

## Dialogue on Diaspora, Migration and Development: Bangladeshi expats to get Smart Cards

A Dialogue on ‘Diaspora, Migration and Development: Current Critical Issues’ jointly organized by BASUG, Films4Peace Foundation and the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment was held at the Ministry Conference room in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh on 5 November 2017. Speaking at the Dialogue first of its kind with any Diaspora organisation by the Ministry, Minister Nurul Islam B. Sc said “the demand



of migrant is increasing day by day. This year additional 20,000 more migrant workers have gone abroad with employment. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina has keen interest in the welfare of the migrant workers” because “Bangladeshis living and working overseas are the major stakeholders in the development of their own country”. According to the Ministry of Expatriates, Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bangladeshi expatriates living in Europe, US and

Australasia are to get smart cards to access welfare facilities like foreign wage earners & migrant workers. The Minister informed the dialogue that Bangladeshis living in Europe, US and Australasia are to get smart cards to access welfare facilities like foreign wage earners and migrant. The Minister claimed that all staff of his ministry were fare and had been working sincerely for the welfare of the migrant workers as per the guidelines of the government. "There is no hanky panky in my ministry. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina has keen interest in the welfare of the migrant workers," he added. *(Photo above: Minister Nurul Islam B. Sc at the Dialogue, right: BASUG leaders at Live TV Talk show at Desh TV, Dhaka)*



Additional Secretary Mohammad Azharul Huq said the Ministry is setting a special cell for Diaspora living all over the world. Azharul Huq also explained that Bangladesh has established special offices for Bangladeshi migrant workers and expats in Australia, South Africa and Italy. More such offices will be opened in countries where Diaspora are significant. “New policy on migrant workers and expat wage earners is expected to be passed in the Parliament soon and will open doors for expanding welfare and facilities for expatriates abroad” he added.

Besides Chairperson of BASUG Bikash Chowdhury Barua – who made keynote presentation – BASUG’s German Country President, Dr Ahmed Ziauddin and Chairman of Films4Peace Foundation, Pervez Siddiqui



addressed the Dialogue. Professor Moazzem Hossain of Griffith University, Australia who is also an advisor of BASUG has shown the participants the results of his research. "Poverty among migrants is less than 10 percent and poverty has significantly reduced, compared to non-migrants’ household poverty remains at 36.36 percent", the Australian professor concluded.

The seminar followed a Live TV talk show on Desh TV’s Shoja Kotha where Dr Ahmed Ziauddin, Bikash Chowdhury Barua and UK’s Country Coordinator Ansar Ahmed Ullah discussed on ‘Diaspora contribution towards Bangladesh’s economy and development: Challenges and government’s responsibility’ hosted by Mohammad Jahangir. Finally, Bikash Chowdhury Barua urged the Bangladesh government to involve the stakeholders to evolve a migrant-friendly policy framework for the Bangladeshi diaspora living and working abroad.

## Bangladesh’s economic growth hits record 7.28%

Bangladesh’s economic growth accelerated to 7.28 percent in the year to June 30, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said at a media briefing in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh recently, citing final data.

Provisional data put the GDP growth at 7.24 percent for the year. Per capita income rose from \$1,602 to \$1,610. “In the final data, Bangladesh’s GDP stands at \$249.86 billion, or nearly Tk 20.88 trillion. It took Bangladesh 34 years to reach a GDP of \$100 billion. The remaining growth has been the achievement of the Sheikh Hasina administration,” he said.

Aside from Bangladesh, only Ethiopia and Cambodia have achieved a GDP growth rate over 7 percent, the planning minister said. “The agriculture sector grew 2.90 percent, manufacturing grew 10.22 percent and the services sector grew 6.69 percent. Though we have aimed for 8 percent growth by 2020, we will reach it by 2019 at the current rate.”

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, or BBS had previously issued estimates of 7.24 percent GDP growth and per capita \$1,602 in April. According to the BBS, the growth rate in FY2016 was 7.11 percent, while the per capita income was \$1,465. The economy eventually passed 7 percent growth in FY2016 after being ‘stuck’ in the 6-7 percent range for nearly a decade. Last June, Bangladesh targeted a growth rate of 7.2 percent for the



## 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of Migration Laboratory in Berlin held

The first face-face meeting of the 'Migration Laboratory' set up by the German Federal government and German development agency, GIZ was held on 19-22 October 2017 in Berlin. The laboratory comprised of 30 'thought leaders' from different sectors across the globe was set up with the objectives of providing a space for dialogue, experimentation and collaboration aiming at the following five key issues:

1. To engage critically with the challenges and potentials of ensuring that migration is beneficial for all actors in society
2. To bring diverse interests in the migration system into dialogue and support a better understanding of mutual perspectives
3. To encourage cross-sectoral collaborations and new forms of cooperation on concrete change initiatives tackling critical issues in the field
4. To foster a global network of change agents, and
5. To impact upon national and global discourses on migration.

