

Environmental Civil Society in Bangladesh: Some unintended Contradictions

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Back Ground Information (Environment)

One of most environmentally vulnerable country

- Environmental degradation (air pollution, water pollution, arsenic etc.) is very high
- increasing tendency in the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events-flood, storm, cyclone and so on
- 1 m rise in sea level due climate change by 2100; affecting 17.5% of total land mass respectively
- Natural resource scarcity with high rate of population

Context of Civil Society

- Bangladesh has a significant size of civil society organization both in large and small size
- Approximately 260,000 CSOs including around 2000 donor funded NGOs are registered in Bangladesh
- In the 1990s NGO started advocacy with the emergence of multiparty electoral democracy
- In case of environmental issue the emergences is also basically since the 1990s (when as a whole the NGO sector gain prominence in the advocacy activities)

Problem statement

During last two decades, Bangladesh has two contrast scenarios in the environment sector

- gain improvement in enhancing forestation, using safe drinking water and sanitation, formulating various policy initiatives like NAPA, PRSP and signing various treaty like so on.
- remains as one of the most environmentally degraded country in the world.

Having numerous civil society organization, Bangladesh still lack to have any effective advocacy and public involvement on environmental problem; environment still remain far both from grass roots and central political realm.

Research Questions

- Who are the environmental civil societies in Bangladesh? What is pattern of their contribution in the environmental development?
- To what extent civil society can play a responsive role in the environmental decision making in Bangladesh?

Key Argument

- The key portion of the environmental activities is done by NGOs sectors which are largely set by the donor sectors according to their project design. This pattern of contribution has some positive impacts on environmental issue however it hinders both the policy ownership and effective environmental advocacy especially from local perspectives.
- In this pattern, environmental civil society organization becomes effective channel to pursue the global and international environmental agenda rather than to be a channel for local platform for environmental protection.

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methodology (largely on statistical analysis on survey data)
Two survey data have been employed

First survey: 108 environmental CSOs in 2006~2007 (EnvBD-JIGS)

Target population and List Collection for EnvBD-JIGS survey

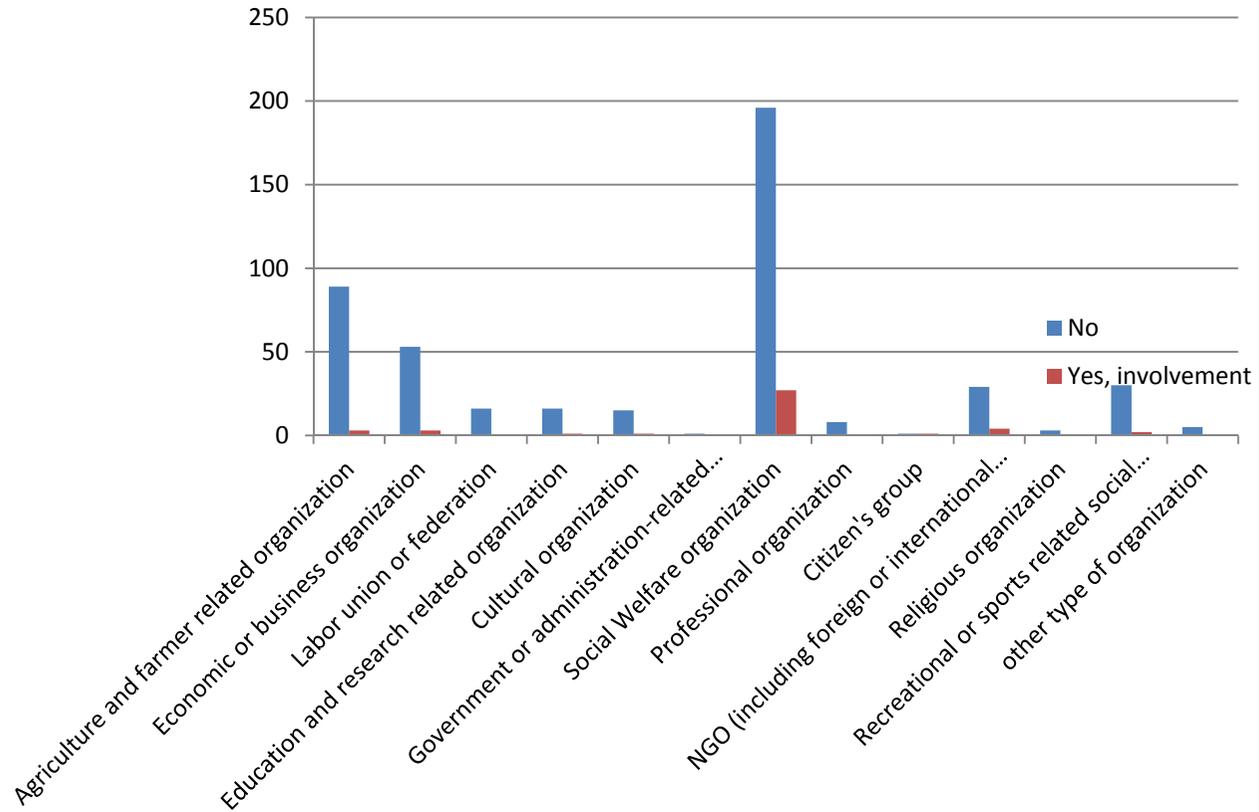
Data source for environment related CSOs in Dhaka-

