



BIDS newsletter

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BIDS Board of Trustees Meeting Held

A meeting of the BIDS Board of Trustees was held on 29 May 2013 at the BIDS Conference Room under the Chairmanship of Air Vice-Marshal (Retd.) A.K. Khandker, BU, Hon'ble Minister of Planning and Chairman of the Board. Among others, the Board approved the revised budget of FY2011-12 and the proposed budget for FY2012-13 of the Institute. The meeting reviewed the BIDS activities including the implementation progress of 30 research studies under the annual research programme for the year 2012-13 and the proposed academic programme of BIDS. ■



Study Highlights

Impact of Inflation on Different Household Groups in Bangladesh

The rising rate of inflation in recent years has raised significant concerns regarding its adverse effect on the economy including negative welfare consequences on different socioeconomic groups, particularly the poor in Bangladesh. The study investigates the inflationary impact on households differentiated in terms of four categories e.g. the poor, lower middle income, upper middle income and high income. In addition to estimating separate consumer price indexes for these household groups, the study examines the wage-inflation dynamics and assesses how their consumption and welfare are affected by the dynamics.

The analysis indicates that both day labourers and fixed income household groups faced higher food inflation than non-food inflation during 2008-2010. In relative terms, the urban household groups faced higher food inflation than those in the rural areas. In contrast, poor and lower middle income day labourers in urban areas faced higher inflation than those of fixed income households. In terms of non-food inflation, there had been no significant differences among rural and urban households.

For measuring changes in income and cost of living in recent years, the cumulative growth in nominal wages and CPI inflation in each year over 2000 is estimated. The estimates show that agricultural wages in Bangladesh on average increased by 9.1 per cent per year over the 2000-2010 period. Similar changes are 9.3 per cent for manufacturing workers, followed by 8.0 per cent for fisheries and

From the Editor

In recent years, BIDS has been investing considerable efforts for strengthening its dissemination, advocacy and publication activities. These efforts aim at better understanding the constraints associated with bridging the gaps between research and policy and tapping the opportunities that could make visible difference in improving the policy making environment in the country. For BIDS, bridging means not only informing policy choices but also be concerned with adopting better policies in practice and their effective implementation. It is the constant endeavour of BIDS to work on creating strong research-policy links and bringing a more pro-poor orientation in the country's policy agenda to serve the cause of shared and inclusive development.

For wider and more effective dissemination of BIDS activities, we have started publishing the BIDS Newsletter on a bi-annual basis and the present issue is the first one in the series. We hope that the Newsletter will help our friends and well-wishers both at home and abroad to better understand the contribution that BIDS is making in expanding the scope, depth and scale of its activities in recent times.

On behalf of BIDS, I express our deep appreciation for the guidance and support that we have been receiving from the Honourable Chairman and Members of the BIDS Board of Trustees, Distinguished Senior Fellows, and all our partners in the government, civil society and the donor community. We hope they will continue to endorse our efforts and contribute to our success.

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all BIDS professionals and staff who have cooperated and contributed to the preparation and publication of this Newsletter. ■

7.5 per cent for construction workers. The cost of living of the workers, on the other hand, increased at an annual average growth rate of 6.6 per cent during this period. This suggests positive change in real consumption of the labourers who mostly belong to poor households in the country. The annual growth of the wage rate index (both nominal and real) over the past decades shows that almost all indexes experienced higher growth than inflation during the period of the 2000s. In particular, the agricultural wage rate index experienced the highest growth during the last decade in real terms and its growth rate was second only to the manufacturing wage index. This shows that the average returns to labour has risen significantly in the past decade, contributing positively toward improving the living standards of the working population.

The variance decomposition analysis suggests that wage formation does not have any impact on inflation in Bangladesh; rather inflationary pressures exert upward pressure on wage adjustments for daily wage labourers, at least in the short run. The daily labour households could adjust 40 per cent of inflationary shocks within three months of inflationary shocks. The analysis

also shows that compared with the daily labour households, fixed income households are mostly unable to adjust inflationary shocks into wages/earnings. The poorer and lower middle fixed income groups could adjust only about 10 per cent of inflation shocks into wages after five months in urban/semi-urban areas.

