



Proposals from National Char Alliance for Development of Char People to be Incorporated in the Manifestos of Political Parties for the 11th National Parliament Election

Surrounded by numerous rivers Bangladesh has vast area of Char land. Almost 10 million people live in these Char lands (Char areas connected to main land, island Char, coastal Char, and temporary Char people). Of the total land of the country, almost 10 percent is Char area. Char lands are spread over more than 100 upazilas of 32 districts of Bangladesh. Char people live struggling against different natural calamities including extreme river erosion, flood, and drought. Every year around 50 thousand people become homeless due to river erosion. Due to its geographic location, Bangladesh is among the countries that are the most affected by climate change. The Char people of the country are first and major victims of this.

In the election manifestos of all political parties, there should be specific proposals to bring positive changes in the socio-economic conditions of the Char people. In this context, National Char Alliance is putting forward the following proposals to be incorporated in the election manifestos of all political parties.

1. Establishing Char Foundation/Board

To ensure sustainable development of Char people a national level Char Foundation/Board has to be formed which will work as the institutional authority for the development and disaster management in Char areas. Because of not having such an authority currently, the National Budget allocations for Char areas are remaining unspent.

2. Specific Development Projects for Char

So far, no specific projects have been undertaken to ensure poverty eradication and sustainable development of Char areas through health and education services, meeting food and nutrition demands, creating employment, developing skilled human resources, increasing agro-production, managing disasters. To attain the SDG targets, specific development projects are needed.

3. National Char Policy Formulation

Because of not having a 'National Char Policy' the comprehensive approach of the Government towards development of Char people is not being reflected in poverty eradication, social safety net, disaster management, education services, women and child rights preservation, land use, agricultural development, crop marketing, social awareness initiatives etc. Hence, a 'National Char Policy' has to be formulated to ensure holistic development of Char areas.

The 'Alokito Char' Project

These proposals for development of Char areas have been put forward as part of the activities under the 'Alokito Char' project. The project is being funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). On behalf of the National Char Alliance, it is being implemented by the alliance secretariat Shamunnay. The overarching goal of the project is to ensure poverty eradication in Char areas through Government institutional mechanism, long-term policy and public participation. Other activities to be conducted under this project are:

- Conduct necessary research and advocacy for formation of Char Development Board/Foundation.
- Ensure planning and monitoring by the people for the projects undertaken for Char development.
- Conduct comprehensive research to determine current socio-economic and geographic conditions of the Char areas.
- Advocacy initiatives to encourage private sector participation in Char development.
- Enhance accountability of the service providers towards Char people.

National Char Alliance

This is a national platform focused on improving living conditions of the Char people. This platform consists of like-minded development partners, international and national development organizations, civil society representatives, researchers, journalists, entrepreneurs, representatives from women and farmer organizations. It has been advocating for the rights of the Char people for the last 12 years.

Shamunnay

Shamunnay is acting as the secretariat for the National Char Alliance. It is a non-profit non-government think tank focused on pro-people research and advocacy. For more than 15 years, Shamunnay has been conducting such activities to ensure fair share of development for the poor and marginalized people living at the bottom of the social pyramid.

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