

Call for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous and Dalit Peoples

To ensure rights of the indigenous and Dalit peoples, TIB urged the government to strengthen the legal and constitutional structure with recognising their ethnic identities through proper inclusion in the Constitution of Bangladesh. Furthermore, the anti-graft organization also put 13 points recommendations including taking proper steps to implement the international conventions on the rights of the indigenous peoples.



TIB made the call while unveiling a research report titled “Indigenous and Dalit Peoples of Bangladesh: Challenges and Way Forward for Inclusion in Rights and Services” in a press conference at its office in Dhaka on 10 March 2019.

At the press conference, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Adviser- Executive Management Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair and Director-Research & Policy (R&P) Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan were present. TIB Senior Manager-R&P Abu Said Md. Juel Miah presented the research report at the event accompanied by the other designated researchers for the study Deputy Managers -R&P Md. Mostafa Kamal and Md. KhurshedAlam.

Aimed to examine how much the basic public service provisions are inclusive for the marginalised people especially the indigenous and Dalit peoples of Bangladesh, the study was conducted during February 2018 - February 2019 covering 28 Upazilas (sub-districts) where indigenous peoples are mostly concentrated in 33 districts whereas the Dalit peoples in every district.

The study identified series of affirmative initiatives by the Government of Bangladesh for the socio-economic development of the indigenous and Dalit peoples which included, comprehensive programme for plain land indigenous peoples comprising income-generating training and financial support, stipend for higher studies, and financial support and distribution of materials to schools, cooperatives and religious institutions; special

programme covering stipends for education, old age allowance and training and financial assistance to youths etc. Moreover, the affirmative initiatives also included inclusion in the national social security strategy 2015 and in the seventh five-year plan 2016-2020 as excluded groups; special health programme for the indigenous peoples; 5% Quota privilege in accessing second and third class jobs in government systems with extended age bar (32 years) for in some cadre services such as general education, technical education and health cadres etc.

However, the study found blatant discrimination faced by the two communities in education, health-care, land rights, other sectors, and employment opportunities. A large portion of poor indigenous and Dalit peoples eligible for different social safety net schemes were found left out of coverage. The study also surprisingly observed that some indigenous and Dalit communities are compelled to keep themselves restrained from voting in any election especially the local government elections. Their rights and interests are not taken under any special ministry or authority with the due emphasis which obstructs to consider their demands. The study also found that the right of the Dalit peoples and indigenous peoples to live on their land where they have been living for more than centuries is being violated enormously. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “The positive initiatives on the issue require more robustness and more legal reforms. Despite progress in some areas, the study depicts an obvious illustration of deprivation, irregularities and corruption in ensuring rights and services of the indigenous and Dalit peoples. There are weaknesses in both the legal and constitutional framework. The constitution in a way offers equal rights for all, while it also does not offer constitutional recognition for the two communities. Even, several administrative barriers have been imposed on the use of the word 'Adibashi'.”

The report demonstrates a key element in The Dalit Manual 2013 where it says the manual has defined the Dalit peoples to be only employed in cleaning jobs. However, they are involved in other professions as well. Moreover, the communities face barriers in school admissions, receiving classes in their own language, and inclusion in school management committees. Also, Dalit students have reportedly been made to clean toilets, and face verbal harassment from fellow students and teachers. In terms of health-care, pregnant women face barriers in receiving healthcare facilities, vaccination is not given in camps, and medication is prescribed without check-ups. The study also observed that the concept of “untouchability” is still in practice in educational institutions. Furthermore, Local Govt Institutions (LGI) representatives are accused of being talking side of the mainstream people and most often they go against the oppressed indigenous and Dalit persons.

According to the study, their identities and rights are not well recognised and included in the legal frameworks of Bangladesh. Moreover, the mother languages used by different ethnic groups and non-Bengali Dalit peoples are not recognised in the legal documents, like the recognition of Bengali language made in the Constitution. Apart from the implications of societal norms, the exclusion and corruption experiences are continuing in Bangladesh due to some particular reasons, which include the deficits of proper awareness of inclusive service delivery among the staff of public service delivery agencies, limitations in laws and policies, and lack of strong monitoring and oversight mechanisms from the top of the institutions.