The impulse responses show that an innovation in the rate of inflation responds positively to the increase of daily wage rate for labour households, particularly for the poor. The wage response to inflationary shocks is prominent in three months; afterwards the response is very low for daily labour households irrespective of their income levels.

Thus while daily wage labourers in agricultural and non-agricultural activities have some ability to adjust their nominal wages to inflation in the short run at least partially with minimal impact on real wages, ensuring real wages and salaries of low paid fixed income workers (including workers in the RMG industry) is a priority. Similarly, along with ensuring fair prices at the producer level to small farmers, supply of food items to the urban poor at reasonable prices would contribute to lessening the inflationary impact on poverty. ■

New Research Studies

Integration of women into Grameen Shakti's clean energy programme in Bangladesh

BIDS has initiated this new research, with support from the USAID through the Development and Training Services, Inc. USA, to review the efficacy of the Grameen Technology Centers (GTCs) in advancing the adoption of renewable energy technology especially among the rural communities living in economically and ecologically vulnerable areas. The research will also examine the success of the Grameen Shakti model(s) in promoting learning skills among women.

Effectiveness of training and academic programmes of BIBM

Under the study, an evaluation will be carried out of the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) with a view to reviewing the functional activities of BIBM, namely training, education, research and consultancy. The study will suggest recommendations and actions on streamlining the activities of BIBM and indicate how BIBM can perform as a dynamic institution for meeting the challenges of the evolving financial sector of the country.

Crowding in or out? An analysis of the effects of public borrowings from domestic sources in Bangladesh

The study focuses on three specific issues: (i) evaluation of the extent to which public borrowings crowd-out private investment; (ii) assessment of the length of time that public borrowings take to create an impact on private investment; and (iii) evaluation of whether there is any structural break in the transmission mechanism of the impacts of public borrowing to the private sector and, if so, assess the relative strength of the transmission mechanisms for the periods isolated by two break points. The findings will help the policy makers to take informed decisions about how much to borrow and from where to borrow without dwarfing private investment.

Is growth in aquaculture benefiting the poor in Bangladesh?

The study will analyse fish consumption by households to address several issues, such as whether the poor households benefit from the structural transformation characterised by the dominance of farmed species over non-farmed species; whether the poor households consume more fish now as compared with the past; and which fish species are consumed more by the poor households. This study will help to understand the dynamics in the fisheries sector in terms of changes in species composition at the level of consumption.

Estimating the cost of food security in the context of climate change in Bangladesh

The study focuses on the estimation of adaptation cost related to food security. This will entail identification and estimation of cost of programmes necessary to make availability, accessibility and utilisation of food consistent with climate change impacts. The analysis will include the present Public Food Distribution System (PFDS) and make recommendations to build climate adaptive PFDS and help protect livelihoods of the vulnerable populations.

Size and growth of the middle class in Bangladesh during 1990-2010: Implications for broad-based growth and development

The research deals with the emergence and development of the new middle class over the last two decades. The emergence of a sizable middle class has economic implications for higher savings, productivity growth, and for more broad-based growth. While this class, by definition, is located above the poverty line, it is susceptible to downward mobility pressures. The study seeks not only to analyse the social significance of middle class but also its economic significance. The study will also draw implications for developing more inclusive

democracy--a factor that would be conducive to political stability and determine the political context for adopting more equitable policy in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh: Integrated water resource assessment

The research aims to develop an integrated water resource assessment to provide a national overview of the resource, the impacts of development and climate change on both surface and ground water resources. It will assess the way impacts will affect the poor and the vulnerable groups, the amount of water that could be sustainably supplied to different economic sectors as well as to the population for drinking and sanitation purposes.

