

Statement of the Conference organised by the
Bangladesh Forum Germany on

Inclusive Citizenship for Good Governance in Bangladesh -
From Grassroot Movements to the International Policy Context

15/16 April 2010, Berlin

The statement paper is the outcome of the conference. The recommendations were prepared with the contribution of the participants. Based on that this final paper was compiled by civil society actors from Bangladesh and Europe.

Contents

Inclusive Citizenship and international large scale projects	2
Inclusive Citizenship and Access to Rights and Remedies	3
Inclusive Citizenship and Access to Government Services and Social Safety Net Programs	5
Inclusive Citizenship and Political Participation	7
Inclusive Citizenship and Dalit Rights	9
Inclusive Citizenship and Indigenous Peoples	11
Inclusive Citizenship and Access for Women to Services and Women's Rights	13

Inclusive Citizenship and international large scale projects

Background

Bangladesh has shown significant developmental progress in the last decades. Indicators for social development and economic growth rates are remarkable considering the persisting political setbacks over the past years. Even though the infrastructure is seen to be developing fast, traffic and demand for electricity with the expansion of the private sector as well as energy consumption pattern of the people themselves in their private life, is growing faster. Responding to this, large scale development proposals are being considered actively by the government and both the national and international investors are showing interest in establishing large scale projects. Measures are being taken to implement them, but unfortunately with hardly any involvement of the people whose life is potentially affected in a negative way. An example of such a project has been the case of open pit mining in the regions of Phulbaria and Boropukiria in the Dinajpur district, which has drawn both local and national protest on grounds that the people have not been involved in the design or development of such projects, nor have environmental and social impacts of such projects been adequately assessed.

These are implications that such proposals of large scale projects should be put under special scrutiny. It needs to be emphasised that in a democratic society it is the people's fundamental right to be informed of any action of the government and to be involved in decision making that affects the livelihood of the people. We therefore put forward the following recommendations to the concerned groups:

Recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh

1. To involve local elected bodies such as Union Parishads and Upazila Parishads in decision making processes on any large scale project within their constituency; this indicates that consultations only are not sufficient; a proper process should be developed for involvement in decision making as well.
2. To conduct, prior to decision-making, an assessment report on the impact of large scale projects on human rights, social development and environmental issues; assessment reports should be done transparently and with participation of affected people.
3. To discuss and decide large scale projects in the National Parliament.
4. To include access to contracts of the corporate sectors including cooperation agreements of the Government of Bangladesh with multinational companies in the Right to Information Act.

Recommendations to the International Community

1. To consider local people's opinion in preparation of policies on large scale projects and to develop a strategy on mechanisms how local people are part of the decision making process.
2. To ensure that the human rights, social and environmental impact assessment is done in a transparent manner and properly including participation of the affected people from the planning period onwards.
3. To follow national laws and international treaties and to ensure that the corporate sectors including multinational companies adhere to them as well.

Recommendation to national and international Civil Society

1. To consider local people's opinions in their policy development and their work regarding large scale projects.
2. To strengthen their line of argumentation civil society should do advocacy on the implementation on large scale projects taking into consideration the demands of the local people as well as the national interests of the country.
3. To bring people's opinion on large scale projects and development partners' policies in mainstream media.
4. To campaign for early information of the affected population on any large scale projects and publication of contracts with the corporate sectors including multinational companies.

Inclusive Citizenship and Access to Rights and Remedies

Background

The return to an elected government and the reconvening of Parliament together with its standing committees and furtherance of efforts for formal separation of the judiciary have contributed to creating a context that is favourable to citizens' involvement in legislative and policy advocacy, for promotion and protection of human rights and access to justice.

Democratic governance essentially underpins participation of the people in all its affairs on the basis of constitutional rights. The poor and marginalised are discriminated in societies that do not abide by the rule of law and where the institutions to enforce the law are weak. In Bangladesh, weak institutions fail to protect the legal rights of the poor and the marginalised. Examples of social and economic injustice can be seen in the frequent evictions of the poor from slums, in the name of public interest, indiscriminate arrests in the name of public security, extra judicial incarceration, deprivation of the rights of minorities and the marginalised population. The poor are victimised not only due to lack of resources, but because they lack power to demand their constitutional rights.

