

## **National Minority & Indigenous Youth Leadership Summit- 2017**

Date: 4-6 March 2017

Dhaka, Bangladesh



## **Acknowledgements**

The National Minority and Indigenous Youth Leadership Summit - 2017 would not be possible without the support of IFIC Bank, the Ahmad Family Foundation, the Chittagong Skill Development Center, the EMK Center and Mr. Omar Faroque. Special thanks are also extended to Mr. Mohammad Haikal Hashmi of IFIC Bank. Council of Minorities also thanks its respected speakers who have given their valuable time and knowledge for the success of the leadership summit.

## **Organizers**

This leadership summit has been organized annually for the past six years by Ms. Hannah Sholder and Mr. Khalid Hussain. Mr. Hussain is Executive Director of the Council of Minorities, and Ms. Sholder is a community development and affordable housing consultant based in the USA. The two organizers have been collaborating since 2009, when Ms. Sholder first came to Bangladesh as a Fulbright Scholar to study the land rights situation and housing conditions of the camp-dwelling Urdu-speaking community. This year, Mr. Aftab Alam also joined the team as a training coordinator, and special thanks goes out to him for helping make the 2017 Summit possible.

## **Date, Venue and Participants**

On 4-6 March, 2017, Council of Minorities (CoM) hosted a three days residential training on “National Minority and Indigenous Youth Leadership” at the EMK Center in Dhanmondi, Dhaka. 70 participants from diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious communities participated.

## **Participants based on Ethnic, Language and Religious Identity**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Religion</b>
Marma	Marma	Buddhist
Chakma	Chakma	Buddhist
Mahato	Shadon	Sonaton(Hindu)
Santal	Santali	Hindu
Urdu Speaking	Urdu	Islam
Uraow	Kurukh/Sadri	Sonaton/Cristion
Rohingya	Rohingya Jaban	Islam
Rishi	Bangla	Hindu

## **Participants based on gender**

Male	Female
30	40

**Participants based on location-** Dhaka, Mohammadpur & Mirpur , Khagrachori, Bandarban, Rangamati, Cox’s Bazar, Rangpur, Saidpur, Nilphamari, Thakurgao, Rajshahi.

**Context and Objective of the Summit-** At the present day minority and indigenous communities are among the most neglected communities in Bangladeshi society. They are facing discrimination in their daily lives and the State has been perpetually violating their fundamental and human rights. Now the time has come to foster the leadership of a new generation of community activists to address these issues within their respective communities.

In this context, the 2017 Summit’s agenda is to teach the youth about leadership traits, but also inform them about new areas of activism, and help make a strong network between all minority and indigenous communities in Bangladesh and so that they can find strength in numbers and begin to improve the conditions of their respective communities.

## Day 1:

Day one mainly focused on interactions between the participants, learning about the minority communities' history and roots, basic human rights and leadership qualities and the role of leaders in their respective communities.

### Inauguration Ceremony

The National Minority and Indigenous Youth Leadership Summit started with a welcome ceremony presided over by Mr. Zakir Hossain, President, Council of Minorities. Mr. Mohammad Haikal Hasmi representative of IFIC Bank and Mr. Mazharul Islam board member of Council of Minorities were present as special guests.



Mr. Zakir Hossain expressed his solidarity to the participants and said that we should believe in equality and we should respect each other. He also mentioned that the youth are the power of any community and that if "you are educated you have to take responsibilities to help create a bright future, and we all are willing to support you".

Mr. Mohammad Haikal Hasmi discussed the journey of IFIC Bank and he also said that "within a small room diverse communities' youth are sitting together with a hope of positive change in their society which is really commendable and, I thank you all of youth coming from across the country and wishing you successful summit 2017".

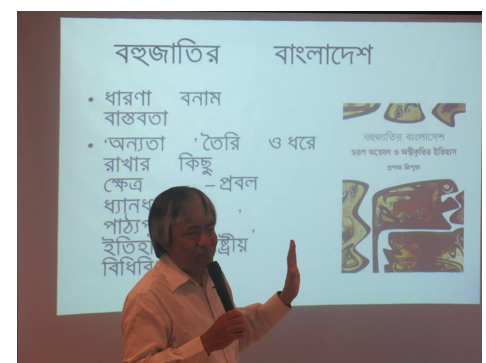
### Session: Leadership

The leadership session was the heart of the summit. Mr. Motahar Akand Chair of Rights Center conducted the leadership session. He has briefly discussed the meaning of leadership and he mentioned examples of national and international leaders. He also discussed the quality of community leaders and their roles and responsibilities. He also discussed how a leader can resolve the problems of their community and facilitated group work to practice conflict resolution.