Unpacking and analysing the census and other data sets for evidence led equity-based policy analysis and advocacy on children and women in Bangladesh

The study uses the 2011 Population and Housing Census data for equity based policy analysis and advocacy for reducing inequality. The study envisages the construction of a disaggregated profile of the groups of people along with an Equity Atlas using selected census indicators from division to upazila level. The Equity Atlas will profile the inequities and vulnerabilities such as education attendance and achievements, youth and adult literacy, teenage marriage, water and sanitation and housing characteristics, amongst others. The rankings will be based on a composite deprivation index. ■

New Research Studies under PRSSP

In the second phase, beginning in June 2013, BIDS researchers will undertake five research studies under the Policy Research and Strategy Support Programme (PRSSP) being implemented by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) with financial support from USAID.



Food safety in Bangladesh: Practices, impact, policies and implementation

The study will carry out a science-based economic analysis of food safety in Bangladesh by taking full cognizance of the existing institutional and legal environment. Furthermore, cognizance will be taken of the disease and health impacts and their economic consequences. On the basis of the analyses, the study will also suggest policy measures and areas of intervention and investments.

Improving the effectiveness of fertiliser use: Issues in quality of fertiliser and the fertiliser distribution system in Bangladesh

The study will assess the current status of two important aspects of the fertiliser sector in Bangladesh: (i) fertiliser distribution system and (ii) quality of fertilisers used by the farmers. The study will document the relevant policies, rules and regulations based on a review and analysis of the evolution and changes in the fertiliser distribution system and the underlying institutional framework. The study will also provide evidence, based on intensive field level surveys and interactions and interviews with concerned stakeholders including the farmers, dealers, local producers and importers, on issues of fertiliser

distribution and marketing as well as quality issues of fertilisers available in the market.

Quality of agricultural inputs

The study will examine all inputs which are crucial to promoting growth in the agricultural sector. On the supply side, the study will explore the roles of the key actors in determining the quality of the inputs in the supply chain of the input markets, performance of the certification and quality control institutions, how low quality agricultural inputs enter into the input market system, and suggest changes in policies associated with agricultural inputs. On the demand side, the study will explore the factors that influence the decisions regarding which inputs to buy from the market and the possible existence of any group-effect and brand loyalty, and identify the reasons behind buying agricultural inputs of lower quality.

Seed sector development in Bangladesh: Issues, constraints and way forward

The study will provide inputs to establish enabling seed policy and regulations that will lead to enhanced private sector development and delivery of improved seeds of nutrient-dense crops, and more rapid smallholder adoption of improved seeds. The study will emphasise the role of the private sector to understand whether there are any structural problems in the market that limit their ability to meet the demand for seed, implying an unavoidable role to be played by the public sector. The incentive structure of the private sector will also be reviewed to see whether there is any dissipation of profit. The current institutional set up and policy regimes will be examined to assess whether they play a controlling or facilitating role for the development of the seed sector.

Economics of water resource management in Bangladesh

The study will examine the economics of water management in general and ground and surface water irrigation in particular for improved agricultural productivity in Bangladesh. The regional dimension of water resources development and management will also be explored to ensure its balanced use across different regions in the country. In particular, the barriers to water resources development in South-West region would

be explored, and appropriate policy interventions suggested. Finally, how farmers respond to water scarcity is not adequately understood and hence this would be examined keeping in view its implications for sustained growth of crop production in Bangladesh. ■

PRSSP First Phase Studies Completed

Under the IFPRI-BIDS collaborative project on Policy Research and Strategy Support Programme (PRSSP), BIDS researchers undertook eight studies to fill knowledge gaps on critical food security and agricultural development issues in Bangladesh. On 11 May 2013, the final reports of the research studies were presented in a seminar at the BIDS Conference Room in Dhaka. Eminent experts on food and nutrition security issues participated in the seminar in which key findings of the studies were shared. The studies covered different aspects of the Bangladesh's food economy:

- Farmers' supply response to prices and non-price factors in Bangladesh
- Management of public stocks for improved effectiveness of PFDS in Bangladesh
- Growth of rural non-farm activities in Bangladesh and implications for household income and employment
- Trade policies and pattern in Bangladesh
- Productivity and efficiency of rice mills in Bangladesh: Economic, social and food security implications
- Analysis of rice value chain for improving food security in Bangladesh
- Barriers to development of fisheries sub-sector in Bangladesh
- Barriers to development of livestock sub-sector in Bangladesh

