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NATIONAL

Weak national integrity system undermines governance, nourishes corruption

A weak National Integrity System (NIS) bedeviled by wide gap of practice and implementation compared to legal provisions and institutional capacity is undermining the prospect of governance and nourishing corruption, reveals a study of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) released on 14 May 2014. The study conducted on 15 NIS institutions between August 2012 – September 2013, shows that despite having relatively strong legal framework, resources and institutional framework their implementation and practice are largely inadequate and a culture of non-compliance generally prevails resulting in a lower than possible level of transparent and accountable governance in the country.

The report titled 'National Integrity System Assessment: Bangladesh' was released at the BRAC center in Dhaka. Similar studies were also done on Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka by respective chapters of Transparency International. Co-authors of the report Professor Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman of University of Dhaka and Professor Sumaiya Khair, Deputy Executive Director of TIB presented the findings. Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of TIB Advocate Sultana Kamal and Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman were also present. The 15 pillars of NIS covered by the study are: Parliament, Executive, Judiciary, Public Administration, Local Government, Police, Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, Political Parties, Civil Society, Media and Business sector.

The National Integrity System (NIS) assessment provides a benchmark for analysing the robustness and effectiveness of a country's institutions of accountability in addressing corruption, the press conference was told. According to the study a dysfunctional parliament bedeviled by the culture of boycott, a dominant power exercising executive, and increasing politicization of the bureaucracy, police and judiciary has resulted in lack of oversight, transparency and accountability required for establishing good governance. On the other side, people's confidence in various Commissions, e.g., Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Human Rights Commission and Information Commission of the government have gone down following doubts raised about their independence and effectiveness. The study also found crisis of internal governance in political parties, civil society and the media.

While talking to the media during the press conference the Executive Director of TIB Dr Iftekharuzzaman said, "While the lack of political will has been a continuing stumbling block in the process of democratic and accountable governance in Bangladesh, there are other cross cutting issues

that have a direct bearing on the current NIS which include ominous level of partisan political influence on the institutions, weak oversight, insufficient resources, lack of incentives, dearth of technical and professional competence, nepotism, and corruption and an absence of exemplary punishment for corruption leading to a culture of impunity.”

The study placed 63 recommendations to strengthen these 15 NIS institutions and also underscored strict implementation of the existing laws. The recommendations included, among others, adoption of appropriate measures to make the parliament effective; enacting of the draft code of conduct bill for MPs as a law; reform of the Rules of Business in order to ensure checks and balance in the role of the Executive; appointments of supremeCourt

judges by an independent body comprised of supreme judicial commission or a collegium of judges; enactment of civil service act; reform of the legal framework for the police force to include extensive transparency, accountability, independence, professional integrity and no impunity provisions in police operations; enactment of law specifying the eligibility criteria for appointments of EC members and a framework for monitoring compliance with electoral laws, rules and regulations; adoption of a strategic plan for the ACC developed by itself to effectively deliver its mandate and re-examining the ACC organogram; and provision for the public officials to disclose information of wealth and assets and update annually.

Curb influence of MPs and ensure even distribution of power

Speakers at a TIB organised roundtable echoed with the recommendations of curbing influence of MPs over local government institutions (LGIs). They also urged for ensuring balance of power among public representatives and administration for its smooth functioning. These were among 18 other recommendations of a TIB conducted study that was presented at the round-table. It made an in-depth analysis of existing laws on LGIs; state of human resources; budget allocation; monitoring, evaluation of activities and audit of accounts; procurement process; use of logistics; role of parliamentary standing committees; planning and implementation of development projects; state of disclosure of information etc.

The round-table titled “Local Government Sector: Governance Challenges and the Way Forward” was held on 25th May 2014 at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium. Mr Mashiur Rahman Ranga, MP, Hon’ble State Minister for

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Professor Zarina Rahman Khan, Deputy Chief of Party, Strengthening Democratic Local Governance project; Dr Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman, Professor, department of Public Administration, Dhaka University; Dr Tofail Ahmed, Local Government Expert discussed on the paper. Dr Iftekharuzzaman moderated the event and M Hafizuddin Khan, Member, TIB Board of Trustees chaired the session. Farhana Rahman, Programme Manager; Nahid Sharmin,

Deputy Programme Manager and Md Rabiul Islam, Assistant Programme Manager, Research and Policy, TIB jointly presented the findings of the study.



