



NGO Federation



National seminar on 'Democracy, Development and Civil Society'

Background

NGO Federation

At a glance

The origin of the national and the indigenous NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) in Bangladesh dates back to the War of Liberation when a few individuals, after participating in the war, came forward to set up small organizations with a view to mitigating the sufferings of the war victims, especially the returning refugees, with programs of relief, rehabilitation and health care. This phase over, they launched multifaceted programs of poverty alleviation, health, education, women's rights, capacity development etc. to respond to the changing needs of the poor. Eventually, in mid-1970s some of these first generation NGO leaders decided to form an apex body of the NGOs with a view to promoting the interest of the sector.

During the year 2001-2002, however, deviation of the then apex body from the core objective of protection and promotion of the interests of the NGO sector resulted in harassments on the NGOs by different Government agencies causing an acute sense of uncertainty and concern among the NGOs. As the communication between the Government and the NGOs was severed, attempts were made unilaterally to frame a new law concerning the NGOs which was detrimental to the interest of the sector. It was apprehended that the new law, if enacted, would severely affect the flexibility and effectiveness of the NGO

sector as a whole and their unique characteristic would be threatened. During this period the urgency of a completely non-political coordinating agency for working collectively for protection of interests and development of the sector was urgently felt.

In this backdrop, a National Convention of the NGOs was organized on 26 July 2002 in order to discuss ways and means of protecting the interests of the NGOs. In the Convention, attended by 2200 small and big NGOs' representatives from across the country, a 22-member National NGO Coordination Committee was formed. The main objectives were to (a) establish communication and discussion with the authorities for stopping the harassment on the NGOs and prevent the Government from passing the proposed NGO Bill, (b) create a congenial working environment for dealing with various other related issues; (c) explore avenues for mobilization of financial and other supports for social programs of the small NGOs (d) promote secular values, and good practices and ethical standards amongst member organisations to ensure fairness and transparency in the sector (e) strengthen reciprocal cooperation between the Government and the NGOs in development activities.

In the aftermath, a full-fledged 'Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh (FNB)' was formed

Vision

replacing the "National NGO Coordination Committee" through holding the 2nd National Convention of the NGOs on 23 February 2003 in presence of executives representing 1,850 NGOs from across the country. With the approval of the draft Constitution and decision for registration of the Federation in another meeting attended by 205 NGO representatives held on 19 April the same year, the Federation started functioning as the coordinating federation of the NGOs.

Facilitate and contribute in spearheading the processes of poverty alleviation, overall socio-economic development of the country as well as building a just, equitable and enlightened society free from all sorts of deprivations particularly for the disadvantaged and marginalized sections. In order to achieve this uphold, protect and promote the interests of the NGO sector, ensure effective coordination among its members and stakeholders inspiring the practices of democratic and secular values in programs and activities.

Registration

The NGO Federation obtained registration on 4 May 2003 from the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies under the Societies Registration Act, XXI of 1860.

Membership

Small, medium and big NGOs from all districts of the country are members of the NGO Federation (FNB). The reputed members, among others, are: ALRD, ASA, BELA, BRAC, BURO Bangladesh, CAMPE, CMES, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, DORP, Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK), NGO Forum for Public Health, Nijera Kori, Padakhep, RDRS, RIC, TMSS, CODEC (Chittagong), CDA (Dinajpur), Ghashful (Chittagong), JCF (Jessore), SSS (Tangail), VARD (Sylhet).

System of Management

Central: The 22-Member National Executive Board (NEB) of the NGO Federation, elected biennially through direct vote of all Members, undertakes programs and implements them through the Federation secretariat.

Districts: The District Executive Committees, elected biennially through direct vote of the district-level Members, implement the programs of the Federation at district level.



Reception to Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, Founder and Chairperson of BRAC and Convener of NGO Federation Advisory Committee on receiving Knighthood.

Objectives

In a nutshell, the objectives of the Federation are:

1. Protect and secure the lawful interests of the NGO community at all levels.
2. Promote good practices, secular values and ethical standards amongst member NGOs to ensure transparency and fairness in the NGO sector.
3. Promote and support the programs of member NGOs in Bangladesh by creating an enabling environment for them.
4. Enhance the capacity of small member organizations through training.
5. Inculcate amongst members the spirit of development free from partisan politics and sectarianism of all kinds.

