

Report on State Level Inception Workshop under the Project 'Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (RESA)' April 20, 2008, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Introduction

Unnayan Shamannay, Dhaka, in association with CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment and Economic Regulation (CUTS C-CIER), Jaipur, organised a one-day Local Inception Workshop under the project "capacity building on electricity reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (RESA project)" at BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka, Bangladesh, on April 20, 2008



Background

CUTS C-CIER has undertaken a pilot project titled, "Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (RESA Project)". The project is being implemented in three countries, viz. Bangladesh, India (only two states, e.g. Rajasthan and West Bengal) and Nepal. The project is supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). In Bangladesh, the project is being implemented by Unnayan Shamannay, a non-profit research organisation, which will be working in collaboration with Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) and a number of its regional partner organisations in the course of project implementation. In Nepal, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment (SAWTEE) is tasked with implementing the project, while in India, CUTS C-CIER and CUTS CRC, the programme and resource centres of CUTS International respectively are to implement the project.

Objective

The project has the following objectives:

- To build capacity of civil society on electricity reforms in Bangladesh;
- To share the project objectives and proposed activities with the local partners; and
- To train them on the consumer survey methodology.

Project Area and Partners

The local project partners in Bangladesh are well-organised civil society organisations (CSOs) working in different parts of the country and are linked with consumer movement in Bangladesh. They are also partners of CAB. The project covers 13 districts under five divisions, viz. Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi of Bangladesh (see Table 1A

and 2A, and Figure 1A). These are small NGOs operating at the local level and working on different aspects of consumers' rights. All of these NGOs have some background in working on energy consumers' rights. All of them participated in trainings and programs on energy consumers' rights organized by CAB and Unnayan Shamannay earlier.

Participants

In all, 73 participants, who included representatives from the partner organisations, members of the National Reference Group (NRG), academia and media persons attended the Local Inception Workshop. Ghulam Rahman, Chairman of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) was the Chief Guest at the workshop.



Proceedings

Dr Atiur Rahman, Chairman, Unnayan Shamannay & Professor, Dhaka University, Dhaka

The workshop began with a welcome speech by **Dr Atiur Rahman**, who presided over the event. He pointed out that when a consumer attaches himself with a people's organisation and participates in different humanitarian tasks, public interest flourishes. The key issue should not be whether the service is coming from public sector or private sector; but it should be 'public interest'. **Dr Rahman** put emphasis on the much-needed synchronisation of government as well as those of NGOs agenda for development of the society. He proposed open discussion on how to build mass awareness towards the development of energy sector. He expressed his hope on the future prospects and referred to the efforts of the present chairman of BERC, who had been trying to build a bridge between the consumers and the government.

Taifur Rahman, the Chief of Programme and Research, Unnayan Shamannay, Dhaka

Taifur Rahman presented an overview of the history and the present status of electricity reforms in Bangladesh, highlighting the goal that the Government has set to provide access to affordable and reliable electricity to all citizens of Bangladesh within 2020. He informed about the big challenges ahead for the consumers in the wake of current state of the sector. Rahman also gave a brief on the objectives and major functions of the BERC. He also presented the objectives and plans of the RESA project in Bangladesh.

Rajesh Kumar, f CUTS International, Jaipur, India

Rajesh Kumar made a presentation on '*Electricity Reforms: Roles and Responsibility of CSOs*'. His presentation focused on the need for electricity reforms, the way India dealt with it, the scope for consumer interventions and CSOs' agendas. He suggested that Bangladesh should learn from the success and failure stories of different Indian states that are implementing electricity reforms. Focusing on vertical and horizontal unbundling of State Electricity Boards (SEBs) in India and the functioning of an independent regulatory body in the reform process, he pointed out that objective of such a comparative study would be to develop a market-oriented electricity sector. **Kumar** identified lack of autonomy to regulators, poor public participation, poor metering system and slow rural electrification programme as the limiting factors in the reform process. Stressing the need for improving the Plant Load Factor of Bangladesh, he called for the importance of determining the appropriate tariff level.