BIDS is currently preparing policy briefs drawing on the findings of these studies which will be circulated among policy makers and other interested stakeholders. ■

Discussion Papers

Quick rental power plants in Bangladesh: A preliminary assessment

The paper examines the economics of quick rental power plants in Bangladesh. Over the last few years, severe power crisis compelled the government to enter into contractual agreements with the private entrepreneurs for high-cost temporary solution, such as rental power and small independent power producers (IPPs), mostly diesel or liquid-fuel based, on an emergency basis. The paper observes that prudent economics requires that the strategy for meeting the electricity demand be based on least cost option in Bangladesh. For this, an integrated approach to the power sector is needed since the current crisis is, to a large extent, a fuel crisis caused by delays in decision making regarding power generation and finding a substitute for the depleting domestic gas supply. The shortage of gas increases the cost of power by raising the dependence on imported liquid fuel and lowering the

efficiency and capacity of power plants designed to run on gas. The paper recommends that new capacity procurement should be based on least cost criteria to minimise the cost of power to the economy to support poverty reduction and improve competitiveness of the economy.

Savings and investment estimates in Bangladesh: Some issues and perspectives in the context of an open economy

The paper examines the conceptual issues surrounding the estimation of savings and investment in Bangladesh and explains why there exist perceptible differences between the estimates of savings and investment, given the relevant theory and the adopted practice. The study also draws some implications of the divergences and provides recommendations for improving the situation. In addition, the underestimation seems to be gaining more severity in recent years which calls for improvements and adjustments in the methodology of measuring savings and investment in the country. As Bangladesh economy becomes more open, the share of income produced outside its boundaries would rise. This would increase the difference between gross domestic savings and gross national savings; and gross national savings would emerge as the more relevant concept of savings based on disposable income. ■

Highlights of Recently Completed Research

Measurement of livelihoods vulnerability index for the coastal districts of Bangladesh

This study uses and extends the Livelihood Vulnerability Index to measure the vulnerability of the households living in the coastal region of Bangladesh. Based on the findings from a survey of 532 households from 12 coastal districts, it is found that households living in the rural areas are more vulnerable than those living in urban areas and households living in coastal districts are more vulnerable than those living in exterior districts. The higher vulnerability of coastal households stems from poor access to health facilities, a weaker social network as well as from natural disasters and climate variability. The rural households also have adverse social and demographic profile.

Global commodity price volatility and domestic inflation: Impact on the performance of the financial sector in Bangladesh

Rising inflation not only affects household welfare, it also affects the performance of the financial sector. High inflation reduces the rate of return (interest), thereby exacerbates credit market frictions, which lead to credit rationing.

The analysis suggests that moderate inflation is favourable for the development of the financial sector, while very low or high inflation has detrimental effect on the financial sector performance. The analysis also suggests that the impact of

inflation on the financial sector might be non-linear and there exists threshold effect of inflation. The analysis suggests that increasing management and operational efficiency and prudent regulatory and institutional framework might help the financial sector to overcome the negative effect of rising inflation on the performance of the financial sector.

Delinking of local and international prices: Exploring competition in the Bangladesh rice market

The rice market in Bangladesh has become heavily interconnected except for the case of the farmers, who may have limited number of contacts and options other than selling produce at the price offered by the traders or millers. The rice millers by taking advantage of storage capacity are able to postpone sale at least for some period. The analysis of domestic and international rice prices shows similar trends suggesting integration in an open economy context. The first segment of the rice market, one that involves primary growers, can be considered to a large extent competitive, although the benefits of competition do not reach small and marginal farmers. The second segment of the market, which is the one of rice millers and wholesalers, raises several issues. Given that an entrepreneur has to have large financial resources as well as business connections to be able to survive in the rice wholesale market, entry into this market segment is rather difficult. Also, default risks of financial transactions or delays in payments often serve as an entry deterrent for new potential entrants.