- -ADAB directory,
- -directory of NGO FORUM for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation (it is a Pioneer NGO in Water & Sanitation field)
- -some other Umbrella NGOs which have network building with environment focused different CSOs (Such as BELA, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, IUCN, BCAS)

- Population /Total number of civil society organizations in Dhaka= 20, 000 (approximate)
- Population /Total number of environment related civil society organizations in Dhaka city = 430
- Sample selected 172 (40% of the total population)
- Return number of sample: 108
- Return rate: 62.7%

Second survey: 1005 CSOs in 2006~2007 (BD-JIGS)

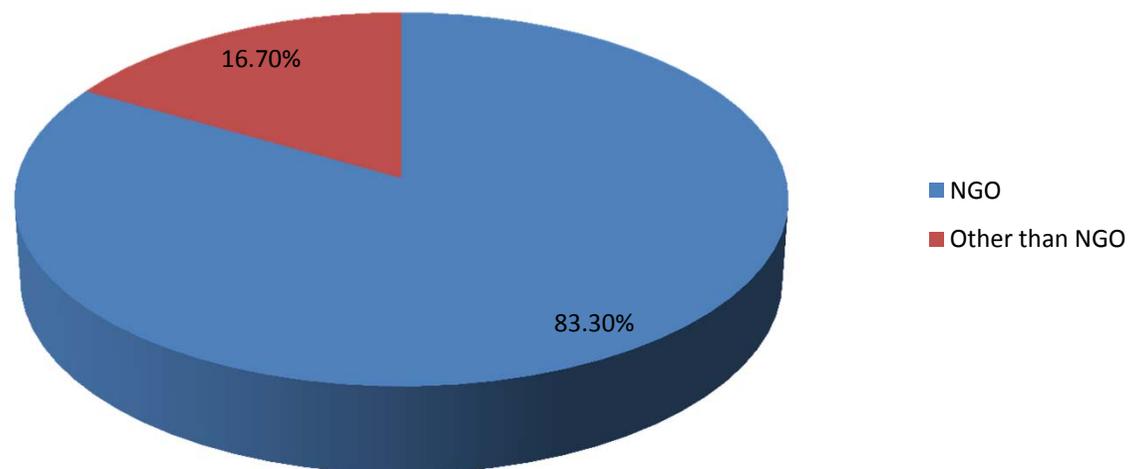
Findings- CSOs involvement with environmental issue