Increasing mobilisation by marginalised communities has led to greater public awareness about equality and discrimination. Yet, for different marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities, much remains to be done in terms of dismantling discriminatory laws, changing attitudes and behaviours and putting in place special measures for advancement of disadvantaged or historically discriminated communities.

High level pledges have been made with respect to a "reassertion of due process" and "zero tolerance" for torture or extra-judicial killings. Important steps to address impunity have been taken, such as the conclusion of the trials of the 15th August 1975 killings, the commencement of prosecutions regarding the Mutiny of the Bangladesh Rifles as well as establishment of the International Crimes Tribunal. At the same time, however, extra-judicial killings allegedly continue apace and arbitrary arrests and custodial ill-treatment, including rape and torture, are reported. These cases raise questions regarding whether due process is available in reality and if so for whom. Political cadres and persons with connections to elected representatives are reportedly involved in gang violence and extortion as well as in a string of widely reported assaults and sexual harassment of women, with no systematic action being taken against them.

Institutional reforms, though promised, have not as yet taken place with regard to the strengthening of the independence of the judiciary or of the various independent commissions – Law Reforms Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, Land Disputes Resolution Commission – which remain deprived of adequate resources to be able to function effectively.

Recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh

1. To further strengthen the independence and accountability of the judiciary, through establishing and support a secretariat in the Supreme Court for oversight of the judiciary; through legislating credible criteria for appointment of judges; by enabling free and independent operation of the judiciary at all levels, through reform of contempt laws.
2. To further provide access to justice, particularly for marginalised communities, through strengthening and catalysing the activities of the National Legal Services Organisation, in collaboration with civil society organisations providing legal services, by activating village courts, and by ensuring monitoring and quality assurance regarding legal services, including alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
3. To address impunity, through undertaking independent and impartial investigations into past violations, including extra-judicial killings, political killings and assaults on human rights defenders and journalists, and enabling effective prosecution of violence against women and against members of minorities or marginalised communities.
4. To accelerate police reforms to ensure due process of law and to eliminate torture, ensure greater gender sensitivity in particular on cases of violence against women and domestic violence and responsiveness to marginalised communities.

5. To strengthen initiatives on prison reforms, including by furthering and deepening collaborations with civil society organisations.
6. To ensure and provide institutional support to marginalised communities, e.g. through training, financial support and capacity building, including awareness raising, strengthened cooperation between civil society legal services and the national legal aid organisation
7. To strengthen the independence and functionality of commissions, e.g. National Human Rights Commission, Law Reform Commission, Information Commission and Land Disputes Resolution Commission, and to enable them to recommend reforms of discriminatory laws and practices in particular those affecting disadvantaged or marginalised people as well as to address discrimination or violence against such persons on a priority basis.

Recommendations to the International Community

1. To support the Government in its efforts to further strengthen the independence and accountability of the judiciary, in order to ensure access to justice, particularly for marginalised communities, e.g. by supporting the establishment of credible criteria of appointment for judges, supporting mechanisms for establishing a secretariat in the Supreme Court for oversight of the judiciary, adopting case management processes to resolve backlogs, and enabling public consultation on issues of accessibility, as well as making available legal services.
2. To support the Government in its efforts to address impunity, through supporting independent and impartial investigations into past violations, including extra-judicial killings, political killings and assaults on human rights defenders and journalists, and enabling effective prosecution of violence against women and against members of minorities or marginalised communities.
3. To support the Government in its efforts to strengthen ongoing police and prison reforms in order to ensure due process of law and eliminate torture and ensure greater gender sensitivity and responsiveness to marginalised communities.
4. To provide institutional support to representatives of marginalised communities as well as civil society organisations to address the concerns of marginalised communities through training, financial support, and capacity building and to provide direct support including through awareness raising, partnering with civil society groups in Bangladesh, strengthening cooperation between the national legal aid organization and civil society legal services.
5. To urge the Government of Bangladesh to strengthen the independence and functionality of the commissions, e.g. National Human Rights Commission, Law Reform Commission, Information Commission and Land Disputes Resolution Commission, and to enable them to recommend reforms of discriminatory laws and practices in particular those affecting disadvantaged or marginalised people.

