

*(A mouthpiece of Bangladesh & Asian Diaspora in the Netherlands)*

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## **BASUG & TNU/Triple L jointly work with Oxfam Novib on a unique Remittance Project**

BASUG with its partner organisation, The Network University (TNU)/Triple L has embarked upon a new project titled “Remittance for Community Development” from December 2010. Oxfam Novib is also a working partner of this two years project. The project is unique in the sense that it will find, by studying selected countries, ‘alternative remittance schemes’, such as collective remittances and others, benefiting the community at whole, and to understand and identify best examples and practices, as well as positive and negative effects of such schemes.

Three countries representing three continents, Mexico, Ghana and Bangladesh, with considerable migrant communities, and significant remittances, have been chosen for specific studies, as well as other countries.

The study will create an inventory of existing projects based on some prior set variables, i.e. involvement of Diaspora community and receiving community, involvement of local and national government in project, effect of project on sustainable development in community, duration of project, choice of sector etc.

### **On-line Survey & Web based Platform**

It will also conduct an online survey among selected project organizations, communities to collect necessary information to determine success and failures of remittances projects in selected receiving countries. A multi-purpose Web based Platform would be developed for interactions within and between communities, stakeholders and others, as well as to find out what others have done for community development by remittances, and as a source of knowledge for those interested..... (Cont Page 2)

### **BASUG sings MoU with TNU/Triple L**

BASUG and its organization TNU University)/Triple Memorandum of (MoU) for mutual a project titled for Community following a BASUG office in December 2010. signed by Prof. on behalf of Bikash Barua on behalf



partner (The Network L signed the Understanding cooperation on “Remittances Development” meeting at the Hague on 10 The MoU was Dr. Gerd Junne Triple L and Chowdhury of BASUG. Dr.

Ahmed Ziauddin, Director Projects of BASUG and Research fellow of Triple L, Danielle de Winter were present on the occasion. The project powered by Oxfam Novib will be for a period of two years. The purpose of this agreement is to assure the smooth implementation of the project and lay a sound basis for further cooperation between the partners in the future. (Photo: Dr. Ahmed Ziauddin, Director, Projects of BASUG and Ms. Danielle de Winter of TNU/Triple L (left) are signing the MoU as witnesses while Dr. Gerd June of TNU/Triple L and Bikash Chowdhury Barua, President of BASUG look on. Photo- Philip Jehu)

## **Remittance Project (Cont...from Page 1)**

At the same time, the project by focussing on Bangladeshi migrants in Netherlands would explore the state of alternative schemes in Bangladesh for remittances for the broader community, and not only on the receiving individuals or families; assess effectiveness, identify measures taken by the government of Bangladesh and other actors like NGOs, civil society, private sectors etc to stimulate the contribution of migrant communities; identify how far and under which conditions the migrants will express their willingness to send remittances to community organisations; and which conditions can be created by communities and by the government to stimulate productive investment of remittances by migrants.

The project emerged, out of a number of parallel discussions that OXFAM NOVIB had been having with two organizations, BASUG, the principal applicant of the Project, and The Network University/Triple L. Both organizations had different skills and experiences; BASUG with considerable credential on working with migrant communities on remittances and development, while the TNU/Triple L has high degrees of research experience, including on migration and development. At the initiative of OXFAM NOVIB, the two entities were brought together to undertake this project to gain knowledge about, amongst others, alternative schemes for community development.

The project, will combine research and practical activities with the Diaspora communities, beneficiary communities in Bangladesh - effectively as an example - with wide consultative, interactive options through web and social sites, to find out from the migrants, how far and under which conditions they could remit collectively, or remit for community organizations, and what circumstances can be created by the communities, or by the government, to stimulate such productive investment remittances by migrants. The project, in the end, is expected to provide some ideas about state of affairs of remittances for the community's development, what could be done next, and provide ideas about best practices.



4<sup>th</sup> GFMD held in Mexico

### **Need for radical change of perception of migrants**

Delegates representing a wide range of government and civil society actors, Diaspora and international organizations met at the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) at Puerto Vallarta in Mexico on 8-9 November to discuss this year's theme "Partnerships for Migration and Human Development : Shared Prosperity, Shared Responsibility".



