

**CSO-NGO Sector with Self-esteem: Campaign on Grand Bargain and Localization
Rajshahi Divisional Workshop
20 September 2018, Moon Light Garden Auditorium, Shaheb Bazar, Rajshahi**

A day-long campaign and workshop titled “CSO-NGO Sector with Self-esteem: Campaign on Grand Bargain and Localization” was held in the Moon Light Garden Auditorium of Rajshahi on the 20th of September, 2018. Representatives from Local and International NGOs, Donor Organizations and Environmentalist Organizations from the eight (8) Districts in the Rajshahi Division participated in the workshop, in addition to a number of journalists, politicians and Government officials. The introductory segment was conducted by Mustafa Kamal Akanda, Assistant Director of the COAST Trust. The workshop itself was conducted by Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director of the COAST Trust.



Rajshahi: Campaign on Localization

The chief guest of the program was Fazle Hossain Badsha, the Honorable Member of Parliament of Rajshahi-2. Also present among the guests were AKM Jashim Uddin, Director of ADAB; K M Obaidur Rahman, Regional Coordinator of ADAB in Rajshahi; Foyejullah Chowdhury, Executive Director of Barendra Unnayan Prochesta; AKM Zahidul Islam,

representing FNB; Suman Das, Programme Officer, Oxfam; and Kalpana Rai, President of Rajshahi Zilla Mahila Parishad.

The program began with a performance of the National Anthem. Then Rezaul Karim Chowdhury from COAST Trust laid out the itinerary of the day. He started with the subject and the background of the Grand Bargain, stating that its primary objective was localization. Expanding upon various topics that would be discussed throughout the day, he said that this workshop was centered around Grand Bargain, Charter for Change, Development Effectiveness and so on, and that the participants must show their own initiative. From his speech, it became clear that the NGOs and the CSOs must become ‘knowledge leaders’ for their own survival.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury explained the symbiosis of the State, the Market and the Civil Society. He posited that if these three elements work in concordance, society will function

more smoothly and that Civil Society and NGO can work as a third force beyond the State apparatus and the Market economy.

In his speech of chief guest, the Honorable Member of Parliament Fazle Hossain Badsha said, “Our civil society is already playing an effective role in the postive change of the country, and we are helping them as much as we can. We should have larger discussions on this topic. I personally will do my utmost to build conciousness and to relaize the plans on your behalf.”



Fazle Hossain Badsha, PM

AKM Zahidul Islam from FNB said, “As we are becoming a middle-income country, the NGOs are facing a number of hurdles. We should cooperate to ensure that the NGOs are getting enough funds. The government alone cannot develop a country on its own. The government, the NGOs and the private sector must unite to do so.”



AKM Zahidul Islam

AKM Jashim Uddin, Director of ADAB said, “Bargains are done when not everything is going well. And as this discussion centers on localization, we must work to localize the incoming funds in Bangladesh. He added, “In the Sustainable Developmental Goals, it was

explicitly said that no one can be suspended from development works wrongfully. But with the excuse of ineptness, our local NGOs are being suspended. The truth is, they are very capable, and they should have the maximum priority in terms of incoming funds. Emphasizing the need of enforcing local NGOs he said, “the local NGOs will not become capable in a flash, there has to be an intitiative for such growth. Due to the attitude of donors, a lot of smaller organizations are not getting suffcient work, hindering localization. This is why smaller NGOs opt to work by sub-contracting rather than by being a development aid, creating a hierarchy under bigger organizations. To change the state of affairs, the demands and the discussions must spring fro m the smaller NGOs.

Suman Das, Programme Officer of Oxfam said, “A chief commitment of Grand Bargain is localization. Oxfam has signed the charter due to moral obligations, and now we are morally obliged to execute the referendum. Similarly, we are trying to enforce the Charter for Change globally. These are not our projects, these are our endeavours.” He went on saying, “Oxfam is now working in Bangladesh and a number of other countries to distribute funds to local organizations. As the objectives of ours and the COAST Trust is same, we shall run eight (8) divisional workshops and a national conference together”.

