

# What can DFID do better for Bangladesh?

A report by the International Development Group (IDG) of the British-Bangladeshi Professionals Association (BBPA) 2 January 2003

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## Introduction

Through the Department for International Development (DFID), the UK taxpayer is spending over £90m annually in aid to Bangladesh, making it the second largest recipient of DIFD funds after India.

Over a quarter of million people of Bangladeshi origin live in the United Kingdom. Yet to date, very little use has been made of the knowledge, insight and contacts available within the British Bangladeshi community to inform and improve the effectiveness of DFID's spending in Bangladesh. Several factors lie behind this oversight, not least of which is the widely acknowledged observation that at many influential levels there is a lack of meaningful interaction between various ethnic minority communities and policymakers within Britain.

This paper hopefully represents a small step in overcoming this gap. It builds upon a variety of discussions and meetings held over the past year involving and/or initiated by British Bangladeshi groups with different DFID ministers and officials. The mutual interest for British Bangladeshis and DFID in seeing funds spent more effectively towards helping Bangladesh and the many potential benefits from increased dialogue are self evident and provide a large amount of common ground for discussion.

The authors are members of the International Development Group (IDG) sub-committee of the British Bangladeshi Professional Association (BBPA), a not for profit body<sup>1</sup> without any political or religious affiliation. Whilst members can draw on a wide range of relevant professional expertise and contacts, the IDG itself is wholly reliant on members' time and goodwill and does not seek external funds for its work.

In preparing this report, the IDG has included insights gained in discussions with people outside the BBPA as well as drawing on BBPA members' own knowledge and experience. Its aims are two-fold; Firstly it follows up the IDG's own recent discussions with DFID and serves as a formal submission to DFID's ongoing review of its Country Strategy Paper for Bangladesh, (CSP), due to be completed by March 2003. Secondly by publishing this report via the media and other diaspora organisations, the IDG hopes to stimulate increased interaction between DFID and British Bangladeshis and to encourage more Bangladeshis with relevant skills and knowledge, whether based in the UK or elsewhere, to engage with DFID's programmes and projects in Bangladesh.

Underlying this paper are four related observations, namely: -

- a. There is extensive consensus about the key issues affecting and/or hampering development in Bangladesh, notably illiteracy, inequality, abuse of power and poor governance. With half its total population of c.140m living below the poverty line, the urgent need to help Bangladesh tackle these issues is exacerbated by the predicted risk of sea level rise caused by global warming which threatens to inundate a large proportion of the country's small land area.
- b. Ever since the huge international attention focused on the country during its war of independence in 1971, Bangladesh has had a large NGO sector playing a major role in development activities. Bangladeshi NGOs include significant internationally acclaimed success stories such as the Grameen Bank and Gonashastra Kendra (People's Health Centre). Political and international economic constraints aside, there can be no doubt that Bangladesh's most valuable resource, its people have the talent and resources to tackle the considerable challenges faced by the country.
- c. Despite the political instability and poor governance – *political insatiability if you will* – that has plagued the country since independence, Bangladesh continues to make substantial progress in some important areas. In the decade since the resumption of democratic elections, it has shown itself to be capable of sustaining 5% annual GDP growth in spite of the background of poor governance. Although the challenges faced by the country should not be underestimated, the signs are that if several key problems or policy bottlenecks can be overcome, Bangladesh has the potential to consistently exceed a 6% growth rate. This is arguably not just desirable but essential in order to help the country adequately meet its most pressing development needs.
- d. Fundamental agreement about these issues and about the need to overcome key blocks to help further development is broadly shared by a wide range of Bangladeshis across the political spectrum from all educational, class and income backgrounds.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.bbpa.co.uk](http://www.bbpa.co.uk) and appendix II

Accordingly, the IDG focuses on drawing attention to ways in which British Bangladeshis and DFID could better approach some of these key issues. The paper is not a detailed description or critique of all DFID's policies in relation to Bangladesh. Ample discussion and debate about the success and failure of different development initiatives in Bangladesh is already available in the public domain.

Instead the report concentrates on matching brief discussion of key issues with practical suggestions of ways ahead. It will be of interest to anyone with a particular knowledge of Bangladesh or special interest in development issues. Readers interested in contributing specifically to the current review of the DFID Bangladesh Country Strategy Paper are referred by way of background to the detailed open discussion and technical details published by DFID available from its Bangladesh office.<sup>2</sup>

As a professional politically independent body the IDG believes it is in a good position to provide objective commentary on DFID's work from a uniquely British-Bangladeshi standpoint. It differs in perspective from the large NGOs and development professionals who typically lobby the likes of DFID in that it is not constrained by institutional interests or funding requirements. The report is focused on encouraging positive policy developments and providing a platform to disseminate practical suggestions.

*Whilst heading its submission 'What DFID can do better for Bangladesh,' the BBPA is as much interested in the broad question of 'What overseas Bangladeshis can do better for Bangladesh' so the recommendations identified are aimed primarily at these two groups, DFID and British Bangladeshis. The paper splits its discussion into key themes. The most important recommendations are also condensed in the executive summary and accompanying table.*

The key groups that the recommendations seek to influence are:

- Internal/Organisational (structure+ attitudes)
- NGOs in Bangladesh
- UKGovt/policy
- UK/International Business
- Bangladesh Business
- Bangladesh Govt/policy
- International Forums

To be meaningful, this type of engagement must be actively followed up, so in this respect the paper is merely the first step in a longer term process.

By stimulating discussion and suggesting a framework for continued dialogue between DFID and diaspora Bangladeshis, the IDG hopes to act as a catalyst for positive change and encourage further more detailed contributions. At a broader level, the BBPA hopes it can also contribute to helping DFID's wider goals and to helping to improve its dealings with other diaspora communities.

Ultimately the BBPA/IDG recognises that the solutions and decisions that would most help Bangladesh are in the hands of its own people and there are limits to the help non-residents can provide. Nonetheless, the IDG believes that the potential benefits of involving more British Bangladeshis in engaging with development issues via DFID and other means, is such that it would be remiss not to make a special effort to encourage this process.

The chronic poverty of so many Bangladeshis and the ever increasing pressures on the country's resources are too big to ignore this option.

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International Development Group sub-committee (IDG)  
British Bangladeshi Professionals Association  
London 2 January 2003

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<sup>2</sup> *Suggestions for further reading contained in appendix II*

## Executive Summary

- 1.1 The BBPA broadly supports the aims and principles listed by the CSP and positively welcomes progressive stances adopted by DFID, for example in relation to the UK government's commitment to stopping tied aid. The increasing efforts made by DFID officials to engage with Bangladeshis are certainly appreciated. It would be wrong though to pretend that many Bangladeshis both within Bangladesh and the UK do not feel alienated and remote from DFID's programmes and projects.
- 1.2 Involving more Bangladeshis both in the UK and Bangladesh, could help overcome problems caused by poor communication or cultural misunderstandings and develop imaginative approaches to solving some of the endemic problems affecting Bangladesh noted in the introduction. DFID Dhaka should make more effort to involve Bangladeshi nationals at senior positions in its operations. DFID in the UK should provide a simple accessible framework for dialogue with the Bangladeshi community.
- 2.1 Compared to some poor countries, international development assistance has over the last decade represented a relatively moderate and shrinking portion of Bangladesh's economy. This trend of decreasing aid dependence is generally welcome. However, the pressing needs of Bangladesh's people mean that for the foreseeable future, the practical need and moral case for foreign aid remains much the same. The fortitude of Bangladesh's people in muddling through so that on some long term indicators it can show genuine progress **despite** the background of poor governance should not be used as an excuse for cutting off aid just yet.
- 2.2 On environmental grounds alone there is a strong case for seeing aid increased in the immediate 10 year period. A clear priority is Climate Change adaptation, which we feel neither donors nor the Bangladeshi government are taking as seriously as required. The UK should increase aid to Bangladesh as DFID budgets increase, focusing on environmental projects related to climate change adaptation, with other increases directed at overcoming policy bottlenecks and developing human capital and infrastructure.
- 2.3 It is clear that poor governance is harming Bangladesh and that a major priority is to tackle corruption and improve governance. The paper notes a range of initiatives that address these issues including creating an independent commission to tackle corruption and supporting moves to require:
- Public officials to declare their assets to the public on an annual basis and implementation of transparent procurement laws.
  - The government to obey the constitution and avoid interference with the judiciary and press.
  - Increasing access amongst the Bangladeshi public to information on national and local government projects and policies
  - Independent private-sector auditors to audit publicly run projects. (and possibly vice-versa)
  - DFID and other donors to publicly agree to a code of conduct that ensures that all their Bangladeshi partners conform to these principles. By setting a good example, and encouraging other donors/agencies to do the same, it could help citizens to put pressure on domestic Bangladeshi agencies, businesses and government departments to conform to best practice principles of transparency and non-corruption

- 3.1 Bangladesh has produced some highly successful NGOs which play a major role in development activities. It is however widely believed that Bangladesh's NGO sector has been disproportionately successful. Whilst past government and business failure are responsible for this imbalance, continuing disparity is arguably drawing away vital talent from the private and public sectors to the better funded NGOs and this could threaten the long term national interest.
- 3.2 Accordingly DFID needs to set its priorities with a strong positive vision in mind of where it would like Bangladesh to be in 20 years time. As sustainable success requires government, business and academic institutions to be more attractive and successful, DFID needs to assert this vision by taking a leap of faith and backing positive elements within existing national institutions. Though Bangladesh has a rapacious political elite and much corruption, the size and diversity of its people means that all *publicly undermined institutions such as its universities should not be written off wholesale as they still contain large numbers of dedicated, expert, public spirited professionals in important positions*. Only by grasping this nettle in the long run can DFID or others help to set a good example and overcome some of the (understandable) reluctance of many people to trust Bangladeshi government institutions.
- 3.3 DFID and the British Council should support more mutual exchange schemes between Bangladeshi institutions such as university departments and their counterparts in developed countries. By doing so it can both increase international interaction and help Bangladeshi institutions keep their best talent. DFID should consider the Soros Opens Society scholarships model to develop schemes to help keep high flying civil servants in post in developing countries.
- 3.4 British Bangladeshis should play a bigger role in setting up and nurturing their own networks to support development projects and positive initiatives in Bangladesh.
- 4.1 Much more needs to be done to overcome the gender disparity that is a major obstacle for development in Bangladesh. The BBPA welcomes the setting up a Human Rights and Governance fund. (HUGO) to work with domestic agencies and legal professionals to ensure that human rights abuses are not left unchallenged in the courts.
- 4.2 Bangladesh should look to its strengths to try and turn democratic advantages into economic and development gains.
- 4.3 Family connections and regular interaction place overseas Bangladeshis in a useful position to help overcome obstructive attitudes by taking a principled and visibly non-partisan stand in support of human rights and tolerance. The diaspora should be vigilant therefore in not becoming embroiled with internecine political debates so it can play a full role as an external watchdog to support human rights.
- 4.4 Overseas Bangladeshis should lend support to nurturing diverse independent media to encourage more scrutiny and reporting of human rights issues. In tandem with this they can do more to raise the country's profile generally including highlighting underreported positive aspects of Bangladeshi society and culture.