About CSOs, **Kumar** stated that their intervention and advocacy will help in creating awareness on electricity reforms, promoting consumer participation, discouraging power theft, encouraging consumers to save energy and raising the systemic issues. He recommended that reforms should be consumer centric, with increasing accountability and transparency, as well as it should ensure autonomy to the regulators and increasing consumer education and awareness.

Kazi Faruque, the General Secretary of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh

Kazi Faruque talked about human rights, which should not be ignored because if the rights are not provided the policymakers, they should be pulled together. He emphasised the need for people to know the process how to win their rights, including the required knowledge to bargain for rights. He requested the Chairman of BERC to work as an effective referee in securing consumer rights.

Professor Shamsul Alam, Eminent Energy Expert and an NRG Member

Professor Shamsul Alam expressed his doubt about the reform initiatives by BERC and questioned why coal is not considered as energy in the definition used by the Commission. He suggested that the Ministry of Energy should not be involved in decision making, but rather in policy making of related sector. Large scale corruption is rampant in pricing and taxing electricity, Prof Alam informed. He asked that BERC should be sensitive to consumer demand and aware of the problems they face.

Professor HKS Arefeen, a Noted Intellectual of Bangladesh and an NRG Member

Professor HKS Arefeen identified electricity as one of the biggest factors in changing human life and insisted on discovering new energy sources to meet the increasing demand. He asked the participants that there is a need to identify the causes why it has been really difficult to gear up electricity generation.

Arun Karmaker, a Leading Energy Reporter of Bangladesh and an NRG Member

Arun Karmaker spoke on different opportunities that are at hand, which are yet to be explored. According to **Karmaker**, civil society has a major responsibility of helping the government, as the pressure should come from it. Different issues concerning capacity building in the electricity sector should be presented to the policymakers and media can play a big role in this, he argued.

Abu Taher Khan, the Managing Director of the NGO Foundation and an NRG Member

Abu Taher Khan said that the different service-oriented organisations should work together and help BERC from different platforms. He also suggested that BERC should pay heed to the demands of the grassroots workers of different service organisations since they work directly at the grassroots, they can reflect the appropriate needs from the consumer level.

Quamrul Islam Siddique, Former Bureaucrat and an NRG Member

Quamrul Islam Siddique, while insisting the role of a pressure group, suggested that the Power Development Board (PDB) should undergo a massive infrastructural change to improve its service quality. He asked for appointing institutes specialising in management, e.g. Institute of Business Administration in this reform task. Energy Conservation Act should be set off where the submission of energy consumption report would be mandatory for all companies, he argued. This step can incur big change in energy utilisation. As Bangladesh has a moderate conservation of coal, he asked the BERC Chairman why Bangladesh is not investing on setting up coal-based power plants, referring that West Bengal already has a coal-based power plant of 2,000MW. **Siddique** also insisted on prioritising the exploration of new hydro-electric plants which might be a big source of energy in the near future.

Khushi Kabir, a Prominent NGO Leader and an NRG Member

Khushi Kabir, focusing her discussion on increasing accountability of the BERC, recommended for exploring the most environmentally sensitive and appropriate energy source suitable for Bangladesh. Environmental hazards should be a decisive factor, she added.

Ghulam Rahman, the Chief Guest & the Chairman of BERC, Dhaka

Ghulam Rahman identified the shortage in supply of raw materials as the key barrier in increasing energy production. He reminded that BERC does not have the required workforce. **Rahman** emphasised the need for much needed infrastructural reform BERC, which has recently inaugurated a website for the general public to facilitate easy access to the related information and submission of complaints. Before taking any decision, BERC will announce a meeting date in the website and call for open proposals from the general consumers, he added.

Rahman talked about the existing significant demand-supply disequilibrium in energy market. He pointed out the fact that the role of BERC would be to act as a referee to determine the status of the market, regulatory conditions and tariff. He also talked about the much needed participation of consumers in the policymaking process. Of the next 16 recruitments to the BERC, 2 would be appointed as consumer representatives whose main task would be to represent the demand of the consumers. BERC will be able to work in full-fledge manner by December 2009. He also noted that regional negotiation should be performed to actualise energy import. It is important to have effective participation of different sectors, he added.