Capacity development and Advocacy

The NGO Federation had undertaken a three-year (2009-2011) program with the assistance of the Aga Khan Foundation for

1) Developing the capacity of the small NGOs by providing training, and 2) Advocacy for Creation of more Enabling Environment for the NGO Sector and for better Public Perception of the sector.

A total of 1833 chief executives, managers and board members of small local NGOs received training through 72 courses on six subjects: 1) Role of the Members of the Executive Board; 2) Office and Accounts Management; 3) Group Formation and Microfinance Management; 4) Evaluation, Monitoring and Report Writing; 5) Organisational Management and Development; and 6) Preparation of Project Proposals.

The Federation has set up its own training outfit with accommodation facilities.

The Advocacy program included series of Workshops, Roundtables/Dialogues and meetings with the policymakers, Government agencies/departments, professionals and the private sector at the national and the district levels including media visits to NGO programs.

6. Encourage gender proactive policies and programs in the best interest of the poor, the ethnic minority and various marginalized groups including the aged and the disabled.
7. Promote friendly relationship and broad consensus of purpose amongst all NGOs at all levels.
8. Initiate and lead direct and indirect organized action in the best interest of the NGO community in the country.
9. Collect and disseminate statistical and other information and make efforts for the spread of technical, economic and management knowledge to strengthen NGO activities in the country.
10. Promote and establish a Code of Conduct based on honor, equity, good governance, human rights and gender pro-activity amongst members.
11. Establish a Human Resources Development Center for capacity development of the NGOs.

Accomplishments

Since inception, the notable accomplishments, among others of the Federation are as follows:

- A Bill detrimental to the interest of the NGOs proposed by the then Government in 2004 for controlling rather than regulating the activities of the NGOs was suspended.
- At the initiative of the Federation the Government established the Bangladesh NGO Foundation for funding the small NGOs.
- The policy relating to obligatory possession of Trade License by all NGOs was revised through a Gazette Notification.
- The NGO Federation, the Credit and Development Forum (CDF) and the International Network of Alternative Financial Institutions (INAFI) resolutely pursued and continued negotiations with the Microcredit Regulatory Authority (MRA) and higher authorities for three years for making necessary amendments to the draft MRA Rules to make it NGO/MFI friendly.
- An instruction concerning inclusion of representative/s from NGO Affairs Bureau /local administration in the Recruitment Board of the NGOs (registered under the Bureau) was withdrawn.

- The system of obtaining Certificate from the district and upazila administration as per rule of the NGO Affairs Bureau was amended and made easier.
- The Ministry of Law exempted the NGOs from an embargo on holding non-political meetings/rallies in 2007.
- The office order in 2007 making it mandatory to spend 50% of the foreign grants to an NGO on 'visible activities' like bridges, culverts, schools was withdrawn.
- At the request of the Ministry of Land the Federation conducted a year-long survey in six upazilas (sub-districts) in six divisions of the country on distribution of Government Khas Land in the 1990s and submitted the Survey Report to the Ministry.
- The Circular of Microcredit Regulatory Authority (MRA) of July 01, 2009 on suspension of loan recovery in 'all the cyclone (Aila) affected unions' of the coastal districts was amended as 'all the cyclone affected families'
- The Bangladesh Bank introduced identification dots in the currency notes for the benefit of the visually impaired.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct has been developed for the Member NGOs according to the objectives stated in the Constitution of the Federation. Opinion of the members was taken on the draft Code which was then approved in the Annual General Meeting in 2006.

NGO Directory

An NGO Directory containing particulars including contact details of the member and the non-member organisations, was published in 2007. It also contains necessary information about international organisations, diplomatic missions, donor agencies and other relevant bodies.

The second edition of the Directory was published in 2013.



Reception to Sveda Rizwana Hasan, Chief Executive of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) on her receiving the Magsaysay Award

Future Programs

1. Continue dialogues with the authorities concerned with a view to promoting congenial environment for implementing development programs of the NGOs;
2. Undertake programs for creating strong and wider scopes of coordination with the Government agencies and others concerned;
3. Facilitate more access to resources for the small NGOs.
4. Set up a Human Resource Development Centre;
5. Research on role and contribution of the NGO sector in national development;

Advisory Committee (2012-2014)

- 1) Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, KCMG (Founder and Chairperson, BRAC), Convener
- 2) Ms. Khushi Kabir (Coordinator, Nijera Kori)
- 3) Mr. Kamaluddin Akbar (Adviser, RDRS)
- 4) Mr. Kazi Rafiqul Alam (President, Dhaka Ahsania Mission)

(April 2013)