Recommendations to the national and international Civil Society

1. To discuss with the marginalised and excluded, including Adivasi, persons with disabilities and Dalits on the advantages and disadvantages on adopting employment and educational quotas for these groups
2. To monitor and campaign in order to ensure the adoption and implementation of the recommendations above.
3. To monitor, campaign and engage in advocacy to realise the recommendations made above and to extend their services to and engage in advocacy for the realisation of the rights of marginalised people in consultation with such communities

Inclusive Citizenship and Access to Government Services and Social Safety Net Programs

The Government of Bangladesh has taken multi-faceted actions in accelerating the pace of providing primary education for all as well as affordable health care services. Moreover, the GoB has been pursuing a number of safety net programmes for more than two decades, addressing also extremely vulnerable groups such as widows, deserted and destitute women as well as old aged and extreme poor to some extent. Providing public services and establishing social safety net measures have contributed partly to achieve goals like poverty alleviation, reduction of vulnerability, decrease of disparity, recovery from illness, home for the shelter-less, human development and opportunities to earn a livelihood.

It has to be acknowledged though that extreme poverty on a mass scale remains a serious problem. Growing inequality is separating those who have benefited from successes from those left behind. The most important forms of ‘social protection’ for the extreme poor come from fragile informal relationships with relatives, friends, neighbours and employers. Many of the extreme poor engage in low paid work – which is often dangerous and exploitative. Others are forced to rely on the charity of others and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Many who are disabled, mentally ill, or chronically ill are extremely vulnerable.

Approximately 30 per cent of the rural population currently belong to the extreme poor people, which mean living on less than \$US 0, 50 purchasing power a day; they only have 1-2 meagre meals per day and spend 80 per cent of their income for food.

The existing safety net programmes provide limited coverage, and hence cannot cope with the magnitude of extreme poverty that exists in the country. Many socially excluded groups such as scheduled castes, Harijans, sweepers are not covered. Millions of persons with disabilities remain unattended. Most programmes are not including ethnic minorities. There is little coverage of some backward areas or less accessible areas like Monga prone areas, haor areas or the outreached chars in the Gulf of Bengal. Moreover, inappropriate targeting remains a major problem, i.e. the inclusion of the ineligible or exclusion of eligible persons in the programmes. Mistargeting and leakage is often linked to corruption and political opportunism. Discretion of officials in allocating transfers undermines the political feedback that can be generated by the constituencies of beneficiaries. Low levels of political feedback keeps these important programmes from becoming significant on policy agendas or from playing a larger role in elections. The programmes are not politically empowering for a number of reasons linked to poor coverage, local discretion – they are not seen as social rights of citizenship – rather a tool used by local politicians to enhance their own local standing.

Recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh

1. To improve coordination among the government ministries and departments and NGOs that are involved in implementing the social safety net programmes and to make transparent the contents of the respective services and safety net programmes so that the (extreme) poor know what their entitlements are and through which mechanisms they can get access to claim these entitlements
2. To formulate a Social Safety Net Policy which will give guidelines for resource allocation each year in terms of percentage of GDP and public and private expenditures
3. To improve delivery methods that are less prone to misuse; to include civil society together with the local elected bodies when selecting the eligible, when informing the eligible about the entitlements they have and when actually delivering cash or kind transfers to the eligible
4. To extend coverage to most marginalised communities (minorities, people with disabilities, landless, women headed households) living in less accessible and disaster prone areas such as the North-western region in Bangladesh, haor and char land as well as the coastal areas

5. To promote self-help structures for extreme poor that are able to work to ensure their economic development and the protection of their rights; this includes providing allowances to access means of production to ensure their fulfilment of basic needs for food, shelter and clothing;
6. To introduce and extend social safety net programs to those who cannot become entrepreneurs due to constraints on income earning ability, chronic illness, social stigma or disability to graduate from poverty
7. To introduce social safety net measures for extreme poor who have to do jobs coupled with high risks such as traffic accidents and dangerous and unhealthy work environments; these occupations are in places such as garment and brick factories, ship wrecking, tobacco processing and in transport work.
8. To improve access to health care for extreme poor by providing a higher number of skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care, by providing a better infrastructure of public health clinics and hospitals including tackling the problems staff absenteeism; to include NGOs and local groups to act as watchdogs
9. To introduce state run education programmes that take the living conditions of the most marginalised communities (children from char islands, children from indigenous groups) into consideration; this has to be taken into account when compiling the national budget and has to result in higher allocation for these groups
10. To improve quality education by properly implementing PEDP II and the forthcoming sector wide approach for primary education, “PEDP III”, including the elimination of misuse in the education sector, the establishment of incentives to increase the attendance of teachers, the promotion of interactive learning methods and material, a learning environment which meets the demands of the children (smaller classes, separate wash rooms for girls and boys) as well as the introduction of a coherent school management and evaluation system, which ensures proper monitoring of quality education
11. To close tax loop holes and to expand the tax base for investing in services and in the extension of social safety net programs

