

**EVENT REPORT  
NATIONAL ADVOCACY SEMINAR**

**A PILOT PROJECT ON CAPACITY BUILDING ON  
ELECTRICITY REFORMS IN BANGLADESH,  
INDIA AND NEPAL - RESA PROJECT**

**BIAM Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh,  
12 November 2009**



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## 1. Introduction

Electricity is one of the important pillars required for the rapid socio-economic growth of a country. Unfortunately, most of the developing countries including Bangladesh and Nepal are facing acute shortage of power supply. Inadequate supply of energy adversely affects every sphere of life and hampers the entire economy from competitiveness of industries to depriving farmers of an important input for production. Per capita consumption of electricity is one of the important indicators taken for measuring socio-economic development of a country.

The reforms process has been initiated to increase the availability of power in the country. Independent regulatory body, called 'Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC)' was constituted to regulate the power sector in the country. Among others, the role of private sector becomes crucial to bridge the investment gap in the sector especially in the generation segment. On the other hand, electricity consumers have a vital role to play in making the system more transparent and accountable. However, because of lack of capacity to intervene and understand complex issues, consumers' participation in the reform process has not been very effective in Bangladesh. As a result, interests of the consumers are not well represented in the whole regulatory process.



*Chinmoy Mutsuddi, Nodal Person of RESA (Left), Udai Mehta, CUTS International, Professor Shahana Rahman, Acting Chairperson Unnayan Shamannay, Kazi Faruque, General Secretary, CAB and Abul Kalam Azad, Secretary, Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Government of Bangladesh at National Advocacy Seminar, BIAM Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 12 November 2009.*

CUTS International, India, has been undertaking an initiative in Bangladesh, Nepal and 2 states of India i.e. West Bengal and Rajasthan emphasising on building capacity of consumers, CSOs to enable them to understand the issues involved, take-up action research, share experiences, and carryout advocacy with policymakers and regulatory agencies to effect changes in the electricity regulatory/policy processes. In Bangladesh, Unnayan Shamannay implemented the RESA project with the support of a number of local CSOs as partners. National Advocacy Seminar is one of the key project activities organised to share the findings emerging from the various activities that were conducted at

the grassroots level under the project with policy makers, regulators and power utility for effective consumer advocacy.

## 2. Objective of the advocacy seminar

The objectives of the seminar were to:

- ensure effective consumer advocacy highlighting the major consumer problems identified during project activities;
- discuss the key challenges in the power sector reform process in Bangladesh;
- facilitate and help in developing a network among the policy community, regulators, civil society representatives; media on the key challenges that needs to be addressed with regards to electricity reforms in Bangladesh; and
- sensitise the policy makers about the importance of consumer participation in policy-making process amid the ongoing electricity sector reform process in the country.

## 3. Scope of the Seminar

National Advocacy Seminar covered wide range of the stakeholders-grassroots consumers to policy makers. Though few senior level government officials could not attend the seminar, there was enough participation on behalf of others stakeholders who shared their views during the event.

## 4. Participants



The seminar brought together a cross-section of stakeholders, including power sector experts, consumer rights' activists, few policymakers, academicians, media persons, civil society representatives, national reference group members, etc. (Annexure B – List of Participants)

## 5. Overview of the sessions

### Opening Session

The session was chaired by Professor Shahana Rahman, Acting Chairperson, Unnayan Shamannay. Udai Mehta, CUTS C-CIER, India participated as the Special Guest, while Brigadier General (Rtd) Muhammad Enamul Huq, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources, Government of Bangladesh was invited as the Chief Guest, but could not attend the meeting. Faruque, Chairperson, Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) gave vote of thanks to the participants.

**Chinmoy Mutsuddi, Nodal Person, RESA**, explained the importance of the electricity sector reforms as well as consumer participation in the energy sector in Bangladesh. He emphasised on the RESA project's initiative of encouraging active consumer participation in the electricity sector reforms in Bangladesh and presented the RESA project findings in the inaugural session. Mutsuddi mentioned that the RESA project activities particularly the grassroots interface meeting (GIMs) contributed in increasing the capacity of the consumers and civil society organizations (CSOs). Given their active involvement in the project, the Consumers are aware of the reform process and they have also taken initiatives to establish networks between electricity authority, consumers and CSOs. Consumer committees have been formed in certain localities with the objective to prevent power theft, conserve electricity and support consumers in ensuring registration of their complaints. However, the Committees require further support (financial and technical) to continue their activities on a more sustainable basis.

**Udai Mehta, (CUTS Representative) India**, stressed on the key outcomes of RESA project activities. He described the project objectives and vision to the audience. He also focussed on the capacity building of the consumers which was one of the main purposes of this project. He made the following key points. Mehta mentioned that the project focused on building the capacity of the consumers in all the project territories and as a result ensuring that as a result of effective consumers' participation the policy making process is more transparent and accountable. The focus of the project was to build the capacity of the consumers and as a result, the consumers are able to relevant steps, such as registration of complaints, ensuring energy conservation, etc.

