

Call for Fulfilling Grand Bargain Commitments in FDMN/ Rohingya Response
**“Local people scarified. Cox’s Bazar economy got shattered.
Humanitarian response must not leads to disparity”**
Abul Kalam Azad, RRRC



Cox’s Bazar, 28 February 2018: Cox’s Bazar CSO and NGO Forum (CCNF) and COAST Trust jointly organized a public dialogue "Integrating the Grand Bargain Principles in FDMN Relief Response and facilitating Localization: Pathways for reducing transaction costs, ensuring accountability in local level and partnering with local organizations" in Uni Resort, Kolatoli, Cox’s Bazar, with a call for fulfilling the Grand Bargain commitments in the humanitarian response for the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN)/ Rohingya in Cox’s Bazar. The initiative is supported by Christian Aid, Oxfam, ICVA and IOM.

The dialogue is organized on the eve of UN launches a Joint Response Plan (JRP) with a financial need of approximately 940 million Dollars up to December 2018 in Bangladesh in this purpose. Grand Bargain Commitments are developed to strengthen the capacity of the local community, non government organizations (NGO) / civil society organization instead of replacing them in humanitarian response.

More than 100 participants take part in the dialogue including local community leaders, elected local government leaders, local / national / international NGOs, representatives from UN agencies, donor countries and organizations and local journalists. RRRC (Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner) Mr MD Abul Kalam attends the dialogue as the Chief Guest, while the Deputy Commissioner of Cox’s Bazar Mr Ali Hossain gives the inauguration speech.

Mr. Abu Morshed Chowdhury, the Executive Director of PHALS and Co-Chair of CCNF and Mr Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director of COAST Trust and Co-Chair of CCNF moderate the dialogue. There are two keynote presentations based on two separate studies titled (1) “Grand Bargain in the FDMN/ Rohingya Response: Taking Stock after 5 months, where next?” prepared by Koenraad Van Brabant of Navigation 360 and Smruti Patel of GMI Geneva and (2) “Fast Responders are Kept Far” by Mujibul Haque Munir of COAST are presented in the beginning of the dialogue.

Abu Morshed Chowdhury, welcomes all the participants and thanks to Mr. Ali Hossain, the DC of Cox’s Bazar, for his brief presence as the inaugurator of the dialogue his tremendous effort to make the order in relief work in the last six months. He also thanks to Mr. MD Abul Kalam Azad, the RRRC, for his presence all along the dialogue and listening to the presentation and reflections. He also welcomes especially the INGO and UN agency officials for showing interest and high level of participation in the dialogue.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury anticipates a lively dialogue to find out the challenges and the way out to integrate the Grand Bargain commitments particularly for the FDMN/ Rohingya as well as the host community. He invites the participants not to blame each other as the blame game doesn’t bring any result. He says, of course

we'll debate and critically analyse our works but at the same time we'll respect each other and will maintain the dignity of others.

Further he says that, we, the local NGOs as well as the local people are the first responders to the influx of FDMN. We might not have enough expertise in this but we have soulful intention. We need the cooperation of the foreign experts. Skills and expertise of the local NGO needs to be enhanced instead of being replaced with the INGOs and NGOs from other parts of the country. We need the sustainability of humanitarian response driven by local community, local government and local NGOs in the long run. We will prepare a document focusing action points raised in the dialogue. We will have another dialogue on 3rd March at Dhaka with the presence of the key policy makers.



Md. Abul Kalam, RRRC of Cox's Bazar is speaking as the chief guest of the dialogue

Md. Abul Kalam, the Additional Secretary and Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) of Cox's Bazar speaks at the dialogue as the invited chief guest. He says, the local people are not rich but have the mentality to share. They sacrificed their needs for the FDMN and still have been facing the impacts of the shattered economy of Cox's Bazar.

He also says, normally the agriculture of this territory is highly dependent than other areas of Bangladesh and this time it is severely affected. On top of that, the local economy got shattered as the price of the essential goods went severely high while some crop products like rice have a great price fall. This is a severe situation on the local economy. Therefore, the humanitarian response for FDMN must not do anything that leads disparity between the FDMN and host community. We can't afford more harm to our local people by the humanitarian intervention.

He says, we are still in the first wave of the disastrous situation. But we have to be prepared to experience more waves in the next two months while we enter into the rainy season that might cause huge landslide and the hit wave in the summer that might be unbearable to stay inside the plastic tarpaulin.

He adds, some international organizations have experience of working in Syria and other places with the refugee problems. Cox's Bazar also has long experience of dealing with displaced people from Myanmar. Last time around 10 thousand people died from hunger, but this time we faced it efficiently. So, we can help each other. Instead of unhygienic competition we can work for harmony achieving results.



The Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar, Mr. Ali Hossain inaugurates the dialogue and speaks

Md. Ali Hossain, the Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar inaugurates the dialogue with his speech. He says that, the local administration tried to give best effort to response to the sufferings of FDMN who are the worst victim of repression. Although many NGOs are working on it now, it is the local NGOs who are the first responder to the crisis. We have passed six months and we should evaluate our interventions now.

He says, this dialogue seems to be a bargaining session where there are multiple parties. The local NGOs are on one hand and the INGO and donors are on the other. We expect a good result with a win-win situation. The FDMN should be our first priority.

The amount of response of the local NGOs for the FDMN might seem very little as they are hardly able to manage enough fund in this purpose. But they are the one who understand better on the ground, and I request to the INGOs, donors and UN agencies to extend support for their capacity building, particularly the financial assistance. This will create a good harmony and might be able to bring a good result.

From the government part, we exercised a lot and developed a joint response plan (JRP) in cooperation with ISCG and UN agencies and we tried to come with the best we could. We should establish partnership & cooperation among ourselves.

Presentation 1: Grand Bargain in the FDMN/ Rohingya Response: Taking Stock after 5 months, where next?

On behalf of Keonraad Van Bravant and Smruti Patel of Navigation 360 and GMI, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury presents the slides on the study findings. The study is conducted during the first two weeks of February 2018 in Cox's Bazar.

The primary findings of this study are presented to a group of leaders from UN agencies, local, national and international NGO in Dhaka on 11th February 2018. The study is conducted as a part of DEEP (a DFID Project).

The researchers says that, the influx was unprecedented and politically challenging. Even there are a lot of achievements and major morbidity and mortality has been avoided with a fairly ordered settlement, but it happened at an unsustainable high cost.

There are sub-contracting approaches, staff poaching from local and national NGOs to international NGOs and UN agencies without any compensation and formal clearance, undermining the involvement of local NGOs and participation of both the affected community and Rohingyas.

The research underscores the needs of Legacy Planning, partnership with the local NGOs and participation of effected communities including Rohingyas. The partnership has to be tailored with equality and dignity towards the sustainable humanitarian assistance in long run.

Presentation 2. Fast Responders are Kept Far is presented by Mujibul H Munir of COAST Trust. In his presentation Munir says, one of the major commitments of the Grand Bargain is, INGOs will engage with local and national responders in the spirit of partnership with the aim to reinforce rather than replace the local and national capacities. But the situation manifests that, INGOs are now replacing the LNGOs with their activities. Some INGOs started their relief works with partnership of LNGOs. Now they have started direct operation having office in Cox's Bazar. This is how they are 'replacing' rather than 'reinforcing'.

He also says, ISCG (Inter Sector Coordination Group) coordinates the humanitarian response to FDMN. ISCG is taking plans ensuring coordination and taking important decisions regarding the responses without having a single participation from local organizations in the team. There are 14 sectors, only one LNGOs are there as one of the lead agencies. 33% INGO have no partnership with the local organizations. He adds, there is hardly any need assessment conducted before implementing projects in the affected area.



Maurice Dewulf of UN (Host Community Support Coordination Group) says that the decisions needed to make very quickly by the humanitarian responders. How would they know who are better among the local partners and how to find the efficient ones to match with their values and vision?

We really would be happy to find them though it is quite impossible for the foreign agencies to find the good organizations as local partners and to know their capacities.

Jeremy Waller of ICVA speaks as the Panel discussant and says, this is a very critical issue to look into and it is positive to see that this conversation is taking place at the right time and the contextualization of the Grand Bargain Commitments is very specific.

He adds, the entire ecosystem of the development work is hardly understood by the actors. Understanding the local capacity is the responsibility of the international community. They need to understand why the Grand Bargain is going on. And they also need to find a local partner in Cox's Bazar where CSO network could be a crucial platform to build the trust in this case.

Khaleda Begum of YPSA says, Local NGOs, in most cases, are not getting the management cost to run any project on the ground. I wonder how it is possible for them to efficiently implement projects without this resource.

We are losing our committed and skilled permanent workers who we nurtured to grow up and they are joining the short-term humanitarian projects like FDMN response. There should be a harmony and balance in the salary given by us and offered by them.



Jesmine of Save the Children says, If we can't find out what is who's responsibility to address this issue, it is pointless to discuss here, in my perspective.

The push needs to come from the local partners to have the work done. She also mentioned about staff poaching and proposed for adopting models to build capacity of local organizations.

Muhammad Mahadi of Action Against Hunger says, Sometimes the truth becomes difficult to accept. We have to endorse that we found all the local NGOs and community leaders have come up with whatever they had on the very next day the influx started. Community people of Cox's Bazar are very humanitarian in their approach. I want to raise the question that how many signatories of Grand Bargain Principles have been following its core philosophy? However, there are still few organizations who are not the signatories but are more closely following the GB commitments.