Representatives of the partner organisations also took part in the discussion in which they highlighted the problems of the energy sector and discussed their current and potential roles in the reforms process as consumer leaders.

The discussants mostly highlighted on different problems that the electricity consumers have been facing in recent years. They also discussed about the governance issues in the sector. The issues of huge corruption in the sector over the last few years came as a big area of discussion.

The participants also discussed about the potential role that they can play as CSOs in raising the level of awareness, the capacity and the level of participation of the consumers in the process of policy formulation and reforms.

Analysis of the perception survey of the project partners

Part A: Details of the Organisation

Name of the partner's organization:

RESA project partners are Social works center, Thikana manob kalyan Sangshtha, People's Development Organization (PDO), Bangladesh Center for Development Program (BCDP), Singejani Manob Unnayan Sangstha, CAB Bhola, United People's Trust, Desh, AREED, Susamaj Foundation, Shepa Society, Wait N C and Ujjibok.

These organizations have been involved in the area of consumer interest or advocacy related activities in the different regions of Bangladesh. The length of their experiences varies from 2 to 10 years.

Out of the 13 partner organizations, 10 partners are registered. The time of registration ranges between 1992 and 2006. All are involved in civil society movement, particularly consumers' rights with Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB). They have big networks all around the country.

The priority areas of the organisation are

- Democracy and good governance
- Consumers' rights
- Gender
- Environment
- Educational program
- Implementation of Smoking and Tobacco control policies
- Health service, health consciousness and health rights
- Right-based activities
- Human Right
- Development/rehabilitation of the disabled
- Youth development
- Human resource development
- Development related activities
- Awareness raising and prevention of HIV/AIDS
- Health and nutrition
- Awareness raising activities

- Agricultural technology and training
- Entrepreneurship development
- Skill development and income generating activities

Partners are working in these areas:

Sirajgonj, Meherpur, Barisal, Chapainawabgonj, Rajshahi, Gaibandha, Bhola, Cox's Bazar, Jessor, Khulna, Dhaka, Comilla and Chitragong District of Bangladesh.

Part B: Engagement in electricity reforms/capacity building of consumers

In 2008, three partners are implementing projects on electricity issues.

The projects are:

- Consumer's opinion regarding electricity issue
- Electricity consumer survey
- Loadshedding

In these projects, supporting agency was CAB. Area covered Bhola, Barisal and Khulna. Other partners have not been involved in any projects related to electricity. The following are the reasons.

- Non-availability of opportunity: 75 percent of the organizations.
- Lack of financial support: 66 percent of the organizations.
- Issues in electricity sector being too technical: 33 percent

Consumer Education

Most of the partner organizations are engaged in consumer's education activities. Out of 13, 10 partners are actively engaged in consumer's education activities.

From 2002 to 2007, these partners had engaged in the following activities related to consumers' education.

- Consumers' group formation
- Consumer's education and consciousness raising activities
- Energy consumers' rights and responsibilities
- Removing corruption from the services
- Adulterant and consumers rights

These activities were supported by two organizations: CAB and Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), a local funding agency.

Area covered Barisal, Chapai Nawabganj, Gaibandha, Bhola, Cox's Bazar, Gazipur, Khulna, Comilla and Gangni of Meherpur district.

There have been some positive outcomes of their activities like the following.

- The level of consciousness among consumers is increasing.
- Capacity of the consumers has increased: to a good extent for some organization and to moderate extent for some other.

Opportunity to work on capacity building and consumer awareness

All partners want to engage in the work of capacity building or raising consumer awareness. They like to take the opportunity to work on capacity building or consumer awareness issues in electricity reforms in Bangladesh.

The reasons for what they want this opportunity, are the following.

- Consumers will be able to know and let others know about electricity issues.
- Experience of the local people should be used in policy formulation.
- A consumer can know about his rights in the energy sector.
- Consumers can increase their awareness on electricity reforms.
- Consumers will be aware of the corruption existing in the electricity sector.
- Consumers can help in policy making.