According to the study, LGIs during 2009-2012 marked some successes including holding elections that resulted in elected representatives in 5375 LGIs out 5439 LGIs (97%); building 21310 kilometers of roads, 1822 meters of bridges and culverts and 791 Union Parishad

complexes; training of 41370 public representatives and officials; rehabilitation of 98240 vulnerable women through different projects; projects for infrastructural development and improve livelihood of the indigenous and introduction of online birth registration.

Despite these positive achievements, LGIs were not able to perform at desired level because of various governance challenges. Major challenges include full control of the central government, interference of MPs, lack of human resources (40% and 20% posts are respectively vacant in Municipalities and Zilla Parishads), Influence of government over recruitment process, bribery

ranging from 1%-10% in project allocation and implementation, bribery ranging from 5000-80000 tk. in managing auditors at union and upazilla parishads and late disbursement of funds hindering implementation of development plans.

Key recommendations of the study includes empowering LGIs to select projects for infrastructural development; holding elections in pending LGIs; considering population, size and need along with the type of the institution in allocating resources; initiate e-procurement; digitalisation of tax system and display on citizen's charter in every LGI and update it on regular basis.

Significant steps in implementing NIS; needs firm commitment of institutions and stakeholders

TIB urged the government to address the limitations of the National Integrity Strategy (NIS) to turn it into a fully implementable document. It also urged allocation of funds, provision of regular reporting and bringing ethics committee under the jurisdiction of the administrative mechanism. The call came during a press launch of a TIB study titled "National Integrity Strategy: Implementation and Progress" on 29th May at Hotel Abakash in Dhaka. Sadhan Kumar Das and Shammi Laila Islam, Programme Managers, Research and Policy, TIB presented the findings. M Hafizuzddin Khan, Member, Board of Trustees; Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director and Dr Sumaiya Khair, Deputy Executive Director, TIB were also present.

The study collected data from January – May 2014 and it revealed several significant steps by the government including formation of a National Integrity Advisory Committee under the stewardship of the hon'ble Prime Minister; an Executive Committee led the Finance Minister; NIS Implementation Unit led an additional secretary of the administrative and implementation department of the cabinet division and appointment of focal person in all ministry, divisions and institutions under directives of the NIS unit to implement the NIS. In addition to these steps a number of

consultation meetings were organised at national and district level and administrative initiatives were also in place to amend laws to this end.

NIS includes 10 state and six non-state institutions. Government institutions made some short term progress such as: introduction of national web portal and e-service, formation of standing committees in the first session of the 10th parliament, installation of significant number of server stations by Election Commission, initiatives to introduce social performance audit, formation of monitoring cell to resist corruption by Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) officials and initiatives to enact different laws. On the other hand the Supreme Judicial Council is yet to have any specific methodology, guideline or policy to run its business, Ombudsman is not yet appointed and Safe Food Act 2013 is yet to be implemented. 6 non-state institutions namely political party, private industries and business entities, NGOs, family, educational institutions and media are yet to have any specific methodology and process to implement the NIS at their end. The office of the Prime Minister and Bureau of NGO Affairs in collaboration with a few NGOs have drafted an action plan and it is now open for public opinion. Many of these institutions lack from initiatives to implement the NIS action plan.

According to the report, there were a number of challenges in effective implementation of the NIS which included among others inconsistency between NIS recommendations and action plan; unrealistic and unclear implementation timeframe; lack of awareness among stakeholders etc.

The study also placed ten recommendations to overcome the implementation challenges. Other key recommendations included: mass campaign among stakeholders; formation of ethics and NIS

implementation committee and appointment of focal persons in organisations that have not done so; inclusion of the all pillars of the national integrity system and inclusion of institutions like Information Commission, National Human Rights Commission, law enforcing agencies, defence and National Board of Revenue (NBR) in the NIS; inclusion of anti-corruption agenda on priority basis and finalisation of implementation strategy for all non-state institutions.

