

BDCSOprocess Annual Conference Declaration, Oct 2020

Note: The draft declaration is finalized based on the comments of the guests, panel members and process members during the Annual Conference, October 2020.

A. Preamble

We are going to organize virtually the 2nd Annual Conference of [BDCSOprocess](#) with the spirit of **the four principles of our liberation war (Democracy, Socialism, Secularism and Nationalism) aiming towards building independent self-esteemed local CSO (Civil Society organizations)**. We emphasize on **local or own resource mobilization** which is the fundamental base of independent and sovereign NGO/CSOs.

BDCSOprocess have been formed with the spirit of Grand Bargain (GB), Charter 4 Change (C4C) and Principles of Partnership (PoP), especially emphasizing 3 streams of **Grand Bargain commitment, i.e., aid transparency, localization and participation revolution**. Local NGOs of Bangladesh participated to those global processes after being prepared through a national consultation during 2104 to 2019. We have several outcome documents of the entire campaign including [a set of demands declared in public on 19th August 2017](#), and the **“Charter of Accountability”** declared on 6th July 2019, our First national conference. The latter is the declaration of our own accountability. We also declared the **“Charter of Expectation”** on the same day defining our expectations from our government, donors, UN agencies and INGOs.

Due to COVID 19 pandemic, we have a reinforced conviction that, localization i.e., **primacy of local NGO/CSOs** is fundamental to promote sustainable humanitarian and development nexus. Our conviction has further **empowered by IASC (Inter Agency Standing Committee) [interim guidance on localization](#) and different announcements on duty care and flexibility**. [IASC](#) is the highest body in view of the UN General Assembly resolution for policy formulation toward humanitarian assistance.

B. Common Expectations

1. A sustainable society should have three strong sectors in a balanced way, (1) public/ government, (2) private/ market and (3) civil society/ non-state actors. **We are part of the third sector**. We expect support of all possible stakeholders to let this sector grow.
2. We emphasize **NGOs as the important part of CSO for having significant interventions on human rights**. We encourage other NGOs of only service delivery to embody the right based issues into their mandate. We believe that the basic requirement of a sustainable society is awareness on rights and claimant capacities. We also like to have NGOs who have limited civil society character on board. That's why we use both term NGO and CSO together.
3. History of NGO/ CSO is not all about foreign aid based interventions, although it has a great impetus. Localization also should not only about foreign aid. **Localization should also include local or own resource mobilization**. COVID 19 pandemic and post pandemic recovery will take time and the learning for the southern countries is the foreign aid is shrinking. CSO should emphasize on local/ own resource mobilization.
4. The lesson learned from COVID 19 pandemic is to revisit our expenditure pattern. **We have to be able to differentiate the 'luxury' and 'necessity'**. **Our expenditure culture has to gain public respect**. The term “international standard” needs a rethink and turn into ‘local standard’ complying with the cultural appropriateness.

5. **Fundamental issue for localization is using the local language.** Everyone should use Bangla to communicate with the locals. International agencies have capable national staff who can help in translation. Using local language minimizes the communication gap and may lead to reduce transaction cost.
6. Government institutions, especially the international agencies have the scope to benefit local organizations with partnership. As they run on public money, the benefit should be free from the Conflict of Interest. So, we urge for an **open and accessible complaint response mechanism** to encourage feedback to continuously improve a transparent and competitive system which is free from conflict of interest to promote good governance.
7. We consider the government is the main driver of development and humanitarian response. We have a history of strong institutions. Still, the government need to realize that they cannot do everything and timely, especially in disaster. Some **government agencies started funding and partnership with local NGO/ CSO. We urge government to come up more vigorously for funding NGO/ CSOs on the same path.**

C. Expectation from Government

8. Policy makers should consider that localization is a policy towards local employment, boosting local economy and somehow facilitating redistributive justice of aid money tailored to sustainability, local participation and accountability ensuring **"Country Ownership"**. In fact, this is also the expectation of the donor country tax payers. These are the main essence of Development Effectiveness Declarations (e.g., Monterrey, Paris, Accra, Busan and Nairobi declarations).
9. Governments of Nepal, Indonesia and Uganda have already taken policy measures on it. Some governments have taken **localization policy** prepared by the ministry, e.g., Nigeria. We also urge our government to take similar concrete policy since our Finance Minister is one of the Co-Chairs of GPEDC (Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation). We should be the pioneer in this regard.
10. We feel, ERD (External Resource Division) and NGOAB (NGO Affairs Bureau) under Prime Minister Office could play a great role to **safeguard the interest of country and local NGOs** through policies of technology and knowledge transfer, local expertise development and creating local employment. To be noted that, in some counties, especially in Nepal, INGO and UN agencies are allowed to work in field/ implementation level only when partnering with local NGOs or local government.
11. Government should ensure that all **expatriates employment is demand-driven**, not supply-driven, based on a need assessment. Expatriate deployment should be time bound and with a focus of technical know-how transfer leading to local capacity development.
12. Host government should play primary responsibility on behalf of the affected and poor population. So, the host government must **scrutinize and monitor the cost in respect of management and direct benefit** of affected and poor since they have the right on the aid money and the government act as the guardian to safeguard their interest. Management cost of all international agencies should be limited to single digit percentage. Questions raised on the cost practice for keeping little difference between luxury and necessity.

