



Concept Note

International Civil Society Consultation

On

“BRICS and the Agenda of Equality and Change”

By

**Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, People’s Budget Initiative
and Oxfam India**

July 28-29, 2016

**India Habitat Centre (Gulmohar Hall), Lodhi Road, New
Delhi**





Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA), People's Budget Initiative (PBI) and OXFAM India proposes to hold one International and two/three sub-national/regional civil society consultations on "BRICS and the Agenda of Equality and Social Change" with the aim to influence the BRICS agenda and outcome.

Context and background

The five countries in BRICS formation (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) together account for 43 percent of the world's population, 46 percent of the global labour force, 30 percent of the earth's landmass and 25 percent of the world's share of global gross domestic product (GDP). Despite the economic slowdown witnessed in some member-states, the formation assumes a lot of significance to its members. With the formation of BRICS development bank, officially called as the New Development Bank (NDB) the possible impact of the bloc on its member-states is likely to increase.

Almost 50 percent of world's poor live in BRICS countries. In such a situation the civil society has very rightly been engaging with the formation and it has a profound role to play, particularly on how the New Development Bank operates. The agenda of BRICS, mainly the New Development Bank should be inclusive of the interest of the poorer and excluded sections in each of its member countries. In the backdrop of jobless growth, and the pattern growth that has led to rising inequality, the development visualized by BRICS should be sustainable and should reckon with ways to manage the adverse impact of economic growth on environment. Civil society has a role in ensuring all these.

It is heartening that the Ufa declaration of BRICS (declaration on July, 2015 by 7th BRICS summit held in Ufa, Russia) does discuss about poverty, inequality (including gender inequality) and gaps in international tax regimes as major challenges and reiterates its commitment to act towards them. However, the civil society ought to see if these commitments incorporated into the BRICS action agenda and are implemented.

India to host BRICS summit in Goa this year

India is going to host 8th BRICS Summit in Goa in October 15-16, 2016. India's Approach to 8th BRICS Summit is summed up as follows:

"BRICS has been an important alliance for cooperation in areas of economic, strategic and developmental concerns and has largely been seen as the new center of gravity in the new international economic order. The process though driven by geo-politics has been mindful of the need to build bridges between societies and civilizations that these nations represent. The compulsion cannot be exaggerated given that governments alone cannot create the momentum of transformational changes towards a balanced and fair world order that the process seeks to attain.





The theme of India's BRICS Chairmanship is **Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions**. During India's BRICS Chairmanship, the five-pronged approach would be:

- **Institution building** to further deepen, sustain and institutionalise BRICS cooperation;
- **Implementation** of the decisions from previous Summits;
- **Integrating** the existing cooperation mechanisms;
- **Innovation**, i.e., new cooperation mechanisms on government-to-government, Track-II, business-to-business and people-to-people to tap the full potential of BRICS cooperation; and
- **Continuity**, i.e., continuation of mutually agreed existing BRICS cooperation mechanisms.

In short, the Indian approach towards its BRICS Chairmanship could be captured as **I4C.**" (*Source: Concept note: BRICS CSOs Forum by Forum for India's development Cooperation(FIDC)*)

Official engagement of civil society in BRICS process

The approach of India's BRICS chairmanship provides adequate scope for engagement of the Civil Society. Officially there will be a 'Civil BRICS' summit in New Delhi in 2nd -4th October. FIDC (Forum for India Development Cooperation), a tripartite initiative by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), academia and civil society will organize the 2nd BRICS Civil Society forum as a pre-BRICS intervention.

History of engagement of civil society in BRICS formation

2013: Brazil took the initiative to hold dialogue with the civil society of Brazil in 2013 for their inputs into BRICS process. This was an independent decision of Brazil. Later however the information and outcome of the meeting with civil society was shared with other BRICS member states.

2014: In 2014 government of South Africa took the initiative to hold several regional consultations with the civil society of South Africa.

2015: The first BRICS CSOs' forum, termed as 'Civil BRICS' was held in 7th BRICS Summit in Ufa, Russia in July 2015. The civil society leaders not only from BRICS countries but from Argentina, Mexico, Indonesia, Egypt participated in the meeting.

The meeting discussed about the necessity of dialogue of the civil society with the decision makers. It discussed on variety of social issues like health care, education, conflict management etc. and formed working groups to come up with recommendations.

2016: This year FIDC, a think tank of MEA proposes to hold the 2nd Civil BRICS in New Delhi in October



Objective of the pre-BRICS consultation by Civil Society

WNTA-PBI-Oxfam has already started the process of engaging with the global forums like G20 and BRICS. The proposed consultations are continuity of this process. It aims at building the civil society engagement with a bottom-up approach where several key stakeholders such as the key social movement e.g. unorganized workers groups, trade unions, farmers unions, and various groups based on different themes like the right to food, health etc. should provide key inputs to set the agenda of BRICS and of course Civil BRICS.

It proposes to hold one two-day International consultation in Delhi and two/three sub-national consultations.

