



Kingdom of the Netherlands



King's Day of the Netherlands

Monday, April 27 2015

FROM TRADITIONAL AID TO RESPONSIBLE TRADE

THE relation between the Netherlands and Bangladesh has undergone a considerable transition during the last couple of years. For the Netherlands, Bangladesh is not only a priority country in terms of development cooperation but has also become a dynamic economic partner. Our strong engagement is reflected over the last few years as the Netherlands has consistently been in the top five largest foreign investors in Bangladesh and there are currently more than 70 Dutch companies investing in the country. We are also honoured that our embassy has won the Fenedex award. This prize is awarded every two years by the Dutch private sector for the best economic services provided by a Dutch Embassy.

The Dutch Minister for Trade and Development Cooperation, Lilliane Ploumen, is personally very engaged with Bangladesh, also with regard to improving working conditions in the Ready Made Garments-sector. The Minister visited Bangladesh twice in the last two years with another visit expected in mid-2015. The Netherlands also seeks to involve the private sector in its development cooperation programs. The strength of these programs is that they can function as a gateway for entrepreneurs. The Netherlands has expertise in



lot in common.

In our future cooperation in the field of water, the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 will play a key role. The mission of the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 is to come to a sustainable delta vision, long term strategy and plan, agreed with the relevant stakeholders, for an optimum level of water safety and food security as well as economic growth and a framework for its implementation. In an inspiring and innovative manner this plan outlines a pathway that is based on a holistic and integral vision. This is essential as it is the only way to work towards sustainable solutions. The perspective of the Delta Plan is far into the future but simultaneously focusses on problems that are asking for practical and effective solutions already today.

The Embassy's water sector also funds the promotion of cleaner water technologies in textile factories under the Partnership for Cleaner Textiles (PaCT) program, which is being implemented by IFC with contributions from major brands and factories.

Food Security:

Since the Netherlands and Bangladesh are both fertile deltas with high agricultural potential, the Dutch government is

very committed to share the Dutch knowledge and expertise that make us the second largest agricultural exporter in the world, after the United States.

The Netherlands supports the leading role of the Bangladesh government in nutrition by scaling up distribution of fortified rice through the social safety net programmes and the right to safe food through safe food act 2013, an outcome of the joint program by the two governments for improving food safety in Bangladesh. Additionally, the Embassy's food security cluster's project on rice fortification targets female garment workers by partnering with large-scale garment factories via their Corporate Social Responsibility programs.

Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights:

The main objective of the Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights programme is to contribute to the implementation of Bangladesh's Health Sector Programme. Particular attention is given to family planning, adolescents and youth's sexual and reproductive health and rights with the aim to reduce maternal mortality. We strive to achieve our objectives by 2017 with the support and cooperation of all our partners

including the Government of Bangladesh and NGOs.

The unique programmes that proved to be successful are the ones on comprehensive sexuality education and reducing the unwanted pregnancy and unsafe menstrual regulation programme (Nirapod), implemented under the leadership of Marie Stopes. Our collaboration with United Nations Population Fund and with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Education contributes in changing attitudes and behavior among community members and adolescents to reduce gender based violence and promote adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (Generation Breakthrough). Through our initiative we have been able to reach 90000 factory workers with information on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights.

Corporate Social Responsibility:

Linking trade to the development cooperation priorities in a responsible manner and promoting values of corporate social responsibility (CSR) are of utmost importance for the Embassy. Compliance with international labor and environmental standards and, establishing enhanced networks and linkages with knowledge institutions such as Netherlands organisation for international cooperation in higher education (NUFFIC) to improve expertise in the areas of private sector development and CSR are key result areas under the Embassy's trade and development agenda.

Efforts are being made to stimulate CSR awareness and behavior throughout all the Embassy activities in food security, water, Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights (SRHR) and economic affairs, with special attention for CSR activities in the Ready Made Garments sector. Through a co-funding arrangement with DFID and Canada, the Embassy supports the major ILO program for improving labor conditions in this.

The Embassy has a partnership with Nyenrode Business University aimed at promoting sustainable bilateral business-to-business cooperation in water, food processing/safety, IT (outsourcing) and logistics.

Message from the Ambassador

IT is for me a great honour and pleasure to convey my best wishes to the People of Bangladesh and my warmest regards to the Dutch community in this country on the occasion of the Kings day. First and foremost therefore I would like to congratulate our King Willem-Alexander on his 48th birthday and on the completion of the second year of his reign.



Gerben de Jong
Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the most important development partners of the Netherlands and our support is continuous to the people of Bangladesh. Since the collapse of the Rana Plaza, our Minister for Trade and Development Cooperation, Lilliane Ploumen, is personally engaged in improving working conditions in Bangladesh and visited the country twice in the last two years with a third visit expected in mid-2015. With the embassy supporting major International Labor Organization programs, we can already see several reforms being undertaken.

Our friendship over the last 43 years is reflected in our current programs for water management, Food Security and Sexual reproductive health and rights. Since I was posted here mid-2012 we have expanded our cooperation in many fields. One example is the "Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100". It is a sustainable delta vision, a long term strategy and plan, agreed with the relevant stakeholders, for water safety and food security as well as economic growth.

More and more we shift our focus from development cooperation to responsible trade and investment. The vibrant economic growth has stimulated cooperation between Dutch and Bangladeshi companies. We are working towards better economic relations. Our engagement is ongoing and I am honored that the Netherlands embassy in Dhaka won a prestigious Dutch trade award. This prize is awarded every two years by the Dutch private sector for the best economic services provided by a Dutch Embassy.

On this gracious occasion I wish to thank all for their commitment in promoting the cooperation between the Netherlands and Bangladesh. And on this note I would like to wish strength and prosperity to the people of Bangladesh.

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