

Cross-Party Group on Bangladesh

CPG Meeting & AGM – 27th November 2024

18:00-20:00, The Scottish Parliament CR2

In Attendance

MSPs

Foysol Choudhury MSP

Evelyn Tweed MSP

Non- MSP CPG Members

Bangladeshi Students association of Scotland

Bangladesh Catering Association Scotland

ELREC

Nazmul Ahsan

Ziauddin k Siddique - Scottish Bangladeshi Welfare Association

Nurul Hoque Ali - Aberdeen City Council

Farhana Murshida Kabi- HERP

Dr Shaif Uddin Ahammed - University of the West of Scotland and The Bangla Centre
SCIO

Cllr Abdul Jabbar - Oldham Council Deputy Leader

Shahnoor Chowdhury

Rashpal Nottay - NHS Lothian

Taleb Uddin

Johura Ahmed

Abu Meron – Community Councillor for Liberton & District Committee Council

Md Shohidul Islam

Laila Israt Jahan - Laila Jahan Fashion House

Farhan Masud Khan

Abul Hasnat

Dr Wali Tasar Uddin - Europe Bangladesh Federation of Commerce & Industry

Ibrahim Rashid University of Stirling

Bodrul Husain Bangladeshi Students Association of Scotland

Mahjabeen Khaled Musharrof Trust

Shaha Haque Hut bazar

Syed Shamsul Islam

Abdul Rahim - Bangladesh Samity Edinburgh

Jamal Khan Study circle London

MD Shaoon Khan Mark International USA LLC.

Salauddin Chowdhury

Muhammad Azizul Islam - University of Aberdeen

Shamima Haque School of Business, University of Dundee

Ehtesham Hasnain Bangladesh Association Glasgow

Matin Khan

Abul kalam

Dr Abdul Kadir - Bangladesh Medical Association UK

Abdul Motlib Chowdhury - EBFCI

Craig McIver EBFCI
Badrul Hussain
Mohammad Zahid
Khaled Miah
Md Shohidul Islam
Nasima Akther
Sharin Mohammad
Din Mohammad
Motin JMN Scotland Ltd
Ashik Miah JMN Scotland Ltd

Invited Guests (Check signed forms)

Ross Gilligan Sightsavers
Ayon Debnath Sightsavers
Saleemul Huq International Centre for Climate Change & Development, Dhaka

And other Individual Members of the Scotland's Bangladeshi Community

Apologies

Sarah Boyack MSP
Miles Briggs MSP
Lord Provost of Edinburgh City

Welcome

Foyso! Choudhury MSP welcomed, CPG Members and guests at AGM and meeting. He reiterated the aims of the CPG to strengthen the relationship between Scotland and Bangladesh. The CPG members and invited guests introduced themselves.

Agenda item 1: AGM

- ❖ Approval of Minutes from AGM 2023
- ❖ Election of Office Bearers (Convener, Vice Convener):
 - The Convener invited the Group to proceed to re-appoint the Office Bearers and Secretary
 - The group re-appointed Foyso! Choudhury MSP as Convener and Miles Briggs MSP as co-convener of the CPG on Bangladesh.
 - High Commission of Bangladesh in London was nominated to continue as
 - Secretariat of the CPG.
 - The Convener noted that a few MSP colleagues have expressed their wish to join the CPG.

Agenda item 2:

Sightsavers Presentation on The Equal Bangladesh/Somatar Campaign

Campaign work aims to adopt measures that protect and enhance the rights of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh.

- Ross Gilligan from SightSavers gave overview of Equal Bangladesh Campaign - Global Initiative for Disability Rights and Sustainable Development
- Sightsavers - International NGO works to prevent avoidable blindness and tropical diseases in 30 countries across South Asia.
- First programmes in Bangladesh – performed 2 million cataract operations; supporting 10,000 people with disabilities
- Further works cross spectrum of disability to **claim rights via inclusive education & vocational training on the ground** - avoiding flying out surgeons, optometrists – building capacity locally. Same Approach used for Equal Bangladesh Campaigning with organisation.
- Ayon from Sightsavers joined meeting remotely from Dhaka speaking on Campaign of **equal access of disabilities** – especially women and girls and, low-income countries to access education, employment, healthcare and political processes participation
- Despite **Bangladeshi Disability Act reformulated 2013** – slow progress seen in delivering rights of disabled people. However, working with strong platform called Disability Alliance and STS Bangalore – 28 organisations working in sector, collaborating with UN Agencies.
- Ayon further spoke on **Implementation of Disability Rights and the Challenges** Faced by People with Disabilities in Bangladesh – e.g. Disabled people rights in workplace → Campaign focused on Consultation with people with disabilities.
- **Various elements of campaign** seeking to ensure law is implemented:
 - Activation of Disability Committees (covering national to district level)
 - Need for different ministries to collaborate.
 - Call for Ministries to appoint Disability Focal Points and allocate Disability Budget
 - Need to relook at Selection plan and review delivery of Disability Act from 2013
 - Form Parliamentary Caucus on Disability
 - For more info visit - [Our charity work in Bangladesh | Sightsavers](#)
- **Existing partnerships** with Ministry of Partnership, engaging with young people with disabilities and lobbying Media to sensitise disability rights.
- **Current Political situation** in Bangladesh challenges disability inclusion – however interim Govt is seen to put it as a priority.
- Emphasised importance of Campaigning during political turmoil to keep momentum going and engage with interim Govt.
- Concluded presentation with thanks to MSPs; extending invitation to Bangladesh to see their work on the ground and see how Campaign is changing lives of people with disabilities.