Mehta stressed on the importance of collating views/problems of the consumers and ensure their involvement in the policy process. However, the initiative taken by RESA Project is a difficult initiative and support from the policy makers is absent in Bangladesh, as none of the relevant policymakers were present in the meeting. The purpose of the project is to bridge the communication gap between the various stakeholders. Policy makers sitting in their head offices are not aware of the situation at the grassroots level; thus, the purpose of the RESA activities including the advocacy seminar is to inform the policy makers of the situation at the grassroots level.

Chair of this session expressed her gratitude to all the participants and emphasized on the importance of electricity in modern society. However, she stressed that Bangladesh electricity sector needs professionalism with consumer's participation in the policy making process.

### **Session I: Electricity Sector Reforms and its Challenges in Bangladesh and Policy issues in Power Sector of Bangladesh**

The session was chaired by Abul Kalam Azad, Secretary, Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Govt. of Bangladesh. A research paper was presented by B.D Rahmatullah, Member of national reference group, Ex. DG, Power Cell, Govt. of Bangladesh and former Chief Engineer of REB.

Given below are key points that emerged from Azad presentation:

- Crisis still exist in the electricity sector because of non-implementation of reform activities.
- Government's Three year road map for the power sector reform (2006-2008) has not been implemented properly. There is an urgent need to take relevant steps to rectify the mistake and effectively undertake power sector reforms.
- Power generators were not installed as planned because of bureaucratic barriers and massive corruption in this sector. Energy conservation and efficient management of the system are absent in the Bangladesh energy sector resulting in frequent load shedding. The same can be mitigated by efficient load management and public awareness to save energy by using efficient equipments.
- Effective consumer participation in the regulatory reform process should be accorded due importance and relevant steps should be taken in this direction by the policy makers
- Strong consumers association is necessary to maintain check and balance in the sector.

Towards the end of the session, Azad said that for a long time in Bangladesh there has not been enough generation of electricity; but the demand has been increasing on a daily basis. WAt present, Bangladesh faced a shortage of around 2000 megawatt electricity. Given the shortage of electricity generation, government is forced to buy electricity from the private sector, which is not a very viable model. Thus, there is a need to adopt and implement a comprehensive plan towards ensuring a more sustainable model for electricity generation & distribution and involvement of consumer participation.

### **Session II: BERC and Regulatory Decision-making Process and Consumer Participation**

The session was chaired by B.D Rahmatullah, Member of NRG, Ex. DG, Power Cell, Govt. of Bangladesh and former Chief Engineer of REB. Presentation was delivered by Professor M. Shamsul Alam, Member of NRG, Faculty, Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET).

Professor M. Shamsul Alam stated that consumer participation is important to ensure transparency and accountability in the regulatory process. In order to ensure effective regulatory reforms, Bangladesh adopted the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act 2003, which led to the creation of BERC. The Act has ensured that BERC would need to take important decision in consultation with the consumers. At present there are no capable consumer organizations that have the required capacity to actively participate in the regulatory process in Bangladesh, particularly, in the electricity sector reforms. However, the RESA project has been able to create certain cadre of consumers at grassroots level who are in a better position to understand the issues and be able to engage actively in the reform process.

### **Session III: Electricity Sector Reforms and Grassroots Experience: Challenges and Opportunities**

The session was chaired by B.D Rahmatullah, Member of NR, Ex. DG, Power Cell, Govt. of Bangladesh and former Chief Engineer of REB. Two Representatives from local CSOs and grassroots consumers shared their experience in this session.

Nabi Nawaz MD and Muzibuddula Sardar, CSO leader, from Jessore, informed that RESA project activities have build their capacity and also provided the exposure to understand issues pertaining to electricity reforms. Having participated in the grassroots meetings, the consumers are now in a better position and are aware of the reform process and have been able to appreciate that it is their right and responsibility to take steps to control theft of power, as from theft and misuse of power, ultimately they themselves are the sufferers i.e. by not getting proper supply of electricity.

### **WAY FORWARD**

- Awareness increased among the consumers who participated in the RESA activities and there is a need to continue running the RESA project.
- Regulators and policy makers need to be involved more closely in the grassroots interface meetings, in order to understand the ground realities in much better way.
- Enhanced capacity of the consumers is required for active participation in the policy process.
- Strengthen and enhance the gains achieved through the current intervention, e.g., consumer-utilities relationship and capacity building of consumers to participate in the policy/regulatory processes.

