

Participating organizations; BARSA, Bangla Praxis, BNNRC, BSS/MFTD, COAST, EquityBD, JS-APMDD, NCC,B, *Shelaidaha Rabindra Sangsad, Unnayan Anneshan/* Innovators, VDC and VOICE

Workshop report on ‘Political Economy of Debt and process of CSO Debt Audit’

1. Event, objectives and participants

In line with the illegitimate debt workshop held in the Philippines in March 2008, the above organizations in cooperation with COAST organized a 3 day workshop, from 05-09 March 2009, titled ‘Political Economy of Debt and process of CSO Debt Audit’ respectively for activists and NGO professional; the objective of this workshop was to develop a core activist group who would analyze country’s debt situation and implement debt audit from Civil Society perspective. The workshop held at COAST Training and Management Center, Coxsbazar, a sea resort town situated around 400 km far away from Dhaka.

In fact, development of a core activist group on the subject matter is very critical for now and future as government dependency on loans both from the external and internal sources has been increasing alarmingly which, in turn, making the government bound reducing finance in social service sectors.

Agencies	Debt Stock (In million US\$) In 2006-07:	Percentage %
OECD Countries	2466.824	13.57 %
OPEC Countries	179.837	0.99 %
Multi Agencies	15532.415	85.44 %
Total	18179.076 million	
In 2007-08 net ODA received (613.86-256.8)	1376.540	
In 2008-09 (July-Nov)	357.060	
G. Total	19912.676 million	
Per capita Ext. debt stock	143 US\$	

The current government is also planning to undertake huge development projects, especially taking loan from the IFIs. Construction of country’s second largest bridge over *Padma* River through ADB financing, construction of another sea port in *Teknaf* and 4 lane road between Dhaka and *Chittagong*, Atomic Energy plant through WB and other IFI financing etc are of few examples. Considering country’s overreaching debt situation participating organization as mentioned above

Agencies	Actual Debt Servicing Liability –DSL (BDT in corer) In 2006-07:		Total Debt Service Liability	% of DSL
	Principal	Interest		
ADB	1029.44	348.07	1377.51	31.01 %
IDA	1303.30	507.06	1810.36	40.76 %
Japan	586.94	245.54	832.48	18.74 %
USA	260.11	161.82	421.39	9.49 %
Total	3179.79	1262.49	4442.28	

Debt Servicing Liability: 2008

organized this workshop that have a common standpoint against neo-liberal economics and domination of IFIs over country’s sovereign development planning. Therefore, this training was to re-integrate spirit and interaction among the anti neo-liberal campaigners and formulate a broad based common & minimum campaign strategy for 2009 focusing illegitimate debt and debt audit. A total of 15 activist and campaigners from different organizations participated in the training.

2. Sessions and Methodology

Prior to the workshop in Coxsbazar there were two small group preparatory meeting have held in

Dhaka especially with the participation from VOICE, Bangla parxis, Actionaid and EquityBD. Six academic sessions were conducted; each of the sessions started with a presentation on the specific issue and concluded following an open discussion and expert opinion from the session moderator.

Session I: Setting workshop objectives, reflection from the participants on the issue.

Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed (JS-APMDD) and Rezaul Karim Chowdhury (EquityBD) moderated this session; major issues were sharing training objectives, synthesizing expectations of the training participants' and incorporating participant's view on the session topics.

Session II: Neo liberal economic order and financial capital

Ahmed Sawpan Mahmud –VOICE made a descriptive presentation and overview on the conceptual framework of neo-liberal economic order. He also highlighted on historical perspective of economic orders and financing policies of the northern countries and their allied IFIs on the LDCs. Mohiuddin Ahmed, Chairperson JSAPMDD moderated the session and gave his expert opinion how neo-liberal economic polices are endangering life and livelihoods of the common people across the South Asia



Group Discussion

Session III: Development aid, debt and domination

This session was moderated by Md. Faruk Ahmed – MFTD and a prominent economic journalist of Bangladesh Sanbad Sangstha (BSS). Syed Aminul Hoque of EquityBD made the key note presentation while he discussed the reflection of

neo-liberal policies i.e. impact of SAP, PRGF and PRSP implementation in Bangladesh.