- 5.1 The negative impact of Climate change falls disproportionately upon developing countries such as Bangladesh especially upon the poor whose homes, agricultural land and lives can be literally swept away. DFID needs to prioritise climate change as an issue that deserves serious consideration, as a failure to alleviate present trends could drastically undermine all its goals.
- 5.2 DFID could play a leading role in developing criteria and performance indicators with other donors and then spreading best practice. It should begin carrying out climate impact assessments on any project that may affect or relate to climate change.
- 5.3 DFID should promote renewable energy technology development in Bangladesh. In particular DFID should promote the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to the Bangladeshi government and facilitate technology transfer in the energy field to the developing world.
- 5.4 We believe Overseas Bangladeshis and DFID should be advocating a Geneva Convention for environmental refugees. DFID should also consider supporting some form of debt write offs in return for conservation programmes.
- 5.5 Bangladesh and other poor countries need stronger representation in negotiations on the trading of Carbon permits. DFID and overseas Bangladeshis should support moves to give countries a per capita entitlement to make emissions – and support mechanisms to ensure poor countries benefit more from Trading in the envisaged carbon emission permit trading market, arrangements for which still need to be negotiated.
- 5.6 DFID could help promote renewable sources of energy such as Solar Power by investing in the production of cheap efficient PV cells and encouraging foreign renewable energy companies to invest in Bangladesh and exchange knowledge and technology.
- 6.1 Many observers believe that more upward development indicators can be directly attributed to industrial development and economic growth than to any general foreign aid /NGO schemes, (both by directly providing jobs to the poor and on the ‘rising tide lifts all boats’ principle.) Moreover, the massive and broadly positive social changes undergone by the creation of 2 million urban factory jobs for a largely migrant rural female workforce cannot be underestimated.
- 6.2 Until a fall off in orders in 2001, the Bangladesh Ready Made Garments (RMG) industry managed to more than quadruple exports to nearly \$5billion in less than a decade. With the emergence of India and China in the WTO and phasing out of quotas under the Multi-fibre agreement in 2004, Bangladesh’s garment sector faces an uncertain future.
- 6.3 Pessimistic estimates such as those made in a study for Action Aid Bangladesh conclude that MFA Phase-out will take away the income of almost 80% of the current 1.3 million RMG female workforce. Alternative employment opportunities in industrial sectors are almost non-existent. *While there have been signs in recent years that the garment sector is trying to respond to these challenges, the balance of evidence is that this may*

*be too little too late to guard against likely job losses. This has in part to be the consequence of past failures of initiative by Bangladesh business and government.*

- 6.4 Though partial protection is afforded by cheap wages and familiarity with buyers, the Bangladesh business sector still needs all the help it can get from overseas Bangladeshis and organisations like DFID to meet the challenges of increased global competition and to develop alternative employment for laid off workers.
- 6.5 The RMG sector should give priority to developing backward linkages, training facilities and related programmes to improve productivity. Establishment of fashion institutes at the national level can be helpful in providing an edge over other competing countries
- 6.6 Increased collaboration between employers and trade unions to ensure better implementation of labour laws could both improve quality of life for workers and increase productivity. If combined with appropriate quality assurance certification schemes, there is growing scope for marketing exports based on ethical production.
- 6.7 Overseas Bangladeshis should make more use of their potential to assist with improving design and marketing functions and in supporting relevant lobbying initiatives in international forums.
- 7.1 National energy policy is a key topic for sustainable development and growth. Energy scarcity has particularly adverse consequences wherever there are large numbers of poor people who have to spend a high proportion of their income on energy
- 7.2 Regardless of the outcome of future exploration and export decisions, Bangladesh faces growing demand for energy as its population increases. With Dhaka's population exceeding 10million and continuing industrial development, it is essential that export of gas does not hamper domestic development and that profits made are appropriately invested back in the country.
- 7.3 DFID should help build up capacity for environmental impact assessments working with other donors as appropriate. It should support measures to improve energy efficiency and where appropriate to develop conservation programmes.
- 7.4 Overseas Bangladeshis should make efforts to encourage and invest in renewable energy sources.
- 8.1 Remittance is crucial for Bangladesh's economy, constituting almost one third of foreign exchange earnings. Transfer costs (fees and exchange rates) could be lowered by encouraging more competition to the present bureaucratic official channels and government banks. Development by Bangladeshi based banks of more reliable and secure electronic transfer methods could both reduce costs and encourage a greater flow of remittance through official channels.

8.2 The IDG welcomes indications by DFID that it hopes to support research and tools to encourage better utilisation of home remittance in the Bangladeshi economy through vehicles like government bonds. Of particular interest would be government bonds that included a matching facility to direct funds for specific infrastructure or development projects.

8.3 As in other countries with large extremes of wealth and poverty, the anomaly can often be noted of large property developments or grand houses being built in areas with poor or failing public services including lack of basic sanitation/lighting etc. Though much property development is generated internally, overseas Bangladeshis could use their influence as major investors in property to help ensure that local property taxes are set and collected at reasonable levels, so that basic amenities are properly developed and maintained.

8.4 Amongst initiatives that DFID could help develop with British Bangladeshis are possibilities such as:

- Supporting the feasibility of new government development bonds for infrastructure investment by encouraging and/or providing guarantees and tax incentives.
- Providing one stop advice, resources and incentives to encourage and reduce the risks of establishing dedicated venture capital funds for developing countries such as Bangladesh to attract home remittances;
- [Supporting tax incentives for senders of home remittances in their country of residence](#)

8.5 For globalisation to work for the benefit of the poor, as well as dealing with capital flows, issues relating to the free movement of people need to be considered in a broader context

9.1 Overseas Bangladeshis could and should certainly do more to help promote the country globally. Of particular value would be assistance in representation in the media and international forums.

9.2 DFID itself should do more to act as an advocate for poor countries generally – both by using its own influence on UK and EU policymakers and by providing direct assistance to help Southern Governments and NGOs make their own case.

9.3 It is arguable that because Indian regional and economic dominance is already so large, that Bangladesh would in practice have little to lose and more to gain from supporting a further opening up of borders and free trade. The geographical isolation of the seven North East Indian states for instance provides a potentially rich trading hinterland for Chittagong port, as well as parts of Burma, Nepal and Bhutan. Likewise, as these areas are relatively less densely populated yet rich in natural resources, there is considerable scope for mutually beneficial economic development. DFID should commission more in depth studies of the potential benefits for the Bangladesh-East Indian region from increased free trade and economic collaboration.

9.4 More should be done to help British Bangladeshis interact with Bangladeshi policymakers, as they begin to reach a position where they can take an active role in influencing policymakers amongst British officials, NGOs and businesses. One fruitful but underexplored approach would be to more pro-actively increase interaction between British-Bangladeshis with an interest in development issues and Bangladeshis working in relevant universities, businesses or NGOs back home.

### Table of key priorities

NB: This is not an exhaustive or mutually exclusive set of recommendations.

Because most of the problems identified overlap across different topics, the recommendations are not necessarily confined in scope to any single area or stakeholder group. Major points have been placed in the executive summary way for convenience. Further details are contained in the main body of text.

SCOPE	DFID	BRITISH BANGLADESHIS
Internal / Organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Increase interaction with Bangladeshis in UK</li> <li>◆ DFID Dhaka to engage with and employ greater number and range of Bangladeshi citizens</li> <li>◆ Continue to improve transparency and reporting on projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Support networks for development</li> <li>◆ Increase engagement with UK/EU policymakers</li> <li>◆ Develop independent long term connections with Bangladeshi institutions to help influence policy</li> </ul>
NGOs in Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Increase transparency of goals, methods, objectives</li> <li>◆ Prioritise projects nurturing human capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Engage more directly with NGOs to increase sense of Bangladeshi 'ownership' and ultimately funding of beneficial projects</li> </ul>
UK Govt/policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Prioritise aid increases linked to addressing climate change and policy bottlenecks</li> <li>◆ DFID to advocate more joined up action by UK government and institutions in support of the poor (eg; do not forget exchange schemes and scholarships.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Support focused increases in aid</li> <li>◆ Engagement to support Bangladesh in international forums</li> </ul>
UK/International Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Demonstrate best practice in transparency and non-corruption</li> <li>◆ Meaningfully seek to influence development goals by improving working conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Promote investment</li> <li>◆ Monitor social benefits provided by business</li> </ul>
Bangladesh Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Increase diversification of export base</li> <li>◆ Support research on key economic challenges (diversification, garments, gas, cross border trade)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Assist in promoting initiatives to support investment in and trade with Bangladesh</li> <li>◆ Monitor social benefits provided by business</li> <li>◆ Enhance productive use of remittances</li> </ul>
Bangladesh Govt/policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Encourage programmes to improve education and tackle gender inequalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Encourage incentives for business</li> <li>◆ Support programmes addressing gender inequality and human rights</li> </ul>
International Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Assist poor countries such as Bangladesh in helping them to better represent themselves (eg; in WTO/ climate convention negotiations.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Help with lobbying advice and functions</li> <li>◆ Promote to global media, NGOs and institutions</li> </ul>

# 1. Monitoring performance and involving the diaspora

Bangladesh is one of DFID's primary aid countries. Over 65m people representing half the country's population live below the upper poverty line, mainly in rural areas.

The large concentration of dire poverty coupled with the pressures inherent from a growing population make it imperative that resources are directed as effectively as possible in lifting people out of poverty.

DFID's current Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Bangladesh was published in November 1998. It sets six key objectives in line with DFID policy to support:

- ( I ) Sustainable improvements in livelihoods and basic services for the poor and those vulnerable to poverty.
- ( II ) Sustainable, broad based and pro poor economic growth.
- ( III ) Better governance and more effective institutions.
- ( IV ) Improved realisation of human rights.
- ( V ) Improvements to the position on women in society.
- ( VI ) Consistency in UK and Bangladeshi policies in support of the elimination of poverty in Bangladesh.

The total volume of aid resources spent during the CSP period (Nov 1998 – June 2002) was £ 205 million. *This was higher than the amount foreseen at the time of publication of the CSP.* By mid-2002 the total number of projects supported by DFID in Bangladesh was 75, out of which 57 had a budget of over £1m.

Almost 60 per cent of the total budget is committed in partnership with other donors. DFID's Country Strategy Review (CSR) of August 2002 suggests that current projects are perhaps spread too thinly. The CSP is argued with hindsight to have not assisted in setting priorities despite an apparently ambitious agenda.

- Given the country's pressing needs and the long term bottlenecks hampering development in Bangladesh, it is urgently hoped that the ongoing CSP review process will soon produce a clearer constructive set of priorities.

In the past year, DFID has responded to approaches from various Bangladeshi public interest organisations,<sup>3</sup> to engage more actively with Bangladeshis in setting and monitoring its goals for Bangladesh. This is a timely and very important step, particularly in the context of measuring the success or otherwise of DFID's performance.

DFID has acknowledged in its own CSP review that for many issues, it can be very difficult to accurately measure the full impact and success or otherwise of its programmes in contributing towards Bangladesh's long term development needs. Ways to improve measurement and increase interaction with Bangladeshi nationals are discussed later in this section.

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<sup>3</sup> The new Minister for International Development Sally Kemble M.P speaking at a Bengali Buffet Dinner organised jointly by the IDG and BIAN (see appendix) on 8 July 2002 acknowledged in her speech that evening; " We do not have all the answers by any means as to how best to support sustainable development in Bangladesh. I hope that we can draw on your experience and knowledge as we seek to design our new country plan....I hope that this can be the first step in a closer association between the BBPA and our development programme."

A subsequent follow up 'Bangladesh Day' meeting was held at DFID offices in London when the DFID Dhaka team was passing through on 30 September to help further this dialogue.

## Limits of the consultancy culture – donors' good intentions are not enough

As noted in its earlier publications and submissions, the BBPA broadly supports the aims and principles listed by the CSP and positively welcomes progressive stances adopted by DFID, for example in relation to the UK government's commitment to stopping tied aid.

The increasing efforts made by DFID officials to engage with Bangladeshis are certainly appreciated and we have no reason to doubt the commitment and professionalism of the many dedicated individuals who work in this field.

It would be wrong though to pretend that many Bangladeshis both within Bangladesh and the UK do not feel alienated and remote from DFID's programmes and projects. Sometimes this is connected to disagreement with particular strategies/NGOs or cynicism about the self-perpetuating tendencies of bureaucracies.

Often however, it simply reflects the distancing effect of jargon inherent in the aid giving/application process, a factor that can easily be multiplied by linguistic and cultural differences. *It is regrettable but not surprising therefore that the (clearly written) analysis provided by DFID in its CSP review paper, is preceded by a table containing over 100 acronyms.*

Inevitably, it is not unusual for people to believe that the prime guaranteed beneficiaries of foreign aid funds, whether from DFID or elsewhere, are the staff and consultants who manage the distribution of funds. This perception is increased by the fact that in practice 'development' can often seem to revolve around narrow circles of people 'well versed in its ways and language.' It is further fuelled by the relative exclusion of Bangladeshis from key roles at some NGOs or at DFID's own Dhaka office, a situation acknowledged by DFID's review paper.

The much-publicised controversy over arsenic contamination of groundwater following the digging of tubewells in Bangladesh is a prime example of the negative unintended consequences that can sometimes be caused by foreign aid schemes, instances of which invariably add to such suspicions. To its credit, DFID since its creation has sought to publicly address some of the key historical criticisms made about foreign aid and NGOs, (such as stopping tied aid,) *but much more needs to be done to adequately address these types of concern.*

DFID's review paper rightly goes beyond the confines of just assessing current projects to take a broader strategic overview of the challenges facing Bangladesh. It acknowledges that at this level it is very difficult to accurately measure its contribution to helping Bangladesh's long term development needs. Moreover it agrees with many economists that it is easier to demonstrate tangible improvements in national development indicators arising out of general economic growth and industrial development than from particular NGO schemes and projects.

