**Public dialogue in Cox’s Bazar**

**Host Community must be heard during Rohingya relief**

**NGO interventions should be accepted by the people**

Cox’s Bazar, 31 March 2018: A Public Dialogue is jointly organized by COAST Trust and CCNF (Cox’s Bazar CSO-NGO Forum) at the conference room of hotel UNI Resort in Cox’s Bazar titled “Impact of FDMN Influx on the host community: emphasizing monsoon crisis mitigation”. The main objective of this dialogue was to facilitate the people’s representatives of those localities, the members and chairmen of the Union Councils, to speak about the effect imposed on their community. Few unheard stories and demands from the ground came out through their voice.

On the other hand there were distinguished guests from government, donor, UN and INGO to listen to them and share their ideas and experience. The turnout of other stakeholders also was remarkable. The invited guests and speakers include Mr. KM Abdus Salam, Director General of NGO Bureau and Additional Secretory along with Mr. Mohammad Abul Kalam NDC, Additional Secretary and Refuge, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner from the Government of Bangladesh.

The dialogue is also participated by Dr. Ainun Nishat, Professor Emeritus, BRAC University and Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER); Dr. Atiq Rahman, Executive Director of Bangladesh Center for Advance Studies (BCAS); Mr. Nayeem G Wahra, Dhaka University and Disaster Forum; Ms. Sumbul Rizvi, Senior Coordinator of ISCG; Ms Elisabeth Pelster of UNHCR, Mr. Arash Irantalib Tehrani of Canadian High Commission and Mr. Manuel Moniz Pereira of IoM were present and spoke as the Panel speakers.

Mr. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Co-Chair-Cox’s Bazar CSO-NGO Forum and Executive Director, COAST Trust; and Mr Abu Morshed Chowdhury Co-Chair - Cox’s Bazar CSO-NGO Forum and Chairman- PULSE jointly moderated the dialogue. Mr. Arifur Rahman, Co-Chair- Cox’s Bazar CSO-NGO Forum and Executive director-YPSA delivered welcome speech in the meeting on behalf of the forum.

Barkat Ullah Maruf of COAST Trust presented the findings and recommendations of the research conducted in the host community in February 2018.

Mr K M Abdus Salam, DG of NGO Bureau said as the chief guest of the dialogue, the local people sacrificed and showed their patience a lot. We need to continue a little more as we kept trust on our Prime Minister who is dealing with it. He added, in this digital era everyone knows everything and you can’t hide information. NGO interventions should satisfy the people’s need of information as it impacts their lives. We have to change the hiding attitude that we used to have in 80s.

“The FDMN people are clearing forestland equal to four football fields every day through collecting fuel wood for their cooking and this is highly alarming,” said the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mohammad Abul Kalam NDC, the Additional Secretary of Government. He also mentioned that, all the agencies working here with FDMN should consider that there is a government in Bangladesh to have the sole authority and no one should overtake the government. He informed the people’s representatives from the host community that the JRP (Joint Response Plan) will allocate the 25% of its fund for the development of the host community and already there are several steps taken by the government.

Ms Elisabeth Pelster of UNHCR said in her speech, we are procuring from locally, not even from nationally. We explicitly want to work with the local partners where possible. Our intention is to capacitate the local partners. UNHCR is working to reduce the impact on the host community, with the collaboration and dialogue with the community.

Dr. Artiq Rahman of BCAS said in his speech, the entire world condemned Myanmar for this situation and the FDMN have to go back to their land, there is no doubt on that. Nobody knows how long will it take. But what we all know and what is inevitable in the next three months is the rain is coming and that will cost us a lot. Even the Europe is struggling with only 30 to 40 thousand of refugees having all their technology and management and we have taken more than a million.

Mr. Manuel Moniz Pereira of IoM said, every crisis has a certain impact on the host community all over the world. In this case the number of refugee is really huge. We are committed to support the affected host community. Already we have started dialogue with the Union Parishad and the local community. We are going to provide LPG gas facilities to 12 thousand families.

Dr. Ainun Nishat, professor emeritus of Brac University said, the government should address some emergency problem within the next 15 days including clearing the drainage system so that the rainwater can move. Last year in this place the amount of rainfall was higher than 400 mm. We should consider that every formula can’t be applied everywhere. Teknaf has special problems and needed special interventions to address it. The damaged embankment should be immediately repaired before the monsoon comes.

Dr. Ainun Nishat also said, there are many interventions of NGOs both local and foreign, but there are hardly any coordination and communication among them. Many of them are overlapping and many problems are yet to address.

Mr. Nayeem G Wahra of Dhaka University and Disaster Forum said in his speech, in a crisis like this sometimes we can’t help but still there are few things we can do and we need to efficiently identify them. Those could include rainwater harvest. Last year we missed the opportunity. We need to be able to do this time. Every household should be capacitated to harvest the rainwater and more importantly the streams and canals should be prepared to hold the rainwater for long time. The newly constructed roads should immediately taken care about the culverts under it so the water can move from one side to another.

Principal Nur Ahmad Anwary, Chairman of Hwaikkyong Model Union Parishad, Mr. A M Gafuruddin Chowdhury, Chairman of Paling Khali Union Parishad; Moulana Aziz Uddin, Chairman of Baharchara Union Parishad; Mr. Abul Hossain, Panel Chairman of Hnila Union Parishad Chairman spoke in the meeting as invited speakers. More than 50 elected Union Parishad Members, representative of UN agencies, local, national and INGOs and civil society, print, electronic media were also attended in Public Dialogue meeting.

UP member Ms Khurshida Begum, Md Shajahan, from Rajapalong Union Parishad; Mr. Nurul Absar Chowdhury, Mozaffor Ahmad, Mr. Nurul Amin from Palong Khali Union Parishad; Mr Jalal Ahmad Hwaikkhong Union Parishad; Mr. Hossain Ahmad, Mr Abul Hossain and Ms Marzina Akhtar Siddiqee from Hnila Union Parishad Mr Sona Ali from Baharchara Union Parishad spoke in the meeting and placed the degenerated situations of Ukhiya and Teknaf upazila after influx of Myanmar citizen. They expressed their grievances in the meeting.