

BASUG Workshop in Berlin: Women empowerment increases economic and sustainable opportunities

Berlin, 19 May: Global migration and climate change experts underscored the need for promoting women’s involvement in the adaptation of the climate change effects in Nepal and Bangladesh, in all aspects, an "innocent victim" of climate change. The woman empowerment has been not only a social and moral issue, but it has also increased economic and sustainable opportunities, they said.

The experts made their remarks at an advocacy workshop on “Empowering Women to Adapt Climate Change Effects for Sustainable Growth” held in Berlin, the capital city of Germany on 19 May 2019. The workshop was organised as a part of the on-going project of BASUG in collaboration with its local partner,



SOLVE Nepal and with the support of the German International Development Cooperation GIZ and CIM.

(Photo: Nepal ambassador in Germany Ramesh Prasad Khanal is speaking at the workshop. Sitting on his right are: Marius Jedlitschka, Dr. Syed Masum Ahmed Chowdhury and Bikash Chowdhury Barua)

The Ambassador of Nepal to Germany Ramesh Prasad Khanal inaugurated the

workshop as chief guest, while Chairman of BASUG Bikash Chowdhury Barua was in the chair. Commercial Counselor of Bangladesh Embassy in Berlin Dr Syed Masum Ahmed Choudhury addressed the session as special guest. The opening session was also addressed by Marius Jedlitschka, Junior Project Manager at CIM’s Program Migration for Development and Executive Director of BASUG’s partner organization, SOLVE-Nepal Rajendra Bahadur Pradhan. Project Consultant of BASUG Germany Marina Joarder moderated the inauguration session.

In the Panel discussion the key note paper was presented by Dr. Prajal Pradhan, Postdam Institute for Climate Research (PIK), Postdam, Germany, BASUG Germany Project Coordinator, Editor of Asian Department of Deutsche Welle Manasi Gopalakrishnan and PhD Researcher AHM Abdul Hai. The panel discussion was moderated by BASUG UK Country coordinator Ansar Ahmed Ullah.

The Chief Guest H. E. Ambassador Khanal said, women are in the front line for the climate change related impacts as men, either migrated to find their employment or stay within the community. These women communities are not able to exit from the vicious cycle of poverty. The only visible solution for this problem is the bottom-up approach, which is empowering people at the bottom of the pyramid, who are mostly women. To empower the women through adaptation to the climate change impact, we need to invest for their capacity building and small and medium entrepreneurship, so that they can learn to adapt to the climate change. They

also need to be exposed to new technologies to reduce carbon emissions. Women empowerment is not only a social and moral issue, but it also increases economic and sustainable opportunities, he added. *(Photo: Beneficiaries of the on-going project of BASUG-SOLVE in Nepal).*

In his speech Commercial Counsellor Dr. Masum Ahmed Choudhury said, the results of global climate scenario analysis show that the impacts of climate change may be intense at high elevations and in regions with complex topography, as is the case in Nepal's mid-hills. So, it is high time to focus on the issue of mitigation and adaptation to climate change to keep the vulnerable countries like Nepal and Bangladesh and the world in the long run safe for the future generation, he added.



In his speech Marius Jedlitschka, Junior Project Manager at CIM's Program Migration for Development explained the different aspects of his organization has taken up to engage more diaspora engagement in the development at both ends.

Executive Director of SOLVE Nepal Rajendra Bahadur Pradhan said, Nepal contributes very little and negligible percentage of (0.027%) greenhouse gas emission, but comes in fourth most vulnerable countries in the world from climate change. The immediate impact has shown in water resources and rains, which has negatively impacted on agricultural production. This directly affects the livelihood of women and children living in the rural areas and dependent in agriculture. That is why under this project it has been attempted to offer training for this vulnerable communities in the rural area in Nepal.

BASUG chairman Bikash Chowdhury Barua said, Experience shows that women offer valuable insights and solutions into better managing the climate and its risks. Through their agricultural experiences, and being the first responders in crises, they can easily adapt to climate change and contribute to finding a sustainable growth. In order to empower rural Nepalese women, it is necessary to give the knowledge and skills.



In the panel discussion Dr. Prajal Pradhan of Potsdam Institute for Climate Research (PIK) presented the key note paper on "Inter-linkages between Climate change, food security and sustainable development goals". Others who spoke on the panel discussion were: Editor of Asian Department of Deutsche Welle Manasi Gopalakrishnan presented paper on Diaspora Engagement and Role of Media while Project Coordinator of BASUG Germany and PhD Researcher in the University of Bonn AHM Abdul Hai on 'Diaspora Engagement for Environment and Development with the Perspectives of Nepal'. A documentary film made by SOLVE-Nepal and BASUG under the project on the climate change issues was also screened. The advocacy workshop was participated by the Nepalese and Bangladeshi diaspora living in Germany. The objective of the workshop was to create awareness among the women and youth groups, policy makers, climate activists and development activists on the issue of adaptation to the climate change hazards for the sustainable growth and food security in Nepal. The project also aimed at promoting diaspora initiatives for the community development in the country of origin.