Stating that the recent government’s election manifesto also includes inclusive development, Dr. Zaman said, “It is impossible to ensure inclusive development leaving indigenous and the Dalit peoples behind. Similarly, it’s also difficult to attain sustainable development goals as it says ‘leaving no one behind.’” Stressing on the

necessity of the constitutional recognition of the indigenous and Dalit peoples, Dr. Zaman said, “It is not accepted that the country, which gained independence through a liberation warfighting identity-based exploitation, oppression and deprivation, won't recognize the identity of indigenous and Dalit people. Therefore, the constitution must ensure the separate and distinct identity of the indigenous and the Dalit peoples.”

Among the 13 points recommendations placed at the press conference for the relevant bodies, the notables are: identifying the groups of indigenous peoples and Dalit peoples through proper research and recognize their distinct identities as well as address their rights and entitlements through inclusion in a specialised ministry; identifying the areas of inclusion in laws and policies through the formulation of laws and policies inclusive for indigenous peoples and Dalit peoples; finalise the draft Elimination of Discrimination Act and ensure its effective implementation. The other recommendations were forming a separate land commission for them to provide effective solutions to their land ownership disputes; introducing a quota system for Dalit peoples in accessing government jobs and restore the quota system for the indigenous peoples in the first and second-class government jobs as well as ensure proper implementation of the existing quota system etc.

TIB Stands Firm with its Activities, defying ACC Chairman's Remarks

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) expressed its disappointment over Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman's remarks disseminated in the media over TIB's activities terming unnecessary and confusing. In a statement released on 6 March 2019, the anti-graft organization stated that TIB's impression regarding ACC's understanding about its activities and work scopes turned out as misapprehension unfortunately at ACC Chairman's statement. “TIB is not ‘one-eyed’ in any way; all of its stances, reports and statements are completely objective and the result of scientific research and neutral”, stated in the press release.

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Iqbal Mahmood remarked on 5 march 2019 that TIB should not be one-eyed as it only knows to criticize, but it does not know how to praise positive initiatives for curbing graft, UNB reported.

In the statement, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “TIB not only identify governance deficits of different organisations and sectors through assessing data with relevance to corruption but also it provides specific recommendations to overcome all challenges. In addition, in each of TIB's research reports, alongside prevailing challenges of related sector or institution, positive achievements are presented objectively.” Reminding contribution of TIB's research-based recommendations and advocacy activities in the establishment of ACC, Dr. Zaman said, it is unfortunate if ACC can't remember it. Furthermore, TIB played consistent role to establish good governance and resist corruption in Bangladesh in nearly all the positive changes and noteworthy institutional, legal and policy reforms in different government and private organisations.

TIB Executive Director also said, “Before remarking or issuing any statement addressing any issue or organization, TIB always depends on relevant research output followed by analyzing the existing situation. We firmly say that TIB has been operating its anti-corruption advocacy initiatives along with others being as an assistant force of government and the ACC within approved work-area by the government. So, TIB welcomes any constructive suggestions of ACC as a partner in the fight against corruption.”

TIB further expressed its disappointment on ACC's criticism on TIB activities, "It is unfortunate that ACC, being a statutory organisation as per law, also falls prey to the same influence of the existing political culture of criticizing TIB. TIB believes that ACC will acquire enough courage to endure criticism. "

10 Points Demand for establishing Corruption-free Bangladesh

The annual meeting of the members of TIB reiterated concerted will to resist corruption through wholeheartedly abhorring corruption. The members demanded the effective, neutral and independent role of all the national integrity institutions including Anti-Corruption commission in deterring corruption at each and every levels of the society and establishing democracy, good governance and human rights. Organised at TIB's Dhanmondi office on 21 March 2019, the members pledged to strengthen the anti-corruption social movement in national and local level by engaging citizens. The meeting also placed 10 points demand in the declaration to establish corruption-free and well-governed Bangladesh.