Recommendation to the international community

1. To focus in the bi- and multilateral cooperation with Bangladesh on the access to resources for extreme poor, including access to social safety net programmes and educational and health services; in reference to the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance and the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living (Art 9 and 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) to promote the nationwide coverage of social safety net programmes for people who are not able to work, including the promotion of mechanisms that ensure proper targeting and monitoring systems
2. To coordinate its efforts and work with the Government and the civil society to fulfil the basic needs of all citizens of Bangladesh with particular focus on those with weak political voices and power
3. To promote the work of NGOs that focus on social mobilisation and the support of self help structures for extreme poor, who are able to work

Recommendations to the Civil Society

1. To focus on extreme poverty in the NGO-programs as well as in the advocacy work
2. To act as watch dogs to monitor the proper implementation and delivery of government services
3. To work with the media for joint advocacy work to hold the Government accountable to ensure food security, basic health services and education for all and to raise awareness to citizens´ rights to basic needs and public services

Inclusive Citizenship and Political Participation

Background

The free and fair 9th parliamentary elections in Bangladesh in 2008 led to Bangladesh's return to democracy and was a very important step for strengthening political participation. Political stability and political participation will enable the Government to fulfil its pledges made in the election manifesto such as maintaining economic stability and controlling commodity price hikes, taking effective action against corruption, eliminating poverty and inequality and establishing good governance. The recently published Nielsen opinion poll shows that a majority of the people sees the Government heading into a right direction.

Political participation is essential for an active citizenry. An active citizen not only needs to be aware of his/her rights and duties but also needs tools to exercise those rights and participate in the decision making process so that he/she is able to exercise autonomy and control over own life. Effectively it attains to a goal where one will be independent in pursuing for its most fundamental needs.

Political participation should not be understood strictly as undertaking a partisan political role which often is the popular perception in Bangladesh. Rather it should be understood as quality participation that ensures citizens' engagement in decisions that affect their day to day lives.

To achieve that goal of citizens' empowerment, global society needs to play a role. To ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups as citizens in political decision making and implementation, different stakeholders must be able to play their respective roles efficiently

The marginalized citizens will need the support to be conscious of their rights and here the local NGOs must play an active role and work with them in partnership with the government and development partners. Similarly international civil society should be linked with the national civil society for dialogue to help that resources are allocated to appropriate organizations. Within that context, below are the recommendations made for these four stakeholders:

Recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh:

1. To have constructive interaction with the citizens of Bangladesh and not feel concerned rather supported about citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities and which are mobilising the people to demand, exercise and enjoy their rights
2. To incorporate the needs of the marginalized citizens in all government policies, rules and regulations and to encourage social mobilization at the grass roots level
3. To establish a Government-NGO Coordination Council (GNCC) to ensure transparent and accountable functioning of NGOs

Recommendations to the International Community

1. To give support in any feasible way to social movements and social mobilisation that protect the rights of the marginalised section of the people
2. To integrate social movements or informal groupings of individuals or organizations which focus on specific political or social issues, on carrying out, resisting or undoing a social change at the earliest stage of the project/program design through dialogue and exchange with these groups.
3. To make sure that inclusive citizenship is an active part of the development agenda and to ensure that the monitoring, evaluation and impact analysis include representatives of these marginalized groups

Recommendations to the Civil Society in Bangladesh:

1. To be more active on social mobilization and working towards informed communities so that political decision making on the local level becomes more participatory

2. To make individual citizens more aware of tools like the Right to Information Act to make officials more accountable for their actions
3. To take active role in highlighting the situation of the most marginalized on the national level and to increase the visibility of these marginalized communities
4. To use innovative means like modern communication technology and media to engage the majority population inside Bangladesh with the problems related to exclusivity for the most marginalized communities

Recommendations to the International Civil Society:

1. To encourage international political foundations to come to Bangladesh to support with capacity building
2. To support the international community by developing proper mechanisms to channelise funds to the eligible beneficiaries.
3. To transport a more differentiated image of Bangladesh to the public abroad by critically acclaiming the deficits of inclusiveness, but also by highlighting the success stories of Bangladesh.

