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ATTENTION: NEWS EDITOR / CHIEF REPORTER

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Bangladesh Maintains Progressive Human Development Trend: Global UNDP Report

Bangladesh Moves 2 Steps up in the Global Human Development Index

Dhaka: Since 1980 till today, Bangladesh's Human Development Index (HDI) has risen by 1.86% annually with steady improvement in life expectancy, education, and the standard of living, according to the UNDP's 2009 Human Development Report launched today.

The Report, ***Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development***, demonstrates that the nation moved into the *medium developed countries category* in the Human Development Index from 2003. The recent HDI for Bangladesh based on 2007 data is 0.543, which gives the country a rank of 146th out of 182 countries.

"I am profoundly happy to see the significant improvement that Bangladesh has made during the last three decades in Human Development and the recent HDI ranking of Bangladesh shows that it has moved two steps up in the HDI ranking from the previous year", UNDP Bangladesh Country Director, Stefan Priesner said.

The 2009 Human Development Report demonstrates that migration can enhance human development for the people who move, for destination communities and for those who remain at home, while nearly one billion — or one out of seven — people are migrants.

Most migrants, internal and international, reap gains in the form of higher incomes, better access to education and health, and improved prospects for their children. Bangladesh has an emigration rate of 4.5%. The major continent of destination for migrants from Bangladesh is Asia with 92.4% of emigrants living there.

"We have seen initiatives by the government to activate Bangladeshi missions abroad to ensure upholding of the Human Rights of the Bangladeshi migrants. I hope further progress would be made on this as this is a crucial precondition to ensure the best out of migration and human movement", Stefan Priesner added.

Remittances, which are usually sent to immediate family members who have stayed behind, are among the most direct benefits from migration; their benefits spread broadly into local economies. They also serve as foreign exchange earnings for the origin countries of migrants. In 2007, US\$6,562 million in remittances were sent to Bangladesh. Average remittances per person were US\$41, compared with the average for South Asia of US\$33.

The report, ***Overcoming Barriers: Human mobility and development***, shows that migration can have a significant impact on reducing poverty in a country. This is especially true for internal migration, since it is much easier for people from poor families to move within borders than across them. Evidence from Bangladesh and India shows that poverty rates fall for households with at least one member who has moved elsewhere within the country. Research commissioned by the Report shows that many countries, including Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, are linking migration policies to their strategies for reducing poverty.

"The poverty-reducing effects of internal migration are significant. Instead of viewing internal migration as a problem, the Report encourages South Asian countries to view it as a possible solution to development needs that can be managed", Priesner further added.



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The Report recognizes that not all movement is beneficial. People forced to migrate, such as refugees, often suffer devastating consequences.

Taking down barriers

Overcoming barriers lays out a core package of reforms, six 'pillars' that call for:

- Opening existing entry channels for more workers, especially those with low skills;
- Ensuring basic human rights for migrants, from basic services, like education and health care, to the right to vote;
- Lowering the transaction costs of migration;
- Finding collaborative solutions that benefit both destination communities and migrants;
- Easing internal migration; and
- Adding migration as a component for origin countries' development strategies.

In terms of international migration, the Report does not advocate wholesale liberalization, since people at destination places have a right to shape their societies; but it argues that there is a strong case for increased access for sectors with a high demand for labour, including for the low-skilled. *Overcoming barriers* also calls on receiving countries to take steps to end discrimination against migrants.

Time for action

The world recession has quickly become a jobs crisis, and a jobs crisis is generally bad news for migrants. In a number of areas, the number of new migrants is down, while some destination countries are taking steps to encourage or compel migrants to leave. But now is the time for action, the Report argues.

"The recession should be seized as an opportunity to institute a new deal for migrants—one that will benefit workers at home and abroad while guarding against a protectionist backlash," says Jeni Klugman, the Lead Author of the 2009 Report. "With recovery, many of the same underlying trends that have been driving movement during the past half-century will resurface, attracting more people to move."

People are going to move, and thus *Overcoming barriers* provides the tools to better manage inevitable human mobility, laying out principles and guidelines for traditional immigration destinations, such as the United States and Europe, and new migration magnets, such as Costa Rica, Morocco and Thailand. The package of reforms put forward in *Overcoming barriers* depends on a realistic appraisal of economic and social conditions and recognition of public opinion and other political constraints, the Report observes. But, with political courage, they are all feasible.

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About the Report: *The 2009 Human Development Report, Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*, demonstrates that migration can enhance human development for the people who move, for destination communities and for those who remain at home. The Human Development Report continues to frame debates on some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity. It is an independent report commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Jeni Klugman is the lead author of the 2009 Report. The Report is translated into more than a dozen languages and launched in more than 100 countries annually.

Human Development is the expansion of the freedoms that people have to live their lives as they choose. This conception—inspired by the path-breaking work of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and the leadership of the late Mahbub ul Haq, and known also as the capabilities approach because of its emphasis on the freedom that people have to achieve vital 'beings and doings'—has been at the core of UNDP's approach since the first Human Development Report in 1990, and is as relevant as ever to the design of effective policies to combat poverty and deprivation. This approach has proved powerful in reshaping thinking about topics as diverse as gender, human security and climate change.

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