Part C: CSOs Perception on the Consumer Awareness on Electricity Reforms

According to all partner organizations, the following are the important issues on electricity to common consumers.

Issue	Views of partner organizations
Quality of Service	All participated organizations think that quality of service is very important.
Electricity Tariff	58.3 percent organization's important issue is electricity tariff.
Metering and Billing	All are think that Metering and Billing is more important.
T&D losses	16.7 percent think that T&D losses are important.
Theft of Power	50 percent participated organizations think that Theft of Power is important.

Project Partners Meeting

The second half of the workshop was devoted to the project partners' meeting. **Quazi Faruque, the General Secretary of CAB**, as the resource person, pointed out the importance



of CSOs involvement in the reform process particularly to take into account the interests of consumers. He also discussed the possible ways of collaboration. His motivating speech was followed by a group exercise in which all the participants (the CSO representatives) were divided into three groups to brainstorm on the importance and the process of consumers' participation in the electricity

reforms. The groups presented their findings in the plenary and a lively discussion was held on the findings.

The last part of the meeting was a deliberation on the Baseline Survey in which participants discussed its methodology and questionnaire. **Taifur Rahman, Monowar Hossain and Rajesh Kumar** explained the technical and procedural aspects of the survey and clarified different points and issues raised about the questionnaire and sampling techniques. Also, the work-plan of the project and the terms and conditions of the involvement of the CSOs were discussed in the meeting.

Way Forward

All partners expressed their commitments to contribute in this initiative on electricity reforms in the country. The mode of collaboration was discussed broadly. It was settled that Unnayan Shamannay will collaborate with the partners through CAB.

Key Points and Recommendations Emerged from the Workshop

The following are the key points that emerged from the workshop.

- The electricity sector of Bangladesh is facing a lot of problems and is not being able to satisfy the consumers. One of the major deficiencies is the shortage in generation. Corruption is a major concern.
- Reforms of the electricity sector are extremely important to improve the management, quality and coverage of the electricity as a public utility.
- Participation of the CSOs and consumers is crucial in the process of reforming the sectors for improved services.
- The BERC has to ensure consumers' participation in its activities. It has to play the role of an effective referee to protect the interest of all the stakeholders, particularly the consumers.
- The RESA project can contribute significantly to building the capacity of the CSOs, so that they could participate in the reform process. For that, the project has to work through the civil society leaders at the national as well as local level.

Highlight

- The highlight of the workshop was the enthusiastic participation of the CSO representatives.
- It was obvious that the discussion at the workshop was able to motivate the CSOs in being effectively involved in the initiative.

Lowlight

- Towards the end some of the workshop, participants were in a hurry to go back to their homes. However, this did not affect the discussion.

