

## BIGD, BRAC University Monthly Updates, May 2015

### SHARIQUE National Seminar on Social Accountability Mechanisms in the Union Parishad held



*Distinguished Guests at the National Seminar on Social Accountability Mechanisms, held on May 30, 2015*

Provision of Ward Shobha, twice in a year, promulgated in the Local Governance Act (UP) 2009, to ensure social accountability of Union Parishad through participation of men-women and poor in its activities and improving the quality of its service, the programme couldn't be successful all across the country, Experts said in a National Seminar titled Social Accountability Mechanisms in the Union Parishads on May 30, 2015, jointly organized by BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Bangladesh.

Presided over by Barrister Manzoor Hasan, Executive Director, South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies (SAILS) and Institutional Advisor, BIGD Mr. Ashok Madhab Roy, Additional Secretary, Local Government Division, attended the event as the Chief Guest. Dr. Tofail Ahmed, Visiting Fellow, BIGD presented the keynote speech based on a study.

Mr. Nazrul Islam of UNDP and Mr. Arif H. Khan of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) have also made two separate presentations on Union Parishad Governance Project (UPGP) and CARTA respectively.

Dr. Salauddin M. Aminuzzaman, Professor, University of Dhaka and Dr. Mirza M. Hassan, Adjunct Fellow, BIGD discussed on the presentations.

In his keynote presentation, Dr. Tofail Ahmed, the reputed Local Government Expert highlighted the research findings which shows, currently the Ward Shobhas lack of agendas, proceedings of meetings and proper conforming of the regulations; reflection of demands of members in the Shobhas and serious violations of rules in some places i.e inactivity of the Standing Committees, poor tax assessment, updated RTI etc . He also added, no open budgets are being made following

the instructions and the budget lacks proper planning. Among others, the findings include scarcity of skilled workforces of the UPs, inadequate allowances considering many informal public interactions of UP representatives and daily dispute reconciliations alongside all the responsibilities.



*Guests at the National Seminar on Social Accountability Mechanisms*

Earlier, Lilia Tverdun, Director, Local Governance Programme Sharique made the introductory remarks and welcomed the distinguished guests and participants which includes, Experts, Academics, Activists, UP representatives from Pabna, Sunamganj, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Khulna, and representatives from public and private organizations, different INGOs, NGOs, Donor Agencies and Media.



*Participants, UP Representatives and guests at the event*

Mr. Ashok Madhab Roy stressed on the interaction and relation improvement between the people and the representatives; increasing public awareness about the duties and responsibilities of UPs, enhancing the revenue of the UPs to strengthen local governments income and make the Ward Shobhas more operative. He said people skip Wardshobhas as their demands are not attended plentifully, and the housewives avoid the Shobhas as they consider the Shovas should be attended by their Husbands. He also suggested the UP Chairmen to raise their objections in the Upazila Parishads meetings as active members. In reply to the question on excessive number of committees

at UPs, he said most of the committees are formed considering social safety net issues and it is not necessary to organize meetings of all the committees every month.

Professor Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman urged to plan and make decisions through analyzing the economic and political condition of the rural areas. He said UPs are overweighed by number of committees. He suggested keeping 5-6 committees instead of 28. He added, it's impossible for one secretary to look after all the duties and responsibilities of UP.

Dr. Mirza Hasan said social accountability mechanism will work as a defensive tool in today's severe crisis of political democracy. He urged to free local government from partyarchy as UP representatives are forced to maintain dual accountability as apart from people, they also have to abide by particular political party. He asked for a justifying socio-economic system following these research findings.

Later, an open discussion on Policy Briefs, based on study was moderated by Maheen Sultan, Advocacy Specialist, BIGD where peoples representatives asked to cancel the regulation which instructs to follow the suggestions of the Member of Parliaments (MPs), as the suggestions arrive in the form of orders, according to the representatives. They mentioned it as a significant constraint similar to political interference and bureaucratic impediments.

