

**BRAC Institute of Governance and Development**  
**BRAC University**  
**Monthly Updates, April 2014**

**Talk by Former Chief Justice of India**



*Justice Altamas Kabir, former Chief Justice of India, during the Q/A session of the Talk organised by BIGD, BRAC University*

The immediate-past Chief Justice of India, Honorable Justice Altamas Kabir, believes that access to justice for all in countries like India and Bangladesh can be improved through various innovative alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Justice Kabir was speaking at a Talk on 'Access to Justice for All', organised by BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University at the Daily Star Centre in the city on 24 April 2014.

The event was chaired by Advocate Sultana Kamal, Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra, while Professor Ainun Nishat, Vice Chancellor of BRAC University and Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Executive Director of BIGD were also present.

Justice Kabir, who was India's 39th Chief Justice from September 2012 to July 2013, talked about the village level "Lok Adalat" (court of the common people) of India, where disputes are settled across the table on consensus basis, and the legal aid clinics that give primary solution and advice. He said women were given preference while recruiting paralegal volunteers for the legal aid clinics. He added, "A man can only go up to the door. A woman has much more entry into the house, and it is easier for them to understand the problems."

In their efforts to make the legal system accessible, mobile vans with a little court inside and accommodation for judicial officers have been introduced, said the former judge. "These vans go to different *haats* (village markets), *melas* (fairs) and hold lok adalats." He shared several anecdotes from his life to illustrate how he utilised his position and vision as a legal practitioner to ensure that justice was provided to those who could not access it before.

The talk was also attended by eminent jurists, former lawmakers and Bar Council members, senior lawyers, researchers, academics and journalists. The event received huge coverage in the national media.

**BIGD National Seminar on Social protection**  
**Social safety nets can contribute to social inclusion, Research says**



*Dr. Minhaj Mahmud, Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Dr. Ferdous Jahan, Dr. Rebecca Holmes and Dr. A H M Abdullah at the National Seminar on “Can Social Protection Contribute to Social Inclusion?” on April 6, 2014*

Social safety nets that are designed and implemented to meet context-specific needs, help the poor citizens of *Chars* and indigenous population to get included in the society, said Dr. Ferdous Jahan, Professor of Public Administration in University of Dhaka and Academic Coordinator of BIGD while unveiling a research report conducted by UK based Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and BRAC Institute of Governance and Studies (BIGD) at the BRAC Centre Inn on April 6, 2014.

Professor Ferdous Jahan was addressing a National Seminar titled ‘Can social protection contributes to social inclusion?’ jointly organised by ODI and BIGD. BIGD Executive Director Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman chaired the seminar. In the concluding remarks, BIGD Head of Research Dr. Minhaj Mahmud said, although 2.2% of our GDP is spent for social safety net programmes, nearly above 60% of poor and vulnerable population do not receive such benefits.

Among others, Dr. A H M Abdullah, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development and Cooperatives; Dr. Zohir Ahmed, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University; Research Director of Ministry of Food Mr. Hazikul Islam; UK Based ODI Research Fellows Dr. Rebecca Holmes and Ms. Jessica Hagen-Zanker, representatives of research and academic institutions, government organizations, donor agencies, NGOs, international organizations and civil society members attended the seminar.

## Workshop held on Gender Dynamics in the Labour Market in Bangladesh



*Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Ms. Simeen Mahmud at the Workshop on Gender Dynamics in the Labour Market of Bangladesh on 30 April, 2014*

April 2014 marks the commencement of the three year research on "Gender dynamics in the labour market in Bangladesh: a puzzle and a challenge" to be conducted in partnership between Centre for Gender and Social Transformation (CGST), BIGD; Gender Institute, LSE; and the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, led by Ms. Simeen Mahmud, Prof. Naila Kabeer and Prof. James Heintz respectively.

The research was initiated with a workshop held at the BRAC Centre Inn Conference Room on 30th April 2014, which presented the findings of the previous work survey carried out by CGST in 2008 and the research proposal for the current research. Fifty five participants representing various constituencies, who have an interest in the topic joined the workshop, including employers (BGMEA), trade unionists (Bangladesh Jatiyo Sramik Forum, Awaj Foundation), ministries (MoWCA), development NGOs (BNPS, BLAST, BRAC, Karmojibi Nari, Nijera Kori, Nari Uddyog, OSHE Foundation, CARE, IOM, Nari Maitree), donors (DFID, UNDP, Manusher Jonno Foundation, AusAid), international agencies (OXFAM, GIZ, Concern Worldwide, Population Council, British Council), women's groups (Naripokkho) and the research community (BIDS, BILS, CPD, ICDDR,B).

Other preparatory work for the research including internal workshops with research team, qualitative guideline preparation and field testing were also carried out during this month.