Annexure 1

Table 1A: Project Areas in Bangladesh

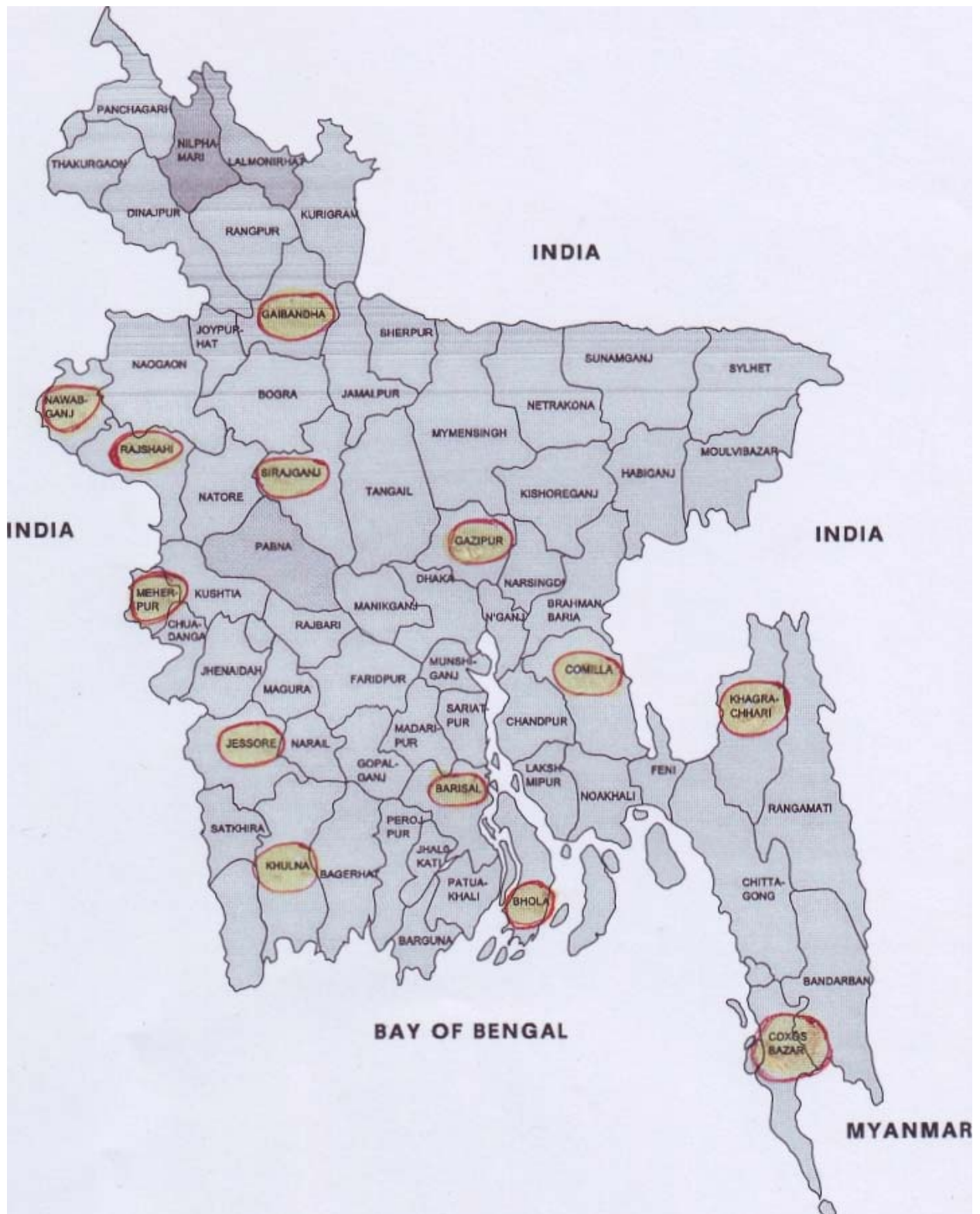
S.No.	District	Division
1	Sirajgonj	Rajshahi
2.	Rajshahi	Rajshahi
3.	Chapinawabgonj	Rajshahi
4.	Sundargonj, Gaibandha	Rajshahi
5.	Jessor sadar, Jessor	Khulna
6.	Khulna	Khulna
7.	Gangni, Meherpur	Khulna
8.	Comilla	Chittagong
9.	Cox's Bazar	Chittagong
10.	Khagrachari	Chittagong
11.	Barisal	Barisal
12.	Bhola	Barisal
13.	Gazipur	Dhaka