- The difficulties associated with measuring performance and the need for considered analysis of DFID's spending must not be permitted to serve as an alibi for inaction. Nor should the widely acknowledged endemic problems afflicting Bangladesh discussed by the review be allowed in several years time to provide excuses for any future failure of DFID policies. Instead they should act as a spur for DFID to be pro-active in improving, communicating and better implementing its policies.

## Joining up thinking, improving measurement and increasing interaction with Bangladeshis

It is not possible to implement pro-poor development policies in isolation. Bangladesh's government, business sector, NGOs, unions, media and civil society can all have negative and positive effects on the outcome of programmes. Usually SMART (*Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound*) objectives are an excellent method of measuring the success or otherwise of tasks carried out by any organisation. An alternative *SMART measure* may be asking if programmes and projects are *Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent*.<sup>4</sup> Overall in the UK context DFID would certainly qualify as moral and transparent. Yet to intended beneficiaries such as the generally powerless poor people of Bangladesh however, its programmes may not seem nearly so simple, responsive or directly accountable.

Developing a country is a complex, long-term process. No two developed countries for example have developed institutions for governance in exactly the same way. Hence SMART objectives may not be the best method of supporting much needed governance reforms in Bangladesh. Imagine for instance, a scenario where DFID Bangladesh supported an organisation that influenced person x in Bangladesh to set up another organisation which 10 years later played a key part in helping to free the judiciary from interference by the executive. SMART objectives would not capture this success, yet if DFID Bangladesh had not provided the support, it is quite possible the reform would have been delayed. Clearly therefore there are many limits to the ability of DFID to gauge its full contribution. *Increasing dialogue and engagement with more Bangladeshis and diaspora organisations offers DFID a convenient source of help in trying to get round this type of conundrum.*

Sometimes, notwithstanding the fear that educated professionals and/or non-nationals benefit much more from DFID funds than those living in absolute poverty, counter-intuitive programmes can be of clear national benefit. For instance funding that helps persuade key academics or professionals to remain in Bangladesh and not join the brain drain by emigrating can have a very positive ripple effect. Likewise, it is right for DFID to spend money on long term strategic goals within poor countries such as helping to increase the tax base, which by involving the better off more in development can both reduce aid dependence and improve democratic accountability.

In the absence of others being in a position to do the job better, it is also appropriate for DFID to act as an advocate for the poor in more remote international forums, and across British government. Failure for Bangladesh to be heard in global trade or environmental negotiations could seriously undermine DFID goals and programmes. The diaspora could potentially play a valuable role in this regard, but DFID's position as a major donor with considerable influence in global circles should not be underestimated.

Obviously in such circumstances, direct financial expenditure is mainly limited to DFID staff and consultants rather than the poor. It may nonetheless be justified wherever the potential gains for the poor far outweigh the costs and there is both clear accountability and a simple chain of causation between expenditure and eventual benefit to the poor. Much of DFID's work in promoting the Ethical Trading Initiative and acting as an advocate for ethical investment could be said to fall into this category. *Even so caution needs to be exercised to ensure that this is always truly the case.* Just as the negative effects of publicity arising out of factors over which a company has limited control (eg; lack of freedom of association in China,) may sometimes be disproportionate to its culpability,

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<sup>4</sup> [www.dailystarnews.com](http://www.dailystarnews.com) 22/11/02

so the publicity benefit to a company or investment fund (*that can readily afford to pay for its own research and public relations*) in being seen to be ethical, can far outweigh the tangible improvements actually delivered to poor people within poor countries.

Finally and perhaps most crucially, it is apparent that DFID Bangladesh must do more to interact with Bangladeshis. This is recognised within DFID's own review paper, but the scale of changes needed may not be fully appreciated. Amongst both Dhaka residents and visiting British Bangladeshis, UK cultural and diplomatic activities, whether via the British Council library, NGO offices or the High Commission itself, often have a poor reputation for accessibility and willingness to interact with a wide range of Bangladeshis. By contrast, despite a greater language barrier and inevitable focus on well off city dwellers, Alliance Francaise and the Goethe Institute are both more widely seen as open and willing to interact with Bangladeshis in a way that many complain eludes much of the UK expatriate (*including UK NGO*) community.

Anything DFID can do to help overcome such unnecessary barriers would be welcome. Improved communication and mutual understanding would pay many dividends. This is because side by side with a popular egalitarian outlook, Bangladesh is a very multi-layered society with complex, quasi-Edwardian gradations of difference based on class and culture. While it is commonly accepted that much of the deference culture associated with this can hold the poor can back, it is sometimes not so easy for outsiders to deal with its subtleties. DFID urgently needs to involve and employ more native Bangladeshis at all levels to overcome this type of obstacle.

British Bangladeshis could help substantially by opening up other channels of communication, offering constructive criticism and providing a sounding board for feedback. They could also act as natural intermediaries to help DFID staff with induction to Bangladesh as well as offering a growing pool of potential recruits.

Involving a larger number and range of Bangladeshis would also help overcome one of the key perceived weaknesses of the development/NGO orientated culture, namely that it operates within closed circles that distance it from the bulk of the Bangladeshi population and increase the scope for different parties to pull the wool over each others' eyes.

Though direct abuse may be rare, the barriers thrown up by institutional jargon and language certainly increase the perception that money may be wasted because people that are good at setting criteria and writing reports in English are not always equally effective at delivering improvements to the desired beneficiaries – and vice versa.

### Recommendations

- DFID Dhaka must make much more effort to involve Bangladeshi nationals at senior positions in its operations.
- DFID in the UK should provide a simple accessible framework for dialogue with the Bangladeshi community.
- Involving more Bangladeshis both in the UK and Bangladesh could also help overcome any problems caused by poor communication or cultural misunderstandings – and provide a way to better welcome/acclimatise non-nationals working in Bangladesh, rather than leaving them disconnected from the bulk of society.

- Increased interaction may be invaluable in helping to set priorities and to measure results. It may also be fruitful in developing imaginative approaches to overcoming long term problems.
- To increase accessibility, DFID should try to avoid 'institutional/academic' jargon. Many British based Bangladeshis have strong links with families and good causes in Bangladesh via which they can provide development insights and priorities which would might not otherwise be represented by Development experts and academics.
- Interaction with British Bangladeshis could be cheaply increased by making provision for more open days and consultative meetings. This can be encouraged by DFID and/or organisations such as the BBPA sponsoring regular seminars in London for visiting speakers.

### **The case for *temporarily* increasing aid to Bangladesh**

- Compared to some poor countries, international development assistance has over the last decade represented a relatively moderate and shrinking portion of Bangladesh's economy. This trend of decreasing aid dependence is generally welcome. However, the pressing needs of Bangladesh's people mean that for the foreseeable future, the practical need and moral case for foreign aid remains the same. The fortitude of Bangladesh's people in muddling through so that on some long term indicators it can show genuine progress *despite* the background of poor governance should not be used as an excuse for cutting off aid just yet. Bangladesh may have defied the basketcase label of its early detractors but still has a long way to go by both global and regional standards.

On environmental grounds alone there is a strong case for seeing aid increased in the immediate 10 year period. A clear priority is Climate Change adaptation, which we feel neither donors nor the Bangladeshi government are taking as seriously as required. It is apparent that a failure to tackle threats caused by climate change would have catastrophic consequences for the attainment of all DFID's other objectives. The human and political consequences of a large unplanned displacement of people caused by climate change would have grave implications for not only Bangladesh but also many other countries.

- To this end, we recommend that climate change adaptation be added as another key objective within DFID Policy and the new Country Assistance Programme.

This conclusion is endorsed by the August 2002 review which suggests that on present scenarios, Bangladesh is on course to meet most of its Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by 2015<sup>5</sup>, but that those for maternal mortality and *environment* will probably not be achieved. Dealing with climate change adaptation issues will clearly help address the environmental concerns and will also assist the British government in fulfilling its international commitments to combat Climate Change. The Chancellor's July spending review provides for a record increase in

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix I for a description of the 8 MDG goals

the UK's level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) by £1.5 billion to reach 0.40 per cent of national income(GNI), by 2005-06. In real terms this is a 93% increase since 1997, and the highest ODA/GNI ratio for 20 years. Whilst this remains some way off the UN target of 0.7 per cent, it is tangible proof of the Government's continued commitment to make progress in the international development arena.

The BBPA considers that the special global nature of climate change as an issue, means that a focused increase in resources to address climate change concerns, would not detract from the overall CSP objectives. (see section 5). Notwithstanding the particular pressure caused by climate change, it is apparent that (whether through private investment, loans or grants) substantial available funds are currently being withheld from Bangladesh owing to concerns that they would not be spent efficiently or appropriately. eg; If Bangladesh received funds from DFID at the same rate as India, the DFID Bangladesh budget would be approximately doubled.

- Bangladesh urgently needs help in tackling these concerns, so that it can make better use of its considerable human resources and increase access to foreign investment. DFID and the diaspora can encourage such developments which are essential in order to enable the country to use its clear potential to stand on its own feet. Otherwise, if Bangladesh is left to simply muddle through, it risks being left far behind other Asian states, which cannot be healthy for the region.

The IDG is not calling for extra funds to be sent to Bangladesh so that it can be wasted. On the contrary, it believes that provided increased funds are focused on tackling key strategic issues, (such as but not limited to climate change,) not only can Bangladesh achieve success in meeting the MDG by reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty, but that it could readily exceed these targets and that both morally and for practical reasons, this must be the outcome that the country should strive to achieve.

- While the MDG provide a worthy universal set of targets for addressing absolute poverty, they do not take into account the specific circumstances of different countries. It is arguable that given its track record and considerable potential for progress, merely meeting the MDG would not be a great achievement for Bangladesh, particularly if it is left falling further behind other Asian countries.
- Correctly chosen, increasing funds solely to be spent on specific projects (such as improving tax collection and higher education or supporting conservation projects in forested areas,) would not necessarily undermine the ultimate goal of reducing aid dependency. Arguably, such dedicated funds may be necessary to help stimulate some of the changes Bangladesh needs.

This is important because the mutually desirable goal for both DFID and Bangladesh is that increased communication, trade and investment sustainably replaces the role of foreign aid funds. Although economic growth during the 1990s led to a noticeable reduction in extreme poverty, (at roughly 1% a year,) given Bangladesh's population growth and the inequitable distribution of wealth this rate is too low to give much comfort. A sustained GDP growth rate of 6% appears necessary to make a genuine leap upwards.

## Recommendations

- 6% GDP growth in GDP is not an unrealistic target for a emerging market economy such as Bangladesh, as it is close to what it has already achieved despite drag factors such as corruption (and has regularly been exceeded by countries such as China.)
- DFID should use its position as a major donor with considerable international influence to help facilitate reforms that can allow Bangladesh to sustainably achieve this rate and thereby rapidly reduce the extent of poverty. (and ultimately end its need to operate in Bangladesh)
- The UK should increase aid to Bangladesh as DFID budgets increase, focusing on environmental projects related to climate change adaptation, with other increases directed at overcoming policy bottlenecks and developing human capital and infrastructure.

## 2. Improving Governance

- Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of governance in Bangladesh's future development. "Good governance" means many things to different people. We would define good governance to be that which promotes broad – based sustainable economic growth and social development as a means to greater human development.

Governance impacts many different areas. We do not intend here to explore all the possible roles of governance and DFID Bangladesh's potential contributions. Instead, we have concentrated on the main issues to which we believe DFID Bangladesh can contribute. Treating poor governance is like treating a disease. One can only successfully improve governance by treating the causes of poor governance, not the symptoms.

Although there are many positive aspects to democracy in Bangladesh, notably high voter turnouts amongst both men and women from all classes and broadly peaceful changes of government, there is no doubt that it is an empty ritual for the ruling cliques at the top of the two main parties.

Bangladeshi politics has become not about representing the people but about sustaining patronage, for example through state loans and government contracts. More disturbingly and wholly contrary to the national interest, a 'tradition' has emerged of political gangsterism by which blatant criminals are protected and even nurtured by virtue of party political affiliation. That the people of Bangladesh continue to vote in large numbers for the two leading parties is testament to their historical importance, fundamentally moderate ideologies, and the enduring loyal if optimistic belief that both contain in their ranks some principled and popular politicians.

A huge obstacle to the economic, political and civic development of Bangladesh is endemic corruption. Transparency International ranks Bangladesh as the most corrupt country in its latest Corruption Perceptions Index.<sup>6</sup> In developed countries, the judiciary and police can usually be relied upon to deter corruption. However, this is not the case in Bangladesh. For example in 1999 the Mahbubul Haq Centre of Human Development carried out a survey that revealed that the Bangladeshi populous believes 60% of judges to be corrupt.

