

Workshop on Civic Space Analysis and Action Plan Implementation of Y-Moves Project

Date: 27 November, 2024.

Venue: Hotel Dhaka Golden Inn Hotel, Banani, Dhaka.

Supported by: Plan International Bangladesh.

Funded by: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

Organized by: PARITTRAN.

The one-day workshop on "Civic Space Analysis and Action Plan Implementation of Y-Moves Project" was successfully organized by **Parittran** at the Hotel Dhaka Golden Inn, Banani, Dhaka. Under the **Y-Moves** Project, funded by the **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)** in collaboration with **Plan International Bangladesh**. This workshop on 'Civic Space Analysis and Action Plan Implementation' has been organized to achieve the objective and expectation that focuses on building knowledge, strategies and on acquiring tools that involve ensuring Civic Space in Bangladesh. The organizations involved have discussed how they can ensure civic space. The CSOs participating in the Y-MOVES Project's Gen-2 organizations (10 Community Development Stakeholders are selected based on their working criteria) are working to improve the quality of life for marginalized people in the country. The project also focuses on building partnerships with government service providers, communities, and other stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive approach to achieving these objectives.



The main two objectives of this workshop in “Civic Space” are-

- i. To discuss and share knowledge about thematic area and space of actions regarding Civic Space from the stakeholder’s/ organizations; to know about the community needs, expectations, challenges from the related civil society organizations and the representatives from these communities.
- ii. To make an Action Plan out of their given recommendations, and this will be done under Plan International Bangladesh to expand the working area regarding community development.

PARITTRAN was established in 1993 in Satkhira to give a voice to the Dalit community at the national and global levels. From its inception, the organization has stood by the neglected and oppressed people of the grassroots Dalit community, fighting for their rights. In this struggle, the organization expresses solidarity with all oppressed and marginalized people and organizations working for their development in Bangladesh and around the world. They are committed to moving forward together in this journey.

And, The Y-MOVES Project of Plan International Bangladesh has two main objectives:

- Establishing the voice of the youth and women community.
- Ensuring their right to freedom, dignity, and the choice of their preferred lifestyle.

All the CSOs participating in today's civic space workshop have joined with these two objectives in mind. The main purpose of the civic space is to establish a welfare state. Organizations working through PIB's Y-Moves project have been able to establish a civil society movement in the country by working as spokespersons and development partners for all marginalized communities, including indigenous people, Dalits, transgender communities, tea garden workers, Harijans, grassroots people, and women in brothels, who face various social and political barriers imposed by the state and society.

Now, here are the Key Contents of the Workshop:

- ❖ **1st Session: Introduction of Civic Space, and Welcoming of Participating Development Partners of Y-Moves Project (2nd Generation Partners)**

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

- **Contents:**

- Introduction of the Individuals and CSOs participating in the workshop
- list of the CSO participants (ERA, CDD, YFC BD, YES BD, SOLIDARITY, AVAS, BONDHU, ZABARANG, CNRS, PARITRRAN)
- Welcome Speech from the Organizers Milan Das, Executive Director of PARITTRAN.
- Discussion, Knowledge and Idea Sharing of Civic Space and its state in Bangladesh, amongst the partner organizations under the Support of Plan International.
- Discussion on Civil Space Analysis tools on National and International Level.
- Proposition on “what strategies should be followed in Bangladesh regarding Civic Space development designing”
- Discussion on National and International Clauses of defending Civic Space in Society and State.



- **Summary of the Session:**

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" - Mahatma Gandhi.

Brief and experience sharing among the partners:

- Freedom to enjoy rights as a citizen of the state.
- Claiming rights if they are not granted.
- Ensuring the right to law, justice, and freedom of speech after achieving basic rights is what civic space is about.
- Ensuring a place of comfort for all citizens means ensuring civic space.

In this session, the opinions of representatives from civil society organizations participating in the workshop, how much activism is reflected or ensured within the governance system, and the acceptance of these representatives at social and political levels in the state are the indicators that define civic space in Bangladesh. This includes the thoughts, ideas, working experiences, shortcomings, and

challenges faced by these civil society organization representatives in the NGO sector, financial sector, and policy gaps in local and central governance in Bangladesh.

Stakeholders' statements:

Although many laws and policies are implemented on paper for the development of civic space and the improvement of the quality of life of marginalized communities, the reality and implementation rate at the local level tell a different story. For example, the Dalit policy was adopted in 2014, and the government has made progress in self-development projects for communities like transgender and Harijan. However, participation must be ensured from the upazila level; otherwise, desired changes cannot be achieved.


In 2021-22, an initiative was taken for allowances for the transgender community. Some criteria were set that were unrealistic and impractical, creating a gap challenge. For instance, the policy level requirement was that a beneficiary must be a transgender by birth, which is naturally impossible. This shows a lack of coordination between real problems and policy levels, as there is no mutual analysis or discussion with the related community. The same applies to marginalized communities like, Munda, Saotal (Ethnic Minority), Harijan, Dalit, and others, whose voices are rarely considered or implemented. Similar gaps and challenges are seen in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Civil society organizations representing these communities do not participate at the union level, budget level, or governance level. Even school and college students are not taught about civic space. Basic important issues like hygiene management are not addressed; they are only taught to wash their hands. Overall, people do not know about civic space because:

- 1) We have not been informed about it.
- 2) We are not consciously made aware of it.
- 3) Even if we know, we are afraid to speak openly.

Schools are meant to teach skills, knowledge, attitude, and competence. But are these taught in educational institutions in Bangladesh? The responsible parties do not provide education in these areas. Therefore, the state must take the initiative

to teach 'exchange of rights and responsibilities' from the school level, meaning governance education should start from educational institutions.

