



# National Citizen Conference 2011

*With the Demand of*  
**Executing Participatory Democracy and Responsive Governance**

## Brief Report

### **Background:**

The aim of the independent Bangladesh was to have the financial independence of the whole nation after the political independence, removal of discrimination among people and finally establishing a developed and humanitarian society. Though we have lots of achievements and there are indications of many positive changes on the eve of 40 years after the liberation war, but we are yet to achieve the basic necessities and rights (food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care and employment) of the people. Still 40% of the total population is living under poverty line and 19.5% of them are extreme poor who cannot eat everyday. At present, about 50% of the 40 million youth of our country that belong to the age group of 18-35 are unemployed. Given the scenario, WAVE Foundation started working on *Responsive Public Services and Strengthening Local Government* under its Governance program in 1997. As part of continual engagement and along with deepening its experience in these areas, WAVE facilitated the formation of Loak Morcha (LM), a social organization, in 2003 and Governance Coalition (GC), a NGOs' alliance that are involved in direct program implementation, in 2004. Later, they included decentralization, UP (lowest tier of local government) open budget, village court, preventing violence against women and social audit of social safety net programs issues in their joint program initiatives to promote good governance. In the light of long experience and considering the present context WAVE Foundation, Governance Coalition and Loak Morcha jointly hold a successful day-long **National Citizen Conference 2011** with the demand of "Executing Participatory Democracy and Responsive Governance" on **23 February 2011**, at **LGED Auditorium, Dhaka**.

### **Different Sessions:**

The day long program was divided into three sessions- an inaugural session, session on issue based discussions followed by a closing session. **Dr. Quzi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad**, Chairman, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) as well as the Chairperson of Governance Advocacy Forum presided over the inaugural session while **Dr. Mizanur Rahman**, Chairman, National Human Rights Commission, **Dr. Tofail Ahmed**, Local Governance Adviser, UNDP, **Dr. M. M. Akash**, Professor, Economics Dept., University of Dhaka addressed the inaugural session as special guests. **Mohsin Ali**, Executive Director of WAVE Foundation and Coordinator of Governance Coalition presented the keynote paper and **Anwar Jahid**, Executive Member of Governance Coalition delivered the welcome speech in the session. Loak Moarcha Representative **M. Habibul Hasan** and **Mamataz Begum**, Representative of Governance Coalition also delivered their speech in the session. **Md. Nazrul Islam**, Deputy Coordinator of WAVE Foundation moderated the inaugural session. It was mentioned in the keynote paper that establishing a developed and humanitarian society according to our dream of great liberation war for the financial independence of the whole nation after the political independence through eliminating discrimination among people could not be made possible yet. So, importance

needs to be given in establishing good governance targeting the achievement of basic necessities and rights of people. To establish accountable governance, peoples' participation in decision making process is very crucial in parallel to transparency and accountability. The citizen should also have their role from their individual positions apart from the state's initiative. As special guest **Dr. Mizanur Rahman**, Chairman, National Human Rights Commission told that democracy means participation and accountability. It was embedded in our conscience of liberation war. For establishing a humanitarian society, we must have to implement the recommendations that are placed in the conference from a rights based view. **Dr Tofail Ahmad** told in his speech that in institutionalizing good governance and democracy, effective measures needs to be taken to make the government and the state institutions including the parliament transparent and accountable. Though at present the economic growth is above 6%, poverty rate is increasing constantly, said **Dr. M. M. Akash**. He also added, we can overcome the present crisis through only decentralization and grassroots participation at all level. **Dr. Quzi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad** in his speech as chair told that we have to organize ourselves to eliminate discrimination for eradicating poverty which is the main obstruction of development and equity. And the purpose of putting our recommendations today is to establishing human dignity for all citizens, he added. In the conference, the 10 points recommendations were presented convening all citizens to unite and to raise their voice in the demand of executing participatory democracy and responsive governance and were accepted unanimously (The recommendations include *basic necessities of all citizens, social safety net programs, people's participation at all institutional structure, preparing national development plan and budget from grassroots level, democratic decentralization and local self government, public services, local judiciary system, women participation, education and employment for youth, executing responsive governance through ensuring transparency and accountability of all institutions*).