Inclusive Citizenship and Dalit Rights

Background

The Government of Bangladesh in its “National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II” is emphasizing on the fact that low caste people such as the dhopa, muchhi or napit are subject to social injustice, are marginalised and have little opportunities for overcoming their harsh realities. The GoB outlines its vision for these groups to include them into the mainstream of society by ensuring their participation in socioeconomic activities and to promote and protect their rights.

Caste discrimination is one of the most serious human rights violations in the world today, affecting more than 260 million women, men and children worldwide. The majority are Dalits, referred to as “untouchables” by many non-Dalits, living in South Asia, with an estimated 5.5 million Dalits - representing about 4% of the population - living in Bangladesh alone.

The caste system is a strict hierarchical social system based on underlying notions of purity and pollution. Those at the bottom of this system face discrimination across all spheres of life. Caste discrimination not only violates basic rights but is also a major obstacle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Dalits who are marginalised and discriminated on the basis of their occupation and descent are to be found in all religious communities in South Asia.

The majority of Dalits in Bangladesh are landless and live in chronic poverty in rural areas or urban slums. They are deprived of or actively excluded from education, health services, housing, employment and participation in public and political life. Approximately 64% of the Dalits in Bangladesh do not have even primary education. Dalit communities experience daily insecurity and violence with usually no recourse to justice. Dalit women face the heaviest burden, experiencing gender and caste-based as well as religion-based discrimination. Furthermore they are exposed to violence from men in wider society as well as within their own communities and families.

Dalits have been overlooked in the development and rights discourse in Bangladesh and have only recently been able to raise their voices and mobilise for their rights. They have started to engage with the Government of Bangladesh and international development partners and to place the issue of discrimination against Dalits in Bangladesh on the national and international agenda.

Recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh

1. To undertake specific policies and programmes to implement the constitutional prohibition on caste-based discrimination, as guaranteed under Articles 28 and 29 of the constitution, and in particular to ensure equal opportunities for persons irrespective of caste, descent and occupation with respect to access to public employment or educational institutions.
2. To enact and implement legislation to criminalise discrimination or violence based on caste, descent or occupation.
3. To compile data in the upcoming Census 2011 to identify the extent of discrimination based on caste, descent and occupation and in order to facilitate enhancing and enforcing the access for Dalits to basic services as well as in the decision making process.
4. To increase awareness within local government institutions about the rights of Dalits as citizens and to establish mechanisms within such institutions for ensuring more effective responses, monitoring and reporting of violation of human rights of Dalits and to facilitate their equal access to basic services.

Recommendations to the international community

1. To support the Government in translating local and national Dalit concerns by incorporating into domestic law based on international standards, e.g. the United Nations Principles and Guidelines for Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent.
2. To support the Government of Bangladesh in adopting policies and programmes to address and eliminate discrimination based on caste, descent and occupation.

Recommendations to the civil society of Bangladesh

1. To strengthen and expand engagement on Dalit issues, including within their own organisations, through advocacy and mobilisation and development interventions and through extending solidarity.
2. To undertake increased coordination and cooperation amongst all stakeholders working on Dalit issues.
3. To ensure appropriate representation of Dalits within organisations that work towards inclusivity of Dalits

Recommendations to international civil society

1. To increase engagement on Dalit issues through support to advocacy and mobilisation initiatives as well as development interventions and to extend solidarity to Dalit communities and Dalit-led organisations.

Inclusive Citizenship and Indigenous Peoples

Background

The Government of Bangladesh took important measures to protect the rights of minority groups. In its „National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction“ the Government emphasizes to include representatives of indigenous peoples in undertaking development projects in areas inhabited by indigenous communities. The Government aims to formulate a land policy which can deal with land disputes involving indigenous peoples. Moreover, Bangladesh aims to support participation of local governments in the management of natural resources and to recognize the traditional knowledge of indigenous people. In terms of access to productive assets the Government acknowledges that an “authentic sense of ownership/tenure of resources will be developed”. The Government has started in 2009 to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord again.

