Press Release

**Speakers Call for Aid Workers’ Safety and Local Leadership in Humanitarian Response**

Virtual Discussion on World Humanitarian Day 2023

**Dhaka, 19 August 2023**: Speakers emphasized the paramount importance of ensuring the safety and security of aid workers in Bangladesh, particularly those engaged in humanitarian responses to the Rohingya crisis. They spoke during a virtual dialogue organized by COAST Foundation, Cox’s Bazar CSO-NGO Forum (CCNF) and BDCSO Coordination Process on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day.

The virtual dialogue, titled "No Matter What - Together we stand beside affected communities - Empower local actors," was moderated by M Mustafa Kamal Akanda, Director of COAST Foundation. The event's keynote presentation was delivered by Md. Iqbal Uddin from the same organization. Distinguished participants included Mr. Abu Morshed Chowdhury, Co-Chair of Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum (CCNF); Mr. Ariful Islam, Chief Executive of YPSA; Ms. Nilima Jahan of Agrajatra; Amir Hossain of NGO Platform; Sheikh Asad of Udayan Bangladesh; Khandakar Faruk Ahmed associated with Trinomul Unnayan Sangtha (TUS) Foundation; and Mujibur Rahman, Advisor of Shushilan. The occasion was inaugurated by Sanat Kumar Bhowmik, Deputy Executive Director of COAST Foundation.

During his keynote presentation, Md. Iqbal Uddin outlined vital recommendations. These encompassed advocating for the welfare, dignity, and survival of all, condemning acts against aid workers, and ensuring equitable compensation, essential facilities, life insurance, and comprehensive local staff support. He also emphasized dedicating 25% of direct funding to local organizations.

Abu Murshed Chowdhury acknowledged the pivotal role of frontline aid workers in humanitarian responses. He advocated for a risk-sharing concept that involves all partners, including donors, to ensure project design incorporates risk management.

Ms. Nilima Jahan emphasized the need to create a positive environment for female humanitarian workers at camp levels and provide them with necessary logistical support. Khandakar Faruk Ahmed suggested allowing non-registered organizations to work as associated entities in emergency projects. Amir Hossain of NGO Platform advocated for direct funding from donors to local organizations to minimize costs and promote local leadership. Sheikh Asad highlighted the need for effective implementation of the Grand Bargain agreement. Mujibur Rahman, Advisor of Shushilan, called for equal treatment of local, national, and INGOs and urged the implementation of the Grand Bargain.

Arifur Rahman of YAPSA stressed the need for direct funding to Bangladeshi NGOs to ensure cost-effectiveness, as intermediary organizations often absorb a significant amount of funds as their overhead or operational costs, leaving local organizations at the forefront without the necessary support.

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