 **Tea and Refreshment Break: 10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

- ❖ **2nd session: PPT Presentation from PIB, Group-Works and Feedback through Excel Sheet, and Q&A amongst Stake Holders.**

 **Time: 10: 30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

- **Contents:**

- Welcome and Introduction.
- Objectives of the tools and Expectations of the Session (Presentation and Q&A)
- Introduction and Discussion on Civic Space (Presentation and Q&A)
- Analysis and Ratings of Each Civic Space Dimension (Group-Works)
- Action Plan to Contribute to an Enabling Civic Space (Presentation and Group Works)
- Next Space (Presentation and Discussion)

- **Summary of the Session:**

- A. The facilitator from Plan International has given a PPT Presentation through Multimedia projection, where she has discussed the details idea of Civic Space, its Objectives and expectation over an expert level knowledge sharing session. This part also includes:
 - Q&A Session (Opinion, idea sharing)
 - The participating individuals who're representing communities have shared their dimensional ideas of Civic Space. They has got capable of finding three kinds of dimensions through their opinion sharing, as such-
 - I. freedom of expression
 - II. freedom of association
 - III. freedom of assembly
 - Idea on Conflicts of Interest: it is an important part of Civic space as it involves with – family, state, public interest and financial community.

B. OBJECTIVES OF THE TOOL:


- a. Strengthen Plan International's to assess civic space and contribute to its promotion for partner CSOs, children and youth, in particular, girls and young women
- b. Facilitate the analysis of civic space and its impact on Plan International's work
- c. Enable formulation of organizational strategies to engage in support of enabling civic space

C. DIMENSIONS THAT WILL BE ANALYSED For the purpose of this tool, civic space is understood as comprising the following five dimensions:

1. Legal framework
2. Public participation
3. Safety of civil society actors and their access to an effective remedy
4. Societal attitudes to civil society actors
5. Organizational attitude to civil society actors.

Plan International's main concerns are the last two Dimensional analysis:

- **Societal attitudes to civil society actors**
- **Organizational attitude to civil society actors.**

 **Lunch-Break: 1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.**

D. After the presentation session, Plan International has divided the participants CSOs into five groups accordingly the 5 dimensions of analysis. The feedback



has been taken through Excel sheets provided by Plan International. Those group are comprised as-

Group-1: PARITTRAN and CNRS on Dimension-01

Group-2: CDD and ERA on Dimension-02

Group-3: JABARANG and Solidarity on Dimension-03

Group-4: BONDHU and YES BD on

Dimension-04

Group-5: AVAS and YFC BDF on Dimension- 05

Their tasks are to answer some questions under 5 dimensions. Each group has to answer questions under only one dimension and they have to give ratings out of 5 by using three tools, as well as they have to give a dimensional analysis along with the ratings.

(The answer/ratings sheets will be provided with the report)

E. After the group works, the participating CSOs have given presentation on their given dimensional analysis reflected on all questions and rated all five dimension. It takes places also with a Q&A Session with the participating CSOs members.



F. In the first part, to formulate an action plan by checking the overview of all analyzed dimensions. The participants are asked to propose three recommendations according to the previously formed group with different dimensional overview, based on-

- Which dimensions are the most challenging in the country they have assessed? Those that are orange or red are more challenging, while those that are green present fewer challenges. In preparation of developing your action plan, take note of which dimensions that have been rated as the most challenging.

❖ 3rd Session: Action Plan for an Enabling Civic Space in Bangladesh:

🕒 Time: 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

➤ Excel Sheet Feedback on Recommendations and presentation on them.

● Summary of the Session:

A. Recommendations: Each group comprised with two CSOs has proposed three recommendations based on their selected Dimension. Here are these-

Group-01; Dimension: 01- Legal Framework

- 1) Easy going CSO registration process in local and national level.
- 2) Giving training to the youth and individual on existing legal framework of the country.
- 3) Taking many awareness-building programs on legal framework.

Group-02, Dimension: 02- Public participation

- 1) Digital inclusion of action and plan of disability
- 2) More extensive network and collaboration
- 3) Reduced workloads

Group-03, Dimension: 03- Safety of civil society actors and their access to an effective remedy

- 1) To increase the awareness building in all kinds of administration including public, private, NGO, police for taking action against sexual and gender based violence, child marriage et el.
- 2) Child awareness of self-protection, Laws, and increasing RTI activities in Chittagong Hill Tracks.
- 3) To build social safety net it is important to have advocacy program.

Group-04, Dimension: 04- Societal attitudes to civil society actors

1. Counseling between families and stakeholders to solve the issues
2. Awareness campaign in online and offline
3. Advocacy for empowering them to raise their own voice.

Group-05, Dimension: 05-Organizational attitude to civil society actors.

- 1) Consultation with CSOs
- 2) Victim Support
- 3) Safeguarding

Ending Greetings at 5' o clock:

Summary:

After the daylong inter-participatory and lively workshop everyone was satisfied and more confident about their integrity and passion towards an

inclusive society together where Civic Space would be ensured by all the stakeholders of society and state.

And lastly the workshop comes to an end by the closing remarks from -

1. Milan Das
Executive Director
Parittran
2. Syeda Husne Kadery
Project Manager,
Y- Moves Project,
Plan International Bangladesh.
3. Amina Moni
Regional Advocacy and Youth Civic Space Advisor,
Plan International Asia Hub.
4. Harjina Jahura
TS-SRHR,
Plan International Bangladesh.

Above all the discussions have been enlightening, the idea's been inspiring, and commitment's been unwavering. We have explored new horizons, challenged old paradigms, and laid the groundwork for a future where every voice is heard, every right is respected, and every individual is empowered.