- Clearly corruption is a problem for many poor countries and questionmarks could be raised about the TI 'perceptions' methodology. Notwithstanding debate about which countries are worse than others, the high prevalence of nepotism and corruption is of serious concern to Bangladesh because it does not "grease the wheels" of transactions; rather it allows the capital to develop wings and fly out of the country<sup>7</sup>.
- The associated poor law and order situation creates a vicious cycle by which it is not just the dominant elite that sends money out of the country but the metropolitan middle and upper classes generally. This results in far less capital than potentially available being retained in the country for inward investment, despite the high returns (of the order of 10-25%) commonly attained within the country by ordinary business ventures.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.ti-bangladesh.org](http://www.ti-bangladesh.org)

<sup>7</sup> Source: *Human Development in South Asia 1999*

- It also encourages other vicious cycles that deter investment. For instance, 40% of electricity distributed to urban areas is never paid for, which strongly deters investment in the power sector, with massive adverse consequences (notably loadshedding) for domestic and business users alike.
- The sense of risk of investing within Bangladesh – and from time to time, the lack of a sense of physical security, results in many otherwise public spirited and well to do people losing faith in the country. Clearly this is of serious concern and is a not an uncommon problem for many poor countries. Corruption must be tackled for Bangladesh to develop as has been done successfully in other former developing countries.

The presence of a reasonably diverse press and deep rooted political culture means that Bangladeshis tend to be well informed of these deficiencies – so in principle enforcement of existing laws whose deficiencies are already exposed within the press, would be sufficient to tackle a large part of this endemic problem.

It is clear that for reforms to be effective, the sense of impunity that exists at the top of government needs to be overcome to set a clear example.

- In order to facilitate the move towards a more “representative” political structure, there should be less centralisation and greater accountability of political representatives. This could be achieved by devolving more power to regional areas both within government and institutions such as political parties and NGOs, streamlining the civil service and improving citizens’ awareness and ability to invoke their constitutional rights.
- In targeting “agents for change” to support the required structural changes needed for Bangladesh to develop, DFID Bangladesh must ensure that the following players are included: civil society organisations, committed political leaders, the media, academic community and international institutions, not forgetting diaspora Bangladeshis.

We agree that DFID Bangladesh should work with other donors to ensure that a common strategy is implemented and that individual tasks are not duplicated. We note DFID Bangladesh’s movement towards donor co-operation where each donor concentrates on its comparative advantage. The free market economic principles of this approach are well documented. However, we also note that this approach does not adequately deal with “public goods” – for instance issues, such as climate change where no donor has an obvious comparative advantage. Such issues require a co-ordinated international response as donor agencies/countries working together have more clout than any one agency/country alone.

Key to success is proper sequencing of reforms. If each donor agency merely concentrates on their own comparative advantage, there is a danger that reforms will occur in the wrong order. Russia is a good example of this; Free market reforms were implemented without sufficient prior strengthening of the judicial and civic institutions required to ensure that free market transactions could be implemented without strengthening corrupt elites. We would call on DFID Bangladesh to work with other donors to ensure that there is a clear strategy in place for the development of Bangladesh, before each donor’s comparative advantage reforms are implemented.

DFID's influence as an important donor could be invaluable in setting a good example to other donors as well as to Bangladeshi government and institutions. In this respect, it is essential for DFID to be seen to be as transparent and above criticism as possible. This requires more effort at openness and communication, both in person and via publications/ websites. Of particular importance is openness with regard to major contracts and direct/indirect dealings with the Government of Bangladesh, so that DFID can avoid becoming embroiled in controversies itself.<sup>8</sup>

### Recommendations

- Bangladesh should be encouraged to create an independent commission to tackle corruption much like the Independent Commission Against Corruption that was set up in Hong Kong in 1974 and the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) in Singapore<sup>9</sup>.
- Overseas Bangladeshis and DFID should support moves to require:
  - Public officials to declare their assets to the public on an annual basis.
  - Implementation of transparent procurement laws.
  - The government to obey the constitution and avoid interference with the judiciary and press.
  - Increasing access amongst the Bangladeshi public to information on and ability to influence, national and local government projects and policies
- Independent private-sector auditors should be used to audit public run projects. (and possibly vice-versa) DFID Bangladesh can help the process of helping to minimise corruption in Bangladesh by ensuring that its partners in Bangladesh clearly abide by the above principles. We understand that DFID Bangladesh already vet their partners. However, to encourage more internal progress, DFID and other donors should publicly agree to a code of conduct that ensures that all their Bangladeshi partners conformed to these principles.
- The social impacts of DFID Bangladesh's activities should be independently monitored and audited with results being reported in as transparent a manner as possible. By setting a good example, and encouraging other donors/agencies to do the same, it could help citizens to put pressure on domestic Bangladeshi agencies and government departments to conform to these principles as well.
- DFID can use its influence within UK government and amongst UK multinationals via programmes such as the Ethical Trading Initiative to put more pressure on businesses and investors (in all countries) to abide by best practice principles of transparency and non-corruption.
- Overseas Bangladeshis can support the Bangladesh media in acting as a public watchdog. They can also do more to fund Bangladeshi NGOs working on issues that may be deemed too controversial for foreign donors to support without creating a backlash.

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<sup>8</sup> For an example see "Row over KPMG aid contract" Guardian 5/07/02

<sup>9</sup> *Both the ICAC and CPIB used slightly different methods to be independent of the "establishment". The ICAC reported directly to the Governor of Hong Kong and was independent of the police force. No one in ICAC could end up working for a senior officer who had been subject to investigation. Government commitment to ICAC was signalled by appointing a person of unquestionable integrity and by the targeting of big high profile officials. The Singapore government strengthened the CPIB during the 1960s and since 1970 the CPIB has reported directly to the Prime Minister's office. The CPIB also requires that ministries review work practices regularly with the aim of reducing corruption. Key strategies to reduce corruption include reducing delays, rotating officers and increasing supervision. The Singapore government has also focused on reducing corrupt incentives for bureaucrats with high wages, bonuses and favourable working conditions.*

### 3. The competing roles of Government and NGOs

#### Limitations on NGO success

Ever since the huge international attention focused on the country during its war of independence in 1971, Bangladesh has had a large NGO sector playing a key role in development activities. Its reputation as an incubator for successful projects, most famously led by the Grameen Bank in the field of microcredit makes it of major interest to development experts. During his diplomatic trip to South Asia in early January 2002, PM Tony Blair visited the village of West Kelia, near Savar, the centre of a development programme run by what is often described as the world's largest NGO, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). Other significant internationally acclaimed Bangladeshi NGOs include the Gonashastra Kendra (People's Health Centre). The positive reputation of leading Bangladeshi NGOs has made them natural partners for aid agencies. Even today they are often the partner of choice for funders as state institutions are not seen as effective enough.

Within Bangladesh, despite appreciation of the fame of the likes of Mohammed Yunus, there is also a widespread tendency across the political spectrum to be suspicious of NGOs as 'tools of foreign influence.' The understandable desire shared by the BBPA, that *Bangladesh should not be an aid junkie* promulgated soon after independence by economist Rehman Sobhan<sup>10</sup> and reiterated by finance minister Saifur Rahman today, adds to these tendencies. This background well documented in development journals and books<sup>11</sup> has sometimes made it easy for vested interests to undermine worthy initiatives by cynically manipulating knee-jerk nationalist or religious suspicions. For example in the early 1980s, Gonashastra Kendra and Oxfam, both of whom were supporting the then Bangladesh government (and World Health Organisation's) Basic/Essential drugs programme found themselves smeared by some mullahs (apparently at the instigation of some large pharmaceutical companies) as being 'undercover Christian missionaries.'

Whilst this aspect of the campaign was not successful and would probably more easily backfire against multinationals today, it does demonstrate the ease with which suspicions of NGOs can be raised. Even though by the standards of many predominantly Muslim countries, Bangladesh has a permissive attitude to religious proselytisation it can still raise public concern particularly if believed to be carried out in a non-transparent manner.

It is not surprising therefore that despite its size and influence, the NGO sector has often been the target of calls for more regulation. Despite many such debates, the Government NGO Affairs Bureau has in practice very rarely invoked powers to restrict NGO activities. Within a democracy, calls for debate and transparency made by elected officials are not in principle objectionable. Nor for that matter is the response of NGOs such as BRAC who have made moves to tackle such criticisms by raising more funds domestically to reduce dependence on foreign donors. Simultaneously however, the increasing involvement of NGOs in profit making activities as a means of sustaining regular income has led to accusations that they unfairly compete against private business. As some NGOs often have superior access to funding available anyway, the very success of the sector means that it is widely seen today as undermining the ability of government, academia and public institutions to recruit and retain good staff.

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<sup>10</sup> Professor Sobhan founded the Centre for Policy Dialogue, a leading Bangladeshi think tank, [www.cpd-bangladesh.org](http://www.cpd-bangladesh.org)

<sup>11</sup> eg; Supporting Citizens' Initiatives (1998), Bangladesh's NGO and Society / Ian Smillie (2000), The Alms Bazaar- Altruism under fire (both ITDG London) Edwards and Hulme (1998), NGOs- Performance and Accountability, Earthscan Publication Ltd, London

Clearly there is no single answer to the cocktail of concerns about NGOs. Some complaints are undoubtedly legitimate and can in principle be readily rectified (cases of fraud/ criminality/ non transparency.) It is also right that within reason, boundaries for profit making activity and party political campaigning by tax exempt charities are set by government and the courts. A clear concern within the Bangladeshi context however, is that such proposals may be motivated not out of the public interest but more by political vendettas and vested interests.

In general however, provided the media plays a fair role in representing a diversity of views and investigating facts accurately, it should still be possible in individual cases to determine where criticisms of NGOs have been made fairly and where they are unfounded.

- DFID can play a role in protecting legitimate NGOs by encouraging more transparency and better communication. As far as possible to mitigate likely criticisms and suspicion, it needs to work more with purely home-grown and transparent NGOs – which are increasingly likely to be influenced and encouraged by the growing urban middle class.
- British Bangladeshis can also help by increasing their own interaction and involvement with Bangladeshi NGOs –to help raise the sense of Bangladeshi ‘ownership’ of legitimate NGO activities. At the same time, they can more vocally support the free press whenever it is threatened so that it can better act as a public watchdog.

The bigger more general problem for the relationship between NGOs and the Bangladesh government then is the belief that Bangladesh’s NGO sector has been disproportionately successful. Whilst past government and business failure are responsible for this imbalance, for Bangladesh to be successful and sustainable in the long term, government, business and academic institutions need to be attractive and successful as well.

Continuing disparity only draws away vital talent to the better funded NGOs and this could threaten the long term national interest.

### Observations

- In the interests of free speech and freedom of religion and conscience, the BBPA believes that regulations on NGOs should be focused only on preventing fraud, non-transparency and criminal/exploitative activities. Free speech in furtherance of the public interest should not be restricted in principle; NGOs are supposed to act as a counterweight to state power.
- Provided there is proper media scrutiny and public debate, some setting of boundaries so that NGOs do not *unfairly* compete with businesses, is acceptable.
- Provided competition is fair, there is also no reason why NGOs shouldn’t have profit making arms that give their surpluses to good causes.

## Education and national infrastructure

- DFID needs to set its priorities with a strong positive vision in mind of where it would like Bangladesh to be in 20 years time. As sustainable success requires government, business and academic institutions to be more attractive and successful, DFID needs to assert this vision by taking a leap of faith and backing positive elements within existing national institutions. Though Bangladesh has a rapacious political elite and much corruption, the size and diversity of its people means that all *publicly undermined institutions should not be written off wholesale as they still contain large numbers of dedicated, expert, public spirited professionals in important positions.*

The fate of the university sector which has increasingly endured a haemorrhage of students and staff to private institutions and overseas is a case in point. Despite conflict between politically protected armed factions of students leading to prolonged closures and long delays in obtaining degrees, it is all too easy to forget that the vast majority of students and staff manage to persevere regardless. Whilst the reputation of Bangladesh's higher education institutions (parts of which have historically had a good record for attracting students from abroad,) has undoubtedly suffered in recent decades, the sector still produces success stories that are obscured by the pervading crisis of confidence in national institutions. Added to this the high regard in which university education is widely held and the fact that the option of going abroad or private is not open to most Bangladeshis and it should not be surprising that despite all the bad news the sector retains considerable numbers of dedicated professionals.

Though the civil service and other public institutions have suffered more from direct governmental interference, beneath the surface a similar picture can be drawn of undermined public institutions nonetheless managing to attract and retain significant numbers of dedicated professionals – who would be able to do a far better job if key national problems relating to governance and corruption were better addressed.