Moderated by TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, the meeting was presided over by the representative of TIB members Professor A. K. M. FazlulHaque where 35 members participated. In the meeting, TIB Director of Outreach and Communication Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam presented the recent activity details of TIB including research, advocacy and campaign initiatives while TIB Director of Finance and Administration Abdul Ahad presented the financial report. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman answered queries of the members participating in the

open discussion.

TIB members expressed their frustration over recent issues especially mass violation of election code of conduct in the national election including other elections, and least presence of voters in the Dhaka North City Corporation and Upazilla elections. In light of these allegations of irregularities, the meeting also aired concern on the prospect of democratic system in the country. Likewise, the meeting further expressed its grievance over continued failure in ensuring people's lives in roads and highways. The members demanded the inclusive engagement of civil society in controlling the prevailing disorder excluding politicians and businessmen with conflicts of interest in the sector. the meeting also called for scrapping the controversial provision such as section 32 of the Digital Security Act and section 14 of the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act.

The meeting released a declaration containing 10 points demands. The declaration includes among others, ensure neutral and inclusive election process by establishing strong election commission; strengthening Anti-Corruption Commission to prevent and control corruption effectively; take initiative to gain public trust on the decaying banking sector with scrapping option of whitening black money; formulation and implementation of proper law to stop murders in roads and highways through establishing discipline in the transport sector.



TIB Acclaims Land Ministry's Initiative Regarding Staffers' wealth

TIB has observed the recent initiative by the Hon'ble Minister of Land Ministry to collect wealth information of its class III and IV employees as a positive step towards establishing good governance in the sector. However, the expected result will be far-out if officials of all levels can't be included in the initiative, TIB cautioned at a statement released on 14 March 2019.

In the statement, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "The initiative by the ministry is consistent with the announcement made by the Prime Minister about taking zero-tolerance against corruption. However, we are yet to be fully assured with the move as grade I and II officers of this corrupt sector are still out of the initiative which might pose the question the whole initiative."

"It's a good initiative, but at the same time, it is the land minister's responsibility to establish good governance in his ministry. The initiative would not yield any 'effective' outcome if the higher-grade officials of the land ministry do not submit their wealth statements," Dr. Zaman added.

TIB Executive Director also said that the government should make it mandatory for public officials to submit their wealth statements in a bid to ensure transparency and accountability in all the public offices. The whole process also needs strict monitoring with regular update. Such an initiative will contribute in reducing widespread irregularities and corruption inconsistent with the commitment of the Prime Minister regarding zero-tolerance against corruption.

'Digitalized services of union Parishad will decrease corruption'

Deputy Director (Local Government) of Natore Md. Golam Rabbi said Union Parishad should display its information regarding budget and development projects in open place as part of its accountability. The respective authority needs to ensure the information disclosure so that citizens can get access to the information. Mr. Rabbi further mentioned that the standard of services will be increased if the responsible persons act according to their responsibilities. Digitalized services of UP will decrease corruption, he added.

Mr. Golam Rabbi was speaking at an opinion sharing meeting with locally elected representatives, especially UP chairman and female members, as chief guest. He made importance to collect revenue and taxes from the Union level.

Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Natore organized the meeting on 19 March 2019 in association with the NatoreSadarUpazila Administration at the Conference Room of Upazila Parishad, NatoreSadar. President of the CCC Ranen Rai presided over the meeting while chairman of the Upazila Parishad Md. Shariful Islam Ramzan and UpazilaNirbahi Office Mst. JesminAkterBanu was present as a special guest. Chairman of all union Parishads, locally elected female members and secretary of UPs were present in the meeting.



UpazilaNirbahi Officer Ms. Akter Banu called upon the public employees to provide their best efforts to ensure services to citizens. Upazila Parishad Chairman Md. Shariful Islam said, we have to make effective the Standing Committees of UP. It's needed to ensure transparency and accountability at the process of selecting beneficiaries of Social Safety Net programmes, he added.