Session IV: Experiences from IFI's funded project and programs and case analysis



Open Discussion

In this session a number of IFI financed projects were presented as the cases of bad project. Discussion on the projects helped the participants to know on the socio-ecological impact of the IFI's funding projects, role of government agencies in facilitating interests of the IFIs and corporations and the contingent liability of the state. Further discussion on the cases helped the participants in setting criteria of illegitimate and odious debt.

All the presented projects were found creating damages in local environment, foreclosing livelihoods options of local people and gross anomaly in financial management. In all cases participation of local people in the planning and implementation processes were denied, which allowed corruption. Md. Hamidur Rahaman – NCC,B moderated the session while Farzana Aktar of VOICE and Musfikur Rahaman of Innovators presented the cases.

Session V: Debt monitoring and Audit and alternative strategies

This session was about conceptual framework on the ways and strategies of debt monitoring, social and political perspectives of debt monitoring, sharing experiences and examples of debt monitoring in different countries and possible options of debt monitoring in Bangladesh.

In this session Md Shamsuddoha of Equitybd explained the vocabularies/ terminologies like Debt Sustainability, Debt Services, Debt Swap, Illegitimate Debt and Responsible Financing etc which are widely used in debt discourse.

Md. Zakir Kibria of Bangla Praxis and Mrs. Farzana Aktar of VOICE moderated the session while Syed Aminul Hoque of EquityBD presented the Conceptual framework of debt monitoring issue.

Session VI: Action plan and strategies on debt monitoring in Bangladesh

This session was of identifying possible course of actions on debt audit and launching broad based anti-debt movement in Bangladesh. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of EquityBD facilitated the session and Anisur Rahaman of BARSAs, a local activist organization in Bangladesh, moderated the session.

In this session participants, through a process of sub group consultation, identified different activities both on short (in 2009) and long term (2009-2015) basis.

3. Short and Long Term (2009-2015) Action Plan on ‘campaigning against illegitimate debt and debt audit in Bangladesh’.

Short Term (for 2009)	Long Term (2009-2015)
1. Case analysis on illegitimate debt; preparation of at least 02 cases	1. Establishment of a Parliamentary Caucus on Debt and Development
2. Expanding working group or alliance	2. Development of local level campaigner and against debt and debt domination, particularly in the Upazilla and District level.
3. Develop communication Tools - Information collection - Website develop - Booklet, Leaflet for mass education	3. Completion of citizen/CSO audit by 2011 and parliamentary bill by 2015
4. Awareness on Debt Issue - Human Chain, Press conference, Leaflet distribution etc	4. Establishment of resource and research centre
5. Develop media caucus	5. Awareness raising among the parliamentarian and parliamentary standing committees
6. Annual conference/ workshop with campaign members	6. Finding alternative development strategies alternatives in case of debt
7. Linking with international of local activities	7. Public Tribunal on debt
8. Country report on Debt with wider constituencies and research.	8. Include the debt issue in election manifesto of the political parties
9. Video documentation and Newsletter	9. Training/workshop with the parliamentary caucus and with the local leaders
	10. Analysis of historical and ecological debt in Bangladesh perspectives
	11. Analysis the capital flight scenario through FDI, DS and High Networking people.

4. Responsibility to be carried out on planned activities

In line with the short and long term action plan a number of sub groups has been proposed/established to work on specific issues; these are;