*(Photo: at Mexico GFMD from left Ismail Awil of Oxfam Novib, Bikash Chowdhury Barua of BASUG and Libaret Nsavyimana of Foundation Ropabu)*

## GFMD in Mexico (Cont...from Page 2)

President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon Hinojosa addressed the second day of the civil society meeting while the first lady of Mexico, Margarita Zavala spoke on the opening day program. More than 400 delegates from 80 countries including 33 government representatives attended the civil society days.

The Civil Society Days (CSD) condemned the xenophobia that scapegoats migrants for broader societal and economic problems that are not of their making. The CSD underscored the need for radical change of perception of the migrants in the countries of origin, transit and destination. In the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families the delegates in the meeting urged the governments to ratify and implement the Convention. They said, states that have already ratified this important instrument and also the other core human and labor rights Conventions, should incorporate them into national legislation and practices. The Civil Society Days emphasized that development is far more than economic growth which includes, opportunities for human growth. This also includes access to decent work, health, education and other basic needs that one deserves as human being both at receiving and sending countries. The meeting urged the government to move migration out of national security agenda and move towards the framework of human security and human development.

Referring to remittances the delegates observed, it is important but not the only means by which migrants contribute to human development. The governments should recognize that dependence on remittance alone would not foster development, the added. It is the primary responsibility of the government for sustainable human development. The government, they added, should actively work with civil society actors with an objective to create public policies that alleviate the need to migrate in search of better opportunities.

## Climate Change and Bangladesh

Regarding climate change CSD called upon the developed countries to provide technical and financial resources towards mitigation and adaptation strategies and support public services to help countries of the global south address the impact of climate change. BASUG observes that the single most important factor that will impact on migration, particularly irregular migration, mass movement of population and environment refugees and all other aspects in years to come is climate change. But unfortunately not enough understanding as well as preparations is in place. In this regard, shared responsibility could make a difference and for understanding of climate change and migration, Bangladesh will be one text book example, where impacts are already there to see. The 2011 GFMD will be held in Switzerland.

### BASUG at CSD/Radio Interview

BASUG was represented at the GFMD Civil Society Days for the fourth consecutive year since 2007 by its chairman Bikash Chowdhury Barua. During the civil society days meeting he was interviewed by Radio 1812 on migration and development issues and on BASUG's on-going EC-UN funded project on Remittance.



Climate change and its impact on Bangladesh also came up in the interview. To listen to the interview go to <http://www.radio1812.net/article/special-report-migration-and-asia>

**BASUG Workshop on Remittance in the Hague:  
"Collective use of Remittance can make a difference"**

The Hague: As a part of the on-going project on “Leveraging Remittance for Socio-Economic Development in Sri Lanka”, BASUG has already organized three separate workshops and trainings for the Sri Lankan migrants in three European cities in 2010. The cities where the workshops/trainings were held include The Hague, Paris and Rome. BASUG will organize another similar workshop in Germany in end January 2010. On the other hand, BASUG’s partner organisation SEEDS ((Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services) has organised similar trainings for the Sri Lankan migrant family members in different parts of Sri Lanka during the same period.

The project funded by EC-UN Joint Initiative on Migration & Development is being implemented in Sri Lanka and four European countries including the Netherlands. BASUG’s partner, SEEDS (Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services) aims to advocate on formal channel of remittances transfer both in country of origin and country of destination, conduct financial literacy training both in country of origin and country of destination, develop financial products like savings, credit and insurance products to the remittances recipient families, offer enterprise development training and business development services to the remittances recipient families, and link the enterprises of remittances recipient families with Microfinance Institutions(MFIs) and mainstream financial institutions like banks and non-banks financial institutions.