The event concluded by the closing remarks of Ms. Melina Papageorgiou Trippolini, Programme Manager, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh.

The event was attended by among others, representatives and experts from Local Government Division (LGD), NILG, BRDB, JICA, BRAC & BRAC International, TIB, NGO Forum, Save the Children, Care Bangladesh, Water Aid Bangladesh MDF, Democracy International, Nagorik Udyog, BLAST CARITAS Development Institute, VOICE, PRIP-TRUST, IUCN, , Democracy Watch, Save the Environment Movement, CDC.

The seminar was organised as part of Sharique-III programme which is a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) funded Local Governance Programme mandated to the consortium of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (HSI) and BIGD, BRAC University.

## **BIGD Executive Director Chaired a session at "High Level Meeting on South-South Asia and Triangular Cooperation in the Post-2015 Development Agenda"**

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, the Executive Director of the BIGD, BRAC University, attended as one of the main speaker in a two-day "High Level Meeting on South-South Asia and Triangular Cooperation in the Post-2015 Development Agenda" held on 17-18 May, 2015 at Sonargaon Hotel, organised by the Economic Relations Division of the government, in partnership with the United Nations Office for South - South Cooperation and UNDP.

H.E. Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, adorned the ceremony as the Chief Guest. Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhit, Minister of Finance, People's Republic of Bangladesh and Mr. Abul Hasan Mahmood Ali, Minister for the Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh chaired the Opening and Closing session of the event respectively.

Developing countries should stop running after low-hanging fruits but rather develop connectivity among them to promote sustainable development, analysts said at the meeting. South-South Cooperation is the mutual sharing and exchange of development solutions - knowledge, experiences and good practices, policies, technology and resources - between and among countries in the global South.



*Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at the opening ceremony of a high-level meeting on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Post 2015 Development Agenda, at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka in the capital yesterday. Photo: PID*

Triangular Cooperation involves partnerships between two or more developing countries along with a third partner, typically a traditional resource partner and/or multilateral organisation.

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman said, "South-South cooperation is possible, and it can be built through multimodal connectivity such as physical connectivity and ICT. If we can do that, it will ultimately spur economic growth in developing countries and lift billions of people out of poverty," he added.

Dr. Rahman also said nothing would happen if there is no strong political commitment from governments. Countries also cannot bypass local communities, apart from political sensitivity, when they construct any infrastructure. Dr. Rahman said there has been rapid change in the areas of ICT, communications and people-to-people connectivity in recent times.

He added, apart from financial support from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, huge funds are available following setting up of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road plan, both led by China.

In another session, speakers called for enhancing South-South cooperation in science, technology and innovation between least development countries and emerging economies.

The theme of the high-level meeting was "South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Financing for Development in the South and Technology Transfer", the event brought together Government ministers, senior officials and practitioners both from the South and the North for discussions on how South-South and triangular cooperation could be better oriented towards the attainment of internationally agreed upon development goals today and in the years ahead. Bangladesh hosted the High-level meeting at a time when the country holds the Presidency of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, the highest body in the United Nations for the promotion of South-South Cooperation. The event aimed at sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices in financing for development and technology transfer towards the achievement of the post-2015 development goals.

## **BIGD Executive Director attended as a Special Guest at the Policy Workshop of PKSF**

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, the Executive Director of BIGD, BRAC University, attended as a Special Guest at the Policy Workshop on "Initiatives on Clustering of small scale fish/ shrimp farmer, opportunities for improving market linkages and access to credit", organized jointly by Bangladesh Shrimp and Food Foundation (BSFF) and Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) at the foundation Bhaban at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar on 5 May, 2015.



*Guests at the policy workshop on Initiatives on Clustering of small scale fish/ shrimp farmer, opportunities for improving market linkages and access to credit*

State Minister for Finance M A Mannan attended the workshop as Chief Guest while former Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, and former Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Agriculture University Dr. M A Sattar Mandal were also present as the special guests.

