

DFD shares its Dutch experience with Norwegian Development Partners in Oslo

By- Bikash Chowdhury Barua, BASUG-DFD

Norwegian Development Network (Bistandstorget) and Development Fund (Utviklingsfondet) jointly organised a meeting on 'possibilities and experiences relating to Diasporas, refugees and immigrant organisations in development cooperation' in Oslo on 25 November 2008.

The meeting first of its kind in the history of Norwegian development cooperation was attended by different development stakeholders both from the Norwegian government, mainstream development organisations, diaspora organisations, representatives from Danish development network Norad. Two speakers from outside Norway were invited to the meeting to share their experiences of their respective countries. One was DFD-Diaspora Forum for Development and the other was PRNGO, a development organisation working with DANIDA from Denmark. Ms Marianne Fredsriksen represented PRNGO and Bikash Chowdhury Barua, Vice Chairman of DFD and also Chair of BASUG- Bangladesh Support Group represented DFD.

Cooperation between the mainstream funding organisations and the migrant organisations is something new in Norway. Although there are hundreds of small and medium size migrant organisations in Norway, they do the development work mostly at their own initiative. Only last year the Norwegian government took an initiative to initiate such cooperation with a Norway-based Pakistani migrant organisation as 'test case'. Under this initiative a educational project (madrasha or Islamic school) will be supported in Pakistan. It may be mentioned that Pakistani migrants are the largest in number in Norway, totalling about 32 thousand.



(Photo- Participants at the meeting in Oslo)

The meeting held at the office of Development Fund in Oslo was also addressed by Ane Myglund of Norwegian Development Network, Alic M Ennals, Project Coordinator of Development Fund, Akhenaton Oddvat de leon, chairman of Norway Immigrant Council, Gunvor Schanke, Department for Civil Society, Norad, Oddveig Nygard of Association of NGOs in Norway, Alfredo Biamont (case from Peru), Babar Qazi, Rahma Islamic Relief Fund in Norway (Pakistani migrant organisation), Fakra Butt, Umar Rana and Arvid Solheim of Development Fund (The Way Forward).

Representatives from the migrant organisations said, although they had been contributing to the economy of Norway and at the same time in their countries of origin, they do not receive support either from the government or from the mainstream development organisations. On the other hand, one migrant leader expressed his frustration saying that in many areas where any incident or accident takes place, the local police or authority do not pay timely or adequate

attention to resolve the problems. Some of them were also critical of the existing platform for the migrant organisations for not doing much for its member organizations.

Speakers from the mainstream development organisations said, compared with other neighbouring countries, Norway was still lagging behind in the field of development cooperation activities involving the migrant organisations there, but ‘we have already started a pilot project with the Norway-based Pakistani migrant organisations. We shall see how it works, we hope it will be successful and after that we shall go for similar projects with other migrant organisations, depending on the size of their population in Norway.’”

Role of Dutch Govt & Oxfam Novib lauded

There was a barrage of questions and queries from the participants about different aspects of cooperation between the Dutch migrant organisations and the Dutch government and the mainstream development organisations. In his speech DFD Vice Chairman lauded the role of the Dutch government and some of the mainstream development organisations, especially Oxfam Novib saying that Oxfam Novib has been very supporting in this regard including providing financial and capacity building training to the active migrant organisations in the Netherlands. Dwelling on the formation of DFD he said, DFD was not a product of one or two days meeting. “We the migrant leaders in the Netherlands had undergone a series of trainings during the last years, which is still going on- on issues relating to development, such as



(Bikash Chowdhury Barua during his presentation in the meeting)

capacity building, literacy training, project writing, evaluation etc. by Oxfam Novib. He added, Oxfam Novib sent also on a regular basis migrant leaders to different international seminars, training in and outside the Netherlands during the last couple of years. Such trainings and attending meetings, conferences brought the migrants groups, leaders together, helped develop a sort of friendship, confidence, trust building and a sense of strong leadership among themselves’. The DFD Vice Chairman also highlighted the efforts made by the Dutch Foreign and Development Cooperation ministries in involving the migrant organisations in the Netherlands in development issues including policy making. In this connection he referred to the number of meetings prior and during the 2nd Global Forum on Migration and Development in the Hague and Manila last year.

DFD Vice Chairman had also two separate meetings with the Norwegian Development Fund and Norwegian Immigration Council during his two days stay in Oslo. On 25th November morning he had a meeting with Immigrant Council at Oslo Town hall and on 26th November morning he had a separate meeting with Norwegian Development Fund at its office. The City council meeting was participated by Immigrants Council chairman, Akhenaton Oddvar de

Leon, Secretary to the Board of Immigrant Organisations and Senior Executive Officer of City Council Imafidon Edokpolo Osa and Project coordinator of Norwegian Development Fund, Alice Ennals. Immigrants council Chairman explained how they brought more than 100 migrant organisations under its umbrella in Norway and wanted to know the nature of work of DFD, its formation and activities etc. Earlier, they showed the DFD leader different sections of the giant building of the City Council. The City Council Senior Executive Officer, who himself is also a migrant showed the big and eye-catching hall with fresco on the big walls where Professor Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank from Bangladesh received his Nobel Peace Prize.

The next morning an exclusive meeting took place at Norwegian Development Fund office at 10:00 hours between DFD Vice Chairman and Project Coordinator Alice Ennals. The purpose



of the meeting was to know more about the nature of work and *(City Council Senior executive Imafidon explains its work during a meeting with Immigrant Council at Oslo City Council while Alic Ennals of Development Fund looks on)* relationship between the migrant organisations and the government and the mainstream development organisations in the Netherlands, formation of DFD,

problems and challenges it faced and has been facing. Alice Ennal was frank in admitting that such area of work is something new in Norway, hence they are progressing carefully.



(Photo left: is the Hall where Professor Muhammad received the Nobel Peace prize for Peace)

It might sound like 'beating own drum' but it is a true that the image of DFD has increased immensely following this meeting of sharing ideas and experiences in Norway. DFD has also learned a lot out of this meeting. Thanks to all who worked behind this meeting, especial thanks goes to Ms Alice Ennals of Norwegian Development Fund and Ms. Ane Myglund of Norwegian

Development Network. Also thanks to DFD members especially to the Board member Sandra Megens Santos of NetEuNI-DFD who brought the two parties together.

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