*(Sri Lankan ambassador Ms. Grace Asirwatham is speaking at the workshop while Philip Peirce of UNDP, BASUG chair Bikash Chowdhury Barua and INAFI Asia chief Atiqun Nabi look on)*

The workshops and trainings (training modules have been developed by International Network of Alternative Financial Institutions (INAFI) Asia, another partner of the project) were participated by the members of both Sinhalese and Tamil communities. It was a big challenge for BASUG to bring both the groups together under one platform as both the groups are politically divided.

The last workshop for the Sri Lankan migrants was held in the Hague at Bel Air hotel. Sri lankan ambassador in the Netherlands Ms. Grace Asirwatham, Principal advisor to JMDI Philip Peirce, INAFI Asia Executive Director Atiqun Nabi, two representatives from SEEDS, Sri Lanka including

## BASUG Workshop in the Hague (Cont. from Page 4)

the Project Coordinator, Saminda Kodithuwakku took part in the workshop. Apart from the members of the Sri Lankan community, the workshop was also participated by some members of Bangladesh, Dutch and African community. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Samuel Guane Achak, Chairman of African Social Development Aid (ASDA) and Saminda of SEEDS, Sri Lanka. Dr. Peter Custers was the moderator at the working session.



*(Partial view of the participants at the workshop in the Hague)*

In his speech Philip Peirce stressed how important it was to listen to participants as individuals, and collectively, as the Sri Lankan diaspora in the Netherlands. High level figures in the European Commission have expressed a desire to ensure that the voice of diaspora is heard in the policy-making debate, and the JMDI is one way in which they are trying to ensure this, he added.

The JMDI Principal advisor in speech said that he had visited the project in action in Sri Lanka in March 2010 and was very impressed with its implementation. The project undertook important and interesting research on the volume and nature of remittances in general, data that is vital to governments, to donors, and to civil society. He said that he was able to take part in a financial literacy workshop in Negombo, and talked to banks offering dedicated service packages for those migrating abroad for work.



*(Resource persons from left Atiqun Nabi, Samuel A, Dr. Peter Custer, Saminda K and S. Nannan)*

The Sri Lankan ambassador in her speech as chief guest thanked BASUG for organizing the workshop. She stressed that remittances are one of the highest sources of income in Sri Lanka. In 2009 the civil war ended in Sri Lanka. Now, the stress is on economic recovery. More banks, financial institutions and socio economic development projects are beginning in Sri Lanka. She urged the Sri Lankan migrants (professionals, refugees, students, businessmen, and economical – political short stays) to send their money through formal channels and not to use informal ones. She said that Sri Lanka needed more help from its own people than the foreign investors and donors. Individual remittances might not help much in investment, but collectively would make a huge change, she added.

# IOM symposium ‘Migration for the benefit of all’

In observance of the 20<sup>th</sup> year of existence of IOM Netherlands a symposium titled “Migration for the benefit of all” was organized on 14 December at the Netherlands Foreign Ministry. It may be mentioned that 2010 was the 50<sup>th</sup> year of existence of IOM International.

The symposium was attended among others by policy makers from the Dutch ministries, political leaders, diplomats, researchers on migration and development, representatives from development and migrant organizations and the press. Head of IOM International, William Lacy Swing (from Geneva) inaugurated the symposium.



*(Partial view of the participants at IOM symposium at the Netherlands Foreign Ministry)*

Four experts from different sections including migrant organizations shared their experiences working on the field of migration and development. Ms. Froukje Santing, former NRC journalist and was the moderator of the two sessions while Jellie Kuiper was the chair. In their presentation the speakers

Katie Kushminder of School of Governance in Maastricht, Bikash Chowdhury Barua, President of BASUG, a Diaspora organization in the Netherlands in their presentation shared their experiences in the field of migration and development. Minister Leers of Immigration and Asylum and Pascal Reyntjines of IOM Brussels also addressed the symposium. At the end Professor Han Entzinger and head of IOM Netherlands, Joost van der Aalst spoke on the subject “migration for the benefit of all”.

In his presentation BASUG President spoke on the important role that the Diaspora organizations can play in motivating the migrants and engaging them in the field of development both at the sending and at the receiving countries.



