

# Report



## SAARC Country Exposure Visit

11-18 November 2018

## Introduction:

As part of its mandate, Civil Society Organization Strengthen Democratic Governance project being implemented by 3 organizations namely Manab Kallayn Parishad, Pollisree and research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) with financial assistance of European Union and Bread for The World and the technical collaboration of NETZ-Bangladesh, organized an exposure visit to Nepal and India from 11 to 18 November 2018. Representatives of NETZ, Bangladesh, staff of RIB, POLLISREE and MKP along with 2 government officials and 2 Civil Society Organization (CSO) took part in the exposure visit and thereupon acquired lesson learnt in development spectrum.

## Description:

A view exchange meeting was held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at the office precinct of Somota Foundation, a local Non-governmental organization in Nepal. The venerable Executive Director of Somota Foundation presented the goals, objectives, core values and strategic focus areas of his organization there. Eventually, it was dealt upon that the marginalized, discriminated and socially ostracized Dalit community people in Nepal has long been striving for establishing their human rights. Contemplating the issues concerned, Somota Foundation has persistently been implementing research, leadership development and publication initiatives for ensuring access to rights and services for targeted community populaces. Meanwhile, many Dalit public representatives have been elected. Mr. Shahidul Islam, Deputy Director of NETZ-Bangladesh concluded the view exchange meet.



Later a discussion meeting with Nepal National Dalit Commission was held at the compound of Somota Foundation at 11.00 am where a representative of National Dalit Commission prominently highlighted its different development endeavors. Later on, an open deliberation session amid the spontaneous participation of the visiting members was held. Here, it was revealed that the incumbent government of the tiny Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal enshrined the rights of Dalit people in the Constitution and efforts are going on for its implementation.



At 12.00 pm. a view exchange meeting with the Nepal Human Rights Commission was held at its office with the participation of honorable Chairman of Nepal Human Rights Commission and its others officials. Soon after the inaugural ceremony, an introductory session was held, and a power point presentation highlighting different activities of the organization was presented before the distinguished audience. Here, the officials responded different queries of the visiting members. It was explicitly learnt that Nepal Human Rights Commission formulated a strategic planning for 2012-2020. The officials further noted that they arrange public hearing focusing on different issues. They work with the local law enforcement agencies through reciprocal understanding by means of conflict transformation and peace building process. They further assured that the Commission would work for climate change.



After that, a dialogue session between the visiting members and the officials of Nepal National Information Commission was held at 1.30 pm. Here, Mr. Shahidul Islam, Deputy Director of NETZ-Bangladesh narrated the objectives of the exchange visit. Eventually, the Deputy Commissioner of Nepal National Information Commission presented its activities before the audience. He said that the rights to information act has been enforcing in Nepal from 2007. There are 77 information commissions in Nepal. Replying to various questions of the visiting team members, they said that a number of statistics was executed in Nepal. They pointed out that as part of fostering wider awareness building initiatives on rights to information act, educational institutions have been brought under its ambit. At this point, some RTI experiences of MKP were presented here. Chairman of the National Information Commission said at least 7 individuals will be adorned with awards in each year with a view to expediting and making dynamism of the initiatives. Finally the commissioner put much emphasis on arranging further exchange visit on rights to information between the two friendly countries, and expressed hope of working together.



An experience sharing event was held at the office of Jonohita Grameen Seba Samity at Sindhupalchak in Nepal on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018 amid the hearty welcome to the visiting members by the development staff of the organization. Later, the Executive Director of the organization highlighted its different development activities through multi-media presentation. Through the open discussion it was ostensibly revealed that people in this area were the worst victims of devastating earthquake causing high casualties and irreparable losses of property compelling them to live under the open sky without essential

supplies for long. But, after a long hardships and excruciating miseries, they somehow



returned to their normal lives through the implementation of different development efforts of Jonohita Grameen Seba Samity. The pertinent beneficiaries deposited monthly savings of Tk 100 and took loan for Income Generating Activities (IGAs) through which many of them were financially benefitted by rearing goat and became self-reliant. Also, different initiatives such social audit and public hearing are the inextricable linked to its activities, and learnt that

migration was one of the principal problems in this area. Finally, the visiting team members narrated their experiences and thus the session came to an end.

On 16<sup>th</sup> November 2018, an experience sharing meeting was held with the stakeholders of SONMAN project being implemented by DRCASC, a non-governmental and voluntary development organization, at Nobogram Murardanga in Bharampur under Murshidabad district in India. The visiting members, DRCASC staff, Program Manager of SONMAN project, Panchat members, government officials and people from different professional backgrounds were present in the event. After the introductory session, Mrs. Afsana Binte Amin, Program Manager of CSOSDG project described the objectives of the experience sharing visit while Mr. Goutom Kumar, an official of DRCASC narrated the goal, objectives, activities, expected outcomes and operational mechanism of their project. Later, through an open discussion, it was revealed that how the grassroots people became skills by involving themselves in different development interventions and economically self-reliant through closely working with the public representatives and government officials. Eventually, the visiting members visited nearby village and saw themselves the puff rice making activities.



On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2018, a view exchange meeting was held with the members of Astha



Jukto Monch at Boloramgolar in Murshidabad district. Here, the president the organization presented its different activities. Moreover, she also narrated that how the beneficiaries members started savings from taka 5 and accumulated their huge savings through which they reared goad and chicken and eventually became self-sufficient. Alongside they have continuously been working to excess to right and services from different local

government and entities. Thereupon, Sree Nironjoni Roy and Sree Minoti Bala CSO member highlighted their various activities along with some successful case study.

#### **Achievement:**

- Knowing various activities at the nation level
- Gaining experience in livelihoods activities
- Acquiring knowledge on realization of rights and new and innovative strategies through working with public representatives and government officials
- Strategy for economic empowerment by forming groups
- Knowing livelihoods status of diverse communities and enriching knowledge on information
- Gaining experience in information by visiting different historical sites

#### **Conclusion:**

We firmly believe that the experiences gathered through the exposure visit would pay a pivotal role in ensuring transparency and accountability at our assigned geographical working area.