### Session: Community History

Professor Prashanta Tripura of BRAC University and Mr. Uttam Kumar Das, Advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court shared their in-depth knowledge about the history and background of the ethnic and religious minorities of Bangladesh with the youth leaders. It was



lecture based session however participants raised several questions during the session and at the end of the session. This session helped the youth to understand the roots of their respective communities.

### **Session: Basic Human Rights**

Barrister Sara Hossain discussed human rights in the national and international context and then she divided the participants into four groups and gave them the task of identifying recent human rights violation cases in the country and ones they knew about personally. After the group work each group presented their group findings.



### **Day 2:**

Day two was focused on housing & infrastructure, education, right to information act, public health and livelihoods.

### **Session: Housing and Infrastructure**

Ms. Hannah Sholder and Mr. Nazmus Saqib presented their work regarding the housing, land rights and infrastructure. Ms. Sholder's presentation was done over skype from USA and Mr. Saqib was present at the summit.



### **Session: Education**

Assistant Professor at the University of Dhaka Taslima Yasmin and Mr. Shahriar Sadat of BRAC University conducted the education session. Professor Yesmin discussed special educational opportunities for the minority and indigenous youth and Mr. Sadat discussed national education policy in Bangladesh. A student from the Asian Women's University in Chittagong, Ushaimya Marma, was also invited to present her life story- how she came from a small village and got the opportunity to study at AUW.





### **Session: Right to Information Act (RTI)**

Advocate Ruhi Naz Subhan from the Research Initiative of Bangladesh (RIB) conducted the session on RTI. She briefly discussed the process of RTI and after her presentation she facilitated group work with four small groups.



### **Session: Public Health**

Dr. Jena Hamadani from ICCDDR,B, Professor Malabika Sarker from BRAC University, and Mr. Fakir Yunus also of BRAC conducted the public health session. They discussed public health as a system and key policies. They also discussed some common diseases and how the youth can help prevent those diseases from spreading in their communities.



### **Session: Livelihoods**

The livelihoods session was conducted by Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director of RIB, Mr. Rajib Hossain and Mr. Shahdab Parvez of Tradeshi. Mr. Hossain presented a brief presentation on economic development and opportunities for the youth entrepreneurs. Dr. Guhathakurta also discussed business opportunities for the minorities and indigenous communities and also discussed a case study of a minority youth who has become a successful entrepreneur.



### **Day 3:**

Day three focused on sharing about the United Nations (UN) and its mechanisms as well as project design by the youth.

#### **Session: UN Mechanisms**

Khalid Hussain conducted UN mechanisms session. He has discussed the different UN mechanisms and process to submit complaints to different UN bodies. He has also briefly discussed the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the process of submitting to UPR. UPR is one of the UN mechanisms to review each country's human rights situation.

#### **Session: Project design**

The project design session was conducted by Mr. Imad Ahmad, CEO of OBAT Helpers, USA. He presented about how to design a project for a community's development. After the presentation participants from each district collaboratively designed a project using a logical framework. Participants also committed to implement the project within their respected community.

#### **Closing ceremony and certificate distribution**

After the project design session all the participants expressed gratitude to the organizers and they have completed evaluations and all participants received certificates of participation.

#### **Next Steps**

Ms. Sholder and Mr. Hussain have decided to continue to run the Summit on a biennial basis (approximately every other year). On the 'off' years CoM's team will focus on organizing follow-up trainings and providing one-on-one technical assistance to increase the capacity of the youth to make change in their communities, as the Summit is really just an introduction to the possibilities for community action and leadership.

The first follow-up training that we are hoping to organize in early 2018 is on housing and land rights, given that this is a critical issue for the camp-dwelling Urdu-speaking minority as well as indigenous communities. In particular, through this training interested youth will be further exposed to the mechanisms of the Community Land Trust model, which increases the tenure security of vulnerable communities through collective ownership and improvements.

In order to facilitate this and other trainings CoM is building its organizational capacity to include a Training Division, starting with hiring a Training and Technical Assistance Manager as well as a Media and Database Coordinator. The Coordinator will track the youth, their needs and actions in order to measure impact and maintain a cohesive national network.

In addition to building its Training Division, CoM will maintain its Legal and Research Division, and provide further opportunities for the Summit youth to get involved in research on minority rights issues including an upcoming district-wide collaboration with BRAC.