Agenda item 3:

Dr Wali Tasar Uddin MBE, Chairman of Europe Bangladesh Federation of Commerce and Industry (EBFCI)

- **Video Presentation of EBFCI** recent visit to Bangladesh which aimed to strengthen business ties between UK, EU and Bangladesh.

Agenda item 4:

Update from International Centre for Climate Change and Development following COP29 in Baku., Saqib Huq, ICCCAD Managing Director

- Updated CPG following COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan; highlighting **2 key elements** noted emanating from COP29 – **Multilateral process** and support from Global North to Global South – noting on sticky issue of **Climate Finance**
- Mr Huq noted controversial issue in past COPs regarding polluting fossil fuels industries and transport sectors → However, Article re multilateral process approved on Day 1 of Convention
- Noted Bangladesh and Global South felt voices were unheard.
- **Carbon Markets** – noting it does not stop polluters polluting as long as they're able to buy carbon credits. – no real change of emissions profile of toxic industries; no real mitigation efforts to offset emissions elsewhere – very difficult to assess emissions reductions – heavily contested issue,
- Reports show emissions increase year on year since drastic cuts during pandemic in 2020.
- **Climate Finance** – How much climate finance and support will Global North be giving to Global South?
 - Issue of vulnerable countries with limited resources, facing impacts of emissions emitted by Global North.
 - Over past 2 yrs – issue intensively deliberated along with workshops, research work to assess different financial mechanisms needed.
 - Assessing what countries are most at threat – including Bangladesh, Small Island states such as Vanuatu, Seychelles.

Lack of Financial Support:

- Last estimated in 2009 with \$100 billion – noting Global North never met – esp. heavily polluting ones such as US.
- Convention preference to count finance support in forms of loans, insurance markets, blended mechanism to support Global South.
 - However, this adds to credit and paying debt with limited resources.
- **Standing Committee on Finance** within Convention identified \$500 Billion just on Adaptation – similar amount for Mitigation.
- **Loss & Damage Impacts** and difficulties in Adapting –
- **Climate Change & Mental Health:** traumatised year on year by floods, losing crops via draughts, heat waves correlation with PTSD symptoms - anxiety, depression
- Noted \$300 billion climate finance mobilised – commenting accounts for third of amount needed of 1.3 trillion.
- **Finance Delivery:** How Global North delivers climate finance support down to local level to Global South, particularly in areas like Bangladesh; noting Global North prefers for financial support to be delivered via multi-donor development banks e.g. World Bank, Asian Development Bank...etc , which work at regional rather than local level. – locked finances are very bureaucratic and slow and not fit for purpose.

- Concluded with thanks to Scotland that delivered first loss and damage funding.

Agenda item 5:

Open Discussion & Questions

- Member asked about Interim Government climate priorities.
- Saqib Huq welcomed interim Govt taking reins on climate and making it a govt priority.
- Chief Advisor, Dr Younis attended Convention and critical part of negotiations.
- Member working in Public Health (EHSCP) – noted water access issue of people carrying water for miles. Asked how Scottish Government and Bangladeshi community organisations can find out about water shortage in Bangladesh.
 - CPG MSP members, Foysol and Evelyn highlighted on their Bangladesh trip and work on water shortages and visit to village with 50 water wells - where disabled people could access fresh water.
- Cllr A. Jabbar who chairs Bangladesh Partnership Board on behalf of Mayor Andy Burnham- who both visited Bangladesh in 2019 looking at issue of plastic bottles disposal, providing support to Bangladesh to create a plastic recycling centre.
 - Funding promised via World Bank and FCDO but suspended.
 - How to focus on delivering and channel funding for projects in Bangladesh.
 - Cllr Jabbar to send plastic recycling plant proposal details and background information on project to date.
- Cllr Jabbar thanked CPG for their work and commitment.
- **Suggestions for future topics**
 - To progress on Education priority
 - Climate
 - Sustainable Tourism
- Convenor invited members to send in suggestions for future topics and proposals to work with NGOs and Government agencies
- Convenor concluded thanking CPG Members and invited guests for their excellent presentations.

Agenda item 6:

Date and Time of **Next Meeting** to be confirmed

AOCB