

Good development partnerships are based on shared vision

## Round Table Conference on 'Tackling Poverty: The Role of Development Partnerships'

A Round Table, jointly organised by the United Kingdom's DFID-Bangladesh and The Daily Star, was held at the CIRDAP Auditorium in the city on Thursday, February 16, 2006, in preparation for the high-level conference which will take place in London on March 6-7, 2006 on "Asia 2015: Promoting Growth, Ending Poverty." The conference will focus on the opportunities, risks and challenges to Asia's development up to 2015 and beyond.

"All the development partners must come together and agree on a shared vision to play their respective roles effectively. Where it is necessary for international partnerships to be firm on commitments Bangladesh needs to improve governance to be able to best utilise the available resources," said Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, whilst presenting the keynote paper at the Round Table Conference on "Tackling Poverty: The Role of Development Partnerships."

David Wood, Country Representative of DFID Bangladesh, made the welcome address. He said that 'Asia demands attention not just as a home to the majority of the world's poor but also for the first time in history it has the potential to eliminate poverty in a generation.... As a country within Asia, Bangladesh has a huge amount to contribute to the conference, based on its own successes, the partnerships that it has forged, and its position as an LDC with numerous challenges still to overcome.'

Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star, who moderated the round table, said

in his concluding remarks that the London conference will be a good opportunity for Bangladesh to contribute significant inputs into the thinking on poverty alleviation. He noted that the most important partner in any national attempt to tackle poverty is the government, and that it needs to have the necessary expertise. He urged that any government should be visionary, committed, honest and efficient in running the country.

David Wood in his closing remarks emphasised that donors cannot develop the country, their role is as partners to facilitate an effective development programme that is owned by the country. He said that the round table outputs would feed into the Asia2015 conference through Bangladesh's delegation and directly to the organisers of the event.

While speaking as a panelist, Hossain Zillur Rahman said that the London conference would not just be a place to negotiate for more resources but an opportunity to share success stories and learn from the lessons of others. Farooq Sobhan, President of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Nasreen Hoque, Country Director of Actionaid Bangladesh, and Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Managing Director of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation were the other panelists present. Among the discussants during the open session were Professor Rehman Sobhan, ADB Country Representative Hua Du, Taleyta Rahman, Rouf Chowdhury, M A Matin, Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Mosharraf Hossain, Ashrafuddin Chowdhury, Mehnaz Rabbani and Homaira Ahmed.

## Welcome Address

David Wood, Country Representative, UK-DFID



This Round Table is all about Partnerships. Partnerships to achieve development between governments, but also with the private sector and civil society. And improving international development partnerships is what underpins the forthcoming Asia 2015 Conference. The Conference is taking place in London on the 6th and 7th of March, co-hosted by DFID, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. It will confirm commitments to development and poverty reduction in Asia. It is an opportunity to share ideas on how to accelerate poverty reduction in Asia, and to build stronger partnerships to make it happen.

2005 was the year for Africa. There was the Africa Commission, the 'G8 Africa' Summit, and civil society action such as the global "Live 8" concert. 15 European Union states agreed to reach the UN target of committing 0.7 per cent of national income to aid by 2015; and the G8 agreed to a doubling of aid to US\$50 billion by 2010, with US\$25 billion of this going to Africa.

But Asia also demands attention. It is home to the majority of the world's poor, and although it is making remarkable progress, there is still a long way to go. However, for the first time in history, Asia has the potential to eliminate poverty in a generation. The Asia 2015 Conference will put Asia firmly back on the international development agenda. It will discuss how increasing aid flows to Asia might be allocated; to a continent that both needs and can make good use of external financing. It will be important to ensure that Bangladesh benefits from this "scaling up" of aid.

The Conference is also about recognising that Asia is different from other regions, and requires different approaches and different solutions. Asia exhibits massive extremes of development, from the highly successful and wealthy, to overwhelming poverty and hardship. And then there are the parts of Asia that are building up a huge momentum in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction. All of the major development success stories come from Asia, and there is no end of lessons to be learned from experience in the region.

Bangladesh has a huge amount to contribute to the Conference, based on its own successes, the partnerships that it has forged, and its position as an LDC with numerous challenges still to overcome. Bangladesh is sending a high level delegation to the Conference, led by the Minister of Finance, consisting of both government and civil society. Bangladesh will speak at 6 of the 10 sessions, including the high-level opening session, and keynote speeches on Governance and on Partnerships.