The objectives of the consultations are as follows:

- a. Influence the agenda and outcome of BRICS process
- b. Influence the agenda of Civil BRICS process and asking for 'Institutionalizing Civil BRICS'
- c. Raising awareness among civil society in India about these global processes and their impact on our lives and economy

The engagement should happen to advocate for inclusion of issues of transparency. Other key issues of concern regarding the BRICS agenda, include the importance of addressing inequality and exclusion, investing in social sectors, tax justice, food security and women's rights. The functioning of NDB, its role and objective ought to be inclusive.

The goals under Agenda 2030, particularly the goal 10 (Inequality) and other key goals and Paris climate deal should steadfastly be brought into discussion to impress upon the member-states of BRICS to fulfill their promises made in New York and Paris last year for their implementation.

A vision document by the civil society describing the key asks and concerns and clear policy recommendations ought to be developed from the inputs from these regional and International consultations. . The terms of meaningful engagement with the civil society in the "Civil BRICS" should be laid down.

Time has come for the civil society of these countries, particularly India to push for formalization/institutionalisation of interaction of civil society with the decision makers in form of "Civil BRICS", outcome of which should constitute a part of declaration of the BRICS summit. The Ufa declaration of BRICS Summit last year does mention about the Civil BRICS process. However, its time to demand that the recommendations of the Civil BRICS are actively considered and incorporated into BRICS agenda and their implementation.



New Development Bank (NDB)

The visualization of BRICS bank, officially known as the New Development Bank (NDB), is seen as a response to the alienating international financial institutions (IFIs) like World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). It's has been instituted "with a vision to support and foster infrastructure and sustainable development initiatives in emerging economies". It stresses on growth with employment and environmental protection. It has come to existence with initial capital of \$50 bn. Its head office is in Shanghai and its first president has been appointed (K V Kamath).

Civil society ought to demand greater transparency and effective accountability mechanisms by the Bank and its investment so that it addresses inequality in the countries.

Design of Two-day International consultation

Dates and venue for International consultation:

- The International consultation will be held on July 28-29, 2016
- Venue: India Habitat Centre (Golmohar Hall), Lodi Road

Themes of discussion:

The two-day programme will hold discussion on the following areas:

- **Inequalities:** Discussion on various aspects of inequalities relevant to BRICS e.g. economic growth, job creation and income inequalities, socio-economic inequalities and inequality among countries
- **BRICS agenda and Civil BRICS:** What's the agenda of BRICS and what's missing. How CSOs can influence it. Recommendations for Civil BRICS, Discussion on how to institutionalize Civil BRICS
- **Food security, nutrition and agriculture:** Food security, nutritional security and situation of agriculture is key to the survival of people and the progress of BRICS nations. How BRICS agenda and BRICS bank support
- **Essential services and SDGs, and BRICS:** How the essential services guaranteed under SDGs like health, education, water and sanitation etc are delivered and what's the strategy of BRICS countries
- **Multi-lateral development bank with special focus on NDB and tax justice; multi-lateral trade:** How are NDB and AIIB designed currently. Why and how should NDB be different from IFIs and strive for sustainable development and mitigating climate change. The issue of tax justice and how lack of this has led to inequalities; the tax havens; functioning of the IFIs. Discussion on multi-lateral trade and sustainable development





- **Social Inclusion and economic growth** (Caste, minorities and gender): The cross cutting theme of gender and caste in BRICS process while discussing the economic growth and job creation
- **Land and environment:** The impact of development on the land and environment. What measures NDB is taking while financing infra projects in the context of land grabbing and environmental protection. How climate change has become too alarming and how BRICS could address this; reference to the Paris Climate agreement.
- **Urbanisation and urban poverty:** Urban areas are considered epicenters of growth and there is rapid proliferation in terms of size and number beyond megacities. BRICS member countries are specifically facing these challenges. Various facets of urbanisation and urban poverty needs to be discussed and addressed.
- Working on policy recommendation for BRICS from civil society

Expected numbers of Participants:

- About 150 people are expected in total.
- About 10 from BRICS Countries:
(2 each from Brazil and South Africa, 1 each from civil society of China, Russia)
- One Member of Parliament or BRICS Sherpa from Brazil and South Africa each
- 40-50 people from Indian states (NGOs and people's movement)
- About 70-80 from Delhi (NGOs, INGOs, academia, social movements)

Proposed Invitees:

- CSOs partners from BRICS countries and possibly from Indonesia and Mexico
- Members of the Parliamentary standing committee on foreign affairs
- BRICS Indian Sherpa
- Officials at MEA (Minister/Secretary and/or the Joint Secretary)
- Ambassadors of BRICS countries in India
Representatives form academia and former ministers and members of Parliament

Sub-National/Regional consultations:

- Two/three regional consultations are proposed. Each will be of one day. WNTA regional partners will host them.
- One will be in Goa (BRICS summit will be in Goa in October) and the other will be in Ranchi, Jharkhand.
- They should be completed in last week of June or first week of July.
- **Objective:** 1. Inform the people about the BRICS formation and the NDB and how they may be impacted from the policies adopted in BRICS summit. 2. Discussion of key issues and concerns of people and develop set of recommendations for BRICS nations.
- Number of days of consultation: 1 day
- Numbers of participants: 35-40 participants from nearby states
- Nature of participants: social workers, people from various social movements, politicians, government officials and academicians
- Key output: Recommendation for BRICS nations