For these reasons, *although it is perfectly understandable why individuals with the means and resources choose to avoid such public institutions or to leave the country altogether, the clear long term interest of the country lies in strengthening some of these institutions.*

It would therefore be a mistake to use the collective lack of faith in public institutions as an excuse for not having faith in individuals connected with these same institutions, as if adequately supported they would usually be the people best placed to implement needed reforms.

- DFID needs to pro-actively expend much more effort than presently apparent to engage with a wider range and greater number of Bangladeshis so that it can better identify and lend support to individuals in a position to act as positive agents of change in national institutions. Only by grasping this nettle in the long run can DFID or others help to set a good example and overcome some of the (understandable) reluctance of many people to trust Bangladeshi government institutions.

By and large, DFID's role in Bangladesh has steered it away from large scale infrastructure projects and towards health and education priorities. This is a fair strategy as other funders have been available for key developments

such as the Jamuna Bridge and it may be useful for a funder of DFID's size to focus on projects that nurture human capital.

However because Bangladesh needs significant infrastructural development in the long run, it is appropriate for DFID to help examine available options. When doing so, it should actively seek to involve more Bangladeshi based experts to provide a boost to national institutions.

#### Related recommendations

More joined up thinking and co-ordinated action is needed across UK government to stabilise and nurture Bangladeshi institutions. In collaboration with the British Council, UK universities, DTI, Treasury and FCO, DFID should imaginatively seek ways to encourage Bangladeshis to support development goals.

- DFID and the British Council should support more mutual exchange schemes between Bangladeshi institutions (such as university departments) and their counterparts in developed countries. By doing so it can both increase international interaction and help Bangladeshi colleges keep their best talent.
- DFID should consider the Soros Open Society scholarships model to develop schemes to help keep high flying civil servants in post in developing countries.
- British Bangladeshis should play a bigger role in setting up and nurturing their own networks to support development projects and positive initiatives in Bangladesh.

## 4. Human Rights and Civil Society

As the Country Strategy Review emphasises, much more needs to be done to overcome the gender disparity that is a major obstacle for development in Bangladesh.

95% of female-headed households are estimated to be below the poverty line, with 40% being classified as extremely poor. Despite women prime ministers, widespread female employment in many professions and constitutional protection, only about 10% of Bangladeshi MPs are women with virtually no female representation in the upper echelons of the civil service and professional classes. We acknowledge that female representation in the upper echelons of politics and business is not particularly representative in developed countries either. However, in developed countries, human rights for women are not nearly as bad as in Bangladesh where poor women are routinely targeted for violence and sexual abuse.

- We hope that DFID Bangladesh will work with various agencies, NGOs and charities within Bangladesh to ensure that women's rights are protected and to promote the role of Bangladeshi women within society.

Improving women's welfare would have a major impact on the welfare of most ordinary Bangladeshis. It is telling that the most successful development programs implemented in Bangladesh (e.g. microfinance and the improvements in health) have targeted poor women and not their male counterparts.

- The BBPA applauds DFID Bangladesh for setting up a Human Rights and Governance fund. (HUGO) to work with domestic agencies and legal professionals to ensure that human rights abuses are not left unchallenged in the courts.
- However in the light of the importance of this project and the background of concerns noted previously about scepticism of the consultancy culture and suspicions of NGOs, it has to be asked why DFID found it necessary for this programme to be managed by a foreign non-Bangladeshi controlled NGO. *It is not credible to believe that DFID could not have found any honest academics or professionals within Bangladesh available to manage such a pivotal programme had it actively tried to do so.* The IDG notes that the apparent failure to consider this angle leaves this very important programme at risk (however unfairly) of being criticised and undermined.

DFID needs generally to be seen to be working more directly with Bangladeshis and not via foreign NGO intermediaries in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of its work. This is especially important when dealing with programmes that could give rise to political sensitivities. It remains quite right though for DFID to support this type of programme in principle.

- The BBPA appreciates that caution is exercised by DFID to respect national sovereignty and the convention is not to interfere with internal political affairs. *It is therefore more incumbent on civil society generally and overseas Bangladeshis in particular to be vocal in protecting human rights and supporting civil society within Bangladesh.*

Interaction between Bangladeshi civil society and overseas Bangladeshis could be very helpful in overcoming certain obstructive attitudes.

Due to the particular history of its intellectual and political culture, Bangladesh's civil society and press represent a broad range of views with many lively debates on key issues of principle relating to human rights and the constitution. However, bureaucratic and centralising tendencies amongst Bangladeshi politicians when in government mean that whoever is in power the government is rarely pro-active in promoting human rights, making the role of civil society even more important.

A particular problem for Bangladesh is the highly personalised internecine struggle between the leadership of the two main political parties for 'ownership' of the history of the war of independence and subsequent struggles against military rule. Though most Bangladeshis can see more than one side of this debate, its existence lies at the core of the political deadlock and 'hartal' culture that has frequently brought the country to a standstill. It is sadly all too easy therefore for intellectual and political energy spent debating key constitutional issues to get lost in party political mudslinging. This background results in whoever is in government seeing themselves as the '*sole legitimate* defender of national honour.'

Although much of this is verbal sparring and indigenous NGOs and campaign groups have always retained relative freedom to promote a diversity of opinions, Bangladeshis politicians readily accuse critics of national disloyalty. Sometimes when particular debates flare up, a knee jerk bureaucratic tendency tempts leaders into threatening censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression whenever the country is criticised in the press. This is often caused by frustration at the country's inability to project and protect its image. (*see section 10, Bangladesh in the International Arena*).

A censorial attitude should not be encouraged particularly as it is usually justified in the name of patriotism – *when globally it can have precisely the exact opposite effect of worsening the country's image*. British Bangladeshis are in quite a strong position to be robust in defending threatened restrictions on the press. This is not to say that the domestic media is not capable of vigilance in supporting such debates – or that help from overseas Bangladeshis may not always be welcomed. However, it is clear that many occasions do arise when external interest can make all the difference to the seriousness with which the government responds to human rights concerns.

- Family connections and regular interaction places overseas Bangladeshis in a useful position to help overcome obstructive attitudes by taking a principled and visibly non-partisan stand in support of human rights and tolerance.
- Satellite news channels and the internet have dramatically increased the ability of overseas Bangladeshis to interact with Bangladeshi civil society over the past ten years. The combination of modern telecommunications and a growing diaspora offers ample scope for overseas Bangladeshis to become more involved with homeland civil society in defence of human rights.
- The diaspora can point to positive examples overseas of societies taking patriotic pride in hosting a wide diversity of opinions and help nurture the view that self-criticism is not always the same as 'national disloyalty.'

It is worth noting at this point that whilst the UNDP in its Human Development Reports has clearly demonstrated a strong correlation between meeting development goals and improving gender equality, many societies have historically developed economically without other immediate improvements in developing democracy and human rights.<sup>12</sup> Likewise success in the global economy or having a large diaspora<sup>13</sup> in major developed countries does not necessarily mean that democracy and human rights will always be continually advanced by the diaspora, though we believe these are usually associated trends.

Many examples most famously highlighted by the War of Independence can be found of overseas Bangladeshis supporting human rights and civil society. The BBPA-IDG itself recently made representations to the United Kingdom All-party Parliamentary Group of MPs on Bangladesh on the Chittagong Hill Tracts in July 2002.\*

- Bangladesh should look to its strengths to try and turn democratic advantages into economic and development gains. The diaspora should be vigilant therefore in not becoming embroiled with internecine political debates so it can play a full role as an external watchdog to support human rights.
- Overseas Bangladeshis should lend support to nurturing diverse independent media to encourage more scrutiny and reporting of human rights issues. In tandem with this, (see section 10) they can do more to raise the country's profile generally including highlighting underreported positive aspects of Bangladeshi society and culture.

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\*The IDG's submission, prepared to assist MPs with meeting a visiting delegation of Bangladeshi parliamentarians, was made in support of minority communities and diversity within Bangladesh.

Elements of the Bangladeshi media have promoted the view that the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord of 1997 was in some way damaging to national sovereignty. Huge population pressures and scarcity of land inevitably help ferment such sentiments. This is mistaken in our opinion because the Treaty has been broadly successful in halting a violent insurgency and counter-insurgency campaign in the region that has cost thousands of lives in the past 25 years.

The IDG expressed concerns that the Accord was not being fully implemented and that adequate measures were not being taken to protect indigenous people. It urged the Bangladesh delegation to take pride in ensuring a full peaceful and proper implementation of the Accord – and pointed to the potential peace dividend benefits of sensitively opening the area to opportunities such as ecotourism.

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<sup>12</sup> Bangladesh's relative openness to democracy and NGOs differs strongly to China and Cuba each of which in vastly different ways has been much more successful in meeting basic development goals.

<sup>13</sup> For instance although India and Israel clearly derive great net benefit from overseas communities, much of the support for burgeoning far-right groups in these countries comes from overseas despite their democratic traditions.

## 5. Climate Change and the Environment

### The Global Issue

Climate change is a truly global issue that not only highlights past injustice but seriously threatens to further worsen inequalities between developed and developing countries. The Bangladeshi view of climate change is not just as a problem of pollution or how to sustain economic growth as for more developed countries, but as a fundamental threat to human welfare and survival itself demanding urgent attention and increased priority. Environmental degradation leaves the poor most vulnerable to natural disasters and in recent years the number of refugees from natural disasters has begun to exceed those displaced by war. <sup>14</sup>

In its previous country strategy for Bangladesh, DFID paid little attention to the potential drastic consequences of climate change. As already mentioned, the human and political consequences of a large unplanned displacement of people caused by climate change could have grave implications for not only Bangladesh but also many other countries. Moreover, it is self evident that a failure to consider climate change concerns could have catastrophic consequences for the attainment of all DFID's other objectives.

As developing countries will often respond to what they perceive are donor priorities, DFID needs to show that climate change is an issue that deserves serious consideration within the context of their national and local priorities. As nations such as the UK have benefited most from industrialisation and both past and present environmental detriment of the world, it is widely accepted that the leading industrialized nations have a greater responsibility to play a lead role in mitigating the effects of global warming and to seek sustainable energy sources in order to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The negative impact of Climate change falls disproportionately upon developing countries such as Bangladesh especially upon the poorest of the nation as their homes, agricultural land and lives are literally swept away and submerged. The effects of climate-change related increases in extreme weather are already proving hazardous and if trends continue without mitigation the consequences will be catastrophic for fulfillment of even basic development goals.

As second generation British-Bangladeshis from the largest overseas Bangladeshi population in the developed world, we in the UK believe that climate change must remain central to sustainable development strategies in our ancestral homeland and not as a subset of environmental issues as has been done in the past.

### Impact on Bangladesh

As one of the worlds poorest and most densely populated coastal nations, Bangladesh is especially vulnerable to sea level rise caused by climate change. A one-metre rise in sea level could permanently flood over 15 per cent of its surface area, displacing between 10-20 million people, most of whom are dependent upon the land for a living. Not only are they certain to be displaced and less able to cope in the future but the poorest are already most greatly affected by the impact of the frequent onslaught of weather experienced by the region in the form of flooding and cyclones. As a significant amount of the accentuation of extreme weather can be attributed to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions historically caused almost exclusively through Western industrialization, the onus falls on these nations including the UK to take responsibility and act accordingly.

## Research with Action

- As well as reducing its own CO2 emissions, the UK should support Bangladesh in its efforts to adapt. DFID should use its influence within government to ensure that that British policies and investments overseas do not actually worsen climate change or undermine the capacity of poor countries to adapt.
- Donors, including DFID, should begin carrying out climate impact assessments on a project and the impact of any project on climate change
- DFID could play a leading role in developing criteria and performance indicators with other donors and then spreading best practice.

We believe that further research on climate change impact is needed but that work on adaptation should not wait until such research is complete, given that many of the options will have a positive impact regardless of climate considerations and are worth doing anyway. The main priority should be assisting on adaptation and avoiding mal-adaptation. For example, technologies employed by a rich nation such as the Netherlands to combat rising sea levels may be unsuitable for Bangladesh. Indigenous technology development and supporting The National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) are more likely to prove more effective and sustainable.

DFID Bangladesh needs to work along side national and global initiatives such as NAPA, PRSP, NSSD, to help support the production of a coherent set of documents and strategies to enable donors and government agencies to be better committed to a sustainable development path which recognises the interdependency of issues like climate change, poverty reduction, the environment and human development.