Source: BDJIGS survey on 2007

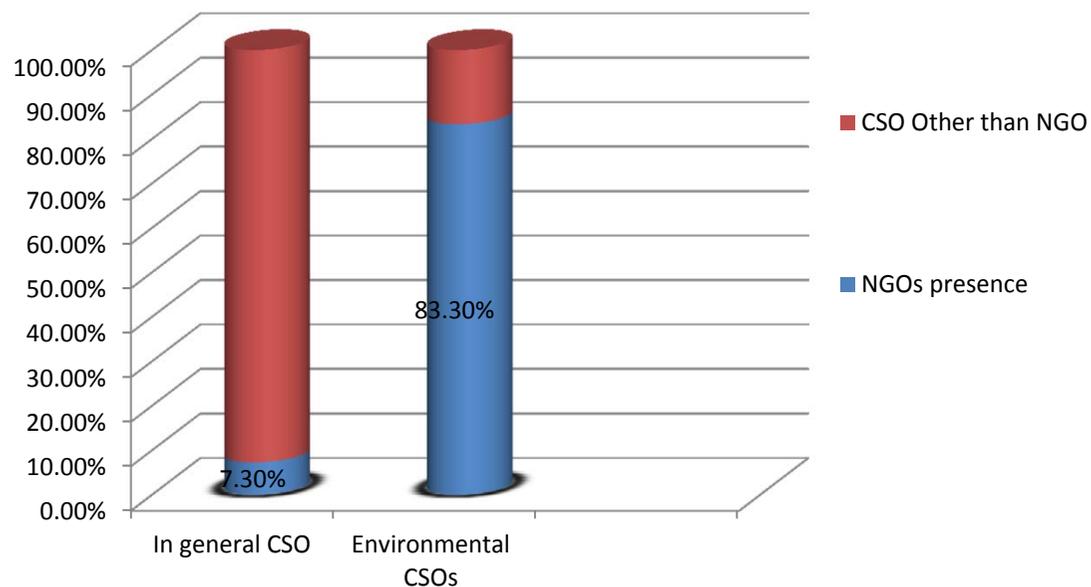
Who are the environmental civil societies in Bangladesh?

NGOs presence in the environmental CSO



In Bangladesh, the donor funded NGOs sectors are particularly visible in the environment sectors

NGOs presence in general CSOs and in Environmental CSOs

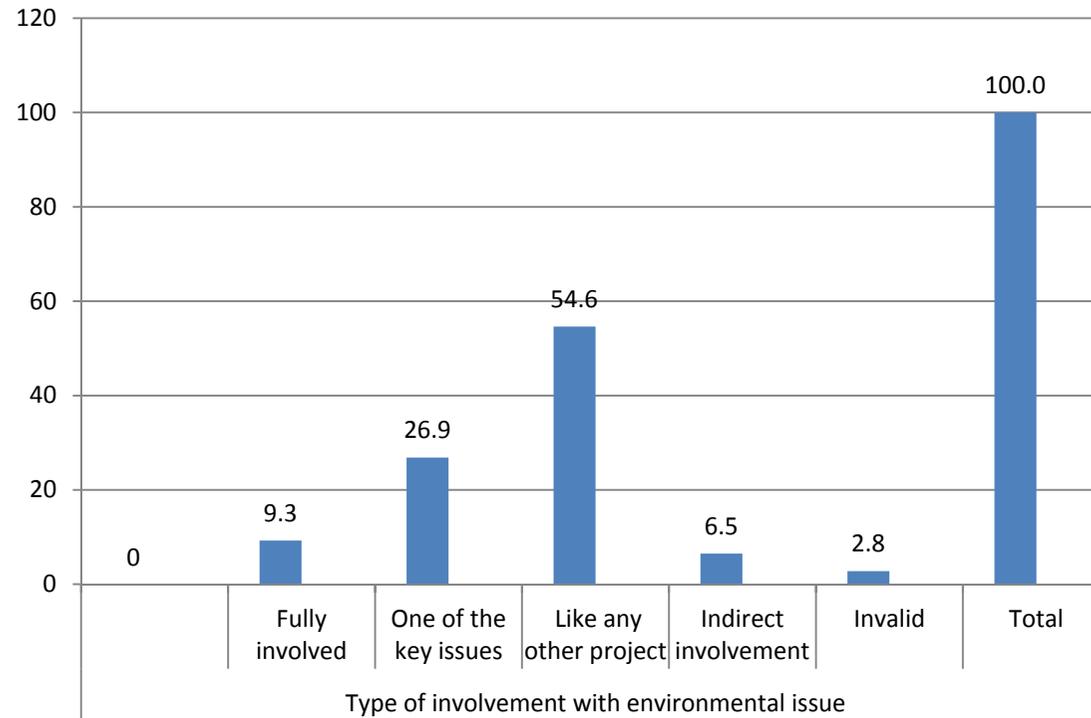


Source: based on BDJIGS and Env. BDJIGS survey in 2007

Compare with other civil society organizations, environmental civil society organizations are relatively more prevalent and have greater organizational resources

Environment focused civil society other than donor funded NGOs are few, scattered and are not well connected with the environmental NGOs.