Our organization, Action Against Hunger have few good practices including we don't treat the partners as contractors or just implementer of projects. We appreciate the cooperative partnerships. We, the humanitarian agencies sometimes hardly show honour to the local authorities. We hire staffs without bothering where they are coming from and if they had completed proper resignation process in their organizations. It is an ethical issue.



Abdul Gafur the elected Chairman of Palongkhali Union, Ukhia says, Rohingya came here in 1978 and everyone was not repatriated. Some left behind. In 1992 they came and again everyone was not repatriated. This is how the number increased here. Now they are more than one million and in my union alone, the half of the population is living. We, the general community people were the first responders to the Rohingya people when we saw them coming through the rain and were starving. We shared our food and we gave them our cropping lands to live on.

Now we have been seeing our students are being recruited by the foreign NGO projects irrespectively. We need the students to carry on their education if we want to develop. I would rather request to give jobs to our labours who are now jobless for the FDMN are found at lower wage. They might not have certificates, but I am sure they are able to carry out the relief jobs what the students are doing. I asked several organizations to take the casual labours from the host community, but my voice was not heard.

Usually I had good relations with the NGOs, but nowadays, they relationship is not going very well. I am an elected people's representative here, but I am all ignored by them in case of the development programs are taken. Though I am responsible to provide NOC (No Objection Certificate) to the organizations both business and charity. Maybe, now they don't need it anymore. There is even a police case against him alleged for obstructing development work. It was about land acquisition for NGO office space. He urged to discuss with the local people including local government before handing over any land to FDMN.



Sumbul Rizvi of UNHCR says, Today's discussion is not this versus that, not LNGO Vs INGO. Both are essentially needed to complement each other to achieve the long term outcomes. Not only we need to explore adequate information on the local ability, we also need to find the capacity of the local authority and the community people as much as possible. All the bits are critical to take into account and analysis in order to achieve what we want to achieve. When we say local, we mean from the local upazila to Dhaka. It is not about Dhaka vs Upazila. We have diversified capacity in the local people.

She adds, Partnership should be mutually developed and it must not be corrosive. Let us strengthen this relationship to increase the achievement.

I feel proud to mention that, the most important element in the recently proposed JRP (Joint Response Plan, 2018) includes the program to address the affected host community.

Manuel of IOM says that Standard for humanitarian response is necessary but standard is not just numbers. Rather, it is the intention to do things for the sake of sustainable development. IOM has a clear statement based on the GB commitment as one of the signatories that Trust is the most valuable thing to do this kind of work at the local level. IOM has a number of plans to fund at the local level to run several projects with the local partners in future.

Mr. Kashem of Help Ukhia says, If the local NGO have the right to work at the local level and if they have the right to receive funds, they should be able to have that. It is not any fight between INGO and LNGO. It is now the time to commit to follow the GB commitments.



Sheuli Sharma, Jago Nari says that the Donors only trains up the project staffs who are normally temporary. That's why it is lost when they leave after the project is over. But they hardly offer trainings for the permanent and committed staff who might have been able to take that forward to build up the capacity of the local organizations in a sustainable way.

Rashed of Nongor says, Local NGOs are the ones who will be at the local level forever. They are committed to the local people. Neither the INGO, nor even the national NGO are likely to stay in the long term. He proposes to explore the web site to find who are working on the ground.

Bimal Chandra of Mukti Cox's Bazar speaks as the panel speaker and says, There is a clause in the Grand Bargain Principles, at least 20% of the total financial resources should directly go to the LNGO for implementing at the local level. Currently this allocation is less than 1%. There is a big gap. I would like to request the UN agencies and INGO to allocate some of their resources to train up the LNGO so that they can shoulder more responsibilities in future.



Nurul Huq, a local Journalist from Ukhia says, Idle people's brain is the devil's home. We must engage the refugee idle brains in different works within the camps so that they don't have the chance to get engaged in any destructive activities. They have the anger as they faced the genocide and had to survive it and there is a risk that they could be prepared for revenge if anyone provokes them.

Mr. Ashfaq as the Panel speaker from Christian Aid says, LNGO has the mind set to stay longer within the community. It is not that they don't have capacity. Rather it is manifested in many ways that they have inherent capacity as they understand the community's need and as they are the one building necessary human resources who are serving in the INGO- I am one of them.

There are examples of distortion in the field. An INGO pays 40,000 Taka to their own staff in the field projects, but when they fund in a same project to any local NGOs, they force the implementing partner to pay less than 20,000 Taka for the same task. It is not fare.

The chair of the dialogue, Abu Morshed Chowdhury concludes the event with the vote of thanks.