

# BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group)

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## BASUG's micro-credit program in Hobiganj- a success

*"Credit is a human right, no one should be denied to it. It is not important whether it comes from a commercial bank or from a specialised micro-finance institution. Half of the world's population does not yet have the access to such financial services. What is important is that everywhere legal procedures should come making the micro-finance institutions available"- Prof. Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, the first bank for the poor in Bangladesh.*



( Prof Yunus is seen with the members of BASUG during his visit to the Netherlands on 12 May 2006.)

the whole working day. No work, no pay- so is the arrangement with their employers. They all are women. They are young and old- difficult to differentiate the young from the old. Due to malnutrition the young girls look older. They do not have access to education. The literacy rate among this group of people, who belong to the Hindu low caste is less than 6% while the national literacy rate of Bangladesh is 60%. They do not have the hygienic sanitation system either.

For this group of people BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group) introduced a micro-credit programme (financed by Oxfam-Novib) in 2005 with the co-operation of its local partner, Endeavour, a government registered NGO in Bangladesh. President of BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group) Mr. Bikash Chowdhury Barua visited the project site in Hobiganj, 156 km North-East from the capital city of Dhaka on 9 August 2006 to see for himself the progress of the programme.

BASUG President addressed two separate groups of the micro-credit programme beneficiaries and heard their stories. The beneficiaries of the micro-credit programme are the women workers in the Duncan tea garden area in Hobiganj district. The women beneficiaries told their story of improvement in their economic situation after receiving credit from BASUG's local partner, Endeavour. They urged BASUG to continue the project and arrange (For more see Page-2)

## BASUG at UN General Assembly session on Migration & Dev.

The United Nations General Assembly as per its resolution A/60/490 held a high-level dialogue on 'International migration and development' in New York from 14 to 15 September 2006. As part of the preparatory activities leading to the high-level dialogue, the General Assembly convened an informal interactive hearings with representatives of the non-governmental organisations and the private sector on 13 July 2006 at the United Nations headquarters in New York. A briefing meeting on the session was also held on 12 July in another building of the UN, close to the UN headquarters main building.

President of BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group), Mr Bikash Chowdhury Barua attended the interactive hearings at the UN General assembly which was attended by 92 representatives from various government, non-governmental organisations and civil societies. Chairperson of the Netherlands-based migrant organisation ERCMOVE, Ms Dr. Cora Dee also attended the session.

The hearings were divided into two sessions: 1) the role of NGO, civil society organisations and the private sector in promoting the beneficial aspects of international migration on development including the facilitation of the flow of remittance and their productive use, 2) the role of NGO's, civil society institutions and the business sector in developing their best practices regarding the social and economic aspects of international migration,

including human rights and the prevention of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. It was a nice experience in



the sense that it helped BASUG widened its network with a number of international organisations and representatives who have been active in migration and development field world wide.

( Left: The UN building in New York; right :BASUG President Bikash Chowdhury Barua inside the UN headquarters)

## BASUG's micro-credit program in Hobiganj (Cont. from Page- 1)

sanitary latrines for them. Chief Executive of Endeavour Mr.Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury and Chairman of Endeavour, Prof. Faruk Uddin Chowdhury were also present on the occasion and addressed the beneficiaries.

Till May 31, 2006 a total of 13 cooperative groups have been formed in the area with 345 members. The groups have accumulated Taka 1,41,196.00 as savings which is their Capital money. The following table shows the activities of the beneficiaries upto July 2006:-

Description	Targeted upto 31 July '06	Achievement upto 31 May '06	
1. Group formation	20 Nos.	13 Nos.	
2. Beneficiaries selection	500 Nos.	345 Nos	
3. Savings	500 Nos	345 Nos	Tk. 1,41,196.00
4. Credit disbursement	400 Nos.		Tk. 415,125.00
5. Awareness training	600 Nos.	345 Nos.	
6. IGA training	400 Nos	150 Nos	



(Photo: BASUG President Bikash Chowdhury Barua addressing the micro-credit beneficiaries in Hobiganj on 9 August '06. Photo- Basug)

Earlier, BASUG President visited the Hobiganj head office of Endeavour where a reception was arranged in his honour. It was a working day when the BASUG President met the group members of the micro-credit programme. But the enthusiasm among them was so high that they took a half day off (without salary) to attend the meetings. BASUG President also visited the two-storey under construction head office and training centre of Endeavour in Hobiganj.

## Oxfam-Novib's training on 'fundraising and mobilisation constituency'

Fundraising and mobilising constituency are two of the three main activities of a migrant development organisation. The third one is developing projects through which vulnerable people in countries of origin can be helped. Today small migrant developing organisations are even more successful than the big agencies. It's time that the success of these migrant

organisations is made professional. This is one of the main reasons for Oxfam-Novib to share its knowledge and experience about development with the migrant organisations.



