

Press Release  
**CPD Expert Consultation on Floods**

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**Need for Enhanced Concern, Better Coordination and Confidence Building Measures**

The Centre for Policy dialogue (CPD) convened an Expert Group Consultation at its Dialogue Room on Saturday 4 August 2007. The meeting was called to discuss the state of affairs in the context of the ongoing floods in the country and the possible consequences in terms of relief and rehabilitation activities. The meeting focused on food stock and food security, probable damage of *aman* crop and its rehabilitation, activation of private sector for food import and distribution, involvement of non-government and community based organisations in relief and rehabilitation works. The meeting was of the opinion that there is an urgent need to enhance the government's *concern* about the unfolding floods, improve *coordination* among relevant government agencies and between the government and non-government actors, and instil an overall sense of *confidence* in the economy and society.

The meeting further observed the following.

1. The government, on an urgent basis, needs to clarify its policy and programmatic approach towards facing the emerging floods. As per the *Standing Order on Disaster Management* (2000), the Disaster Management Committees at national, district and thana level need to be immediately activated. The government needs to mobilise the development NGOs, community based organisations (CBOs), private sector bodies and concerned individual citizens and development partners towards relief activities. Local administration needs to gear up its initiating and coordinating role in this regard.
2. The government needs to make it explicit that it warmly welcomes involvement of the NGOs, CBOs, private sector bodies and other civil society organisations in relief and rehabilitation work. To this end, the Chief Advisor may call a meeting with the relevant and important actors in this field.
3. The food security situation needs to be viewed in the context of rising prices in global and regional markets, current level of food stock and pipeline, and possibility of a prolonged flood. The current food stocks may be replenished gradually in line with enhanced demand through both public and private imports. Energetic steps should be taken to encourage private foodgrain importers to open letters of credit and to facilitate border measures. The government may like to sit with the potential importers and leading bankers to address this issue urgently.
4. The government has to publicly notify public food stock and distribution status in different thanas and districts and monitor this on a daily basis to instil confidence in the citizens. Such public notifications should be readily available in real time to the general public.
5. There is a need to encourage and facilitate greater availability of late variety *aman* seedlings, particularly taking note of the fact that the floods may be protracted. Full availability of fertilizer at mill gate price on demand has to be guaranteed. There should not be any increase in fertilizer price, at least, till the *aman* cultivation is over. For supplementary irrigation, effective use of "Diesel Cards" has to be ensured.
6. For agriculture rehabilitation activities, the government should have a coordinated initiative, particularly involving the private sector banks to enhance inflow of rural credit along with specialised government banks.
7. The micro-credit programmes have to be sustained, as in earlier flood years, to mitigate the misery of the rural poor. It is expected that the micro-credit operators will make available relief grants to its borrowers as well as reschedule debts suitably, if necessary.

8. The government machinery should be fully geared to initiate the VGF and VGD activities programmed under the ADP on a priority basis in the flood affected areas. Post-flood rehabilitation activities need to be integrated in the regular anti-poverty programmes.
9. The government may consider an appeal to all interested citizens and organisations to donate to the Chief Advisor's Relief Fund.
10. The government may invite international donor funding towards relief and rehabilitation activities. The NGOs may be encouraged to tap their international networks to generate resources for the purpose.

The meeting stressed that the government will have to undertake an extraordinary effort, including the local civil administration playing a pro-active role, in involving all stakeholders to address food supply and relief operation. BDR's involvement will supplement these efforts. In addition, appropriate security and safety measures should be taken to safeguard flood marooned people and their property. In the absence of traditional political players in the field, media and civil society will have to play an increased and meaningful role in providing voice to the affected people and ensuring effectiveness of the relief operations.

Chaired by *Professor Rehman Sobhan*, Chairman, CPD the meeting was attended by *Dr Saadat Husain*, Chairman of Public Service Commission; *Mr M Syeduzzaman*, former Finance Minister; *Mr Syed Manzur Elahi*, former Advisor to the Caretaker Government; *Mr Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury*, former Advisor to the Caretaker Government; *Dr Mahabub Hossain*, Executive Director, BRAC; *Mr M Aminuzzaman*, President of the Bankers' Association of Bangladesh; *Dr Z Karim*, former Secretary, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries; *Dr Quazi Shahabuddin*, Director General, BIDS; *Mr Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled*, former Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank; *Dr Ainun Nishat*, Country Representative, IUCN; *Professor Abu Ahmed*, University of Dhaka; *Mr Fazlul Haque*, President, BKMEA; *Dr Mustafa Mujeri*, Professorial Fellow, BIDS; *Dr Rushidan Islam Rahman*, Research Director, BIDS; *Dr Sajjad Zohir*, Executive Director, ERG. *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Executive Director; *Professor Mustafizur Rahman*, Research Director, *Fatema Yousuf*, Additional Director, *Dr Uttam Deb*, Senior Research Fellow and *Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem*, Research Fellow, CPD also took part in the discussion.