Integrated Family development approach helped improve condition of the poor

Hobiganj: The Endeavour Integrated Development (EID) Project which started in July 2018 with an aim to improve the living condition of the poor people in Chunarughat area under Hobiganj district in Bangladesh ended in December 2018. The Project was supported by the German development organization, Internationaler Ländlicher Entwicklungsdienst (ILD). BASUG also made financial contribution for the implementation of the project. *(Photos of the EID project in Hobiganj).*



Integrated Family Development (IFD) approach has been used as development tool for improving the living condition of the target families in EID project. All of the members of the target families were brought as stakeholders of the development initiatives. Each of the family is a development unit and whatever they need, as per plan they received support from the project as integrated way.

improve health situation and reduce the dropout rate at high schools and inclusion of disabled children and youth in the project activities. The unique part of this project was inclusion of the whole family in the development process, discuss with the members of the family and find out their problems and then design the

activities according to their need. Two responsible members of each family took in the family development workshops. A total of 1020 families were benefited due to this project. Approximately, 50 lacks Taka loans were given to the target families, which helped them start income generating activities such including vegetable gardening, rearing of cow, goats and small shops. Under the Education program of the project five education centres were opened where 125 given non-formal education at the preparatory level. Under the agriculture head, different kinds of vegetable seed and fertilizer were distributed among 154 farm families. A total BDT 6, 73,750.00 was provided as a credit for these



purposes where farm families contributed about BDT 1, 34,750.00 from their small savings. It helped them increase their agricultural production. Day long trainings on homestead gardening and vegetable cultivation at project center were arranged where 50 farmers took part to improve their knowledge and skills about homestead cultivation.



Awareness session on savings, credit management and capital use: The main objective of the awareness session was to aware the families about Income generating activities-related different topics. Cluster basis discussion on different topics such as importance of savings, credit management & use of capital were also arranged. About 275 families attended the discussion sessions.

‘Nepal Day’ celebrated in Cologne

Cologne: The 30th Nepal Day was observed in a befitting matter with the participation of the Nepalese and other nationals including the mainstream German community members on 4 May 2019 in Cologne, Germany. The day long program included discussions, display of Nepalese products and colourful cultural programs.



Nepalese ambassador in Germany Ramesh Khanal and honorary general consul general Ram Pratap Thapa who were present on the occasion addressed the visitors gathered there. Representatives of BASUG Germany AHM Abdul Hai, Riazul Islam and Mahamud Ibne Farid attended the program. The German ambassador appreciated their presence on the day and introduced them to other members of the community present there. *(Photo above: part of the meeting on Nepal Day; below: AHM Abdul Hai, Mahamud Farid and Riazul Islam pf BASUG are seen with Nepal ambassador on the Nepal Day in Cologne, with cap.)*

In the morning session, former German ambassadors in Nepal, Frank Meyke and Matthias Meyer took part in the podium discussion and shared their experiences in Nepal. The session was moderated by Norbert Meyer from Bad Honnef city councillor. Later the Nepalese delegate Aditya Baral



presented a power point presentation about the prospects of Nepal s tourism and invited the audience to visit his country in order to promote the economic development of the South Asian country. In their speeches former German ambassadors in Nepal, academics and development actors underscored the need for the on-going cooperation between Germany and the diaspora organizations.

“Make world ‘Plastic-free’ and start practice at Home” – observes Bonn workshop

Bonn: The first ‘Climate-friendly Bangladesh Day’ and a Workshop on ‘Jute Instead of Plastic’ was held in Bonn on 3 November 2018. The Europe-based Diaspora organization, BASUG organized the workshop in cooperation with Bonn Network for Development with support from the German development organization, SUE-NRW. The on-line European news portal, Our Voice was the media partner. Jute and jute-related products were on display at different stalls at the DGB House where the program was organized.

Speakers in the workshop called upon the consumers to make a firm commitment to avoid use of plastic in their day to day life in order to make the world plastic-free. To fulfill this ambitious but very important goal, they said, ‘we should start the practice from home and immediately’.