- 4.1 Case study group:** The above group will prepare at least two case studies on illegitimate debt in Bangladesh by June 2009. Md. Shamsuddoha of Equitybd will coordinate the group; the other members are Md. Zakir Kibria Bangla Praxis; Muafikur Rahaman Innovators; Frazana Aktar VOICE, Hamidur rahaman NCC,B, Syed Aminul Equitybd and Anisur Rahaman of BARSA. Once the cases are prepared, these will be shared with wider stakeholders including different government agencies, ministries, and foreign missions in Bangladesh. In this relation Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and and Zakir Kibria will develop a dissemination strategy to communicate the cases to the wider stakeholders.
- 4.2. Expanding the working group:** Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Convenor, EquityBD will develop strategies to expand this group and group activities at local level. He will develop a group list-serve of the workshop participants and also inviting other people to join this group as campaign member.
- 4.3. Develop communication tools:** It has been proposed to develop reader-friendly publication on debt and debt domination in Bangla. A team has been formed with Farzana Aktar, Ahmed Swapan Shamsuddoha, Aminul Hoque and Zakir Kibria to develop publications of these sorts. Md Shamsuddoha will coordinate this group. All the e-publication will be posed at EquityBD website (www.equitybd.org).
- 4.4. Creating pressure group and workshop:** The main premises for the pressure group to work on the issue of inclusion of debt issue in election manifesto bring the bill in next parliament and conduct citizen audit on debt etc. Mr. Kamruzzaman bhai will coordinate this responsibility.

4.5. Establishment of a media caucus/ group: Md. Faruk Ahmed of MFTD and special correspondent to the Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha will develop a media caucus on debt and development. It should be noted that there will be such a separate workshop with a group of journalist to be held during 25-29 March.

4.6. Parliamentary caucus develop: Mostafa Kamal Akanda of EquityBD will communicate with the parliamentarian and parliamentary standing committees for caucus development. He will prepare a list of the relevant parliamentarian and develop communication strategy with the parliamentarian by 31 March 2009.

4.7 Annual Conference: It has also been planned to organize an annual conference on the Aid and Development policies, focusing illegitimate debt and domination in December 2009. In this annual conference, along with other issues like neo-liberal domination, privatization of public services etc, the cases of illegitimate debt will be presented. This will create mass awareness on illegitimate debt and will help creating pressure for debt cancellation. People responsible for organizing this annual conference are; Anisur Rahman, Mostafa Kamal , Kamruzzaman and Shafikul Islam .

4.8. Resource and research centre: Individual organization will preserve relevant resources and research publication by its own. EquityBD will create a website blog where members can share the resource and information. Farzana Aktar, Anisur Rahaman and Aminul Hoque will work together for compiling country's debt statistics. Aminul Hoque will coordinate this initiative.

4.9. Metaphoric Public Tribunal, Historical & Ecological Debt analysis: Rezaul Karim Choudhury, in association with Mohiduddin Ahmed, will work on historical and ecological debt analysis of Bangladesh. They explore possible strategies to implement metaphoric public tribunal. Prior to that, it is critical to raise public awareness on the negative impact of debt on the people's life and livelihoods.

They also will link country position and campaign activities to the international campaigns.

List of Participants

Sl	Name and Designation	Organization and Address
01	Ahmed Sawpan Mahmud Executive Director	VOICE
02	Anisur Rahaman Executive Director	BARSA
03	Faruk Ahmed Special Correspondent	Bangladesh Sangbad Sangsta
04	Farzana Akter, Coordinator	VOICE
05	Hamidur Rahaman, Program Officer	Network for Climate Change – Bangladesh (NCC,B)
06	Md Kamruzzaman, Coordinator	Bangladesh NGOs network for Radio Communication
07	Md.Safikul Islam Executive Director	Village Developemnt Centre (VDC)
08	Mohiuddin Ahmed Chairperson	Jubilee South Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (JS-APMDD) and CDL Community Development Library
09	Md Shamsuddoha General Secretary	Equity and Justice Working Group
10	Mostafa Kamal Akanda Member	Equity and Justice Working Group
11	Musfiqur Rahaman	Unnayan Onneshan (The Innovators)
12	Rezaul Karim Chowdhury Convenor	Equity and Justice Working Group
13	Sathi Nazrul Islam Executive Director	Shilaidaha Rabindra Sangsad (SRS)
14	Syed Aminul Hoque Head-Research and Advocacy	COAST Trust
15	Zakir Kibria Executive Director	Bangla Praxis



Workshop Participants