Press release, Dhaka, 19th April 2020

NGO network leaders on virtual press conference called for Inclusive Coordination

**Social Mobilization, Local leadership and Resurrection of Local Economy are Key to Overcome Corona Crisis**

Dhaka 19th April 2020: Leaders of the existing NGO networks of Bangladesh, from ADAB, BD cso process, Disaster Forum, FNB, NAHAB and NIRAPAD, who represent almost the total NGO sector of the country and represent around 2000 NGOs came together to fight the Corona Crisis. In a virtual press conference held today titled “Local and National NGOs in Bangladesh to Fight COVID-19”. The leaders urged for inclusive coordination at all level to promote broader social mobilization and engagement of local leaders in view of the Disaster Management Act 2012 and Standing Order on Disaster (SOD).

The press conference also urged to resurrect the local economy maintaining the health measures for revival of production and supply chain of the food and other essential goods. A key focus of the conference was promoting Localization with active engagement of local and national actors combined with local level coordination steered by the local government.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of COAST and BD CSO Process moderated the virtual press conference while Abul Haseeb Khan and Hasina Akhter Mita of NIRAPAD, Md Rafiqul Islam of FNB, AKM Jashim Uddin of ADAB, Dr Ehsanur Rahman of NAHAB, Nayeem Gawher Wahra of Disaster Forum and Abdul Latif Khan, Independent Consultant were the key speakers. Mostafa Kamal Akanda of COAST Trust has given welcome address. Nurul Alam Masud of PRAN, Noakhali, Faroque Ahmed of TUS, Mymensingh and Mr Asad of Udayan Bangladesh, Bagerhat also spoke. Journalists from across the country joined and interacted in the press conference.

The group of of the major NGO networks of Bangladesh released a positon paper both in English and Bangla on this occasion. On behalf of the group Mr. Abdul Latif Khan placed seven major demands including (i) Coordination at the local level have to be strengthened in an inclusive approach especially with local NGO and CSOs, (ii) The approach of ongoing Government information dissemination should be reviewed to rebuild public trust and confidence, (iii) UN agencies and INGOs should limit their role in monitoring and technical assistance to the local NGOs and should provide direct funding to them, (iv) NGOs and CSOs should also be important part of government declared incentive package and should be involved in package implementation at the remote level, (v) To face the post Corona-Crisis, the rural economy must continue with their production maintaining the social distancing and local NGO and MFI (Micro Finance Institutions) should be allowed for operation as they are the key player in this regard, (vi) Investment and attention have to be enhanced on health system in decentralized manner so that rural people are able to avail the services, and (vii) Initiate the preparation to reorganize the arrangement in the institutions and offices especially the schools with more washing facilities and maintaining physical distance.

Abul Haseeb Khan of NIRAPAD described how NGOs responded already and supported the government's response.

Md Rafiqul Islam of FNB mentioned that around 2000 of NGOs across the country responded to the crisis according to their ability and we found reports from 150 NGOs.

AKM Jashim Uddin of ADAB sad, the monsoon period is coming and we need to have preparation of other natural disasters like cyclone and flood. He called back the strength of local NGOs as first responders in all disasters.

Dr Ehsan of NAHAB said, as the Grand Bargain commitments showed, the time has proven that the local actors are the first and best responders.

Nayeem Gawher Wahra of Disaster Forum said, the awareness is still a bit limited in urban middle class. NGO CSOs should be given space to work in this regard. He expressed worries about reaching the incentive package to the hands of real farmers as a huge mismanagement reported. He proposed to divide the country into different zones from highly effected to non-effected zones and the non-effected or green zones should allow the economic activities.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of COAST said, in this lockdown situation the production line should be running maintaining physical distancing as this is the lifeline. He urged 150 million people somehow connected with the NGO and MFIs should be considered as the major source of local resource mobilization for both economic and relief activities.

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