Political leaders, entrepreneurs, teachers, students, development and climate activists and researchers expressed their interest and commitment to continue their efforts and initiatives to avoid plastic products and promote the use of alternative to plastic in all spheres of their lives. Having said this, they at the same time underscored the need for ‘practice and awareness campaign’

starting from own family and own home. *(Photo: Mayor of Bonn city Gabriele Klingmüller Speaking while Bikash Chowdhury and Dr. Syed Masum Ahmed Chowdhury look on).* The Mayor of City Bonn Gabriele Klingmüller inaugurated the event as the Chief Guest, while BASUG Chairman Bikash Chowdhury Barua was in the chair. Commercial Counselor of Bangladesh Embassy in Germany Dr Syed Masum Ahmed Choudhury attended the event as guest of honour. In the technical session, Co-founder of AltEco and Manager (Research and Development) of Scubet Germany Dr M A K Azad presented the key-note paper on “Alternative to the Plastic and Environment-Friendly Packaging, Comparative Analysis between Jute and Sea-Weeds.” while the Mapping research report on the ‘trend and practice of plastic use and its alternative’ was presented by city planner and former Scientific Officer of Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Science Khurshid Hasan Sajib. Director Overseas of Jutetex Bangladesh M K Ibrahim presented a paper on technical aspects and prospects of jute as alternative to plastic products.

The workshop was addressed among others by the President of Bangabandhu Foundation Germany (BFG) Younus Ali Khan, BFG Chief Advisor Mahbulul Hoque, Green Party leader Shahabuddin Mia, Vice President of House of Integration and German-Bangladesh Association Nurul Islam and Tamanna Talukder, BASUG Organiser Dr Golam M Mohiuddin, BASUG Project Officer Mahamud Farid Chowdhury, Assistant Professor of Rajshahi University Amena Khatun Urmee and Pakistani Environment Engineer Hina Habib and Dr M. Rabiul Hosen, Postdoctoral Researcher in the University Hospital Bonn spoke on the day. BASUG Project Coordinator AHM Abdul Hai moderated the workshop and technical sessions.

The City Mayor of Bonn Gabriele Klingmüller in her speech said, back in 1978, churches and Christian development aid started their campaign against plastic bags. The alternative came from Bangladesh and was sold in GEPA fair trade and solidarity shops. I still remember buying my first (jute or) burlaps-bag at the price of 2,50 Deutsche Mark. It was brown, a bit smelly and certainly itchy. In 1978, we didn’t even have plastic waste collection. Almost nobody brought a bag from home to the shops. Buying one of these burlaps bag was much more than fair trade-solidarity with poor seamstresses in Bangladesh alone - it was a kick-start to a new

and more sustainable lifestyle. It was a symbol. A symbol of our standing up against plastic and against the attitude of throwing away instead of reusing. A symbol of a new ecological and social awareness. A symbol helping to recognize like-minded people.” She added, 40 years have passed. We are now in 2018. Unfortunately, plastic waste pollution is worse than ever. The oceans are full of plastic waste. Micro plastic is taking over.

Commercial Counselor Dr Syed Masum Ahmed Choudhury appreciated the campaign initiative against plastic and the promotion of the environment- friendly jute products as an alternative to plastic. He expressed the interest of the Bangladesh Embassy in Germany to initiate such initiative and organize similar event in the capital of Germany. He also encouraged BASUG to take greater initiatives on this vital issue to create awareness among the people in other areas too.



BASUG Chairman Bikash Barua said, plastic has become an inevitable part of our lives. Although certain countries have already banned, it is not easy to get rid of it. People still depend a lot on plastic. Just think of all those items that we normally use in our home and office. Plastic does not break down or vanish, it can lead to the choking of drains, causing national disasters like floods.

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On the occasion an art and development exhibition with the information stands of 7 organisations and associations and the art works of the artist and poet Mir Zabeda Yeasmin was arranged for the whole day. Seraji Foundation, Women Initiative for Balua Kandi Bangladesh, German-Bangladesh Association, JuteTex Bangladesh, AltEco, BASUG and Haus der Integration took part in the exhibition with information materials, jute products, banner and flyers on the issue. Popular Bangladeshi-Germany singer from Cologne Abdul Munim staged his musical performance on the occasion.

Bangladesh Economy under stress: CDP

Dhaka: The country's macroeconomics is currently under pressure, claimed Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue on 11 July 2019. He blamed the shortfall of revenue, problems in the banking sector and pressure on the Taka-Dollar exchange rate for the condition. ‘The pressure on macroeconomics will come down if these problems are solved,’ he told a media briefing on the 'State of the Bangladesh Economy and the Budget Challenges' at CIRDAP auditorium.