The Government of Bangladesh has obligations under the constitution to eliminate discrimination on grounds of religion and race as well as to ensure affirmative measures for historically disadvantaged or discriminated sections of the population. The current Government has pledged to take action to eliminate discrimination against minorities. However, although there are some 46 communities living in Bangladesh with distinctive culture, language and different religious practices, the constitution still does not explicitly recognise indigenous peoples in the plains or Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Adopting constitutional amendments in this regard would contribute to further the inclusion of indigenous peoples as citizens of Bangladesh.

The armed conflict between indigenous peoples and the state in the CHT spanned two decades until the CHT Peace Accord was signed between the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti and the GoB in 1997. The current Government has expressed its commitment for the full implementation the accord, and taken a number of measures in this regard, but a clear cut road map needs to be adopted and implemented within a clear time frame to ensure peace and development for all citizens in the CHT. In the meantime, incidents of violence and land occupations continue to be a reality in the region, leaving communities in a state of insecurity. The recent incidents of looting and arson in Baghaihat and Khagrachari in February 2010 are a matter of grave concern, which require immediate action by the Government to investigate, bring the responsible persons to justice and provide adequate rehabilitation as well as reparation to the affected individuals.

The international community has a strong commitment to protect and ensure the human rights of indigenous peoples and Bengali communities in the CHT and towards their self-determined development. The civil society in Bangladesh has increasingly supported the cause and contributed to a better understanding of the situation and the necessity to implement the CHT Peace Accord without delay.

Recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh

1. To ensure explicit recognition of indigenous peoples in the Constitution of Bangladesh.
2. To translate its commitment for the implementation of the CHT Peace Accord into action by developing a road map in cooperation with representatives of indigenous peoples', Bengali communities and from the national civil society.
3. To protect the rights of all citizens and to ensure effective and prompt action to prevent violence and to investigate and prosecute reports of human rights violations in the CHT, to ensure appropriate penalties for perpetrators and redress for victims.
4. To enable wider public consultation on the operations and activities of the Land Disputes Resolution Commission and its monitoring as well as to engage efforts to increase understandings of best practices drawn from other countries

5. To invite the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous Peoples to visit Bangladesh

Recommendations to governments and multilateral institutions acting on international level

1. To act on their commitments to support the implementation of the CHT Peace Accord, to ensure development respecting political, economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous peoples and Bengali communities and to promote and protect human rights in the CHT, with a strategic approach allowing for immediate as well as long term development action.
2. To broaden the group of committed governments and multilateral institutions who are working on the development of the CHT
3. To create a contact point for communication with civil society and to improve communication at the level of the international community to coordinate between concerned governments and multilateral institutions
4. Develop a common strategy among the different specialised agencies and treaty bodies of the UN regarding addressing human rights violations and promoting development in the CHT.

Recommendations to civil society in the CHT

1. To support the development of a road map for implementation of the CHT Peace Accord.
2. To develop strategies which include all communities in the CHT, including Bengali communities, traditional institutions, Government institutions, NGOs, people's organisations and other relevant actors from the civil society in the CHT.

Recommendations to civil society in Bangladesh

1. To develop strategies and programmes to strengthen democratic and secular values among all communities, including Bengali communities, in the CHT.
2. To contribute to increased understanding of the situation in the CHT among the general public in Bangladesh.
3. To engage in public debate to strengthen and deepen understanding of Bangladesh as a plural and diverse nation.

Recommendations to international civil society

1. To develop, through or with the International Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission procedures for regular exchange and cooperation with other actors in Bangladesh's national civil society on monitoring implementation of the CHT Peace Accord and on the enforcement of rights in the CHT.

Recommendations to all actors

1. To ensure that all development actors conduct a thorough analysis and assessment of the impact of their work on the rights of indigenous peoples and Bengali communities in the CHT during planning and implementation, in particular by ensuring full and effective participation of all local affected people on the basis of their free, prior and informed consent.
2. To encourage the Government of Bangladesh to invite the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous Peoples to visit Bangladesh and to enable civil society organisations to participate in and facilitate and support this visit.
3. To encourage media to highlight the issue of the CHT Peace Accord and its implementation.
4. To promote non-violence as a common denominator for all interventions in the CHT.
5. To recognize and support women's roles as peace actors.