Type of Involvement of the Environmental CSOs



- Majority of the EnCSOs are involved with environmental issue just as it is their one of the other projects
- A few (9.3%) are fully involved in the environmental issues

Pattern of the role/contribution of the civil society in Environment field

Table 1 : Achievement of social forestry in Bangladesh since the mid-1980s

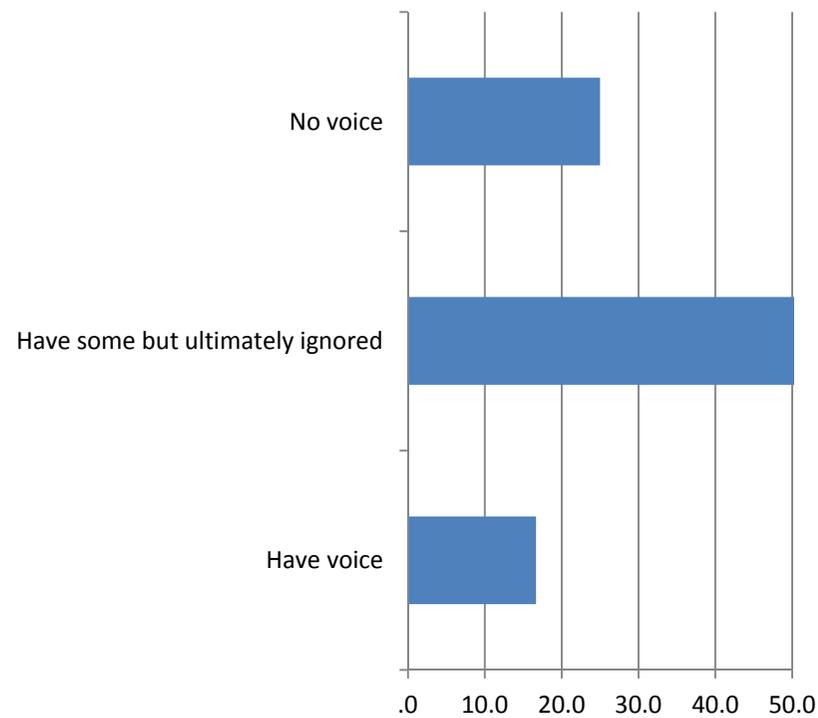
Source: Nur Mohammad et al. 2005, p. 378.

Programmes	Achievement
1. Strip plantation	48420 km
2. Woodlot plantation	30666 ha
3. Agroforestry plantation	7738 ha
4. Embankment plantation	1338 ha
5. Foreshore plantation	645 ha
6. Village afforestation	7421 villages
7. Seedlings for sale and distribution	201 million