13. Bangladeshi NGOs should maintain the policy of **“as much as possible to become local and as necessary as possible to become national”**. Government should encourage NGOs to be limited in local level from where it is originated and tailored to community leadership and maintain intensive coverage, rather than going national and sporadic coverage.

D. Expectations from donors

14. Donors have played great role to promote NGO/CSOs for decades in our countries. Especially the local NGO/ CSO of Bangladesh have received global acclamation for their professional maturity. So, we request our donors (including bilateral and multilateral) **to fund directly to local NGO/CSOs without channeling through intermediaries**. Local NGO/CSOs should have chance to form consortium of themselves and bid in the process to be able to learn from each other.

15. Donors would invest to the local NGO/CSO who give **importance to demand side mobilization for localization, aid transparency, and participation revolutions** as well as the four principles of our liberation war, humanitarian and development nexus. There are already a lot of supply sides with international agreements having huge gap in practice level. Demand side mobilization, in fact, will pave the passage for minimizing the gap between policies and practices.

16. Donors have accountability to their country and constituencies, we respect that. Considering the situation of last few decades especially the pandemic fallout, donors should try for a self-dependent NGO/ CSO at national level. So, we request donors **to review their due diligence for impetus rather than to impede. Capacity development should be a matter of “Capacity Exchange” through giving importance to local context**.

E. Expectance from UN agencies and INGOs

17. **We believe in complementarity and inclusiveness in humanitarian and development assistance**. No agencies have everything to respond to every sphere. UN agencies and INGOs have much more important roles but that should be more focused in monitoring and technical assistance especially in Bangladesh. Local NGO/ CSO who have a considerable level of experience and professional maturity, should lead the field level implementation to gradually build an independent and sustainable sector.

18. We believe that UN agencies and INGOs do like to see a sovereign and independent NGO/CSO sector has grown up in Bangladesh. So, in view of this principle, we do like to see UN and INGOs to promote the government and local NGO/ CSO to be able negotiate directly with the donors for funding. **Time has come for UN and INGOs to reconsider their role to perform the role of intermediaries or not**.

19. There is a need to review the partnership selection and management process. The policy and practice should be in view of Principle of Partnership (2007) which they have prepared and signed. **Partnership selection should be based on long term policy and criteria based which has prepared in view of context analysis, free from conflict of interest, transparent and competitive. Otherwise it will again reproduce the practice of patron-client dependency relationship and hinder self-esteemed independent NGO/CSO development in the country**.

20. Without aid transparency it is hard to suggest the best uses of aid and to be the best for the affected and poor population. **There are common standards i.e., International Aid**

Transparency Initiative (IATI). According to the Right to Information (RTI) act in Bangladesh, all NGOs and INGOs who are registered in Bangladesh are bound to provide aid information to NGO Affairs Bureau under Prime Minister's Office. Though, there is an assumption that UN agencies received a huge chunk of humanitarian and development assistance (which is approximately more than 60% of the total) hardly having published any information on it. It is the moral responsibility of the UN agencies and host government, to publish fund transparency in public. Including UN agencies, NGOs and INGOs should follow the IATI and RTI without minimum exception.

- 21.** There is a common public concern on the ongoing cost culture of all, especially of UN agencies and INGOs. Due to pandemic fallout, there might be a dwindling situation of aid and Rohingya response could have the worse impact. Due to competition of recruiting better human resource, the salary structure is swelled up to 250% of the average level of local NGO. **All including UN agencies and INGOs should review the salary pattern and cost culture considering the difference between luxury and necessity. We must give all effort to ensure aid money to directly go to the affected and poor as much as possible.**

- 22.** We believe in multilateralism and are afraid of unilateralism and protectionism due to the fallout of COVID 19 pandemic. We support UN to uphold the spirit of multilateralism. **We expect UN to focus its vision and mission to emphasize promotion of human rights and sustainable peace, rather than being involved in humanitarian and development assistance.** We have already mentioned that they should roll back from project implementation where local NGO/CSOs are strong and matured. UN has a lot of good policies in respect of CSO engagement, especially they have two global compacts on Migration and Refugee. UN agencies should **“reinforce rather than replace NGO/ CSO.”**