The first meeting of the laboratory was facilitated by Peter Garrett and Jane Ball of the Dialogues Associates, an international consulting firm, based in the U.K. The methodology of the Migration laboratory was unique



and different than the usual conferences or round table meetings. All participants had to share or vent their opinions or thoughts on different issues of migration during the different sessions. There were

more interaction and involvement of the participants in the whole process. Maksim Roskin of GIZ and Project Manager of the Migration laboratory and Claudia Apel of GIZ Global Leadership Academy supported Peter Garrett and Jane Ball during the four-day program.

Apart from the face to face meetings the participants also got the chance to get themselves acquainted with the activities of the refugees who arrived in Germany in recent years, how they are engaged to build up a new life through different projects, how they are trying to cope with the society. Two projects that the participants visited were a) Interkular, a Berlin social enterprise, which promotes the potentials of young people of all origins and b) Bantabaa, a community project which started in 2015 as a meeting point for refugees around Goerlitzer park in Berlin Kreuzberg. This has today turned into an integration project focusing on education and jobs in the catering sector.



The Migration Laboratory consists of representatives from Bangladesh, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco, the Philippines, Sweden and Switzerland. Chairman of BASUG, Bikash Chowdhury Barua is one the members of the Laboratory. The next meeting of the Laboratory will be held in Rabat, Morocco on 15-18 February 2018.

## NGO network meeting at Bangladesh Embassy

The Embassy of Bangladesh in The Hague, with support from Niketan, a Dutch NGO organised a meeting titled “Bangladesh NGO network and friendship meeting: Towards a dynamic Bangladesh” on 22 Sept 2017 at the Embassy conference room. Around 50 representatives from more than 35 Dutch NGOs who are active in Bangladesh, participated in the meeting.

Bangladesh Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal in his opening speech highlighted child marriage, woman empowerment, income inequality etc. and urged NGO support in achieving the SDGs. He termed the SDGs to be challenging for a country like Bangladesh, which needs international support for achieving the ambition. He called for multi-stakeholder approach for inclusive development and stressed on mobilizing domestic and international resources to achieve SDG. Senior Policy Officer of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Jan de Boer welcomed the initiative of Bangladesh Embassy. The former First Secretary of the Dutch Embassy in Dhaka, Mrs. Ella de Voogd stressed on better coordination of Dutch development organizations in Bangladesh.



Counsellor of the Embassy Kazi Russel Pervez, in his key note speech, highlighted the current status in working condition in Bangladesh and the relevant Government policies etc. Counsellor Russel also explained Government’s “zero tolerance” against terrorism and violent extremism. *(Photo left: Bangladesh ambassador, below Sr Policy Officer of Dutch Foreign Ministry)*

The former First Secretary of the Dutch Embassy in Dhaka, Mrs. Ella de Voogd stressed on better coordination of Dutch development organizations in Bangladesh. Ms. Astrid Frey, board member of Niketan conducted the plenary session in the meeting, where the participants. The NGOs also talked about the opportunities and challenges in Bangladesh. BASUG Chairman, Bikash Chowdhury Barua stated that they have built awareness among the migrant workers to send remittance through banking channel. Judith De Bruijne of Blue Gold Program briefed on their activities in Bangladesh.

As a finishing remarks Ambassador Belal urged to all for introducing the best practices of the Netherlands in Bangladesh especially in agriculture. He also requested support from all concern for implementation of Delta Plan 2100, the flagship Dutch Bangla Project. The meeting was moderated by Istiaque Ahmed, First Secretary of the Embassy. Embassy



has the plan to host this kind of meeting at least once a year. The participating NGOs appreciated the initiative of the Embassy in building bridge between the Government and the development partners. They termed Bangladesh as a very friendly country for the foreign NGOs and ‘a land of opportunities’ owing to its young and energetic people.