Joint initiative to stop land acquisition

Following an allegation of land grabbing in Shreepur upazila of Gazipur, a joint delegation of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Nijera Kori, Association of Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) and TIB visited the spot on 21 May to thoroughly investigate the incident. According to ALRD record 800 Bighas

of farmland of owned by the villagers and 1200 acres of land owned by a private college was illegally occupied by a private limited, backed by the general Secretary of the ruling party's local branch. The delegation along with local human right activists organised press conference, human chain and submitted a memorandum to the District Magistrate to take effective steps to stop the land grabbing.

Young journalists vow to work as anti-corruption activists

It was a wonderful experience for Gazi Sadek – a university correspondent of Daily Jugantar. Sadek used to send reports regularly to his Dhaka office but never received any feedback on quality of his reporting. “I got a lot of tips on how to maintain standard Investigative Journalism (IJ) and reduce legal challenges.” he said. Not only Sadek, similar is the case with all the journalists of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) as they, for the first time learnt about different aspects of investigative journalism.

Though most of them are working in several national and local media, they never received any formal training on journalism from media houses or any other organizations. A total of 35 journalists participated the two day long IJ training held on

23 - 24 May organised by TIB at the university campus. At the very beginning of the two day training, journalists shared their experiences regarding barriers and challenges of investigative journalism while facilitators discussed about the probable ways to tackle those challenges. “I along with four university reporters was suspended from the university for publishing reports on corruption in teachers’ recruitment.” said Misbah Uddin, correspondent of Daily Prothom-Alo, SUST.



Knowing the provisions of designated RTI officials, the young journalists expressed their dissatisfaction over the absence of designated Information

Officer at the university which they consider as a major obstacle to get information. They also

criticized the role of university authority regarding restrictions on writing social networking websites about university issues.

The training covered primary concepts of journalism and investigative journalism, Steps and strategies, its necessity in Bangladesh, interview process for reporting, were covered during the first day of the training. On the concluding day, reporting issues identification in educational institutions, process of report writing, use of Right to Information Act were discussed. The whole training programme was quite interactive. There were group works where they devised individual work plans to apply the learnings.

Associate Professor of Rajshahi University Journalism department Dr Pradip Kumar

Panday, Assistant Professor of Dhaka University Journalism department Saiful Alom Chowdhury, special correspondent of ATN News Mashudul Haque, Senior Programme Manager of TIB Outreach and Communication division M Sajjad Hussein, Programme Manager Shahanaz Momotaz spoke on different sessions. Inaugurating the training, Dr Tulshi Kumar Das member of Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) and Professor, Department of Social Work, SUST emphasised on unbiased and investigative reporting aiming to establish good governance and rule of law. Mr Samik Shaheed Jahan, Vice President of CCC urged the young journalists to actively participate in anti-corruption social movement and support the CCC activities. All the participants took anti corruption oath at the end of the training and vowed to work as anti-corruption social activist.

CCC NEWS

Practicing accountability contribute to improve quality service of Hospital

Chandpur government general hospital authority now regularly collects feedback from service recipients and Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) members and takes appropriate measures based on these feedbacks to improve the quality of medical services. Thanks to the efforts of CCC to ensure such accountability practices Chandpur CCC. This was revealed in an opinion sharing meeting with hospital authority on May 27 at the hospital auditorium. The meeting was presided over by the Convenor of the Health sub-committee Dr Md. A. Q. Ruhul Amin and moderated by member Dr. Pijush Kanti Barua. Superintendent of the hospital Dr Prodig Kumar Datta thanked CCC for their continuous support and suggestion for the hospital a better. Considering the limited human resources, he also thanked his colleagues for giving their best. He admitted still there are scopes for improvement in service delivery system including cleanliness, diagnostics and medicine supply. Apart from CCC members, doctors, hospital officials and several service recipients attend the opinion sharing meeting.