Foyejullah Chowdhury, Executive Director of Barendra Unnayan Prochesta and the Convener of the Rajshahi Divisional Commitee of the ongoing workshop questioned the survival of local NGOs if they fail to understand the policies behind fund accumulation.

After this preliminary discussion the workshop was inaugurated. Shawkat Ali Tutul presented the policies and the principles of the workshop for everyone's understanding.

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:

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.

Zia from PNS raised the issue of political parties, “NGOs and Civil Society Organizations can spawn a political movement, and politicization can aid our development works to bear results. A lot of our works are impossible outside the realm of politics. For example, microcredit regulatory authority registration is unavailable without a certain amount of outstanding credit, but microcredit cannot be dealt with the registration. Who will then take the 4 million taka to the hands of the smaller NGOs? This is why CSOs, I believe, should get involved in politics.”

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, in his reply, said, “Politics is fine as long as one is not attached to any specific party. We are not and cannot become their agents. We are involved in politics in the name of equality, social justice, human rights. We don’t belong to the political parties.”

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



Shawkat Ali Tutul

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 Grand 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 activities 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.

Bashar from AVAS complained, “Often a lot of conditions are imposed on Local NGOs that are impossible to fulfill.” Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said in reply, “This was raised in the Grand Bargain as well. We have been pushing this since 2017. If an NGO is formed locally and if its leaders reside in the said region, the NGO should be given preference even if they fail to comply with certain conditions.”

Nazrul from SNKS said, “As local organizations are hardly capable, international NGOs and the big fishes are collecting and spending the funds as they wish to. A lot of local organizations have disappeared due to this behavior. Isn’t it morally binding that the smaller NGOs will receive help from the bigger ones?” Rezaul Karim CHowdhury replied, “Capability is relative. The international NGOs claim that local NGOs have no skills in English; but if you observe their activities in Bangladesh, you will see that it is the international NGOs who have no skill in Bengali. On the other hand, it is important to guarantee liability, responsibility and accountability. The fact that you have an active communication with the people shows that you are capable.”

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.

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
- Human needs
- Trickle down
- Short-term result
- Supervised by Donors
- Equality for women
- Employment
- Apolitical aid

Development Effectiveness

- Equity
- Analysis of the roots of poverty
- 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.



Rajshahi Divisional Campaign: Group Work

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 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.

Recommendation from Group 01

1. Providing and implementing local NGOs in the area of work area
Integrity in the involvement and principles of the agencies. Lack of communication at the time of need is a major problem.
2. Correspondence Writing and Implementation in spontaneous Bangla Language
3. Taking long-term projects and implementing them.
4. Convergence among donors in the work area
5. During the implementation of the local NGO funds, assist in the development of skills
6. Participation of local NGO representatives in taking the donor's project
7. Stop the extortionists and lobbying for government projects
8. Providing all work based on the needs of the community through a project
9. Close subcontract customs
10. Training in different sectors according to the needs of the people.

Recommendation from Group 02

1. The publication of the official Citizen Charter
2. Publish details in detail for everyone
3. Involve every stakeholder in each program.
4. Include the beneficiary while taking the project / program
5. Publication / evaluation of the project / program on self-initiative
6. Organize public stage or public confrontation
7. Publish the open budget of the project / program.

Recommendation from Group 03

1. To make everyone involved in activities (such as PP made)
2. Involve everyone on the local issue
3. A consortium based on equality - National NGO, local NGO area. Ingo, NNGO, LNGO is determined by the roll.
4. Negative view of local NGOs should be changed (Administration, INGO, NNGO)
5. Think of local partners as a development partner rather than identifying them as a vendor.