*(Photo left BASUG Chair Bikash Chowdhury speaking at the IOM symposium, right IOM International chief William Lacy Swing speaking at the reception following the symposium. IOM Netherlands chief Joost van der Aalst is seen standing on his left.)*

# Bangladeshi farmers to grow rice in Ghana & other West African states

Bangladeshi farmers are looking at possibilities of growing food in Ghana and other West African countries, that country's media has reported. According to the reports, the country's

farmers intend to grow rice and other food grains under what is known as 'contract farming'. The other countries under consideration are Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal.



"In the 'Contact Farming System' the Bangladeshi farmers will grow crops in those countries and Bangladesh will get half of the total production," Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary, Mohamed Mijarul Quayes was quoted as saying. The reports cited him as saying initially some countries including Ghana, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal expressed interest in the deal and they have already made proposals to the Bangladeshi government.

He also said: "The countries have a lot of fertile lands. However, only rain-dependent crops are generally grown there. We have proposed contract farming to them so that they may allow us their lands for agriculture. We will send experts and farmers. The Bangladeshis will grow some crops round the year and train the locals."

Apart from looking at farming, the Bangladeshis are also considering industrial investment in the pharmaceuticals, jute products, coffee, rubber, coco, yarn, garments and agriculture processing sectors of these countries, the reports said. Bangladesh, the reports said has already suggested to Ghana to run Friday clinics to promote Bangladeshi pharmaceutical products. By- Emmanuel K. Dogbevi, Courtesy- Ghana Business News

Visit to Ghana

## Expert Meeting on 'Gender & Remittances'

A 5-member Dutch team visited Ghana in September 2010 to attend an expert meeting in Accra on 'gender and remittances'. The team members included, Ms. Nickie Monga, Mr Ismail Awil, both from Oxfam Novib, Dr. Ahmed Ziauddin of BASUG, Ms. Daniëlle de Winter of Triple L and Mr. Antoinne van Naerssen of Radboud University.



(Expert meeting in Ghana; Dr. Ahmed Ziauddin of BASUG (R) speaking at the expert meeting. Photo- Danielle)

The five day meeting organised by Sankofa foundation was also attended by experts such as Ms. Elisabeth Robert of UN INSTRAW. They took part in the discussion to come up with new strategies and discuss key constraints regarding women senders and receivers of migrants' financial transfers. The Dutch team was taken along on visits to Western Union to discuss remittances initiatives initiated by the commercial branch, as well as to a return migrant business initiative to show the business potential for migrants in Ghana.

## JMDI Chief Coordinator reviews BASUG's EC-UN Project

The chief Coordinator of EC-UN Joint Initiative on Migration and Development (JM&DI) Philip Peirce held a meeting with the officials of BASUG and its two partners of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at BASUG office on 22 November 2010. It may be mentioned that Philip Peirce came to the Netherlands to attend the workshop of BASUG on Remittance, held on 21 November in the Hague. The workshop was a part of the on-going EC-UN JM&DI project.



Philip Peirce reviewed the progress of the EC-UN funded project of BASUG which is being implemented in collaboration with its partners INAFI Asia and SEEDS (Sri Lanka). He expressed his satisfaction over the progress of the project so far and hoped that it would come up positive results at the end of the project period. The meeting was attended by the Executive Director of INAFI Asia, Atiqun Nabi, Project Coordinator of SEEDS, Sri Lanka, Saminda Kodithuwakku, Fernando of SEEDS, Office executive of BASUG Philip Jehu and President of BASUG, Bikash Chowdhury Barua.

### PICTORIAL



(Photo left: To bid farewell to the outgoing ambassador of Bangladesh Mr. Mizanur Rahman the Sri Lankan ambassador Ms. Grace Asirwatham hosted a dinner party at her residence. Picture shows Bangladesh ambassador with spouse, BASUG Chair & spouse, Sri Lankan ambassador with her husband & honorary Consul of Bangladesh and spouse. Right: Philip Jehu of BASUG Office Executive is flanked by two resource persons from SEEDS, Sri Lanka at BASUG workshop. Below: cultural events at BASUG workshop on Remittance on 21 November 2010