Table 2A: List of Project Partners in Bangladesh

Organisation Name	Address	Contact Person
1. SWC	Jubali Bagan lane, Sirajgonj	Md. Safiqul Islam Phone: 01716455554
2. Susamaj Foundation	11 Smith road, Jassor sadar, jassor	Nobi Newaz Mohammad Nojibudoula kanok Phone: 0421-72798, 01711397441
3. Desh	9 No. Kakolibag tarer Pukur, Khulna 9100	Saiful Islam Phone: 01711450178
4. Thikana Manob Kalyan Sangstha	Kustia Road, Gangni, Meherpur	Mazedul Haque Phone: 01712841408
5. United People's Trust	Hazari Computers, Kandir Par, Comilla	Ali Hazari Phone: 081-66502, 01715524649
6. Wait N C	Maya Kuthir, Ghonar Para, Bibekananda Biddhaniketan Road, Coxes Baza	Umme Sajeda Khanum Phone: 01816147943, 01558665791
7. Ujjibok	Daily Aronno Berta, Master para, Khagrachari	Abu Taher Mohammad Phone: 0371-61250, 01819993985, 01727398888
8. Shepa	Mazedia shopping center (1 st floor) Ganokpara, Shaheb Bazar, Rajshahi	AHM Golam Mostafa Mamun Phone: 0721-773700, 01715013519
9. Beel Chalan Unnayan Sangstha	Arambag, Battala Hat, Chapinawabgonj	Altab Hossain Phone: 0781-61570, 01716730704
10. Singijani Manab Unnayan Sangstha	Vill: Singijani, Post: Lalchamar, Upazila: Sundargonj, Gaibandha	Md. Azizur Rahman Phone: 01735816327
11. People's Development Organization	'Shabnam' Jardon Road, Barishal	Ranjit Dutta Phone: 0431-63016, 01712297872
12. CAB Bhola	Ukil Para, Zilla Sadar, Bhola	Mobashshir ullah Choudury Phone: 0491-61098, 01731489595

Organisation Name	Address	Contact Person
13. AREED	Shimultali Chator, Gazipur	Parveen Akhter Phone: 01711788944
14. Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB)	8/6, Segun Bagicha, Dhaka 1000	Uday Chatterjee Phone: 8802-9562858 Fax: 8802-7173733 E-mail: quazi@citech.net

Figure 1A: Map of Project Areas in Bangladesh



Annexure 2

Local Inception Workshop Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal April 20, 2008

Table 2A: Registration Sheet

Sl. No.	Name	Organisation	Phone/Email
01	Abdullah Al Mamun Sumon	B.C.D.P (Chapainowabgonj)	0119932457
02	Dr. Md. Aziaur Rahman Siddique	CAB, Comilla	01819824010
03	Md. Sulaiman	Agency for Infectious Disease Control and Prevention (AID CAP) Bangla School More. Sadar Road, Bhola, 8300	01711162680 sulaiman21@gmail.com aidcap@gmail.com
04	Md. Ali Hazare	CAB, Comilla	01715524647 hazare_twcc@yahoo.com
05	Md. Showkat Ali Hazari	United Peoples trust	01711182745
06	Iqram Us-Shakur	United Peoples trust	01911277473
07	Sharmin Akter	DESH	01911975909
08	Abutaher Muhammad	CAB, Khagrachari	0371-61250 atmuhammad@yahoo.com
09	Md. Azizur Rahman	President CAB, Sudarganja	01735816327
10	Miss. Golenur Gegume	Secretary CAB, Sudarganja	01735816327
11	Md. Zahidul Islam	P.O. SMUS, SundarGanja, Gaibandha	01199125736
12	Md. Borhanuddin	P.O. SMUS, Gaibandha	01718809351
13	Md. Tajemul Hoque	Join Secretary CAB, Chapai Nawabgonj	01818461924
14	Taj Mohammod	DESH	01718347090
15	Shahed	Jugantor	01911317013
16	Md. Shahidul Islam	Daily Samakal	01715982778
17	Shujon Mehedi	Channel one	01712078916
18	Abdul Hamid Shamim	S.W.C	01826615288
19	Md. Shutiqul Islam	S.W.C	01716455554 swcbd@yahoo.com
20	Enayet Hossain Chowdhury	CAB	01711364383
21	Md. Aktaruzzaman	Thikana manub Kallayan Sangghtha	bokul_gangni@yahoo.com
22	M. Hoque Manik	General Secretary, CAB, Gam----	01712841408 manik-thikand@yahoo.com
23	Md. Abu Hossain	Member of CAB	01716494614 ORD.gangni@yahoo.com
24	Rafique-ul-Alam	President, Meherpur District, CAB	01711402333 pr.alam@yahoo.com