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> session, the issue based discussions were presided over by **Mohammad Golam Rabbani**, Ret. Justice, Appellate Division and Supreme Court of Bangladesh. In the issue based discussions, **Ms. Sheela Tasnim Haque**, Director, Civil Society Program, The Asia Foundation, **Hossain Shahid Sumon**, Cluster Leader, CHTDF, UNDP **Ms. Shahana Hayat**, Country Director, VSO-Bangladesh **Dr. Akhter Hussain**, Professor, Dept. of Public Administration, University of Dhaka **Dr. Pias Karim**, Professor, Economics & Social Science School, BRAC University discussed on *MDG & Governance, Governance & Local Justice System, Youth & Governance, Democratic Decentralization & Local Self-Government* and *Participatory Democracy* respectively. All the discussants emphasized on the necessity of being aware and raising voice of all citizens on discussed issues and in taking effective steps on behalf of the state to execute participatory democracy and responsive governance. The session was moderated by **Kaniz Fatima**, Assistant Coordinator of WAVE Foundation.

In the Closing Session, **Dr. Sayed Habibur Rahman**, President, District Loak Morcha, Barisal presided over the discussion segment on **Program Implementation & Organizational Issue**. **Aniruddha Roy**, Deputy Coordinator of WAVE Foundation moderated the session. At the outset **Mohsin Ali**, Executive Director, WAVE Foundation raised discussions on Program Implementation & Organizational Issues of Governance Coalition and Loak Moarcha. On behalf of Loak Moarcha and Governance Coalition Representatives, 31 persons delivered their speeches and they discussed about various program implementation & organizational issues in the light of their experiences. At the end of the discussions, specific decisions on yearly campaign programs and organizational issues have been taken in the light of 10 points recommendations accepted in the conference. All the representatives presented in the conference, committed once again to play more active and significant role in implementing those decisions. Above 500 participants including representatives from Loak Moarcha, Governance Coalition, a significant number of youth representatives and people from various professions and occupations both from local and national level attended the conference.

The 10 points demand accepted in the conference to undertake immediate steps by the state are:

1. **Undertake effective steps for ensuring constitutionally recognized rights including basic necessities (food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care and employment) for all citizens.**
2. **Implement appropriate development programs including social safety net programs to ensure livelihood development of the extreme poor.**

3. Formulate and implement the provision for people's participation in all institutional structure including state owned structure from local to national level.
4. Prepare development plan at district level from next fiscal year ensuring people's participation and gradually at all tiers of local government and prepare national development plan and budget based on these.
5. Formulate democratic decentralization policy and execute local self government system in line with the policy.
6. Ensure effectiveness of public services including education, health and agriculture at local level.
7. Activate local judiciary system (village court, arbitrary council, ADR) and ensure access of the poor people including women.
8. Undertake necessary steps to improve the condition and position of women and prevent violence against women including participation of women in all institutional structure.
9. Provide appropriate education including general, vocational, IT, specialized and higher education for the youth and their employment.
10. Executing responsive governance through ensuring transparency and accountability of all public and social institutions.

#### Call from the Conference

To make any great achievement happen, it is essential to undertake series of steps and special initiatives with firm determination towards the goal. Together with the relevant stakeholders, the conscious citizen of the country, political activists and the youth should play a significant and proactive role in this regard. The whole nation also expects a lot from them. Therefore, from this conference we call upon the activists of all political parties, civil society, youth and representatives from all classes and professions to:

## Unite and Raise Your Voice

*With the Demand of  
Executing Participatory Democracy and Responsive Governance  
for Ensuring Basic Necessities of all Citizens*