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He said that the next budget was ‘very important’ for three reasons - implementation of Awami League's election manifesto, achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and the national 7th five-year plan. He pointed out that poor revenue collection had hurt the government's investment

plans, prompting it to take loans at higher interest rate, which put pressure on the economy. ‘Cutting the interest rate alone cannot solve the banking sector's problems. Good governance is also needed,’ he added. CPD's senior research fellow Towfiqul Islam Khan, reading out the keynote paper, said that a liberal bank commission should be formed to resolve banking sector's problems. Khan noted that the budget implementation rate had gone down in the last decade to 75-80 per cent from 93-94 per cent. ‘VAT programming and increasing institutional capacity will help increase the rate,’ he added.

Engagement of int’l bodies in Rohingya repatriation needed

Dhaka: Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said, Bangladesh does not have the capacity to host Rohingya refugees for an indefinite period of time. Foreign Minister has requested honorary consul generals of different countries working in Bangladesh and abroad to engage their respective governments and civil societies to facilitate the repatriation of Rohingyas refugees.

The foreign minister made the call with an aim to create a favourable environment in the Rakhine State of Myanmar for the Rohingya community and initiate the refugee repatriation process, said a press statement published on the ministry's website on 11 July 2019. The minister said, Bangladesh does not have the capacity to host Rohingya refugees for an indefinite period of time. "The security and stability of the region will be threatened if the placement of this community, which had been distressed and deprived of basic rights for generations, is prolonged in this country," the release said.



The minister said, Bangladesh is cordially trying to find a permanent solution for the Rohingya crisis under three treaties signed with Myanmar, such as the bilateral agreements of 1978 and 1992. However, the beginning of repatriation scheme for the Rohingya community is still facing uncertainty due to Myanmar's lack of interest and failure to create a favourable environment in Rakhine State for safe, dignified and voluntary repatriation following the bilateral agreements, added the statement. "Bangladesh is expecting an active role of the international community in this regard," Momen said.

Foreign students visit BASUG office

The Hague: A group of foreign students (professionals including politicians) visited BASUG office in the Hague on 27 November 2018 to get acquainted with the nature of work of the organization and gather knowledge on activities in the area of international development. They were in total 9 representing countries such as Kenya, Ecuador, Hungary, Ireland and Spain including one guide from the organizer of the visit. They came for the study visit to Netherlands for a short period. Their visit to BASUG was organized by Stichting Libertas International of the Netherlands.



The visiting team comprised of Maria Fuerts (Spain), Moses Aran (Kenya), Omar Abrari (Kenya), Angela Ponce (Ecuador), Noel Norvath (Hungary) and Ema Idowu (Ireland). The team leader was Andrea of Stichting Libertas International of Utrecht, Netherlands.

Earlier, they were received by the Chairman of BASUG, Bikash Chowdhury. They watched a

documentary film on BASUG activities, wanted to know about migration, children and youths programs for peace etc. The foreign students also visited another international NGO, Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD) in the Hague on the same day. *(Photo: Foreign students with the chair of BASUG in the middle)*

CIM-GIZ Training on effective exchange of knowledge

Frankfurt: A successful three day training course on “Sustainable Development through effective transfer of knowledge: Concept, Method and Process” was held in Frankfurt on 2-4 November 2018.

The training course was organized by the German development organization, Center for International Migration and Development CIM/GIZ. More than a dozen diaspora organizations from across the country and their representatives took part in the training course and received at the end the certificate of participation.



(Photo: left is BASUG Sr Project Officer Riazul Islam)

The training was conducted by well-known trainer and facilitator, Mohan Dhamotharan. The participants from various diaspora and migrant communities received an in-depth idea about transfer of knowledge regarding their work in the light of sustainable development goals or SDGs. During the discussions the participants, who are active in various countries in Asia, Africa and East Europe, exchanged their experiences as well as ideas to move forward their ongoing projects and to further mutual cooperation among them.

The Training course facilitator and program officer of CIM, Nora Seddig congratulated the participants for their effort and interest to work with German development organizations GIZ and CIM. During her address, she mentioned that CIM has always been open to new ideas from the development partners and do not hesitate to incorporate them in ideal cases. She also urged the diaspora organizations to utilize the opportunities that CIM is offering them. For any enquiry the hotline of CIM is ready to provide required information.

Among other participants BASUG Project Consultant, Riazul Islam, BUGI President Anindya Siddharta, NEMO NRW first Chairwoman Joana Gerdt, u-Data Analytics Institute’s project manager Esther Philips, NARUD’s consultant Renee Eloundou, Culture Pour Tous (CPT) e.V. spokesperson Arnold Bwele were present in the training course.



European Development Days (EDD) 2019 in Brussels on 18 June 2019.

“Together we can make this world a better place to live”

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