Bangladesh has many insights and success stories to share. For instance, its remarkable record of macroeconomic stability, with positive economic growth every year for the past 30 years. Also, the ground-breaking expansion of microfinance, and the vast network of NGOs. Primary school enrolment is approaching 100 per cent - one of the highest rates; particularly for girls, in the developing world. And in health, infant and child mortality have been brought down faster than in any other developing country.

Existing relations between Bangladesh and donors have been evolving, with the completion of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the hosting of the PRS Implementation Forum late last year. I would like to see this taken further, with improved partnerships built around government-led mechanisms for PRS implementation, with DFID and other development partners accountable for better coordination, greater predictability of aid flows, and respecting the need for national ownership of the development agenda.

### Participants:

- Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, Chairman, BUP
- Farooq Shobhan, President, BEI
- Hossain Zillur Rahman, Executive Chairman, PPRC
- Nasreen P Huq, Country Director, Actionaid Bangladesh
- Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Managing Director, PKSF
- David Wood, Country Representative, UK-DFID
- Mahfuz Anam, Editor & Publisher, The Daily Star
- Hua Du, Country Director, ADB
- Sungsu RA, Deputy Country Director, ADB
- Qazi Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Member, Planning Commission
- ABM Ziaur Rahman, Research Fellow, BIIS
- Angela Gomes, Executive Director, Banche Shekha
- Taleyta Rahman, Executive Director, Democracy Watch
- Rehman Sobhan, Centre for Policy Dialogue
- M. Fasihur Rahman, Secretary, BGMEA
- Mosharraf Hossain, Country Representative, ADD
- Prof. Ashraf U. Chowdhury, Dept. of Economics, Dhaka University
- Dr. Hossain Shahriar, Executive Director, ESDO
- Andrea Rodericks, Asst. Country Director, Prog., CARE Bangladesh
- Alan Brooks, Regional Director, SA Office, Worldfish Center
- H. E. Dora Rapold, Ambassador, Embassy of Switzerland
- Gareth Aicken, Head, Human Development, DFID, Bangladesh
- David Humphrey, Programs Director, SCUK
- M. A. Rouf Chowdhury, Director, FBCCI
- Durga P. Pandgal, Director General, CIRDAP
- Tom Crowards, Senior Economic Adviser, DFID
- Humayra Ahmed, CPD
- Hasan Abdullah, Ex. Ambassador
- M. A. Zaman, Consultant, DAM
- Ranjon F. Rojario, Co-ordinator (DMD), Caritas
- Sylvester Halder, Head Bangladesh
- L. A. Khan, CEB
- Syed Fahim Munaim, Managing Editor, The Daily Star
- Rezaul Karim, Planning Commission, GOB
- Dr. Saiful I. Dildar, Sec. General, BHRL
- Shamima Akhtar, ERD, Govt. of Bangladesh
- Mehnaz Rabbani, Sr. Research Associate, BRAC
- M. Hafizur Rahman, Bangladesh Krishi Bank
- A. Milton Khan, DFID, Bangladesh
- Kamal Ahmed, Young Economists Association
- Minhaz Anwar, Communications Adviser, DFID, Bangladesh
- Nazmul Hoque, BSEHR
- Mahbubur Rahman Biswas, Director, New Era Foundation
- M. A. Matin, Secretary, FICCI
- S. M. Shah Alam, Director, RDB
- Mahtab Ali Rashidi, Member, E.C., BEA
- Md. Mozammel Hoque, Green Delta Ins. Co. Ltd.
- Shakil Bin Azad, TMSS
- Md. Khairul Alam, Bangladesh Economic Association
- Md. Anwarul Azim, Bangladesh Economic Association
- Naseem Ahmed Alim, Project Co-ordinator, SQSP
- Maruf Ahmed, Director, Prokash
- Raqib Siddiqui, Chief Editor, The Bangladesh Monitor
- AZM Saleh, President, BYEA
- Kazi Wahidul Alam, PR Consultant
- M. Jamal Uddin, President, MWDG

## ASIA2015 Promoting Growth, Ending Poverty

Asia 2015 : Ending Poverty, Promoting Growth is a major two-day conference to be hosted by Department For International Development and co-sponsors the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. It will involve around 150 delegates, mainly from Asia.

