issue of progressive political parties Rezaul Karim Chowdhury stated, “This friendly relation with the progressive parties would depend on the NGO personnel, and for this reason the law refers to “all possible political parties”. Shawkat Ali Tutul, Assistant Director of the COAST trust, said, “We are a public platform, we should have the capability to influence all political parties, but that is not equivalent to being included in one.”

Grand Bargain : Hosted by Shawkat Ali Tutul, Assistant Director, COAST Trust

In 2015 the Secretary-General of UN had been Ban Ki Mun, who appointed a high-level panel on humanitarian financing that was titled : “Too Important to Fail: Addressing the Humanitarian Financing Gap”. This panel recommended an increase in financing to prepare for disasters and to mitigate the ensuing losses. Its recommendations also included an increase in asset-based humanitarian activities to lessen humane demands worldwide, an emphasis on localization of power, and a reduction of transaction costs.

To realize these recommendations, UN, Red Cross, Red Crescent and more than 35 donor organizations and International NGOs signed a pact titled “Grand Bargain”. In the Istanbul World Humanitarian Summit this Grad Bargain was first discussed, and it was included in the WHS outcome report.

In this global pact, 52 commitments were pledged grouped into ten (10) branches. A large number of donors and aid organizations signed the pact to make the humanitarian acivities more efficient.

The Ten Branches :

The signatories committed to:

1. Greater transparency
2. More support and funding for local and national responders
3. Increase the use and coordination of instant cash-based programming
4. Reduce duplication and management costs with periodic functional reviews
5. Improve joint and impartial needs assessments
6. A revolution in participation : include the affected people in making the decisions
7. Increase the number of partners in collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding
8. Reduce the earmarking of donor contributions
9. Harmonise and simplify reporting requirements
10. Enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors

These key notes were discussed in brief subsequently.

Charter for Change

This segment was hosted by Barkat Ullah Maruf, Assistant Director, COAST Trust.

Barkat Ullah Maruf detailed the funding parameters and strategies in his speech. The discussion quickly moved to why the local NGOs are not treated equally as the International ones when a donor organization contemplates funding. Barkat Ullah Maruf stressed that what should dictate the amount and the implementation of the fund is the need of a local organization, not the themes and the whims preset by the donor. In the Charter for Change, 150 Donor organizations from 43 countries pledged to fulfil 8 conditions. These conditions are :

1. Increase direct funding for humanitarian action to NGOs working in the least-developed and developing countries.
2. Reaffirm the Principles of Partnership.
3. Increase transparency around resource transfers to southern-based (i.e in Asia, Africa and South America) national and local NGOs.
4. Stop undermining local capacity.
5. Emphasize the importance of national actors.
6. Address subcontracting.
7. Robust organizational support and capacity strengthening.
8. Communication with the media and the public about partners.

In the open discussion, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury talked about the rights and the scopes of the civil society, and its particular importance in Bangladesh. Asif in Barishal asked what would happen to the organizations that did not sign any of the said agreements. Barkat Ullah Maruf replied that all were being approached gradually. He regretted the questionable role that the donors have played in relation to the Rohingya crisis, saying, “When they talk about development, their approach is structural or wholesale. They completely ignore the lack of social development. The deluge of Rohingyas in Bangladesh is not our sole responsibility, it is a shared responsibility. But they have constantly overlooked it.”

From Aid-Effectiveness to Development Effectiveness

Hosted by Barkat Ullah Maruf, Assistant Director, COAST Trust

In the discussion titled “AID effectiveness to Development Effectiveness” this much became clear that the so-called aid is more commercially motivated than a help. But, contrary to the approach of aid and for the benefit of NGOs of multiple tiers, the Istanbul Principles were formulated. With GPEDC by our side we have accumulated a reservoir of moral energy and now can demand for equity based redistribution.

Aid Effectiveness

- Charity
- Analysis of the symptoms of poverty

Development Effectiveness

- Equity
- Analysis of the roots of poverty

- Human needs
 - Trickle down
 - Short-term result
 - Supervised by Donors
 - Equality for women
 - Employment
 - Apolitical aid
- Human rights
 - Equal Distribution
 - Long-term result
 - Supervised by all partners
 - Sexual equality
 - Work with respect
 - Politics is power

Group Work

The participants were split into three groups, and each group was given a particular topic to discuss and analyze, so that they may express their desires and their opinions regarding the said topic.

Group 1: Make a list of our demands from Donors, the UN, International NGOs and our government with respect to the Grand Bargain and other similar global pacts. Make sure that everyone participates in the task.