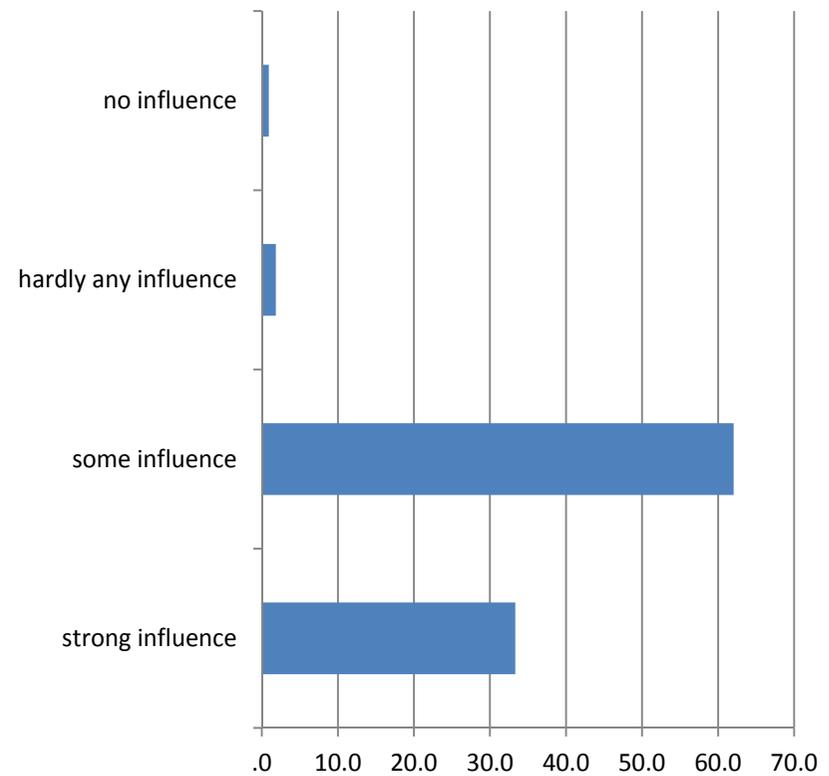
- Donor funded NGOs have positive contribution in forestation, safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation, disaster management
- However the participation of local community in the environmental decision making remain strictly limited

Influence of CSOs at local level

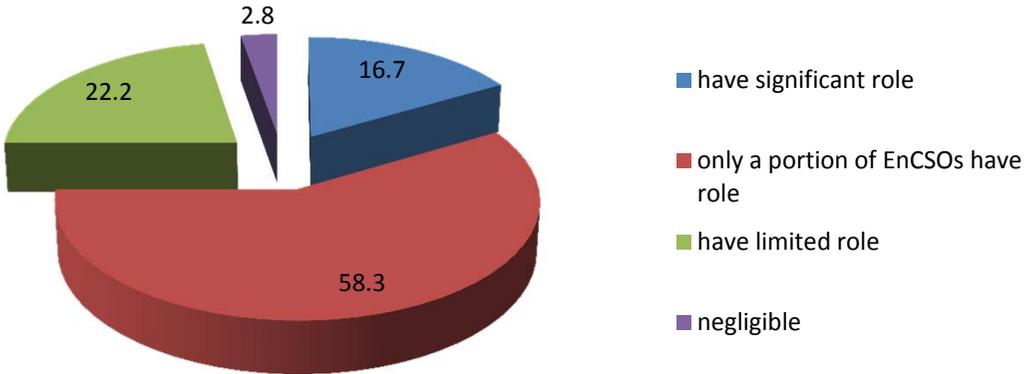
**Grass roots public involvement
in the environmental decision
making**