Asia has had notable success in the last twenty years, taking more people out of absolute poverty than anywhere in history. It's possible to virtually eradicate poverty in Asia in a generation - this is a success story poised to spread throughout Asia.

However Asia faces huge challenges in nutrition, health, education, water and sanitation, governance and social exclusion over the next decade. The Asia 2015 conference will provide a platform to raise the profile of these issues and discuss the changing face of development in Asia over the next decade and the implications for how DFID and the international community should respond.

The conference is being held at Lancaster House in London on March 6 and 7, 2006.

### The Aims

- To raise awareness of the development challenges faced by Asian countries.
- To identify and devise new strategies that will address central challenges facing developing countries in Asia and accelerate poverty reduction
- Over the next ten years there is an opportunity to support more Asian countries into self sustaining development.



to reach consensus on priorities for action and for working in partnership to achieve poverty reduction in Asia. The conference is a unique, informal gathering of politicians, experts, private sector, civil society and development agencies from throughout Asia and beyond. The conference will be attended by representatives from Asian countries involved in the Asia 2015 project. They are the ADB, World Bank, and DFID, other development partners, like UNCTAD, UNEP and other UN agencies. The conference will host business leaders, academics NGOs and leading civil society members from Asia. The countries involved in the conference include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, China, Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

## Tackling Poverty: The Role of Development Partnerships

Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad

President, Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) and Chairman, Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP)

Developing countries have been able to convert some of the potentials into actual benefits and minimize some of the challenges faced. The successes and failures actually do vary across the Asian developing countries involved in the 2015-Asia conference: Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. But, all of these countries are constrained in different ways and to different extents, which are serious enough for the countries to be included in the conference as the parties needing assistance to overcome the constraints faced. Per capita income, as of 2003, in PPP US\$, in these countries vary mostly from 1,420 (Nepal) to 3,361 (Indonesia). Only China achieved 5,003. These figures (except for China) are lower than the average of the developing countries (4,359) and extremely low compared to the average of high-income OECD countries at (31,020) (UNDP 2005). The Asian developing countries participating in the Asia-2015 conference mostly belong to the bottom third and all the four South Asian countries to bottom fourth: Indonesia (rank 78), Vietnam (85), India (90), Bangladesh (93), Pakistan (95), (Nepal 98). Even China comes in only at 51, notwithstanding years of economic and trade growth. (UN 2005a).

In building partnerships each assistance-receiving nation should be treated differently, given its level of development, extent and depth of poverty, and other socio-economic realities prevailing within, and external circumstances faced. A straightjacket approach will do more harm than good. Also, on the international side, depending on the interest and ability, the international partners may focus on different aspects. However, it will be necessary to coordinate both externally and internally in order to give the arrangements the best possible chance of effectiveness and success.

The UK and our developing partners can play a role in facilitating a partnership between the successful second/third generation British nationals of Bangladeshi origin with people here in Bangladesh and that should include transfer of expertise, because we have people who are very successful in all possible sector today in UK, who originally came from Bangladesh. The last point is access to the European market for both products as well as jobs. One of the biggest challenges, as far as the international agenda is concerned, is the free movement of people. This has become a big issue in most of the European countries including the UK. How can we facilitate this because you have an aging population. Countries which have the largest number of migrants in Europe are also the most successful and yet these countries today are trying to frustrate and prevent free movement of the people.

In order to reduce poverty,

growth is necessary and, at the same time, it is essential that the growth achieved is equitably distributed. The partnerships at all levels should, therefore, be so designed as to promote both growth and the participation of the poor in the process of producing that growth and equitably benefiting from it. The role of development partnerships between the advanced countries and the international institutions on the one hand and developing countries on the other is extremely important. But the partnerships have to be properly formulated to address the critical constraints faced by the developing countries and equitable mutuality of benefit in the case of direct foreign investment, and not in a framework given to expanding globalization regardless.

It is also necessary to establish partnerships inside nations. The actors to be involved would include the rich and the poor, government, civil society, and the private sector. Inside the nations, partnerships should be established/strengthened at both national and local levels. The former provides the macro perspectives, while the latter involve the real actors and facilitators in economic and other activities including governance. The poor have to be actively and integrally involved in the partnerships at the local level and should be specifically targeted in the macro interventions when the purpose is to tackle poverty.