CCC and School authority pledges to work together

CCC, Bagerhat organised an opinion sharing meeting with Singrai government primary school authority on 17 May. The meeting discussed the present state of education at the school and also various existing problems i.e; inadequate teaching staff, land ownership dispute with the locals, overflowing of water into the school ground during rainy season, connecting road to reach school, inadequate class rooms etc. It was decided that the school authority and the CCC will work together to solve these problems. The CCC in particular will do advocacy with the Upazila and District Education authority to this end.

The meeting was presided over by the President of School Management Committee Mr. Abdus Salam Akunji. CCC members, SMC members and teachers took part in the discussion.



Rangamati Municipality practices accountability

On 27 May CCC Rangamati organised an opinion sharing meeting with the Rangamati Municipality authority with the objective of promoting accountability in the municipality activities and improve the quality of services in the long run. In the meeting quality of services, cleanliness of municipal area, activation of ward level co-ordination committees, management of safe drinking water supply, Face the Public program etc. were discussed. Participating citizens pointed out some problems regarding cleaning services in the municipal area. In response, the Mayor Saiful Islam Chowdhury informed them in order to improve the quality of services; some of the ward level coordination committees have been formed. The CCC proposed some development activities that needed to implement immediately. The mayor said that he would seriously consider these activities. It was decided that the planned 'Open

Budget Program' will be held in July instead of June. On behalf of municipality he thanked the CCC for its active engagement to promote



accountability in Rangamati Municipality. CCC member Mr. Amalendu Howlader, Swajan member Bihari Ranjan Chakma, Counselors were present in the meeting.

Anti-corruption campaign at Pirojpur

CCC Pirojpur organised an anti-corruption campaign on 26 May 2014 at Cyclone Shelter Center of Dumaritala Ranipur Shariktala High School. As part of the campaign anti-corruption discussion session and cultural programme were held with participation of citizens and professionals from different walks of the society.

CCC President Rama Rani Saha chaired the discussion moderated by Swajan member Tapas Bhattachariya. YES and YES Friends members performed dance, songs and comedy talk show at the cultural programme. At the end of the program audience and participants took part in the anti-corruption oath taking.

YES NEWS

YES learns the way of effective communication for anti-corruption campaign

As part of ongoing capacity development programme for the YES members, two trainings on 'Effective Communication for Anti-corruption Campaign' were organised on 11 and 16 May at the TIB



Conference Room. 36 participants from Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University and Stamford University YES groups attended the training and learnt basics of designing and

implementing of anti-corruption campaign. Mr. Sajjad Hussein, Senior Programme Manager of TIB facilitated the daylong training.



People gets information of health services from Satellite AI-Desk at DMCH

YES members of Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall, Kuwait Moitree Hall of University of Dhaka and YES-1 jointly organised a Satellite AI-Desk at the outdoor premises of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on 6 May. A visiting delegation from TI-Nepal visited the desk and discussed with YES members about operational issues of AI-Desk, its benefits and what it achieved over the years.



YES members distributed 6,000 leaflets among service recipients and an estimated 18 hundred people received advice and information about the services provided by DMCH.

Youth learns to fight online harassment against women

Three open seminars on 'Combating Online Harassment Against Women Through ICT' were organised jointly with Bangladesh Open Source Network- (BDoSN) at Ruqayyah Hall, Institute of Education Research (IER) of Dhaka University and Shahjajal University of Science and Technology (SUST) at Sylhet respectively on 11, 14 and 21 May. Female YES members of Ruqayyah Hall and IER and students from different departments of SUST attended these seminars. Mr A A Munir Hasan, the General Secretary of BDoSN made a presentation and discussed the technique of maintaining online security and privacy while using internet and social media. After the presentation, YES members shared their harassment experiences

and asked various questions around the topic. Mr Munir answered to these and suggested probable remedies. He urged the participants not to hide anything particularly from parents & concerned authorities and be vocal against any sort of online harassment. He said that any kind of harassment is punishable by law if the victim takes immediate actions. Mentionable that the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) is operating a helpline (10921) that provides quick support to victims.

In the context of digitalisation, this seminar is expected to sensitise and aware the young female participants on how to positively use social media and ICT, fight online harassment and launch a social movement against online harassment.

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