## BASUG in German-Africa Diaspora Conference

The First German-Africa Diaspora Conference was held in the weekend in the international convention centre of the Technical University in Dortmund. The conference focussed on the contribution of the African and other Diasporas in Germany to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the North-South perspectives. Above hundred representatives from African and other Diasporas in Germany, France, Netherlands, Switzerland, Cameroon and Uganda attended the conference and shared best practices from the Southern perspectives for the achievement of Agenda 2030 through partnerships, networking and cooperation.

The conference started with the welcome address from the Chief Executive of Association of Socio-Cultural Migrant Organisations in Dortmund (VMDO) Dr Ümit Kosan and the First Secretary of Uganda Embassy Ms Margaret Otteskov. EDDA, Cameroonian Association of Engineers and Informatics Professionals VKII, VMDO, samo.fa, AAR, Club Camer, One World Network, Engagement Global, House of Resources, Dortmund and Culture Pour Tous with the support from German Federal Ministry for Family, Elders, Women and Youth and BMZ organised the conference.

Organisers Armel Djine and Justine Magambo welcomed the guests and participants and presented background and focus issues of the conference. On the opening technical session, the Expert Promotor on Asylum, Migration and Development from One World Network NRW Serge Palasie, Political Scientist and Activist Elisabeth Kaneza and the Vice President of African Tide Union Dr Medard Kabanda presented papers. On the first day, among others, Human Rights Officer from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights OHCHR Liza Sekaggya Essaga, Coordinator of Refugee Works in Unna Region Joel Zombou, Expert from Environmental Governance Institute John Takang and Uganda Representative of TruTrade Mark Namara highlighted the issues human rights situation in Africa, African refugees in Dortmund, youth entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development Goals.



On the second day BASUG Project Coordinator in Germany AHM Abdul Hai presented the best examples on Remittance and Development: Role and Activities of BASUG. In his presentation Abdul Hai said, Bangladesh



has played pioneering role in the achievement of MDGs earlier, and now the Bangladeshi Finance Minister has already announced, that the expatriates will have to pay no fee to send remittance to Bangladesh, which is also a sub-point of the SDGs. BASUG has also promoted and engaged the expatriates from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal to use the legal channel to send remittance and to increase investment for the community development at home country, to fight the illegal and risky trafficking and migration process, he added. Amanda Magambo from Northern Corridor Integration

Projects (NCIP) urged all Diasporas to work together for the better role and reflection for partnership, cooperation and development in Africa and Europe. Development activist and journalist Tina Adomako and Miriam Camara moderated the technical sessions in the conference. *(Photo above: participants at the conference; Left: AHM Abdul Hai of BASUG Germany e.V during his presentation.)*

## “Bangladesh is on a very strong trajectory in all the SDGs”

Ovais Sarmad, chief of staff at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) spoke to the Dhaka Tribune’s Syed Zainul Abedin on the sidelines of the Delta Coalition Ministerial Conference in Dhaka. He discussed various issues related to migration driven by climate change and Bangladesh in meeting the SDGs. “Bangladesh is at a very important terms of many socio-economic, political and climate change issues. To them, government has to take a proactive and longer-term view to ensure economic growth of the country addressing the issues that are dire because change and the subsequent rising water level”. Migration and climate nature are not restricted within the boundaries of a country. “The first step recognize that there is a problem, there is an issue. I think Bangladesh has recognized this issue through the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2015”. Moreover, Bangladesh is on a very strong trajectory in all the SDGs. “They are trying very hard. But given the socio-economic issues of the country, it has limitations in terms of funding, in terms of jetty geography – the land available and the climate change. So, they need innovative and technological advantage and there are several out there. I expect the government to look into that matter and use those solutions and implement those at the local level”.