(Photo- BASUG Secretary Sudhier Nannan (6th from right) is seen with the participants. Ms. Leila-Rispens Noel of Oxfam-Novib is also seen.)

An outcome of this thought is the training on fundraising and mobilising constituency which was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2006 at Leusden. Representatives from a number of

migrant organisations based in the Netherlands took part in the training. Among them were BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group), ERCMOVE, Stichting Sankofa and Hirida. BASUG was represented by its Secretary, Sudhier Nannan.

The training conducted by the director of Warner Strategy and Fundraising Bart Romijn had 2 main goals. The first one was to exchange experiences in development work. The second one was getting to know more about tools, tips and tricks within the world of development. As their where representatives participating from several migrant organisation with different levels of development experiences it was very nice to see what difficulties migrant organisations were coping with and more over what the solutions were which were used to solve these difficulties.

Tools, tips and tricks were very clear after knowing that describing a vision of your organisations is the most important. With the tools given to the migrant organisations in this training you should be able to translate this vision in a mission and a strategy. The strategy can be translated in to a marketing strategy to mobilise the constituency. Conclusion: It's a cliché but still very true: "Knowledge is power". The training has shown us that just by sharing knowledge and experience migrant organisations can be empowered to become professionals. With this we can make the world a better place to live in.

## Bangladesh-British Chamber delegation in the Netherlands

The Hague: A six member trade delegation from London-based Bangladesh-British Chamber of Commerce (BBCC) held a meeting with the Bangladeshi business community at a local hotel recently. The purpose of the visit of the delegation is to expand its activity beyond UK and develop its network with their fellow Bangladeshi business community living in other European countries including the Netherlands. The delegation was headed by BBCC Chairman, Dr Wali Tasar Uddin who is also the honorary Counsel for Bangladesh in Scotland.



*(Photo shows Bangladesh ambassador in the Netherlands Ms. Ismat Jahan (middle) with the participants after the meeting. Photo: Khokan Sharif)*

It may be mentioned here that the Bangladesh-British Chamber of Commerce came into being in 1991 with the purpose of promoting, protecting and strengthening bi-lateral trade and commerce between Bangladesh, UK and the members of the European economic

community and other countries as well. The mission of its networking is to identify small minority enterprises both in Bangladesh and the European countries including the Netherlands.

Another purpose of the visit of the Bangladeshi British trade delegation is to form a Bangladesh-Dutch business network through which the local entrepreneurs can share the experiences of their counterparts in the U.K. The Bangladeshi counterpart was headed by Bangladeshi businessman G. R. Chowdhury (Faruk). Bangladesh ambassador in the Netherlands Ms. Ismat Jahan addressed the meeting as chief guest. The meeting was also addressed by Ramesh Prema, Equal Project Manager, Business Link for London, Aziz ur Rahman, Director General, BBCC, S. B. Faruk, London Regional President, BBCC, Ms. Maritza Russel, President of the Dutch organisation ZZVN, Moqbul Ali, Salim Sharif, Project coordinator, Business link.

## Crack down on NGO in Bangladesh: 100 arrested

In a sudden move the Government has cracked down on the officials and employees of Proshika, one of the largest NGOs of the country. At least 100 officials and employees of Proshika were arrested by the police from different parts of the country, according to a recent report receiving from Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.

According to officials and employees Kishoreganj and drive against the wave among other



reports, police started arresting the Proshika employees from Saturday. The Proshika officials were arrested from Rajshahi, Manikganj, Raipur of Luxmipur district. The sudden arrest Proshika officials and employees has sent a panic NGO officials and employees across the country.

Police did not show any reason for the arrest of the Proshika officials and employees. A police official said the arrests were made following directive from the government. Following the arrest many senior officials and employees of the second largest NGO of the country went into hiding to avoid arrest. Police said, suspecting subversive activities, they started the arrest drive against the Proshika officials and employees. But police did not disclose the nature of subversive acts. Police action started following successful holding of massive rally in Rajshahi recently by Sammilito Nagorik Andolon in which Proshika took a leading role. The rally demanded reform in caretaker government, resignation of Chief Election Commissioner and other ECs to ensure free fair election to pave way to establish democratic government. (Source: BD News)

## Honour for BASUG

**Chittagong City:** BASUG's development partner, Everbright Foundation (EBF) organised a reception in honour of BASUG President Bikash Chowdhury Barua at its office at Jubilee Road in Chittagong on 24 July 2006. Everbright Charirman Prof. A. k.Q. Sirajul Islam Chowdhury and Chief executive, Mahfuzur Rahman expressed gratitude to BASUG for supporting EBF's programme and urged to come forward with support for future programmes. The chairman handed over a project proposal to Basug. A crest was also handed over to BASUG President. In his speech BASUG President thanked the EBF members for showing this nice gesture and assured support depending on the success of the present programme and availability of fund.