Sl. No.	Name	Organisation	Phone/Email
25	Mohammad Sahkil	AREED- Gazipur	01915723342
26	Ummah Sajeda Khanom	General Secretary, CAB, Cox's Bazar District Comm	01816147943
27	Md. Jashim Uddin Siddique Advocate	Member, CAB, Cox's Bazar Advocate and officer, Wait, NCC (NGO)	01818188716
28	Pronob Dhar	CAB, Jessore	01726226387
29	S. M. Aziz	Shu Shomaj Foundation	01711273376
30	Fazlul Quader Chy	ED Green Cox'sbazar President CAB, Cox'sbazar	01558310923 fqehygreencosbazar@gmail.com
31	Kumar Chandro Dus	Shusamaj Foundation	01712574513
32	Monzur Alam Sker	Wat. And C---	01818125778
33	Siriti Rani Shil	CAB member	01721961417
34	Rubina	AREE ----	01912139426
35	Amrin Naz	AREED, Prg. Officer	01552328035
36	Parvin Akther	AREED, Secretary	01711788988
37	Mr. Fazlur Rahman	AREED, Coordinator	01912137426
38	Malia Bagom	B.C.D.P-----	01723667491
39	Altab Hossain	Secretary General, CAB, Chapainawabganj	01716730704
40	Sanjia Sultana	S.W.C, Sirajgonj	01711451622
41	Neazee Sultana	CAB, Chairman, Sirajgonj	01716880428
42	Nabi Nawaj Md. Mujibuddaula Kanok	Shusamaj Foundation	01711397441 shusamajbd@yahoo.com
43	Md. Nashir Uddin Faruq	DESH	01711047266
44	Saiful Islam	DESH	01711450178
45	Mobashwirullah Chowdhury	CAB	01731489595
46	Shabnam Nigar Laz	DPO, CAB, Rajshahi	01717890846
47	Debasish Halder	DPO, CAB- Khulna	01720087479
48	Subrata Kumal Bala	DPO, CAB, Chittagonj	01911602020
49	N. Naby Tuhin	DPO, CAB, Barishal	01711047112
50	Md. Khorshad Alam	Member, CAB, Khagrachari	01819534310
51	Md. Shahidul Islam	CAB, Member, Khagrachari	01720051452
52	Muhammad Abu Daud	CAB, Member, Khagrachari	0371-62402 (R), 61029 (O) 0371-61374
53	Sadhana Bepari	PDO, Barisal, CAB, Barisal	01727247127
54	Akkas Hussain	PDO, Barisal, CAB, Barisal	01718745789
55	Kazi Gias	President, CAB, Rajshahi	01711944038
56	Md. Golam Mostafa	CAB, Rajshahi	01715013519
57	Muhufa Za Hostafa	SAPEA Society, Rajshahi	0721773700
58	Jahan Panna	Alor Pathey, Rajshahi	01711866156
59	Md. Moniruzzaman	Environment Activist (BELa)	01920806941

Sl. No.	Name	Organisation	Phone/Email
60	Md. Abdur Baker Mia	Member, CAB, Bhola	01716876649
61	Khushi Kabir (NRG member)	Nijera Kori	
62	Ranajit Datta	CAB, Barisal	01712297872
63	Atiur Rahman (NRG member)	Unnayan Shamannay	
64	Taifur Rahman	Unnayan Shamannay	
65	Monowar Hossein	Unnayan Shamannay	
66	HKS Arefeen (NRG member)	Prof. Anthropology Dhaka University	
67	Kazi Faruque (NRG member)	Secretary of CAB	
68	Ghulam Rahman	Chairman, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission	
69	Rajesh Kumar	CUTS International	
70	Professor Shamsul Alam (NRG member)	Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET)	
71	Quamrul Islam Siddique (NRG member)	President BWP	
72	Muhammad Abu Taher Khan (NRG member)	Managing Director, NGO Foundation	
73	Aurun Karmaker (NRG member)	Senior Reporter, The Daily Prothem Alo	