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## Workshop on Africa Immigrants in Germany

The African NGO Migrafrica, which is based at Cologne city of Germany, arranged 3day long Workshop at Capital city Berlin. It continued from 3 to 5 November at a Hotel Park Plaza. Basically, all african non-profit org. were targeted for the program. Apart from them, Mahamud Farid from BASUG attended the event. Dr. Martin, collaborator of Cologne, contributed as moderator. About 50 Ngo representatives were present



there. The objective of the Workshop was to make migrants understand development and integration policy of German govt. Mr. Amanuel Amare, Manager of Migrafrica, briefs participants on his organaision's activities. In the next phase, representatives worked in groups on various migrant issues as per their choices. The groups found out several suffering issues they are facing since they started life in Germany. African migrants think that still racism exists. Not only parents but

also their children who born in Germany are the victims at school, work place and market. A young girl regretted that very often people ask her where she is from though she is a citizen of the country and German is her mother tongue. *(Photo: from left Serge Palasie, Dr. Martin, Peter Krahl and Mahamud Farid)*



Mr. Peter Krahl from German development ministry (BMZ) appears at general discussion round. He points out how development policy works. Welfare of the immigrants is a combine effort of govt. bodies and political parties. Local politics has good influence on the matter. Now it is a matter of concern that Germany tends to have less immigrants for upcoming years. Regarding Africa, he adds that German Ministry is playing active role in establishing democracy, expanding trade in African region. In the afternoon, open discussion took place. Participants ask question to the pannel. Pannel members included a young African woman politician Miss Aminata Toure, Peter Krahl and Serge Palasie (One world NRW). Issues like equal rights, integration policy, job market and fair trade got priority at the discussion.

## CIM Workshop for Indian Diasporas in Frankfurt

The Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), a cooperation of the German development agency GIZ and the International Placement Service (ZAV) of the German Federal Employment Agency (BA), organized a daylong networking workshop for the Indian diaspora organizations in Frankfurt University on 28 October. Project Manager of the CIM Programme “Migration for Development” Olivia Hannemann, Program Coordinator of CIM in India Richa Arora and Faliou Gueye from ZAV presented different funding options and programs for the returning experts from Germany for the sake of development projects in India and other developing countries in Asia. During their presentation, it was appreciated that the project



application procedure to CIM has been much simplified and also possible in English language.

BASUG project with the title Clean Clothes: Safety and Health Compliances for Garments Workers in Bangladesh was presented as an example of best practices. With the support of CIM it has been implemented in Germany and Bangladesh. BASUG Project Coordinator in Germany AHM Abdul Hai presented it including project objectives, target audience, project activities, financial plan and management, communication materials and documentation methods. It also comprises the challenges and opportunities to

achieve the expected results and outcomes. *(Photo below is AHM Abdul Hai of BASUG Germany e.V.)*



About 20 representatives from different Indian Diaspora organizations active in different cities in Germany took part in the workshop. They also presented their own organizations and projects for the better understanding of the trends and methodical approaches of development projects in the southern countries. The workshop also included better networking opportunities among the stakeholders and potential partner organizations for further cooperation and joint projects specially targeted for the socio-economic development in the

Indian states. Founding President of the Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) Ashutosh Kumar delivered a presentation on How to manage networks. Among others Chairman of AMIKAL Anjana Singh, President of Hanseatic India Forum e.V. Dr Amal Mukhopadhyay and Founder President of Gandhi Kinderhilfe Bad Camberg e.V. Dr H.C.B.N. Roy attended the sessions.

## Integration and inclusion in Dortmund

On the first Sunday in October, “For Kids Sake” organized their second “Rollstuhlrün – Run & Roll” in the beautiful Romberg Park in Dortmund. Elderly wheelchair riders, disabled people, runners from Bangladesh, Africa, Nepal and Germany all came to celebrate and run and roll for the benefit of orphan and school



children in Bangladesh. Dortmund’s Mayor Birgit Zoerner was the patron of the event: “This is a great event that connects three positive items: inclusion, integration and internationality” were her opening remarks.

Bikash Choudhury Barua, Chairman of BASUG, along with the BASUG officials from the Netherlands and Germany joined this event among others. Earlier, Thomas Stukenberg of For Kids Sake welcomed the participants. Altogether, 150 runners and rollers from Bangladesh, Nepal, Africa and Germany participated; the youngest was 8 years old and the oldest wheelchair runner 95. More than 1000 people witnessed and participated in this feast with music and catering for integration and inclusion. With the help of runners, rollers and sponsors, For Kids Sake has raised more than 7000 Euro to support kids in rural Bangladesh. The next Rollstuhlrün in Dortmund, for the benefit of Bangladesh, will be on Sunday, September 16 in 2018.



## FSI’s Qualification Round Cooperation Manager Global 2017 program in Dortmund: BASUG joins

Germany: Like the previous years, the Forum for Social Innovation (FSI) organized the capacity build up program titled, ‘Qualification Round Cooperation Manager Global 2017’ on 11 February 2017. The first such program, held at the Youth Hostel in Dortmund city of Germany, will have four modules across the whole year. Each module has two days’ session and will be organized in different cities in the North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) province of Germany.