## BIGD Researcher Attended a Meeting on A2I Implementation Assessment Tool in Washington DC, USA



*BIGD Research Associate Mohammad Sirajul Islam at the validation meeting on A2I Implementation Tool in Washington DC, USA*

Mohammad Sirajul Islam, Research Associate of BIGD (ex-IGS), attended the Pilot Phase III Validation Meeting on Access to Information (ATI) implementation assessment tool, held from 21-23 April, 2014 in Washington DC, USA. In the meeting, Mr. Islam presented country assessment report on implementation of right to information legislation in Bangladesh and participated in group and plenary discussions. Researchers and country experts from Chile, Georgia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Jordan, Mexico, Scotland, South Africa, Uganda and the United States also have taken part in the meeting, which was moderated by Ms. Laura Neuman, Manager, Global Access to Information Initiative and Senior Associate Director, The Carter Center. The tool including research findings will be formally launched in the piloted countries in the coming months.

BIGD, in a grant agreement with The Carter Center, carried out Pilot Phase III of The Center's Access to Information Legislation Implementation Assessment Tool (IAT) in Bangladesh along with ten countries from January to April 2014. IAT has been applied in six Government agencies namely, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, National Board of Revenue, Law & Justice Division and Finance Division. Ex-IGS was involved in Pilot Phase I and Phase II in 2011 and 2013 respectively.

## BIGD Staff Participated at the Gender and Development Fair in Rangpur



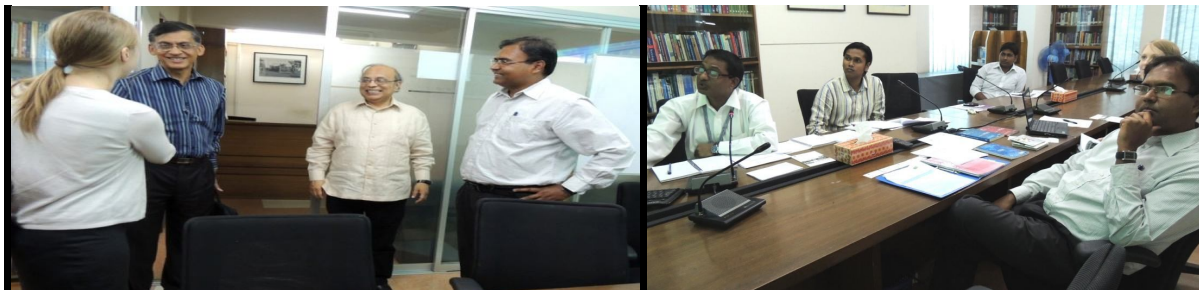
BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) participated in a three-day long 'Gender and Development Fair-2014', held at Begum Rokeya University (BRU) from 8-10 April 2014. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and BRU jointly organised the fair in Rangpur with the theme 'Inspiring Change: Pathways to Empowerment' for promoting development and empowerment of women.

The State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Ms. Meher Afroz Chumki inaugurated the ceremony. The inaugural ceremony was presided over by Vice-Chancellor of BRU Professor AKM Nurunnabi and Ms. Janina Jerujaleski, Mission Director of USAID was also present.

The concluding ceremony of the fair took place on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014. US Ambassador to Bangladesh H.E Dan Mozena addressed the ceremony as an invited guest. Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur Mr. Farid Ahammed also addressed the occasion as the special guest while USAID Senior Programme Development Specialist Ms. Mahmuda Rahman Khan moderated the ceremony. The State Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Mr. Moshir Rahman Ranga also addressed the concluding ceremony.

A total of 70 stalls of domestic and foreign agencies participated at the fair. Seminars, symposiums and discussion programmes were the part of the 3-day long programme. Among others, BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) represented BRAC University at the fair. The stall contained a diverse range of publications from the Institute on the topics such as Gender Social Justice, Advancement of Women and Social Transformation, Politics, Democracy and Governance, Local Governance, Sustainable Development and Urbanisation. BIGD Programme Officer, Ms. Marufa Aktar, Project Assistant Ms. Sameeah Zahangir and Research Associate Mr. Shameem Reza Khan, represented BIGD at the fair.

## IDRC's Second Phase Assessment Visit to BIGD



*Mr. Samar Verma and Ms. Kathy Stockton from IDRC at BIGD for Phase II Evaluation*

Mr. Samar Verma and Ms. Kathy Stockton, Evaluators, commissioned by International Development Research Centre (IDRC), visited the Institute of Governance Studies (IGS), BRAC University on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2014. IGS Executive Director Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman welcomed the evaluators to IGS and discussed vision, mission, objectives, targeted outputs, utilisation of funds in Phase I. He also expressed sincere appreciation to IDRC for the grant under the TTI provided to IGS over last four years which has enabled so many of the accomplishments including two annual flagship publications of IGS to be sustained by the IDRC grant. Dr. Hafeez also mentioned the most inspirational part of IDRC's grant under the TTI which is its flexibility to undertake 'independent' research. Dr. Hafeez wished that with the autonomy already provided by BRAC University's Board of Trustees to BIGD, it will have much more to show for the IDRC grant this year, and hoped very much that IDRC will continue to support BIGD at this crucial time to transition and for the long haul –TTI Phase II.