Estimation of the parameters needed for integrated and effective PFDS planning in Bangladesh

The study streamlines both supply-side and demand side estimates to analyse the food gap in Bangladesh and assist the government in determining the Public Food Distribution System (PFDS) size and desirable stock of food grains over the months of a year for operating an integrated and effective PFDS.

The study reports that the routine estimate of area based on annual estimates each year by the BBS contains an over estimation of around 7.4 per cent, which translates into overestimates of production. It is found that, in the case of rice, total seed, feed and wastages (SFW) is nearly 12 per cent. In the case of wheat, total SFW is estimated at 15 per cent (as wheat grains).

Stock is mainly held by the growers, which varies from

16 to 43 per cent of gross production in different months of the year. Among the private traders, millers in the case of rice and the retailers in the case of wheat dominate in maintaining stock. The study reveals that the country is marginally surplus in rice in recent years, which varies between 0.72 million metric tons in 2008 and about one million metric tons in other years. In contrast, the country is in deficit of wheat by 2-3 million metric tons per year.

Impact evaluation of vulnerable group development programme

The study examines the impact of the vulnerable group development (VGD) programme on the beneficiaries. Indicators used to assess the impact of the programme on beneficiary households include, among others, the success in raising household incomes, enhancing food security and increasing asset ownership.

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the beneficiary households are better off compared with their non-beneficiary counterparts. Though a significant proportion of beneficiary households still have low incomes, live in poor housing conditions and suffer from food inadequacy for a significant part of the year, but compared with their non-beneficiary counterparts, their vulnerability has reduced and their poverty situation has improved. The main strength of the VGD programme is that it could reach the hardcore poor women target group without much leakage and it has been effective in enabling the beneficiaries to improve their socio-economic conditions.

Gender, social capital, local government and climate change adaptation in Bangladesh

Considering the gender differential in vulnerability, the study conducts social assessments and institutional analyses that include gender based experiences in collective actions and support from local institutions/networks for developing inclusive strategies for increased climate resilience. Such gender-sensitive analysis is considered important to direct aid and plan for full and equitable recovery in the case of frequent climatic events, such as floods and cyclones, whose frequency and intensity are expected to rise with climate change. Furthermore, gender-sensitive analysis is important to ensure women's participation in long term climate change adaptation strategies, which might have been constrained due to their traditional social norms in the country. ■

Visitors at BIDS

Ghent University delegates visit BIDS

A 25 member delegate of teachers and students of conflict and development programme from the Ghent University, Brussels visited BIDS recently to attend a lecture programme organised for the team on microcredit and microcredit-plus and char land development programme in Bangladesh. The team visited Bangladesh on a exposure trip.

Visitors from LBSNAA at BIDS

A group of 12 IAS officers and one Faculty Member from the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie recently visited BIDS under its induction training programme to Bangladesh on a foreign exposure visit. It may be mentioned that LBSNAA is India's foremost institution imparting training to the country's higher civil services and is recognised across Asia as an institute of excellence in the field of training civil servants. ■

MoUs Signed

MoU between DTE and BIDS

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Department of Technical Education (DTE) and BIDS on 2 April 2013. The signing ceremony was attended by Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid, Hon'ble Minister of Education.

Under the MoU, both DTE and BIDS will establish cooperative relation to promote collaborative research and undertake capacity strengthening activities. Potential collaborative activities will cover a wide range of areas including building a stronger and more integrated knowledge support system for the development of technical education system in Bangladesh.



EoL between BIDS, BBS and UNICEF

Recently an exchange of letters (EoL) has been signed between BIDS, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The objective of the EoL is to lay out a framework for the successful implementation of the partnership to unpack and analyse the Census and other Data for Evidence led-Equity-based Policy Advocacy on Children in Bangladesh. All the parties have expressed their commitment to harness respective organisational comparative advantages to undertake this exercise of dissemination and use of data, publications, policy findings and recommendations arising from the analysis.