The international, regional, national, and local level partnerships can work purposefully by helping mould policies, practices, and institutions that would best respond to the problems faced by a particular developing country and mobilize adequate resources to promote and support programmes

and projects that can make the best possible contributions to growth and employment generation in the particular country. For poverty reduction, the circumstances of the poor in the particular country must be taken into account in the designing and implementing all these actions, with a view to ensuring the participation of and accrual of benefits to the poor on an equitable basis. Partnerships, to be purposeful and effective, must necessarily be based on shared vision among the parties involved. Those partnerships which are anchored on a vision of doing good, i.e. virtuous partnerships, must be promoted or strengthened.

Development Partnerships for Bangladesh

Bangladesh can make use of various types of virtuous partnerships towards accelerating poverty reduction in the country, but it needs to dismantle the vicious ones which promote corruption, mismanagement, and extremism in the country.

Bangladesh is already involved in various development partnerships internationally, regionally, nationally, and sub-nationally. For example, Bangladesh has signed a Development Assistance Framework for 2006-2010 with the United Nations (UN 2005). It has prepared a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper-PRSP (PRSP 2005), which has now been accepted by the World Bank and the IMF as a document to use as the basis for provision of foreign assistance to the country. Bangladesh has signed many international conventions and protocols relating to human rights, social development, environmental conservation, and so on. There are also agreements in place with other multi-



### Farooq Shobhan

President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute

This conference is a curtain raiser for the Asia 2015 Conference in London a very important very important component of the concept of partnerships. Asia 2015 initiative comes from an earlier initiative taken by Prime Minister Tony Blair to do something for Africa, which was then focussed in the last G-8 Summit and also setting up of the Africa Commission. Prime Ministers of Asia including the Prime Minister of Bangladesh did raise the issue, saying we welcome the initiatives taken for Africa, but what about Asia. She then raised the key issue what can the United Kingdom and its development partners do for Asia. If we are to take a country like Bangladesh which has been growing at 5 to 6 per cent to a double digit growth, we need to know what needs to be done and what role can the development partners play in order to facilitate this.

For Bangladesh today in order to implement the PRSP, a number of issues have to be addressed and that not without significance the issue of the role of the private sector has been highlighted. I would like to focus on that particular aspect of poverty reduction as well as partnerships under the role of London Conference.

One of the paradoxes, we experience in Bangladesh is one half of the government and possible even the country, look forward to welcoming and facilitating foreign direct investment, whilst the other half, that includes the government, spends a lot of its time trying to frustrate this direct foreign investment and indeed occasionally gives the impression that possibly it was the last thing they actually want. That's the case of Korean EPZ. Way back to mid-1995, when Begum Zia was the PM, the MoU signing for the KEPZ took place in Seoul. Eleven years later, we are still to see this project being implemented. There is no rational explanation to this. I say this because we are currently also involved in an exercise which involves DFID in setting up special economic zones in different parts of the country. This (KEPZ) is essentially is special economic zone. So the government really needs to get its act together.

One of the critical features, in frustrating direct foreign investment is the lack of in-house expertise within the government to negotiate with foreign investors. This is an area where our development partners can certainly play a role in creating capacity. We need legal financial technical experts within the government who can carry out these negotiations in an open transparent manner. Another key area where our development partners, in particular, the UK and DFID can help, is in resource development. This is another area which is critical to both job creation as well as making us more attractive for investment. One specific action that can come out of London Conference is mobilising perhaps 10,000 or more persons in England to come and teach English here. Because learning the English language is of critical importance, particularly for the IT sector. So this is one specific example.

The UK and our developing partners can play a role in facilitating a partnership between the successful second/third generation British nationals of Bangladeshi origin with people here in Bangladesh and that should include transfer of expertise, because we have people who are very successful in all possible sector today in UK, who originally came from Bangladesh.

The last point is access to the European market for both products as well as jobs. One of the biggest challenges, as far as the international agenda is concerned, is the free movement of people. This has become a big issue in most of the European countries including the UK. How can we facilitate this because you have an aging population. Countries which have the largest number of migrants in Europe are also the most successful and yet these countries today are trying to frustrate and prevent free movement of the people.