



IORA Update:

Workshop on Promoting Microfinance for Economic Development in IORA Region Dhaka, Bangladesh 8-9 April 2015



The workshop on Promoting Microfinance for Economic Development in IORA Region was held on 8 and 9 April 2015 at the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The workshop was jointly organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and PKSF. It was attended by Experts from 12 Member States of the Association and the IORA Secretariat headed by Mr. Firdaus Dahlan, Director, in representing Secretary General of IORA.

The inaugural session was honoured by the presence of the H.E. Mr. Abul Maal Abdul (AMA) Muhith, MP, Honourable Finance Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, who inaugurated the workshop, and Rear Admiral (Retd) Khurshed Alam, Secretary MOFA Bangladesh, and Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chairman, PKSF.

In his remarks, Finance Minister AMA Muhith mainly underlined the need for more studies to ensure the best use of microcredit for maximising its benefit for the borrowers. Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, PKSF Chairman, highlighted the importance of effective initiatives in poverty reduction in view of ensuring major services including education and health. PKSF is supporting the rural economy by earmarking 40 percent of the loans for the agriculture sector, said Abdul Karim, Managing Director of PKSF. Speaking also on the

occasion, IORA Director Firdaus Dahlan pointed out that the workshop would provide a platform for IORA Member States to share their experiences and best practices in Microfinance and which would bring to the region economic development.

The two-day workshop included four discussion sessions on different aspects of microfinance such as the inherent synergy between microfinance and development in Member States, disbursement based financing to integrated development financing, microfinance for inclusive growth, and poverty alleviation and financing for enterprise development: policy frameworks, institutional structures, and monitoring mechanisms.

The deliberations of the above topics were substantiated through the intervention of a number of regional experts and professionals from the microfinance field and the key recommendations of the workshop among others included: IORA Member countries to enhance Government interventions to promote microfinance and financial inclusion programmes, IORA Member States to promote ICT through workshop/seminars for better management, monitoring and delivery of services, Member States to exchange appropriate methodology for microfinance development, Dialogue Partners of IORA to support IORA programmes related to poverty reduction.

In his report to the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, at the Closing Ceremony, Rear Admiral (Retd) Md Khurshed Alam, Secretary, Maritime Affairs Unit (MAU), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh as the Chair of the workshop highlighted the outcomes of the workshop and thanked PKSF for hosting this workshop, the Ministry of Finance for guidance, the IORA Member States for their participation and the IORA Secretariat for their assistance in the organisation of the workshop.

On behalf of the IORA Secretariat, Mr. Firdaus Dahlan extended gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh specially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PKSF and other parties for making this workshop a success. He pointed out that the workshop was fruitful with doable recommendations with the assistance from experts in Microfinance.

Mr. Barclay O'Brien, from Australia, representing the participants, presented vote of thanks to the organisers for excellent arrangement of the workshop and hospitality of the host during the workshop namely the PKSF, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IORA Secretariat, as well as the participants for sharing their ideas and experience with the other member countries.

A Closing Statement was made by Dr. Atiur Rahman, Governor, Bangladesh Bank, special guest, who stated that the geographic and resource diversities of the IORA region should be viewed as its "strength".

A final Official Closing Speech was delivered by H.E. Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, who was the Chief Guest. Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali has called for establishing a common mechanism for sharing knowledge and expertise of microfinance among the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Member States.

The meeting was part of a much larger endeavour elaborated by the IORA through its Sustainable Development Programme (approved at the 14th Meeting of the Council of Ministers held in Perth on 9 October 2014), in an attempt to stimulate economic development among its least developed Member States and balance growth among the rim countries while reducing economic disparity.