**Influence of EnCSO on their
working area**

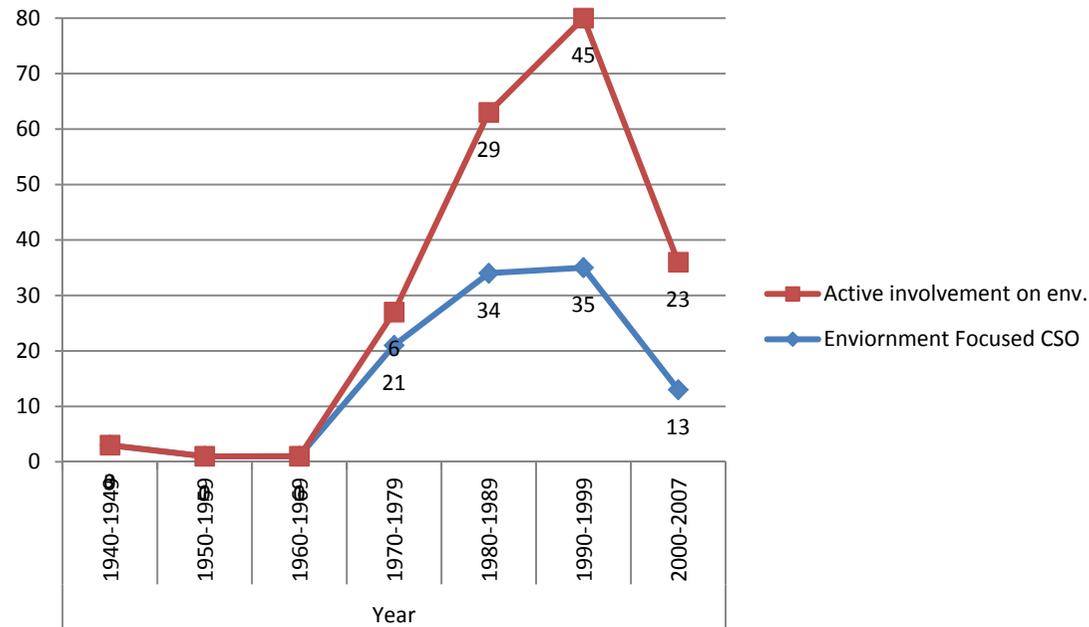


Perception of Env.CSOs about their performance



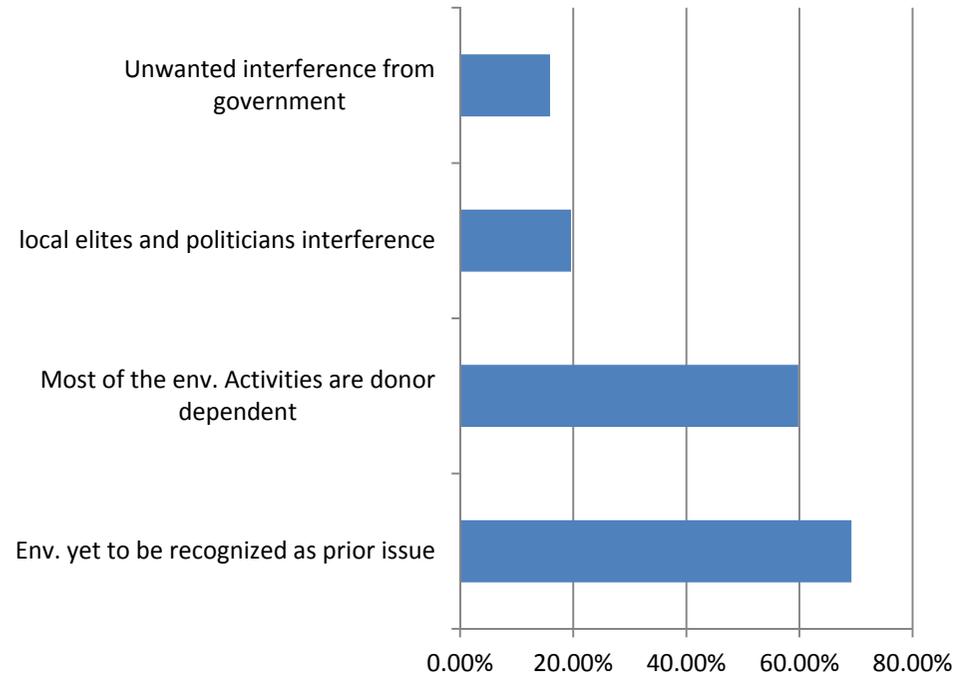
Only a portion of Env.CSOs are visible and active

Founding and active involvement years of CSOs



- In the 1990s with the promotion of neo-liberal policy agenda, a large number of Environment focused CS founded and became active
- However, in the 21st Century with decrease the foreign donation the involvement also declining

Perception about the key constraints



Donor dependency and lack of public involvement remain as two key constraint area

Overall key findings

- Environmental civil society are large donor funded NGOs, who have prescribed project and much of the NGOs advocacy is part of their project activities
- Donor funded NGOs work through their staff and beneficiary who lack to have sense of membership and ownership of the organization
- The environment focused NGOs have no effective network or relation with the other CSO and/or effective public involvement in advocacy activities on environment
- The relation of En CSO with government and Donors exhibit that CSO are not influential with them, they are not influential in their working arena.
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Conclusion

- Env.CSOs has high participation in project oriented environmental activities; however have low participation in environmental decision making
- NGO oriented and donor dependent Env.CSO can hinder the potential collective action of environmental advocacy in Bangladesh
- Lack of policy ownership make Env.CSOs less influential in their working area and low involvement with the public