Convener of the CCC Sub-committee on LG issues Md. Mostafizur Rahman Tutul delivered the welcome speech and member of the CCC Mr. Paritosh Kumar Adhikary moderated the programme. Participants discussed various issues of UPs along with Designated Officer for providing information, Right to Information Act, Roles and responsibilities of female UP members, Ward Shava and open budget meeting. Members of CCC, SwachhotarJonnoNagorik (SWAJON), Youth Engagement and Support (YES) groups were also present in the meeting.

Workshop on role of mothers to ensure transparency at primary schools



CCC, Barishal organized a workshop titled 'Role of mothers to ensure transparency & accountability at primary schools' on 14 March 2019 with the assistance of BarishalSadarUpazila Education Office. The coordinators of the Active Mothers Forum of 26 primary schools of BarishalSadarUpazila participated in the workshop.

Ms. Sabina Akter, Assistant Upazila Education Officer, inaugurated the workshop held at Binapani Model Govt. Primary School, Barishal. The workshop clarified

various issues including definition, necessity & formation of Active Mothers Forum, effectiveness of School Management Committee (SMC), the role of teachers, SMC and parents etc. Md. Firoz Uddin, Programme Manager-Civic Engagement of TIB facilitated the workshop. Principal GaziZahid Hossain, member of the CCC Sub-committee on the education issue, delivered his speech mentioning few directives to the participants. H M Abdul Hai, Head Teacher of the Binapani School, also delivered his speech in the workshop. Respective Area Manager of TIB moderated the workshop.

International Women's Day observed at CCC level **'Political commitments needed to empower women'**

With the theme 'Sustainable Development Goal, Good Governance and Women', Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) observed the International Women's Day (08 March 2019) with due importance along with local administration and Department of Women Affairs organizing various awareness-raising activities. CCCs along with respective authorities of government-organized rallies, discussions, orientations, human chains, seminars, Women Development Fairs and quiz/essay/debate competitions across 45 locations in the country on 6th & 7th March 2019. Deputy Commissioners (DC) of respective districts, Superintendent of Police, locally elected representatives, UpazilaNirbahi Officers (UNO) along with other public officials, different professionals, civil society members, media representatives and young people were attended these events.



A concept note with a set of 15 demands was disseminated among relevant stakeholders where TIB stated that political commitment is important to restrain violence against women & children. The practice of accountability at power structures will decrease corruption that ensures social justice, rule of law and equal rights which is a pre-requisite for establishing women empowerment. Therefore, ensuring legal and institutional obligations, awakened conscience for equal rights for female-male is crucial. Speakers from different spots stated that women rights movement and anti-corruption

movements are tied in the same rope. So equal rights of male & female needs to be ensured for empowering women.

Speakers also added that our women are belonging backward position and underprivileged because of our existing patriarchal attitude. On the other hand, corruption is also hindering the process of women development. Hence, it is evitable to resist corruption and establish good governance in each sector of our society and state to achieve the desired development of women. Members of CCC, SWAJON, YES and YES Friends were attended in these events.

World Water Day observed at CCC level
Human chain for good governance at the water sector and safe drinking water



Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) across 45 locations in the country observed the 22 March World Water Day with great enthusiasm based on the theme ‘Good governance and combat corruption at water sector for ensuring safe drinking water’. Besides the human chain, few CCCs organized rallies and discussion meetings on this issue. CCCs recommended a few suggestions to ensure access of all level of citizens to safe drinking water.

Discussants stressed on good governance and controlling corruption for ensuring safe drinking water. They demanded availability of safe drinking water for all based on the slogan ‘leave no one behind’! They also demanded to set up a sufficient number of Tube well at the residential colonies of marginalized community. CCCs also disseminated TIB’s position paper on that issue. Different level stakeholders including teachers and students, professionals, developments workers and members of CCC, Swajan, YES and YES Friends participated at these events.

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