



An eNewsletter from SUPRO, Bangladesh

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## Cancel Foreign Debt to combat Global Recession

### SUPRO demanded in a press Conference on the eve of UN – ESCAP workshop

SUPRO demanded an unconditional cancellation of all foreign debt of Bangladesh to rich countries and international financial institutions to tackle recession. The demand was raised at a press conference on 26 July 2009. Sushasoner Jonny Procharavizan (SUPRO) organized the press conference at the Reporters Unity prior to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's economic policy responses to the financial crisis.



SUPRO Chairperson Abdul Awal and Director Uma Chowdhury briefed reporters at the press conference. The press conference was also attended, among others, by SUPRO Executive Committee members Mohsin Ali, KGM Fraque and Manju Rani Paramanik; SUPRO National Committee members Mahboob Morshed; Director of SBSS Ferdous Ahmed and Director of Batchte Shikho Nari Feroja Begum.

Abdul Awal Said, we have demanded that Bangladesh's foreign debt be cancelled as it is the root cause of the country's poverty. Due to the burden of foreign debt, Bangladesh is gradually shrinking the budgetary allocation to health, education and other essential services. He also said, the cancellation of debt must not be considered as development and additional aid has to be given to tackle the impact of climate change. We also want rich countries to keep their promise to provide 0.7% of their GDP to the poor countries to achieve MDGs.

He said that Bangladesh repays 1.5 dollar for every single dollar it borrows from the external sources. Some 65% of its foreign aid is spent in paying back the previous external debt. In the 2007- 8 financial year, Bangladesh paid 1551.3 million as foreign debts repayment, which was 18% of total expenditure of government.

Uma Chodhury said, we demanded cancellation of all external debt to mitigate the impact of financial crisis that originated in the rich countries and to help achieve Millennium Development Goals.

To attract the attention of Bangladesh government and the leaders of Asia-pacific Region, SUPRO has placed the following demands to be considered in the upcoming UN – ESCAP workshop (27-30 July) in Dhaka.

- International community especially G-8 nations should cancel all the incurred debt of Bangladesh and these cancelled debt should not be counted as development assistance.
- Against the existing structure of World bank and IMF, the sustainability of debt of poor countries should be considered on the basis of MDG-Compatibility and all the unsustainable debt have to be cancelled.

- The lending/creditor countries should bear the responsibilities of debt related problems and these debts should be cancelled without any conditions.
- The developed countries should provide extended assistance to mitigate the damage of global climate change caused by excess carbon emission by the developed countries and compensation should be paid to the heavily affected countries like Bangladesh.
- The states should be freed from the influence of World Bank and IMF and multinational companies in taking economic decisions independently.
- Under the any commission of UN, the debt and development assistance related issues will be operated rather than authority and guidance by World Bank, IMF and ADB.
- According to the commitment, the developed countries should provide 0.7% of their GNI as development assistance to the poor countries.
- To keep the existence and interest of the comparatively weaker and poorer countries, policy coordination and cooperation should be increased among the Asia and Pacific countries.

## Lobby Meeting with Finance Minister of Bangladesh on National Budget 2009-10

As a part of the National Budget Campaign, SUPRO has an opportunity to take part in a lobby meeting with Finance Minister on National Budget 2009-10. Lawrence Besra, Project Coordinator of Activist's Capacity for Equity and Justice (ACEJ) has represented SUPRO at the lobby meeting with Finance Minister along the other representatives of civil society networks and NGOs on 26th June 2009 at Finance Ministry, Dhaka. This is a particular meeting of SUPRO with Finance Minister where the following demands and recommendations have been submitted:

\_ The Finance Minister has given thanks for formulating district budget from the next year for which SUPRO has been campaigning for the last few years for proper representation of grass roots people like as poor farmers, marginalized and disadvantaged community of Bangladesh as well as budgetary formulation reformation process.

\_ Bangladesh's foreign debt needs to be cancelled without any conditions because the interest of foreign loan is outsourcing public money from essential services. And they should not be treated as development assistance.

\_ The global development assistance should be increased and the government should play an important role in this regard.

\_ To achieve food sovereignty, subsidies to farmers needs to be increased and transformation of arable to non-arable land needs to be stopped. It has to be ensured fair prices for farmers of their produces and in this regard farmer's association should be formed and agricultural inputs have to be easily available to the farmers on time

- To reduce the distinctions of education between rural and urban areas, it has to be introduced uniformity of education system in Bangladesh.

\_ In order to ensure accessibility of poor and marginalized people towards education and health facilities, Primary, Secondary Education and Health Sectors have to be excluded from Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

\_ The Community Clinics should be reactivated and vacant positions of doctors and nurses should be filled immediately to ensure quality health services to rural people.

\_ The production and supply of electricity should be at the hand of government for accessibility of poor and marginalized people.

\_ The social safety net programs should be closely monitored by the government for actual benefits of rural poor people.

\_ For women's empowerment, their roles and responsibility should be clearly outlined and government should pay attention to rural disadvantaged women.

\_ This year's budget taka 700 crore has been allocated to cope with the impact of climate change and it has to be fully utilized through formulating strategic viewpoint to spend the money accordingly. The meeting was ended with vote of thanks on behalf of the representatives of civil society

The meeting was ended with vote of thanks on behalf of the representatives of civil society networks and NGOs working in Bangladesh.

## **Planning Workshop on MDG Campaign 2009**

A day long planning workshop on the 'Campaigning and Advocating for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh' the newly started project of SUPRO was held on 16 July 2009 at YWCA Conference room, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.

Aimed to share and finalize the detailed planning of the project activities and have common understanding about the activity implementation, the representatives from 12 selected networking organizations from 12 districts participated in the workshop.

The participating organizations are Shoroni (Manob Unnoyon Songstha) -Tangail, ISOL-Jamalpur, Shabolombi Unnoyan Samity (SUS)-Netrakona, SDO-Shariotpur, We-Jhenaidah ,SAS-Rangamati,Pabna Progoti Songstha(PPS)-Pabna,Pave-Bogura,JagoNari-Borguna,Manob Kollyan Porishod-Thakurgaon Sodesh- Satkhira, and Royal Bengal Foundation-Pirojpur and SUPRO Secretariat, Dhaka.

The workshop contained presentations and discussions on the following topics: project briefing, orientation on UN Millennium Campaign, Stand Up and Take Action against poverty, progress and challenge in achieving MDGs, Budget Monitoring, sharing the program budget and finalizing the activity calendar. In between Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between SUPRO and respective district networking partner. The workshop was started with the welcome speech by Ms.Uma Chowdhury, Director, SUPRO. In the welcome speech, she called upon the all to ensure concerted efforts to make the campaign an effective one and hoped for a participatory day for well effective planning of the project activity.



The daylong workshop was ended up with the closing remarks by SUPRO Director Uma Chowdhury. She thanked all the representatives of the networking members and the SUPRO team for all the efforts to make the day a fruitful day and wished for a productive campaign.