## Clean Energy Development

A year long DFID funded wind speed study by the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), in collaboration with Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) and Energy Technology & Services Unit (ETSU), at seven coastal sites in 1996-97 revealed the potential for energy generation in those areas. More research and programmes of this nature needs to be encouraged. Pilot projects could be set up to monitor output and efficiency of wind energy generation in these areas. Projects funded by DFID and others should not be tokenistic but should be used in taking forward a real development of renewable sources of energy.

- DFID should promote the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to the Bangladeshi government and facilitate technology transfer in the energy field to the developing world and in particular renewable energy, permitting growth of the indigenous energy sector.
- DFID should promote renewable energy technology development in Bangladesh (see section 7 Energy and Sustainable Development)

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<sup>14</sup> Red Cross Report 1998

## Broader Environmental Challenges <sup>15</sup>

Awareness of environmental issues is high and increasing amongst Bangladeshis. Globally the strongest philosophical criticism made of environmentalism as a movement concerns the tendency by typically well off people to over-romanticise nature and rural idylls without considering the real needs and wishes of the often considerably poorer people whose lives their campaigns affect. Arguably, the massive social and developmental challenges facing Bangladesh makes it harder for Bangladeshi environmentalists whether based at home or abroad to fall into this stereotype. The magnitude of social pressures on Bangladesh is such that it is impossible to raise environmental issues without asking some daunting questions such as:-

- How can Bangladesh bring industrialisation and development to raise its population out of abject poverty (bearing in mind that it is too small to adequately be a nation of over 140 million farmers) *and* limit pollution to air and rivers?
- Can the country sustainably increase production of crops without causing permanent damage to its water table and soils?
- How can a poor country adequately protect the unique habitat of the Bengal Tiger in the Sunderbans without increased funds?
- With Dhaka's expanding population inexorably creating one of the world's mega-cities, it is often asked whose needs should pre-dominate, the tiny elite of chauffeured car owners or the million people dependant on rickshaws for sustenance. But isn't a better question why can't Bangladesh make everyone more productive by making a modern integrated public transport system available for all inhabitants?

Complete solutions to these problems will be inextricably connected and depend on both local and international actions. It is clear that unsustainable and unevenly distributed economic development can be very damaging to the environment and often this is the only form of capitalism on offer to the poor. Yet, genuinely increasing prosperity and successful development in the form of a better educated and housed, as well as better off, populace, *must* be an integral part of solutions to protect Bangladesh from environmental threats. <sup>16</sup>

As environmental issues are inherently global in scope particularly in relation to atmospheric emissions, internationally agreed approaches are also a vital and integral part of the equation. In the meantime, far more can still be done even without increased resources. Foresight, proper planning and enforcement of current laws would go a long way to alleviating many current blots on the landscape. As with other aspects of Bangladeshi life, much could be gained by simply increasing good citizenship and compliance with existing laws rather than developing wholly new rules and regulations. An informed and sympathetic external perspective is one of the main contributions that overseas Bangladeshis can bring to these issues. Collectively, both via increased trade and communication as well as more effective lobbying, the Bangladeshi diaspora has the potential to lend valuable support to initiatives to combat threats to Bangladesh's environment. In particular it could raise global awareness to help tip the balance in ensuring more equitable policy commitments by the developed world and assist in nurturing capacity building and research expertise within Bangladesh's own academic and NGO institutions.

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<sup>15</sup> From "How the diaspora can help fight threats to Bangladesh's environment," IDG paper originally published May 2002

<sup>16</sup> So long as it is remembered that though it can insulate individuals from environmental degradation, increased wealth alone is no substitute for long term planning particularly in small densely populated areas. Few after all would disagree that city life in Paris and London offers more meaningful civic space and greenery than say Houston or Tokyo

In the long run, such connections could also ensure that the valuable hard currency remittances sent home by expatriate Bangladeshis are not lost with succeeding generations but are amply replaced by increased communication, trade and investment.

The significance of the diaspora is that it can beneficially influence the policies of rich countries but that its external perspective and experience can be tapped directly to help Bangladesh solve its own problems. The detailed email bulletins provided by the Bangladesh Environment Network\* offer a simple illustration of how people from all corners of the world with an interest in Bangladesh can work together to share helpful information and ideas.

#### Main recommendations

- Climate change adaptation should be a major new priority for DFID's new Country Strategy Paper for Bangladesh.
- We believe Overseas Bangladeshis and DFID should be advocating for a Geneva Convention for environmental refugees.
- DFID should also consider supporting some form of debt write offs in return for conservation programmes.
- Bangladesh and other poor countries need stronger representation in negotiations on the trading of Carbon permits. DFID and overseas Bangladeshis should support moves to give countries a per capita entitlement to make emissions – and support mechanisms to ensure poor countries benefit more from Trading in the envisaged carbon emission permit trading market, arrangements for which still need to be negotiated. (see section 9, *Bangladesh in the International Arena*)

\* One example of such an idea is promotion of the Seal of Quality Programme to certify hatcheries, farms and processing plants in Bangladesh developed by the Agro-based Industries and Technology Development Project (ATDP-II). This builds on UN and WWF codes of conduct aimed at protecting mangrove forests and ensuring that shrimp farming is only undertaken in a sustainable manner. As well as restricting shrimp farming in sensitive areas the code aims to enforce key labour standards and to build in third party certification.

- By supporting the Seal of Quality Programme operated by the private sector with outside third party certification, Bangladesh could go from being a questionable source of shrimp to a world leader in guaranteeing buyers and consumers hygienic, disease-free shrimp raised in an environmentally sound manner, with full respect for the human rights of the industry's workers. Such a reputation would ensure Bangladesh a premium price for its shrimp in the international market.
- DFID could use its influence to encourage the Bangladesh government to support a privately run Seal of Quality Programme by enacting legislation that would allow only members of the Programme to participate in the production, processing and sale of shrimp internationally. A current government-operated quality assurance programme has not been run credibly and has led to repeated threats of a ban by the EU or the US.

[BEN and Daily Star 22 November 2002]

## 6. Garments and beyond: helping Bangladeshi business to help development

Bangladesh is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest exporter of garments to the US. It earns around three-quarters of its total official foreign exchange from Ready Made Garments (RMG), an astonishing growth rate given that in 1976 garments represented less than 1 per cent of total exports.

Many observers believe that more upward development indicators can be directly attributed to industrial development and economic growth than to any general foreign aid /NGO schemes, (both by directly providing jobs to the poor and on the 'rising tide lifts all boats' principle.) Moreover, the massive and broadly positive social changes undergone by the creation of 2 million urban factory jobs for a largely migrant rural female workforce cannot be underestimated.

The Bangladeshi garments industry is probably best known in the UK due to union and NGO campaigns around issues of workers rights and phasing out of child labour. *As is now more widely understood, considerable care needs to be taken to guard against unintended consequences of such campaigns to ensure that they are not protectionist in impact.* Sensitively handled, such campaigns can have considerable positive social benefits in wiping out abuses and improving labour rights, as well as bringing marketing advantages and productivity gains.

There is ample evidence that garments has been a major national benefit to Bangladesh by sowing the seeds of industrialisation and providing very healthy export growth. While the prime beneficiaries of Bangladesh's low wage rates are factory owners and foreign buyers, in the context of urbanisation and a growing population, the industry can take credit for opening up opportunities previously unavailable to poor uneducated women to work their way out of the poverty trap.

Given the youthful age profile of its population however, Bangladesh urgently needs to be able to sustainably create many more jobs.

### Limitations on -and of - Bangladeshi business

- ❑ Bangladeshi business have been successful in a number of areas, not least garments where until a fall off in orders in 2001, the industry managed to more than quadruple exports to nearly \$5billion in less than a decade. In areas where trade has been liberalised and opened to private sector development such as internal transport and pharmaceuticals, Bangladeshi business has made significant progress since independence.
- ❑ However, endemic problems of poor governance and corruption and lack of infrastructural development have held back the growth of even the most successful sectors. A combination of trade barriers and lack of competitiveness has left it unable to significantly increase exports to India, which maintains very high (official and unofficial) trade surpluses with Bangladesh.
- ❑ Bangladesh's natural gas and oil sector has attracted considerable interest from international oil companies. The relatively small domestic market and political *controversy (see section 7. Energy for Sustainable Development)* over exporting gas to India has hampered increased investment in the gas sector.

- Bangladesh's two major seaports, Chittagong and Mongla, handle over 14.5 million metric tons of cargo each year. Even without growing demand from Bangladeshi industry, the landlocked nature of the seven North East Indian states and Nepal potentially offers Chittagong a rich trading hinterland. Yet, despite interest from investors, Chittagong port's two existing container terminals continue to suffer from a shortage of handling equipment, corruption and congestion. Political and union intransigence has held up major investment projects that could create many future jobs, including a reported \$440 million contract provisionally agreed between the government and the US company Stevedoring Services of America in 1998. ***Against this background the country as a whole remains in a weak position to compete in the global economy.***

### **Implications of phasing out the multi fibre agreement (MFA)**

The very dominance of garments for Bangladesh is a worrying sign. For a hundred years till the 1980s jute occupied a similar position as a foreign exchange earner. Failure to match competition and latterly to successfully promote some of its environmental advantages has marginalised the 'golden fibre' once synonymous with the 'golden Bengal' of the national anthem *Sonar Bangla*.

Economic slowdown in the US combined with the aftermath of the World Trade Centre terrorist attacks caused a large scale loss in garment orders and jobs at the end of 2001. With the emergence of India and China in the WTO and phasing out of quotas under the Multi-fibre agreement in 2004, Bangladesh's garment sector faces an uncertain future. The economies of scale and cheaper access to materials available to these two countries alone threatens to wipe out many of the gains made in the past decade. The opening up of duty free access by the US to 72 Sub-Saharan, Caribbean and Pacific countries is further reducing Bangladesh's competitive advantage.

Pessimistic estimates such as those made in a study for Action Aid Bangladesh conclude that MFA Phase-out will take away the income of almost 80% of the current 1.3 million RMG female workforce. Alternative employment opportunities in industrial sectors are almost non-existent.

*While there have been signs in recent years that the garment sector is trying to respond to these challenges, the balance of evidence is that this may be too little too late to guard against likely job losses. This has in part to be the consequence of past failures of initiative by Bangladesh business and government.*

To a large extent the RMG industry has developed passively thanks to the availability of quotas and cheap labour, with growth largely being led by investors from Korea and Taiwan. (Certain favourable tax laws and incentives for export processing zones were already in place some time before much of the industry took off.) Bangladeshi garment owners have shown a general lack of foresight by failing to develop backward linkages or incorporate design and marketing functions so as to increase their share of income.

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has started to respond to some of these concerns. For instance it is becoming more actively engaged in publicity and lobbying efforts. Its website also contains much marketing information and draws attention to successful programmes run by the ILO and UNICEF to

provide rehabilitation and education to underage workers and highlights moves to certify the industry as being child-labour free.

However, the relative weakness in international forums of recent lobbying efforts by the Bangladesh government to promote the industry does not raise confidence in the country's ability to develop sufficient new jobs in RMG or other sectors to guard against possible job losses. Although there is a growing domestic market for other sectors, the prospects for creating adequate alternative employment in other industries should the RMG sector completely collapse after 2004 remain very low.

### Recommendations

- Though partial protection is afforded by cheap wages and familiarity with buyers, the Bangladesh business sector still needs all the help it can get from overseas Bangladeshis and organisations like DFID to meet the challenges of increased global competition and to develop alternative employment for laid off workers.
- The RMG sector should give priority to developing backward linkages, training facilities and related programmes to improve productivity. Establishment of fashion institutes at the national level can be helpful in providing an edge over other competing countries
- Overseas Bangladeshis should make more use of their potential to assist with improving design and marketing functions and in supporting relevant lobbying initiatives in international forums.
- The Government of Bangladesh should give priority to increasing facilities and investment opportunities available to its ports in order to facilitate a more efficient throughput of exports from all sectors.
- Increased collaboration between employers and trade unions to ensure better implementation of labour laws could both improve quality of life for workers and increase productivity. If combined with appropriate quality assurance certification schemes, there is growing scope for marketing exports based on ethical production.
- The Government of Bangladesh needs to take up the issue of negative impacts on livelihood and security for garment workers arising out of MFA phase out to negotiate international assistance for managing the transition. More should be done to increase access to alternate skill training for RMG workers faced with unemployment. The IT and Nursing industry are possible sectors which could grow quickly if more trained workers were available.