What the training focus on? FSI trainers, sometimes guest trainer also takes part, deliver lectures on

relative issues to NGO activities so that members of organizations can play the role of leadership well in their activities. On the first day, trainer Miss Naima El Hasbani discussed properties of “Smart Goal” for the project. Participants also gathered concrete knowledge from do it by yourself part of the session.

Representatives from 14 development organizations from NRW attended the program. BASUG Senior Project Officer, Mahamud Farid attended the program. It may be mentioned that BASUG is the only organization which has been attending the Qualification Round Cooperation Manager Global programs for last three years.



## Migration Laboratory formed: BASUG Member

In order to bring together the international thought leaders from different sectors to enable new perspective and to facilitate the co-creation of ideas and innovative practices towards a migration that benefits all actors in society, the German set up a 30-member consists of Indonesia, Mexico, Switzerland. Barua has been



Federal Government and German development organisation, GIZ have ‘The Migration Laboratory’ recently. The Migration Laboratory representatives from Bangladesh, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco, the Philippines, Sweden and Chairman of BASUG-Diaspora and Development, Bikash Chowdhury selected as one of the 30 members of the Migration Laboratory.

The Migration Laboratory aims at providing a space for dialogue, experimentation and collaboration aiming at 5 key objectives: 1) engage critically with the challenges and potentials of ensuring that migration is beneficial for all actors in society; 2) bring diverse interests in the migration system into dialogue and support a better understanding of mutual perspectives; 3) encourage cross-sectoral collaboration and new forms of cooperation on concrete change initiatives lacking critical issues in the field; 4) foster a global network of change agents; and 5) impact upon national and global discourses. Some members of the Migration Laboratory will also join the next Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) scheduled to be held in Marrakesh, Morocco on 5-7 December 2018. It may be mentioned that BASUG Chairman, Bikash Chowdhury Barua is a member of the International Steering Committee of GFMD Civil Society Days.

## Bangladesh’s GDP per person is now higher than Pakistan’s

When Bangladesh won independence from Pakistan in 1971, it was much poorer than the country it left. Industry accounted for only 6-7% of its GDP, compared with over 20% in Pakistan. The battle for independence had killed or displaced millions, damaged roads and railways, and severed ties with Pakistan’s bankers and industrialists (including the owner of one of the world’s biggest jute mills). Even before the war, Bangladesh had been trampled by another apocalyptic horseman: a cyclone killed hundreds of thousands in 1970. The country’s independence leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, complained that West Pakistan had not promptly shared its bumper wheat crop or “given a yard of cloth for our shrouds”.

Last month revealed a remarkable turnaround. Bangladesh’s GDP per person is now higher than Pakistan’s. Converted into dollars at market exchange rates, it was \$1,538 in the past fiscal year (which ended on June 30th). Pakistan’s was about \$1,470.

Strange as it may sound, Bangladesh jumped ahead because of an advance in Pakistan. On August 25th Pakistan released the results of its census, updating earlier population estimates. They showed that the country has 207.8m people, more than 9m more than previously thought. It may now have the fifth biggest population in the world, surpassing Brazil’s. But the new count also lopped 4-5% off Pakistan’s GDP per person, the arithmetic consequence of revealing so many more people.

A caveat should be noted. A dollar stretches further in Pakistan than in Bangladesh because prices in the former tend to be lower. So, Pakistan’s \$1,470 per person actually has more purchasing power than Bangladesh’s \$1,538. This is nonetheless a good moment to celebrate Bangladesh’s economic progress. Its annual growth has averaged more than 6% over the past ten years and has run above 7% over the past two. Industry accounts for 29% of its GDP. (The Economist)

## PICTORIAL



Left: Partial view of the Dialogue at Expatriates' Welfare ministry; BASUG chair with Birgit Zoernmer, Stadtratin of Stadt Dortmund. Below: BASUG leaders at Live TV talk show at Desh TV in Dhaka on Diaspora issues on 30 Oct 2017



Below left: Minister Nurul Islam B.Sc is flanked by Pervez Siddiqui of Films4Peace Foundation & Dr. Ahmed Ziauddin of BASUG Germany; (R): Media personality Muhammad Jahangir at BASUG in the Hague

