

REGION WISE RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT

Cross Border Cooperation and Respect to the People's Sovereignty should be the Primary Basis for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia

CIRDAP Auditorium, Dhaka

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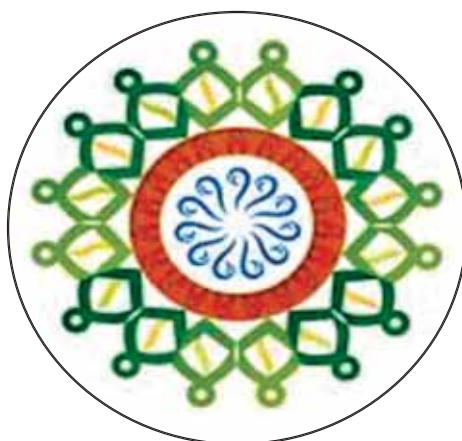


The seminar was jointly organized by Action Aid, BRAC, Christian Aid, COAST (www.coastbd.net), Dan Church Aid (DCA), Deshari, Disaster Forum, Dwip Unnayan Sangsta, Gono Unnayan Kendra, Islamic Relief, Light House, Nirapod, Pidim Foundation, Oxfam, Plan International, Practical Action, SKS Foundation, Tearfund and World Vision. The seminar was moderated by Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of COAST. Mr. Shah Kamal, Secretary Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDM&R) and Mr. Reaz Ahmed, Director General, Department of Disaster Management has attended and speaks as the chief guest and special guest respectively. Other speakers of the seminar was Mr. Aminul Kawser Dipu of ESC, Ms. Hasina Inam of DCA, Mr. Shasanka Sadi of BRAC, Mr. K Jakaria Khaled of Bangladesh Red Crescent, Mr. Jashim Uddin of ADAB, Ms. Wahida Basher Ahmed of Cordaid, Ms. Kobita Bose of Help Age International, Mr. Polash Kundu of SKS Foundation and Mr. Banarjee of Pidim Foundation.

1. Background: AMCDRR and Disaster in Bangladesh

Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), 2016 is going to be held on 2-5th Nov 2016 in New Delhi. Indian Government is hosting the event with collaboration of UNISDR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction).

As a requirement of the Sendai Framework, the intended outcome of the conference in India will be to adopt an 'Asian Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework'. The AMCDRR 2016 will provide a unique opportunity to shape the implementation and monitoring



of the Sendai Framework in Asia.

Bangladesh has approximately 160 million people, the third most populous country in South Asia. The country is exposed to multiple hazards, including floods, storm surges, river erosion, cyclones, droughts and earthquakes. Approximately 30 per cent of the country experiences annual flooding during the monsoon season. Extreme flood events can submerge over 60 per cent of the country. Given Bangladesh's low elevation and high exposure, it has been estimated to be the country facing maximum risk to the impacts of climate change. Up to 50 per cent of Bangladesh's urban slum dwellers may be IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) forced to flee their rural homes as a result of river erosion. (IDMC report 2015, Bangladesh).

As per UNISDR 2011, revealing risk report; Dhaka has been built upon on drained bodies

of water or wetlands, and the soil upon which these buildings stand is prone to liquefaction – it liquefies in the event of an earthquake’. If an earthquake hits the country especially the Dhaka city nobody predicts exactly what may happen.

After 1970 devastating cyclone, Bangladesh gradually has undertaken life-saving disaster risk management actions, such as early warning and evacuation, rescue and establishment of good number of cyclone shelters. All these measures have been taken to save people’s lives during cyclone and flood. But the above risks are still prominent. Bangladeshi civil society is urging Asian leaders and stakeholders to ensure that “regional river basin and cross border cooperation and respect to the people’s sovereignty be the primary basis for disaster risk reduction in Asia”.

2. Objectives of the Seminar

- To validate civil society position towards AMCDRR 2016 in National level.
- To sensitize Government and other stakeholders about the call of civil society.
- To uphold initiatives and positions of the organizations who are participating at AMCDRR 2016
- To know government initiatives and positions during AMCDRR

3. Key Messages and Discussions

On behalf of the organizers **Mr. Shawkat Ali Tutul** of COAST, presented six-point demands from joint voice, which has prepared by the Bangladeshi civil society for this AMCDRR 2016 in New Delhi. These are (i) Government must listen to the people of the region and consider basin wise joint management to reduce river erosion, flood and salinity intrusion especially in lower riparian countries, (ii) Countries must invest to build critical infrastructure to protect people from cyclone and monsoon tidal surge, saline water intrusion and also provide shelter to urban poor. They also said getting official development assistance in this regard is the legitimate right of the countries like Bangladesh which is not at all responsible of climate catastrophes, (iii) Countries must



respect dignity and rights of the disaster and climate induced displaced people, they must prepare internal and cross boarder displacement policy in view UN guidelines, (iv) Country must prepare and well equipped agencies for cross boarder deployment in respect crucial disaster, (v) Government must ensure participation of civil society in planning and implementation of Sendai Frame Work in national level, and (vi) Urge all relevant stakeholders to uphold the spirit of WHS (world humanitarian summit) outcome, i.e. putting community, local and national NGOs in first



Mr. Aminul Kawser Dipu of ESC said, The last census says population of coastal area is decreasing. So what is the reason and where the people went away, he questioned. He appealed to the government to build concrete dam to save our land from river erosion.