*(Photo: EBF Chairman Prof. A.Q.M. Sirajul Islam is handing over the crest to BASUG President at its Chittagong office.)*

## Success Story of Sona Handicraft & Sewing Centre

**Chittagong:** Located in a remote village, North Purangar under Satkania sub-district in Chittagong, Sona Handicraft & Sewing Centre, although small in size stands as a unique example of success story of BASUG'S development project for the poor women. Started in February 2006 the centre has already trained 40 poor girls and women of the village. Of them, 10 have been declared well-trained and they are now capable to work independently.

BASUG President Bikash Chowdhury Barua visited the centre on 2 Aug 2006 to see for himself the sewing work at the make-shift centre in Purangar. The female workers put their finished products (clothes for new born babies, girls (salwar-kamiz) and boy's t-shirts on display in the make-shift centre. Mr.

Mahfuzur Rahman, Executive Director of Everbright Foundation (EBF) who was also present on the occasion handed over a few samples of the finished products of the centre to BASUG President. Expressing thanks and satisfaction at their work BASUG President handed over a small amount of money to the working women and girls to buy sweets and assured them to continue the project.

*(At the reception in North Purangar BASUG President is being presented with a crest. EBF chief Mahfuzur Rahman is on his right.)*

To keep the project running and economically viable Everbright Foundation (EBF) is trying to get a contract from the local Municipal authority (Chittagong) to supply clothes for the new born babies in the municipal hospitals in Chittagong. According to EBF, Chittagong Municipality authorities give clothes to the new born babies as gift. If they get the contract, the centre will need no more financial help from outside, according to the director of EBF.



### Medical help

Everbright Foundation is also trying to set up a permanent centre in the village to house the handicraft & sewing centre. The centre will also facilitate a medical doctor to treat the patients of the village and the adjacent areas once in a week. One villager has volunteered to give a plot of land to construct the centre. Everbright urged BASUG to support their programme. Later, a reception was arranged in the village. The villagers of North Purangar handed over two crests – one for BASUG President and the other for Ms. Sona Brunott, a Dutch lady (aged 72) who had initiated the project in North Purangar. The centre has been named after her.

## Visits INAFI Asia head in Dhaka

**Dhaka:** BASUG President Bikash Chowdhury Barua visited the INAFI Asian head office in Dhaka and met its Executive Director, Mr Atiqunnabi Chowdhury on 8 Aug 2006. They discussed the possibilities of working together in the field of migration and development both in Bangladesh and in abroad. Mr. Atiqunnabi proposed to organise an international forum on migration in Dhaka in collaboration with BASUG and other development agencies including Oxfam-Novib. He would send a project proposal to BASUG in near future.



*(Picture shows BASUG President with Mr Atiqunnabi, Executive Director of INAFI Asia at his Dhaka office).*

## Experience of a BASUG member from Seva Training

It was an eye-opener for me into the world of funding because of the fact that I really didn't know anything about it. I met with some students who had just graduated from the Haagse Hogeschool and organise various events in an attempt to break the cultural barriers that are existent here in the Netherlands.

There were three speakers- Ronald Lucardie from Cordaid, Grad Sissingh from HOF and Mariëke van der Plas from an funding agency called Fonds 1818. Mr. Lucardie explained how the funding-world in the Netherlands is structured and Ms. van der Plas examined the project proposals that were submitted. I had to defend the project during the workshop that was held at the end while others judged it by list of criteria that are used by funds 1818. They like the idea, but need more inside information. Dr. Radj Bhondoe, Director of Seva Network Foundation said that he liked that I was showing interest. I was the youngest participant there that was kind of funny and when they heard that I was 19 they didn't believe it hahaha-

**by Bijoy Roy**

### BASUG's AGM

The annual general meeting of BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group) will be held on 21 October 2006 in the Hague. The meeting will review the successes and failures of the organisation during the last one year. The annual programme and the budget will also be presented in the meeting. Discussions will be held on its future programmes both in the Netherlands and in Bangladesh, its network and membership issues. All members are requested to attend the meeting. Information on the venue and the time will be issued soon.

### BASUG's new website soon

BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group) is now active improving its present website ([www.basug.nl](http://www.basug.nl)). A professional web designer has been assigned with the task to improve the site. We hope that we shall be able to present you a better website soon with more information on various issues. –Editor