BIGD Institutional Advisor and former IGS Director (during Phase I application) Barrister Manzoor Hasan had a meeting with the IDRC Evaluators where he presented the genesis, evolution and context of IGS and BIGD's establishment, progress to date, the ongoing merger, and future structural direction of BIGD. He also expressed confidence that if the Phase II grant materialises, BIGD may be expected to emerge as a top rated centre of excellence in Bangladesh and the wider region around it.

Later, Mr. Verma and Ms. Stockton participated in a number of meetings with Research team comprising Research fellows, Senior Researchers, Faculty members' and others led by Dr. Minhaj Mahmud, Head of Research, BIGD; Communications team led by Mr. Ekram Hossain, Project Manager (Communications), IGS and Finance, Administration, IT & HR team led by Mr. Alamgir Kabir, Head of Operations (Admin, Finance, HR & IT), BIGD. Different teams made separate presentations on the responsibilities, activities, the ways of works, achievements, the targets/plans of each team to be achieved in 2014 and further on.

This was the final evaluation before they announce the recipients of the grants under TTI Phase II in June 2014.

### **BIGD Lead Researchers Presented Papers at ESID workshop in Capetown, South Africa**

Dr. Sohela Nazneen, Lead Reseachrer, BIGD spoke at a public seminar on 'Making States Work' organised by the Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice (GSDPP), University of Cape Town, South Africa on April 29, 2014. She focused on how and when states deliver to women and on gender equity. The Panel was jointly hosted by GSDPP and the Effective Sates and Inclusive Development (ESID) RPC based at the University of Manchester. Prof. David Hulme, Prof Samuel Hickey and Prof Diana Mitlin also spoke on the Panel and it was chaired by Prof. Alan Hirsch. BIGD is a partner in the ESID programme.

Dr. Mirza Hassan and Dr. Sohela Nazneen, Lead Researchers of BIGD were at a midterm review conference of the Effective States and Inclusive Development RPC in Cape Town, South Africa. Dr. Hassan presented his paper on the politics of social provisioning in Bangladesh and Dr. Nazneen presented on how women's political empowerment is influenced by existing political settlement--analysing four country cases: Uganda, Rwanda, Ghana and Bangladesh

## **BIGD Researcher Participated in an Exchange Programme in China**



*BIGD Researcher Faiz Ahmed Chowdhury along with other members of the South Asian Delegation to China*

BIGD Research Associate Mr. Faiz Ahmed Chowdhury participated in an Exchange Programme organised by Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAFIU) from 9-18 April 2014. He was part of a South Asian delegation which consisted of participants from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and the programmes were held respectively in Beijing, Fuzhou and Kunming. The South Asian delegation had discussions with CAFIU leaders, attended briefings about China's development in the political, economic and social areas given by Chinese experts and also had exchanges of views with Chinese NGOs. The delegation also had a meeting with the Foreign Affairs Office of the Yunnan Provincial People's Government.

### **BIGD Executive Director's Activities**

In April, 2014 BIGD Executive Director Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman held several meetings with number of distinguished personalities such as Ministers, Advisers to the Honorable Prime Minister and prominent academics and researchers regarding the research collaboration, capacity building and other relevant issues of BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD). Among others, Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman had meeting with Mr. Juan Miranda, Director General and Mr. Hun Kin, Deputy Director General of Asian Development Bank (ADB), Dr. Mashiur Rahman, Adviser to the Honorable Prime Minister, Economic Affairs, Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Adviser to Prime Minister, Dr. Mustaque R. Chowdhury, Vice Chairperson of BRAC, Mr. Firoz Shah Alam, Member, NBR, Mr. Zaidi Sattar, Chairman, Policy Research Institute (PRI).

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman also attended a Seminar on *Improved Educational Outcomes for Rural Students* as the Chief Guest on 21<sup>st</sup> April at BRAC Centre Inn. This Seminar was organised by BRAC Research and Evaluation Division (RED) in collaboration with Faculty of Business and Economics, Monash University under financial support from DFAT (AusAid). Further, Dr. Rahman attended another Seminar on 'Trade and Investment for Higher Growth' on 23<sup>rd</sup> April organised by Policy Research Institute (PRI) in collaboration with DFID.

**OpEd by BIGD Staff:**

The Daily Star: [Constitutional Safeguard and Democratic Local Governance](#) , 28 April 2014, Rafiqul Islam Talukder, Senior Programme Manager, BIGD.