## 7. Energy for sustainable development

National energy policy is a key topic for sustainable development and growth. Both the United Nations and DFID agree that “Energy can contribute to all three pillars of sustainable development-economic, social and environmental.”<sup>17</sup> The 2002 Johannesburg summit<sup>18</sup> reconfirmed sustainable development as a central part of the international agenda promising global action to fight poverty and protect the environment.

Energy scarcity has particularly adverse consequences wherever there are large numbers of poor people who have to spend a high proportion of their income on energy. Not only does lack of access to electricity and power drastically limit ability to satisfy basic education, housing and sanitation needs, but it also has immediate negative environmental effects. For example, 40m tons of fuelwood are consumed in Bangladesh for cooking purposes which unnecessarily adds to deforestation pressures as well as adding to pollution by being less energy efficient.

Until recently development strategies have often overlooked the fundamental role of energy in poverty alleviation. Whilst Bangladesh has made some progress in bringing electricity to many villages, it still lacks a reliable electricity grid. Private investment in the energy sector is hampered by massive underpayment of bills which has had the knock on effect of limiting generating capacity leading to chronic shortages of power and regular ‘loadshedding,’ adding further costs to business and industry. Uncertainty about Bangladesh’s energy policy has been complicated further by the ongoing public debate on the gas export issue.

### Gas production and export

Bangladesh has substantial high quality natural gas reserves in the eastern part of the country, which currently supply about 71% of total commercial energy needs. The total amount of gas has been estimated in August 2002 to be between 32 and 64 trillion cubic feet (TCF) with a total net recoverable reserve of about 16.1 TCF.<sup>19</sup>

The nationalised Petro-Bangla does not have the money and technology to extract gas economically from these gas fields. This makes Bangladesh heavily reliant on foreign companies to invest in the sector, but under current circumstances they are only willing to pursue significant investment if the gas is exported to India to guarantee revenue. This is a very controversial topic within Bangladesh where many feel the gas should be earmarked for domestic development and industry ahead of exports. Certainly there are some arguments in favour of this point of view as there are growing energy demands and most estimates of reserves range only around 15 years if used domestically. Estimates of potential financial gains from gas export also vary drastically from as little as \$170m a year to several billion dollars. Yet without further foreign investment which will not be forthcoming without approval for exports, even known reserves may not be extracted efficiently, creating a Catch-22 situation.

Past history suggests that with time and better technology one can expect recoverable reserves to increase substantially leaving some expert panels confident that the country has adequate reserves for foreign sales. All indications are therefore that some form of exports will eventually be agreed so as not to kill off investment in the

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<sup>17</sup> Energy for the poor report-August 2002.

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit\\_docs/2009\\_keyoutcomes\\_commitments.pdf](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/2009_keyoutcomes_commitments.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [www.energyintel.com](http://www.energyintel.com)

sector. The BBPA hopes that the national focus on whether or not to export does not lead to other related concerns being forgotten. Nigeria and other oil rich nations provide cautionary tales to show that wealth in natural resources does not always lead to progressive development and often worsens corruption and imbalances of wealth. Hence, DFID and overseas Bangladeshis should certainly continue efforts to improve national governance.

- Regardless of the outcome of future exploration and export decisions, Bangladesh faces growing demand for energy as its population increases. With Dhaka's population exceeding 10million and continuing industrial development, it is essential that export of gas does not hamper domestic development and that profits made are appropriately invested back in the country.

Investing in energy is essential to help Bangladesh prosper. This can be aided by projects to improve the distribution infrastructure which is essential to encourage economic development and foreign investment. The environmental impact of development should also not be neglected. Concerns such as those arising out of the 1997 Magurchara<sup>20</sup> blast that exploration companies are not following best practice in pollution clean up and safety standards also need to be addressed urgently.

- DFID should help build up capacity for environmental impact assessments.
- DFID and other donors should support measures to improve energy efficiency and where appropriate to develop conservation programmes.
- DFID and overseas Bangladeshis should make efforts to encourage and invest in renewable energy sources.

Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) installations have been successfully implemented in different parts of the country demonstrating innovative application of the technology for improving the quality of life in off grid rural Bangladesh. In June 1996, Grameen Shakti<sup>21</sup> launched a soft financing system to support this further.

- DFID could help promote renewable sources of energy such as Solar Power by investing in the production of cheap efficient PV cells and encouraging foreign renewable energy companies to invest in Bangladesh and exchange knowledge and technology.

Grassroot projects that should be supported more by DFID include the (Sustainable Environmental Management Programme) sponsored by UNDP and Local Government Engineering Department set up in on October 1998, for Rural Energy Technologies demonstration and transfer.

- DFID should also increase support to the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficient fund (REEF) formed by the World Bank and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to provide funding to energy efficient projects.

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<sup>20</sup> [www.dailystarnews.com](http://www.dailystarnews.com) 20 May 2002

<sup>21</sup> <http://shakti.hypermart.net/>

## 8. Encouraging Investment and Trade

### Linking home remittances to economic development

Remittance is crucial for Bangladesh's economy, constituting almost one third of foreign exchange earnings. It is driven by overseas Bangladeshi's and appears steady whether it comes from the Middle East, the UK and increasingly the USA. Yet the topic is often overlooked and remains an unsexy area of research within the development field.

The total of officially recorded annual overseas remittances<sup>22</sup> estimated in 1999 at \$ 1.2 billion by the University of California Centre of Migration is greater than the annual flow of aid to Bangladesh. Official 1998-99 records credit remittance with contributing towards 22% of the cost of financing imports. Over the past 25 years labour migration from Bangladesh has registered a steady increase. On average since 1990, 225,000 Bangladeshis have been migrating annually on short-term employment, mostly to 13 countries. In the past the bulk of the migrants consisted of professional and skilled labour. However the dominant trend is more towards semi- and unskilled labour migration. Recent research<sup>23</sup> suggests that a typical migrant remits c.56% of their income with less than half all remittances being channelled through official sources, 40% through *Hundi*<sup>24</sup> with the remainder going via friends and relatives. Given the difficulty in estimating how much money is carried by workers themselves, the evidence suggests that the level of overseas remittances could easily be several times that recorded by official transactions.

The expenditure pattern of migrant families provides some useful information on the potential for a "more productive use" of remittances. Opinions vary on what constitutes productive use, which is usually defined as "any activity that has the potential to generate additional income, or to safeguard against future expenses." This generally refers to investments such as savings, loans, or income or small business investments and related employment generating activities, which in practice can serve as insurance/pension schemes for the migrant.

Apart from directly supporting families, the biggest use of remittances for both long term and short term overseas Bangladeshis tends to be in property. Abundant opportunities for rental makes property popular as an investment option in its own right. This can have a mixture of uses including providing support for family members as well as possible future second/retirement homes for migrants themselves.

Remittance is presently often confined to family related investments and conspicuous consumption. The large volume and availability of remittances suggests that much more could be done to enhance use of remittances for economic development. The development potential of remittances could be improved by increasing the flow of remittances by lowering transfer costs and offering more attractive investment alternatives.

- Transfer costs (fees and exchange rates) could be lowered by encouraging more competition to the present bureaucratic official channels and government banks. Development by Bangladeshi based banks of more

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<sup>22</sup> Defined as monies transmitted from one place to another. Although remittances can also be sent in-kind, the term remittance usually refers to cash transfers, mainly to families back home. These sums can be very large. One early 1990s study found that remittances to Bangladesh from Bahrain alone exceeded \$35m, which was more than the entire USAID contribution to the country that year.

<sup>23</sup> Migrant Worker remittances and micro-finance in Bangladesh, ILO, Dhaka (Feb 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Hundi is a colloquial term for existing informal transfer systems. Hundi agents act as foreign exchange dealers who charge 1 to 2 per cent more than official exchange rate but are used as they are seen as quick and convenient.

reliable and secure electronic transfer methods could both reduce costs and encourage a greater flow of remittance through official channels. The opportunity also exists for effective micro finance institutions like the Grameen Bank and BRAC to develop services to remit money that can be utilised directly for development needs.

- As in other countries with large extremes of wealth and poverty, the anomaly can often be noted of large property developments or grand houses being built in areas with poor or failing public services including lack of basic sanitation/lighting etc. Though much property development is generated internally, overseas Bangladeshis could use their influence as major investors in property to help ensure that local property taxes are set and collected at reasonable levels, so that basic amenities are properly developed and maintained. (Remittance incomes tend to be large enough in relation to local income levels for overseas Bangladeshis to be more willing to bear the cost of taxes – provided of course that appropriate services are duly provided.)

### **Helping international investors**

In general, the factors that most discourage international investors from investing in Bangladesh also deter overseas Bangladeshis from committing funds to non-family related commercial investment. Experience of the large flow of remittances suggests that if some of these barriers can be removed, the potential volume of available investment funds from overseas Bangladeshis could be very large indeed.

- The IDG welcomes indications by DFID that it hopes to support research and tools to encourage better utilisation of home remittance in the Bangladeshi economy through vehicles like government bonds. Of particular interest would be government bonds that included a matching facility to direct funds for specific infrastructure or development projects.

The IDG believes that this will be a fruitful area for making use of measures entertained within the new powers granted to DFID in 2002. British Bangladeshis should work with DFID to develop practical approaches for overcoming barriers to increased investment and trade. Amongst initiatives that DFID could help develop with British Bangladeshis are possibilities such as:

- Supporting the feasibility of new government development bonds for infrastructure investment by encouraging and/or providing guarantees and tax incentives.
- Investigating incentives to encourage and reduce the risks of establishing dedicated venture capital funds for developing countries such as Bangladesh to attract home remittances;
- [Supporting tax incentives for senders of home remittances in their country of residence](#)
- [Investigating collaboration with groups such as Grameen and BRAC to make better use of the home remittance transfer process for development objectives.](#)

Investment via financial vehicles such as unit trusts and investment funds is inherently a risk-averse activity. Although in principle incentives can be developed to attract a wide range of international investors overseas Bangladeshis offer the most readily available latent potential for attracting significant new funds.

Direct investment in business and trade also needs encouragement. While market forces may cause industries such as textiles or oil to find their own way to encouraging investment in countries like Bangladesh, this is not the case for most sectors. Even though high returns on capital are not uncommon in many existing business ventures, lack of confidence and trust in potential business partners is a major barrier discouraging overseas Bangladeshis from investing directly in new ventures.

- Establishing 'one-stop shop' format sources of advice, both electronically and on the ground would be of tremendous benefit in encouraging and enabling investors to commit funds without fear of being misled or approached for bribes. DFID's work in improving governance both at governmental level and via encouragement for improved corporate governance may also help generate a more beneficial investment climate.
- British Bangladeshis should establish and support more initiatives whether in the form of direct ventures and funds or promotional activity such as trade fairs to encourage trade with and investment in Bangladesh.

### **People to people exchange**

*Ultimately for globalisation to work for the benefit of the poor, as well as dealing with capital flows, issues relating to the free movement of people need to be considered in a broader context.* Existing debate is heavily dominated by the needs and priorities of wealthier countries, so there is widespread familiarity with say, the pros and cons of encouraging educated professionals to move from poorer to richer countries in search of a better life.

What is usually neglected is that in an increasingly mobile age, other permutations are possible from the traditional model of emigration for life, but that inequalities in freedom of movement prevent people in poor countries from taking full advantage of such possibilities. Hence while it is easy within reason for anyone with a UK passport to travel and invest funds virtually anywhere in the world, this is largely one sided as lack of infrastructure and visa restrictions limit equivalent opportunities to people in poor countries. This represents a major opportunity cost as in all poor countries there are undoubtedly many academics, entrepreneurs and civil servants committed to building their home countries, who would nonetheless benefit from the ability to regularly travel and work in other countries.

- Historically much of the world's communication and trading networks have been geared to serving the rich countries of the North, so that the scope for increased South to South trading is artificially restricted. This needs to be considered further at a multilateral level. It would be relatively cheap however for DFID to facilitate more South to South exchange schemes, which could potentially have many beneficial spin off effects. *ecotourist entrepreneurs in Brazil may have much to offer counterparts in Vietnam or vice versa, likewise farmers in Pakistan and Kenya, or transport planners in Mexico and Bangladesh....*
- We believe the potential gains from enhancing people to people exchange are considerable and justify encouragement, whether in the form of developing and financing a wider array of scholarships, exchange programmes and bond schemes to support visas for entrepreneurs and academics, or by taking a more liberal approach towards immigration policies.

## 9. Bangladesh in the International Arena

Recent major debates within Bangladesh about the country's international image have served to highlight how far behind other countries Bangladesh is in being able to promote itself to the world.