Mr. Palash Kundu of SKS Foundation mentioned people has full rights to get return to their original place of living who are displeased due to river erosion lived in char land. Government should work in cooperation with local NGOs to build capacity of those people so that they can recover themselves and also learn how to live together with natural calamity, he asserted.



Mr. A. B. Banerjee of PIDIM Foundation said, we should consider the issue- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) from human rights lance because after any natural disaster the devastation of the respective areas are huge and everybody ignore the humanitarian ground only busy to provide some food and water. These people should be compensated with full dignity





Mr. Halim Miah of Practical Action said yet damage of resources are high though using technology. He urged that accurate and predict message can help to reduce destruction of resources so that government can ensure providing message on time using high technology.

Mr. Md. Moniruzzaman from Islamic Relief said there is no

region wise plan and indicator in respect of DRR. Bangladesh should have a position which would be model for other countries in this regard, he mentioned.



Ms. Wahida Basher Ahmed of Cordaid suggested that the



government should analyze data and information of devastation and take strong position in respect of river basin management in Asia. She also said it is not only the responsibility of ministry of disaster and relief, all related ministry and department should work together to manage all type of disasters. We should also push the private sector like business sector to work to this regard as this is their corporate social responsibility.



Mr. Zia Uddin Khan from Light house suggested the government to prepare a long term plan to tackle disasters and initiatives for displaced people as every year the land is reducing due to storm surge.



Ms. Kobita Bose of Help Age International said Padma and Jamuna River's water are overflowing in every year in certain period due to India. We should negotiate strongly with India and seek other countries' cooperation

Mr. Aminur Rosul Babul of Unnayan Dhara Trust suggested to work together with countries in Asia for proper river basin management. All of us know that water come from India and China brings waste as we are downstream country so that we have no other option to avoid water flow. So, strong cross border cooperation is needed to solve problem. He said bilateral discussion should take place during AMCDRR with India regarding water sharing because people in Bangladesh are experiencing severe flood when India opens the gate of Farakka barrage.



Shasanka Sadi of BRAC said the agenda of upcoming AMCDRR is fixed, but civil society always is doing their job as pressure group that is why they gathered here to make difference. "Our intention is to facilitate government before attending ministerial by sharing our learning and experience in this regard," he said..



Mr. Zayed Iqbal Khan from Bangladesh Krishak Federation (BKF) said, a large number of people in coastal area is living on dams due to river erosion so that government recognize them as climate forced migrant and make a strategic plan for life saving.



Mr. Jashim Uddin of ADAB said the government should concentrate to making infrastructure in long run basis as since 1960 water logging is major issue yet. We also should have long run plan to protect ecosystem for our live.

Masud Rana of Concern Universal said the authorities need to know the water storage capacity of rivers so that they can preserve water coming from India which would be our asset. “It is also important that water sharing with the countries should be discussed clearly as we are suffering most as downstream country,” he added.



Mr. Jakaria Khaled of Bangladesh Red Crescent said those who are going to attend the upcoming ministerial in India should have same voice under the leadership of the government on this issue.



“We also keep in mind that if we provide any data or information must be authentic and accurate,” he added.

Mr. Rafiqul Islam of Dwip Unnayan Sangtha good cooperation between GO-NGOs to manage disaster has been proved effective. “We can take opportunity to make negotiation the water sharing countries in Asia using this strength in Asian Ministerial Conference of DRR,” he said.



Hasina Inam of DCA said that regional countries must consider the rights of people rather than rights of state and people sovereignty should come first. “In terms of river basin management we should enhance our capacity to negotiate with the countries and need to build cooperation to cross border countries,” she said..



Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of COAST shared the aim, objective and long journey of this platform where engaged CHS support group Bangladesh, Bangladeshi NGOs for WHS and other Bangladeshi Civil Society groups. He appealed to the government to enlist day laborer and other poor people to get official development assistance (ODA) as their rights to live.

Director General of Department of Disaster Management, **Reaz Ahmed** said, all though there is a need of regional cooperation, but Bangladesh has to live with own effort and build up its own resilience. “We have own capacity to manage disaster. “We managed flood this year successfully. We will seek regional cooperation in upcoming ministerial,” he said.



Secretary of Ministry **Mr. Shah Kamal** said Bangladesh will share its best practice of law, policy and strategy of disaster management with other countries. “We also will share our GO-NGO collaboration with the cooperation of volunteer groups such as Red Crescent, BNCC, Bangladesh Scouts, Fire services and civil defense, Ansar and VDP etc to work together during and after disaster for recovery,” he said.

The secretary said last one year’s achievement of DRR will be shared at the meeting. He also said the government is committed to accommodate and facilitate the civil society representations. He said the government will plea for international cooperation from development partners and countries in this regard.

Report by: **Ferdous Ara Rume** Assistant Director, Gender, Training and Community Radio



Contact: COAST Trust

House 13, (1st floor), Metro Melody, Road 2, Shyamli, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh
 Tel:+88 02 8125181/9118435/9120358, Fax:+88 02 9129395
 e-mail: info@coastbd.net, www.coastbd.net