Inclusive Citizenship and Access for Women to Services and Women's Rights

With the evolution of the Bangladeshi society over time, the status of women has also been changing. In the changing context of internationalisation, women in Bangladesh have entered new spheres of the economy and social life. In adjusting to such changes however, barriers still exist for women to gain both access to services as well as in the assurance of human rights and dignity. In addition, women's entry into this new global sphere of existence has also complicated life choices for them and thrown up new challenges without proportionate expansions in safety nets and other protective measures.

The reality is that many more women in Bangladesh are now engaged in economic, social and political activities outside the boundaries of their homes, yet having to carry the burden of both household chores as well as working in their respective professional areas for a sustainable livelihood. But their access to services and rights has not increased in a similar scale. Women, no matter how well they have progressed either individually or as a particular segment of the citizenry are still discriminated and deprived of rights and entitlements due to them in their families as well as in social and public life. With the complexities of socio-economic-political processes due to its linkages with globalisation, more and more women have to struggle harder in the face of higher competition for limited resources offered by the respective authorities in order for them to be able to live with equal rights and in full dignity. Increased participation of women in these processes also escalated both actual violence as well as threat of violence against them in all spheres of life. Furthermore, women from marginalised communities, poor families and living in remote areas are even more discriminated against and deprived than others. The recommendations therefore touch on centralised policies of the Government that affect women generally as well as specific and local cases of discrimination that necessitate their adjustment to changing realities of Bangladesh.

Recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh

Policies on women

1. To take immediate measures to revise and adopt the National Women's Development Policy in consultation with women's rights organisation.
2. To systematically disseminate in cooperation with civil society and international development partners information to women on welfare schemes by the Government, such as old age pensions and support for people with disabilities etc., so that they can better access such facilities.

Women's work and labour

1. To assure welfare for women workers; to ensure social and labour standards for women that correspond with the guidelines of the International Labour Organisations and that ensure a living wage
2. To ensure equal pay for women engaging in the same work as men.
3. To ensure social protection of women migrant workers through their consular offices and to give central policy directives. This should be supported by the international and national civil society.

Law and order

1. To review in consultation with national civil society organisations gender discriminatory laws and practices and revise them in conformity with international human rights, including e.g. domestic violence, sexual harassment.
2. To ensure social and legal protection of women from sexual harassment in public spaces.
3. To take measures to stop extralegal oppression of women through fatwas, i.e. religious verdicts, given in local salishes, traditional mediation council, and take immediate measures to protect the victims of such verdicts. Local level agencies such as the Union Council should be empowered to offer such protection.

4. To take measures with support by the international community to make the legal provision of “safe custody” safe for women;

Access to Markets and capital

1. The Government of Bangladesh with the support of international developmental partners should ensure access to markets for women in order to enhance their self-determination and self-reliance.
2. The Government of Bangladesh with the support of international developmental partners should also ensure control of production and marketing of products of women entrepreneurs so that there is less dependency on middle-men.
3. Women should be informed about and ensured access to capital and training programmes of private banks or non-profit

Recommendations to the International Community

1. To support measures to improve conditions of women workers and labourers in places of work.
2. To take measures to support programmes for training women entrepreneurs.

To International Civil Society

1. To take measures for providing counselling and lending infrastructural support to women entering new fields of labour and work
2. To extend its support to women’s concerns within socially excluded groups like the Dalits and within indigenous and other minority groups and help to integrate their cause into the mainstream women’s movement.

To National Civil Society

1. To empower women to organise and mobilise through constructing their own agendas.
2. To ensure social support and adequate shelters for female victims of violence with proper social counselling
3. To monitor women’s access to health services and maternal and child mortality rates in a systematic way
4. To continue to build awareness about women’s education especially women in vulnerable and underserved groups
5. To give special focus on concerns of women in their development plans for socially excluded groups such as Dalits, Adivasi etc.
6. To set in motion and include as component of development programmes a longer term processes of changing the mindset of young men and youth towards respecting the dignity of women and girls need to be set in motion
7. To provide women entrepreneurs with capacity building courses on designing and managing creative entrepreneurial ventures