Group 2: Make an announcement outlining the minimum that we can do to keep our self-esteem intact and to guarantee our accountability to our beneficiaries (the people), the laws of



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the state, and the ones who send the donations and the management facilities (i.e. donor organizations, donor countries, UN, INGOs). Develop it further with everyone's active participation.

Group 3: What can be done to unite the local NGOs and the CSOs? (CSO = Civil Society Organizations) Make a list of such tasks and develop it further with everyone's active participation.

Recommendations of Group 1:

1. Respect and trust
2. Avoid bureaucratic Barriers
3. Funding for the local organizations
4. Donor agencies should not directly implement projects
5. Simplify the project proposal and reports submission procedure for the local organizations
6. Project should start on time and sufficient time in implementation
7. Taking Longer term projects
8. Development projects should be based on the local demand
9. End discriminations among donor agencies, local organizations and beneficiaries

Recommendations of Group 2:

1. To have Citizen Charter
2. Annual activity report
3. Audit Report
4. Practice Right to Information Act
5. Having different policies like
6. Human Resources, Gender, Procurement, Child Protection, Emergency Plan etc.
7. Should have Sharing and planning
8. Transparency and accountability of the organization's activity
9. Have the approved constitution
10. Participatory and right based approach

Recommendations of Group 3:

1. Increase communication and relationships between NGOs and CSOs
2. NGO and CSO to work together on local issues on shared goals
3. NGO and CSO to have dialogue with local authority and to increase their consensus
4. Ensure transparency and accountability (economic) in civil society and CSOs work.
5. Conduct activities with dignity and respect to each other
6. Be expressive with respect to others political opinion and avoid partisan political activities
7. NGOs will provide financial support for civil society activities

After the groupwise presentations, the women leaders from multiple Districts came up on the stage and expressed their opinions on the information and lessons gleaned from the workshop.

In the subsequent discussuon, Nurul Amin, Secretary of Mymensingh Nagarik Andolon, said. “Today’s program was for whoever is working in the development sector. In this coordination, you will always have us by your side.” Hakim Babul, Secretariate Member of Jonouddog, added, “NGOs and CSOs, we all should keep ourselves transparent. Transparency is an imperative for us as well as for others.” Moazzem Hossain Jalal from Mymensingh FMB said, “Now that we know of Grand Bargain and Localization, we should be able to improve ourselves with the knowledge.” Shyamolendu Pal, a fellow of Jonouddog Netrokona expressed himself with much emotion, “We in Netrokona will proceed with these tasks, and this division-level discussion will enlighten us, enrich our knowledge.” Representing NGO Forum for Public Health its regional manager Shishir Kumar Roy stated, “I finally realized the meaning of some words that I have heard far too many times.” He thanked everyone for having participated in the workshop.

Opinion

Md Abdul Hai from Adorsho Polli Unnoyon Songstha told us, “We have learnt from this workshop that it is not only local NGOs, but the donors as well who are responsible for solving local problems.”



Muhammad Mustasim Billah

Muhammad Mustasim Billah from Adorsho Shamajik Progoti Songstha said, “The law tells us to deploy any organization that is present at hand at a moment of crisis. Unfortunately, the donors do not always abide by this law. Our demand is simple : improve the efficiencies of the local and smaller NGOs so that they may be given the work when crisis appears.” He went on, “A local organization implies local employment, who will be able to respond to any crisis moment even after the project has been closed. They could be driven by themselves once they have had proper training.” He also emphasized on the need of the donors assimilating their project visions to local situational problems.

Anjan Kumar Chicham, the Executive Director of PCC said, “Donors always want us to work as they demand, turning in reports and so on. But I believe this ridiculous amount of paperwork can actually be reduced. This will save time and free us to focus more on the field work.” He further added that this workshop has made him believe that he has the rights to say what he is saying now.

Swadhin Chowdhury, a noted journalist, told us, “The country offices of donors in Dhaka could use Bangla as a medium. This would greatly facilitate the smaller NGOs.”

Khandakar Faruk Ahmed from Mymensingh Trinamool Unnayan Sangstha said, “When project proposals are called for in English, a lot of the smaller NGOs fail to understand anything.” According to him, they then have to hire a third party to write the project proposal. This leads to a wastage of money and time, and a deficiency in their overall grasp of the project. He thinks if an option of writing project proposals in Bangla was available, more opportunities would be open to local NGOs. Furthermore, the execution of their projects would then prove to be easier.



Anjan Kumar Chicham



Swadhin Chowdhury



Khandakar Faruk Ahmed