Presided over by Managing Director of PKSF Abdul Karim, the function was also addressed, among others, by Additional Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestocks Mr. Anisur Rahman, Director General, Department of Fisheries; Dr. Syed Arif Azad and South Asia Country Director of Worldfish and BSFF Chairman, Syed Mahmudul Huq.

At the seminar, a memorandum of understanding was also signed between PKSF and BSFF for mutual cooperation and sharing of expertise.

The workshop was organized attuned to the outcomes and findings of a project titled "Building trade capacity of small-scale shrimp and prawn farmers in Bangladesh: investing in the bottom of the pyramid"

Speakers at the policy workshop underscored the need for introducing contract farming arrangements for production of safe and quality shrimp and prawns for greater penetration of Bangladesh products to international market. They also put emphasis on innovation of appropriate technology for reducing the risks of diseases in shrimp and prawn aquaculture and evolving a National Code of Conduct for responsible aquaculture.

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

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, the Executive Director of BIGD, BRAC University, held several meetings in May 2015 with number of distinguished personalities such as Ministers, prominent academics and researchers regarding the research collaboration and other relevant issues of BIGD. Among others, Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman had meeting with Prof. Dr. Brian Pratt, Strategic Director & Dr David Lewis, Advisor of TARIF Team-- DFID funded Transparency, Accountability and Right to Information Fund (TARIF); Nahid Hasan Sumon, Regional Senior Project Manager, South Asia, Education and Society, British Council; Regional Governance Adviser Mr. Simon Alexis of UNDP and Mr. Samiul Haq Rabbany, National Programme Officer -Political Governance, Democratic Governance Cluster, UNDP, Dr. Nipa Banerjee of Ottawa University & Jonathan Rose. Dr. Rahman had also meeting with the Finance Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. He also attended the discussion meeting on Budget organized by BIDS.

## **Training provided by the ILO at BIGD**

BIGD organized a training on Better Work Bangladesh on 24 May at BIGD Conference Room. The training was facilitated by a team of International Labour Organization (ILO Better Work Bangladesh). Lopita Huq, Research Fellow; Kabita Chowdhury, Shahida Khandoker, Research Associates; Towhid Iqram Mahmood, Ahmed Asif Enam, Sanjida Parvin and Sufia Khatun, Research Assistants of BIGD, BRAC University attended the training.

The objective of the Better Work Programme is to improve working conditions and promote competitiveness in the global garment industry. It does so by promoting compliance with international labour standards and national law in global supply chains as a basis for building socially responsible export strategies, and by enhancing enterprise-level economic and social performance.

## **BIGD Researcher presented a Short Overview of Research**

Ms. Lopita Huq, Research Fellow of BIGD, BRAC University presented a short overview of the total research titled "*BWB Impact Assessment Research Presentation*" at the Better Work Bangladesh Impact Assessment Roll-out Workshop organized by ILO on 13 May, 2015 at the Hotel Sarina, Banani, Dhaka.

The overview was prepared along with Ms. Simeen Mahmud, Fellow & Gender Studies Cluster Coordinator of BIGD, BRAC University. Kabita Chowdhury and Shahida Khandoker, Research Associates; Sanjida Parvin and Sufia Khatun, Research Assistants of BIGD, BRAC University also attended the workshop.

## **Academics**

### **CIPS Exam on May 2015 held**

CIPS exam on May 2015 was held in BIGD, BRAC University from 18 to 22 May 2015. Total 24 government officials from different public sectors, such as- Public works Department (PWD), Department of Public Health Engineering, WASA, Bangladesh Railway, Primary Education Board, REB, Ministry of Planning, Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU), Ministry of Finance etc attended the exam. In addition another 23 participants from private sector have participated in this global exam. As the only exam center of CIPS in Bangladesh, BIGD has organized the exam at BRAC University.