Poor representation in the global arena can have adverse consequences for development goals by leaving countries like Bangladesh marginalised for example, from negotiations on climate change that may have a crucial impact on its future. Inevitably, rich countries can often dominate proceedings by sending much larger delegations. Whilst collaborative efforts by poor countries and Western NGOs have on occasion proved mutually beneficial, such moves can not substitute for improving a country's own ability to promote its best interests.

In many ways Bangladesh has played a very positive role in the international arena and is often cited as a prime example of an emerging democracy with a majority Muslim population. Despite long experience of military rule, it has been more successful than its neighbours in limiting defence expenditure as a proportion of GDP and has actively discouraged proliferation of nuclear weapons. In addition to success in fields such as microcredit, Bangladesh has made positive contributions to international forums including supplying peacekeeping troops to United Nations programmes in Bosnia and Sierra Leone.

By setting up the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) its diplomats have encouraged the key, if as yet underused forum for multilateral collaboration in an area fraught with regional conflict. Yet, it is also true that for one of the most populated countries in the world, Bangladesh overall has a low global profile, which is ironic, given the very high level of international interest during its war of independence. Like other poor countries not on the tourist or sporting trail Bangladesh tends to figure in the Western media consciousness only during times of natural disaster, yet as this paper has noted it is not without significant success stories.

Failure to excite a higher level of international interest is enhanced by a number of factors, not least of which is the political domination of the South Asian region by the India-Pakistan conflict. Added to this is the often inward looking nature of Bangladesh's political culture, which has tended to show a lack of media awareness and placed little value on projecting the nation to the world at large.

The underlying reasons for 'failures of projection' relate to key questions of identity and national self image that are a major preoccupation for Bangladeshis. However, understanding this background alone will not help to quickly increase international interest or to challenge incorrect historical stereotypes and perceptions. In practice this is only likely to come with time and greater international interaction through growing trade or cultural influence.

- Overseas Bangladeshis could and should certainly do more to help promote the country globally. Of particular value would be assistance in representation in the media and international forums.
- Improved communications and increased interaction by overseas Bangladeshis with organisations back home may also help foster a better level of global media awareness. DFID itself should do more to act as an advocate for poor countries generally – both by using its own influence on UK and EU policymakers and by providing direct assistance to help Southern Governments and NGOs make their own case.

## Relations with India

No discussion about Bangladesh's future can be complete without mentioning relations with India, by which Bangladesh is surrounded, barring a small border with Burma. As noted in passing, much of the deadlock afflicting Bangladesh's political elites is nominally tied up with debate and constant political mudslinging about relations with India and Pakistan and the legacy of the 1971 war of independence.

As a non-political body, the IDG would like to see an end to the damaging effects of partisan name calling. In common we believe with the vast majority of Bangladeshis, we can see more than one side to the arguments of competing factions. For instance we would support:

- Encouragement of an atmosphere of respect for the rule of law including the ability to hold both present and past government officials to account.
- Development of a South African style Truth commission as a way of helping to resolve some of the more persistent national debates arising out of crimes against humanity committed during the War of Independence.

Whilst the above aspects of national political baggage may be viewed in principle as historical and potentially resolvable, Bangladesh's geographical attachment to India is of a more permanent nature. Economic logic suggests that India should be the country's natural prime trading partner, but the sheer difference in size between the countries' economies provides grounds for fearing economic domination. Added to this past stonewalling adopted in bilateral negotiations by India and its huge trade surplus, which is deepened by one sided tariff and non-tariff barriers to Bangladeshi products and it becomes easier to appreciate the widespread political reluctance to open up borders further with India.

As negotiations over the Farraka Accord demonstrate though, such fears can in part be overcome by assiduous diplomacy. It is possible therefore that current contentious debates over gas exports and negotiations over transit of Indian goods through Bangladesh will eventually be resolved the same way.

- It is arguable that because Indian regional and economic dominance is already so large, that Bangladesh would in practice have little to lose and more to gain from supporting a further opening up of borders and free trade. The geographical isolation of the seven North East Indian states for instance provides a potentially rich trading hinterland for Chittagong port, as well as parts of Burma, Nepal and Bhutan. Likewise, as these areas are relatively less densely populated yet rich in natural resources, there is considerable scope for mutually beneficial economic development.
- DFID should commission more in depth studies of the potential benefits for the Bangladesh-East Indian region from increased free trade and economic collaboration. This should necessarily include reference to the considerable potential for major infrastructure projects in the region including transport links and scope for power generation. Only by demonstrating a broad range of gains for the people of the entire region, will it be possible to overcome mutual political suspicions between states. Otherwise support for free trade risks being held up for many years, especially if it is seen as primarily benefiting India as the region's dominant power.

- In the long run, although it is important to be aware of the legitimate grounds Bangladesh and Nepal have to fear Indian hegemony, the logic of a South Asian free trade area along the lines of the European Union has significant appeal. The EU offers a positive model for supporting regional development and overcoming enmity whilst retaining strong national identities for smaller countries. From a Bangladeshi perspective also, this long term goal would fit in with its consistent support for SAARC.
- History ties Bangladesh to South Asia, which is why much of its political energy is focused on debating policy models followed by India and Pakistan. Much of this debate is needlessly introspective and damaging. Overseas Bangladeshis should encourage moves by Bangladeshi policy makers to adopt a wider global perspective by nurturing trade and cultural relations with other Asian states and further afield. In addition to assisting Bangladesh's ability to prosper in the global economy, fostering a more internationalist outlook and increased relations with a wider range of states, would provide alternative models to follow and mitigate fears of Indian domination.

### **Making better use of the diaspora**

This paper has focused on ways in which British Bangladeshis and DFID can work better for the benefit of Bangladesh. The IDG aspires to encourage stronger links between British-Bangladeshis and Bangladeshi institutions and policy makers, so that the valuable hard currency remittances presently sent home are not lost with succeeding generations but are amply replaced by increased communication, trade and investment.

It is important for these goals to be widely discussed and supported amongst Bangladeshis. In the past, language and lack of common cultural ground have often been cited as hurdles preventing second generation overseas Bangladeshis from directly assisting their ancestral homeland. Anecdotes abound of Bangladeshis who will show an inappropriately deferential attitude to even the least qualified 'white face,' but will ignore overseas Bangladeshis who have the wrong accent or status. This can be damaging if it weakens ties to the homeland amongst younger generations. It is also particularly short sighted as by and large, younger overseas Bangladeshis with an interest in development issues, as well as being natural but unused intermediaries, can often be more objective than older expatriates as they are less likely to be hampered by petty party political baggage.

- More should be done to overcome such barriers as British Bangladeshis begin to reach a position where they can take an active role in influencing policymakers amongst British officials, NGOs and businesses. One fruitful but underexplored approach would be to more pro-actively increase interaction between British-Bangladeshis with an interest in development issues and Bangladeshis working in relevant universities, businesses or NGOs back home. All too often, such contacts only happen by accident or are limited to small networks or cliques.
- Plenty more should also be done to increase communication between Bangladeshi academics and business people on research or trade assignments within developed countries and second generation overseas Bangladeshis. Whilst family networks and hospitality may ensure that such visitors have plenty of interaction with first generation emigrants, mutual contacts often do not extend down the generations and clearly this could be a major lost opportunity for all concerned.

## 10. Visions for the future

Bangladesh urgently needs to develop the vision, confidence and will to strive towards a better future for all its people.

At the outset, the IDG noted that there is considerable consensus about the key issues affecting development in Bangladesh. Insight from countries such as South Korea that have experienced rapid growth, confirms the vital importance of addressing basic concerns to do with education, equality, governance and infrastructure.

The experience of Malaysia and Singapore also demonstrates the importance of having high aspirations. As noted in the first section, in some respects for a country of Bangladesh's considerable human resources and potential, the Millennium Development Goals, though difficult to attain under current circumstances, are arguably not ambitious enough as Bangladesh clearly has the ability to exceed these goals.

Included below is a brief selection of national goals and aspirations that have been recorded in conversations about Bangladesh's development. They are noted in no particular order, but will hopefully like this paper inspire further thought and action on these very important issues.

- .....
- *Full national literacy to secondary level-All Millennium development goals exceeded*
  - *Empowerment of the poor and more participative and decentralised democracy*
  - *No extreme poverty and increased opportunities for all*
  
  - *50% representation of women at all political levels*
  - *Increased national self confidence – Bangladesh viewed as model emerging democracy with successful economy*
  - *Pride taken in nurturing a diverse, peaceful and tolerant society- full protection and enhancement of rights for all*
  - *More responsible political elites - Bangladesh governments commended by human rights and anti-corruption NGOs*
  
  - *Improved atmosphere and reputations for national universities – reverse brain drain*
  - *More vibrant + varied media- increased recognition of Bangladeshis abroad in global cultural circles etc*
  - *Dhaka develops sustainably as a World City– more green spaces, improved cultural life, better public transport etc*
  - *Fast train links to India, Burma and beyond*
  - *Chittagong port seen as a Rotterdam for the region of East India, Nepal and Burma*
  
  - *Diversified industry and export base - Bangladesh has more global brand names than just Grameen*
  - *Avoidance and mitigation of the worst consequences of climate change*
  - *Successful sustainable development – economic growth with low emission/pollution rates*
  - *Continued protection of key habitats such as the Sunderbans – Bangladeshis set lead in developing and enjoying socially and environmentally responsible tourism*

# APPENDIX I

## DFID Policy papers

*DFID Country Strategy Review 1998 – 2002 Bangladesh, August 2002 and associated papers (current Country Strategy Paper 1998 and DFID Bangladesh study “Drivers of Pro-Poor Change.”*

*further details available via [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk) . Comments can be sent to Bo Sundstrom, DFID Bangladesh, British High Commission, United Nations Road, Barishada, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh. ([B-Sundstrom@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:B-Sundstrom@dfid.gov.uk))*

### Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, representatives of 189 countries met at the U.N. Millennium General Assembly in New York and adopted the Millennium Declaration concerning peace, security, and development issues. These 8 Millennium Development Goals are also endorsed by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

#### Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

#### Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

#### Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

#### Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

#### Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

#### Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

#### Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. Have achieved, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

#### Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system.... Address the special needs of the least developed countries.... Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states.... Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries.... In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries. In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

## APPENDIX II

### Sources of Information

- I. IDG BBPA Submission to the House of Commons International Development Committee Inquiry into Global Climate Change and Sustainable Development. (see [www.bbpa.co.uk/idg](http://www.bbpa.co.uk/idg))
- II. "How the Diaspora can help fight threats to Bangladesh's Environment," IDG paper May 2002
- III. Wind Energy in Bangladesh, Dr. Anwar Hossain Former Chairman, BAEC, Ex-Consultant LGED, Presently Energy Advisor, BCAS
- IV. Third report of Session 2001 – 02 Global Climate Change and Sustainable Development
- V. A Study on the Probable Impacts of Phasing-Out of MFA upon the Livelihood Security of the Female workers of RMG Sector in Bangladesh, Action Aid Bangladesh 2001
- VI. Migrant Worker Remittances and Micro-Finance in Bangladesh, Tasneem Siffiqui, Chowhury R Abrar, ILO Office Dhaka, February 2001
- VII. Bangladesh Government Official weblinks via [www.bangladeshgov.org/](http://www.bangladeshgov.org/)

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### Persons and networks consulted in course of preparation

- Farid Bakht, Consultant
- Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN) and BEN Digests. c/o [www.ben-center.org](http://www.ben-center.org)
- BIAN - Bangladesh International Action Network London, c/o Kumar Murshid GLA
- Sultana Begum, SOAS Postgraduate Department (FCO Secretariat interneer)
- Rob Cartridge, Campaigns Director War on Want
- Dr. Saleemul Huq, International Institute for Environment and Development, [www.ied.org.uk](http://www.ied.org.uk)
- Mathew Lockwood, UK Advocacy team, Action Aid
- Asaur Rahman, Deputy Chair BBPA.
- Emanur Rahman, [www.Alochona.org](http://www.Alochona.org) – an international (predominantly US and Bangladeshi based) monthly magazine and Bangladesh focused email network which covers many key national development themes.

In addition, numerous Bangladeshi Newspapers are available on the internet, via websites such as [www.worldpress.org/newspapers/ASIA/Bangladesh.cfm](http://www.worldpress.org/newspapers/ASIA/Bangladesh.cfm) and News From Bangladesh c/o [www.bangladesh-web.com/](http://www.bangladesh-web.com/)

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The BBPA (British-Bangladeshi Professionals Association) is a not-for-profit organisation founded to foster educational attainment, the pursuit of professional excellence and social responsibility within the Bangladeshi community in the UK. [www.bbpa.co.uk](http://www.bbpa.co.uk)

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