## ANNEXURE A

### AGENDA

Time	Sessions
09:00 -09:30	Registration and tea/coffee
09:30-10:30	<b>Opening Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chinmoy Mutsuddi, Nodal Person, RESA</li><li>• Udai Mehta, CUTS International, India</li><li>• Brigadier General (Rtd) Muhammad Enamul Huq, MP, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Government of Bangladesh</li><li>• Professor Shahana Rahman, Acting Chairperson, Unnayan Shamannay</li><li>• Quazi Faruque, General Secretary, Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB)</li></ul>
10:30-10:45	<b>Tea Break</b>
10:45-11:45	<b>Session I : Electricity Sector Reforms and challenges in Bangladesh</b>  B.D Rahmatullah, Ex. DG, Power Cell, Govt. of Bangladesh and Chief Engineer of REB
11:45-12:20	<b>Session II : BERC and Regulatory Decision-making Process and Consumer Participation</b>  Professor Shamsul Alam, Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET)
12:20-13:30	<b>Session III : Electricity Sector Reforms and RESA's Grassroots Experience: Challenges and Opportunities</b>  Two Local CSOs and Two Grassroots' Consumers
13:30-14:00	<b>Closing Session</b>
14:00 onwards	Lunch

**ANNEX B**

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

<b>SL No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Phone/Email</b>
01	Mobashir Ullah Chowdhury	President of CAB, Bhola District	01731-489595
02	Aysha	Member of CAB, Bhola District	01918167768
03	Mohammad Azizur Rahman	CAB	01735816327
04	Shiri Sunil Chandra Pal	President of CAB, Sundergonj, Gibandha	
05	Subhanker Bhattacharia	Member of CAB, Sundergonj Upazila Gibandha	01715800358
06	Subroto Kumar Roy	CAB, BCTC Project	01718773130
07	Udai Mehta	CUTS	
08	Shahen	Unnayan Shamannay	01712145000
09	Chinmoy Mutsuddi	Unnayan Shamannay	
10	Raziya Khandaker	BCTC	01718-299842
11	Mustafizur Rahman		01718558810
12	Dr. Mahbub Hasan	Unnayan Shamannay	
13	MST. Mariya Begom	CAB, Chapainawabgonj	01723667491
14	Kazi Faruk	CAB, Center Office	9562858
15	Dabashis Haldar	CAB, Khulna	01911181871
16	Majadul Haque Manik	CAB, Gangni, Meherpur	01712841408
17	Md. Shaheen	Meherpur	01917207244
18	K. M. Nurunnabi Tuhin	DPO, CAB, Barisal	01711047112
19	B. D. Rahmatullah		0152480511
20	Metteru Runi	ATN Bangla	01713049820
21	Ezaz Hossain	Ittefaq	01711184093
22	Indranil Barua	BPDB	01711024794
23	Joyanal Abedin	RTV	01712037354
24	M. A. Jems	RTV	01552366324
25	Md. Sha	CAB, Gazipur	01915723342
26	Shahnaj Begom	BSS	9566231
27	Habibur Rahman	Unnayan Shamannay	01552481075
28	Sathia Khan	Bangla Vision	01711586835
29	Masum	Banglavision	01814473701

SL No	Name	Organization	Phone/Email
30	AKM Muksudul Alam	Shamunnay	
31	Abu Taher Muhammad	Khagrachhari	01550606008
32	A. A. K. Mahmudul Hasan	CAB	01713332861
33	Uday Chatterjee	CAB	01711389656
34	Fazlul Quader Chowdhury	CAB, Cox Bazer	01558310923
35	Habibur Rahman	Shusamag Foundation	01713907145
36	Md. Golam Mostafa Mamun	CAB-Rajshahi, SEDEA	01715013519
37	Sahin	Janakantho	01919826542
38	Md Tipu	Daily Shangbad	01552330729
39	Md Fazlur Rahman	SEPEA	01712205370
40	Md. Ali Hazari	United People's Trust Comilla	01715524647
41	Md Zaman	CAB	01722316418
42	Md Shala Uddin	CAB	01723525369
43	Md Sirazul Islam	DG, BIAM Foundation	
44	Engineer A. M. Bhuiyan	Ex. Director, DESA	9133131
45	Shahana Rahman	Acting Chair, Unnayan Shamannay	01715244811
46	Abdullah Al Maun Sumon	Member of CAB, Chapainawabgonj	01190221573
47	Anwar Hossain	NTV	01817045314
48	Rakib Hasan	NTV	01712368080
49	M. Shamsul Alam	CUET	01713109917
50	Md. Wasim Bin Hasib	The Daily Star	01718092428
51	Ranajit Das	CAB, Barisla	01712297872
52	Shabnur Nigar Laz	UPO CAB, Rajshahi	01914887488
53	Lata Rani Biswas	Accounts officer, CAB	9562858

SL No	Name	Organization	Phone/Email
54	Arun Karmaker	Prothom Alo	01711698699
55	Sayeeda Islam Mita	ABC Radio	01921091723
56	Nabi Dawan	Shusamaj Foundation	01711397441
57	Md. Muzibuddoula Sardar	Shusamaj Foundation	
58	Mohammad Alauddin	Power Division	01711835612
59	M. Nazmul Azam D	CAB, Khulna	01711829414
60	M. Zakir Hossain Khan	Transparency International, Bangladesh	01713065546
61	Anowar Hossain	Prothom Alo	01713424339
62	Md Shafiqul Islam	SWC, Sirajganj	0171645554
63	Md Abdul Odud	SWC, Sirajganj	0171732518
64	Sanjida Sultana	SWC, Sirajganj	01711451622
65	Abul Kalam Azad	Power secretary, Govt. of Bangladesh	-