রাজশাহী সমাপনী অধিবেশন

6. Business Grants and Social Program (CSR) implementation through local NGOs

7. Internal democracy (local and national)

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. The program ended with a performance of patriotic songs

Opinion

Suman Das, Programme Officer of Oxfam, told us, “To ensure fast response from local organizations, the donors have promised to send 25% of the money directly to the local ones. Oxfam, as it has signed the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change, has taken on a few projects to make this sure. One of them is “Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors”. Under this title Oxfam is working with COAST Trust to run this nation-wide campaign on localization and Grand Bargain, which will make the organizations who signed the treaties respond to our call. This campaign will make a demand for localization from the root level. So, the bigger organizations will be more accountable, and the smaller ones will act with more self-awareness.”



Suman Das

Mohammad Motahar Hossain from Manab Mukti Sangstha, Sirajganj brought up the partnership pact of NGOs and donors while talking to us, “These topics should not be limited to papers. A lot of us don’t know about them or about their execution. After an INGO asks for proposal, the submission, the correction, and the ensuing conversation take up more than five to six months. Eventually the background of the proposal becomes obsolete. The damage that was to be reversed may become permanent in the meantime. Another task is to prioritize local demands while working in region.”



Mohammad Motahar Hossain

Mohona from Diner Alo said, “I work with the Hijra (transgender) communities. Others would not understand their demands, as I, one among the community, will do.”



Mohona

Nure Jannat Mitu, Chairman of Rajshahi ADAB and Executive Director of Shechhashebi Bohumukhi Mahila Somaj Kollan Shamiti pointed out the lack of accountability of the donors themselves, “We submit proposals with their demand on our minds, but there is no space for us to make our demands. Sometimes we are not even told that our proposals are being



Nur-E- Jannat

rejected, and they hardly tell us the why. Transparency should go two ways. They can analyze our works and our accounts but we stay in the dark about their behaviors. There is no direct communication, as there is always some organization in the middle. I think that they need to be transparent too.”

Abdul Latif, Chief Executive of Santhia Karnaphuli Shomaj Kolyan Shongstha from Pabna, said to us, “To create accountability among the donors, the local organizations have to keep their own transparency, and bargain on the basis of local demands.” He believes it is essential to trim down the number of ineffective projects, and to do so, local NGOs should directly deal with the donors without any bartering INGOs in the middle.

Foyejullah Chowdhury, Executive Director of Barendra Unnayan Prochesta, said, “There should be a policy from the state to force accountability into INGOs and other development partners. In our country, there is no such policy yet. Government will do it if there is a united pressure on it from the regional NGOs. It should be the state’s policy to maximize the effect of funds.”



Foyejullah Chowdhury

AKM Jashim Uddin, Director of ADAB, told us, “No matter how small or how big, the first criterion to judge an NGO should be their liability to their locality. This is the most important ability in practice. When an INGO starts working here, they should have the same liability that the local NGOs have. If need be, government should reinforce its mechanisms. We should come together if necessary, and make a deal with the government. They [the government] should regulate the INGOs as strongly as they are regulating us. A key problem comes up when we hire a foreigner to do something that we could cheaply have done here. The budget is then understandably exhausted. International NGOs may provide policies, guidelines or supports but operational tasks should be governed locally. We can then serve more people with lower spending.”



AKM Jashim Uddin

Touhida Khatun Komola, Executive Director of Prodipto Manab Kallyan Sangstha, Chapai Nawabganj, told us in the interview, “We, the small organizations, are often afraid of audits of the international NGOs. We should have a forum where we can audit their activities. We have the rights to know the total amount of donation. They come here with the permission from our government. So, government should



Touhida Khatun Komola

monitor their operations too. This will bring transparency in every level. Sometimes they cut down funds without telling us, creating a wide range of problems. Government sometimes takes our service, but we do not get the credits due. If we are united we can regain our prestige. We have seen today the pacts that the donors have signed. We will talk to the donors about them and demand their full enactment.”