MoU between BIDS and SOW-VU

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Centre for World Food Studies (CWFS) of Free University, Amsterdam (Dutch acronym: SOW-VU) and BIDS on 19 May 2013. Under the MoU, the two institutions will jointly conduct a project on allotment gardens in and around cities of Bangladesh. The aim of the project is to ensure food security among urban and peri-urban dwellers in Bangladesh. Under the project, SOW-VU will organise a workshop in Amsterdam to train a staff member of BIDS in spatial data logistics, data management and statistical software. ■

Abu Abdullah Trust Fund

On 20 March 2013, the Abu Abdullah Trust Fund was created at BIDS with a donation of Tk. 2 million from the family members of late Abu Abdullah, a former Director General of the Institute. The income of the Trust Fund will be used to provide monthly stipend to one MSS graduate of the Department of Economics, Dhaka University for his/her pursuing research at BIDS on socio-economic issues of Bangladesh, especially relating to agriculture and the rural economy. The stipend will be provided for a year. ■

BIDS Seminars

A seminar titled "Do population trends matter to agricultural productivity?" was held at the BIDS Conference Room on 30 January 2013. Dr. Rafiqul Huda Chawdhury, Honorary Coordinator and Adviser, Masters Programme in Population and Development Studies, East West University made the presentation.



Dr. Nazrul Islam, Senior Economic Affairs Officer at the Development Policy Analysis Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, presented a seminar on "Towards a sustainable social model: Implications for the post-2015 agenda" on 3 January 2013 at the BIDS Conference Room.

Mr. Subhasish Dey, Doctoral Research Fellow, Department of Economics, School of Social Science, University of Manchester, made a seminar presentation on "Employment guarantee programme and its potential as a safety net for social security: A reflection on South Asia" on 6 November 2012 at the BIDS Conference Room. ■

BIDS Professorial Fellows Appointed

BIDS Board of Trustees, in its meeting held on 29 May 2013, extended the tenure of Dr. Quazi Shahabuddin, former Director General of BIDS as Professorial Fellow of BIDS for a period of one year after the expiry of his current term of two years. The Board also approved the tenure of Dr. M. Asaduzzaman, former Research Director of BIDS, as BIDS Professorial Fellow for a term of two years from the date of his joining the position. ■

Visiting Research Scholars

Dr. Saswata Ghosh

Under the BIDS Visiting Scholar Programme, Dr. Saswata Ghosh of the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata (IDSK) visited BIDS for two months during March-May 2013. During his stay, Dr. Ghosh worked with BIDS researchers on the issue of contraceptive method choice and son preference in Bangladesh and West Bengal, India.

Professor Yasuyuki Sawada

Professor Yasuyuki Sawada of the Faculty of Economics, University of Tokyo visited BIDS under the Visiting Scholar Programme during September 2012 to March 2013. During the period, Professor Sawada worked on saving habit formation among garment workers in Bangladesh. ■

BIDS Researchers in International Meetings

Mustafa K Mujeri, Director General

- Participated in the 14th Annual Global Development Conference of GDN during 19-21 June 2013 in Manila, chaired a parallel session of SANEI on *Sustaining Rapid Growth in South Asia in the Face of the Current Global Financial and Economic Turmoil* and acted as a Panelist in the Concluding Roundtable.
- Attended the summit on *Asian Century Seizing the Opportunity and Managing the Threats: The Role of Think Tanks* in Tokyo during 12-14 June 2013 organised by the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) and the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Programme (TTCSP) of the University of Pennsylvania.
- Participated in the *Fossil-Fuel Subsidy Reform in Developing Countries* conference organised by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in Geneva during 2-3 May 2013.

Zaid Bakht, Research Director

- Participated in the 14th Annual Global Development Conference of GDN during 19-21 June 2013 in Manila.

Rushidan Islam Rahman, Research Director

- Attended the international seminar on *South Asian Labour and Employment Research Network: Promoting Inclusive Growth* in New Delhi during 21-22 May 2013 organised by the Institute of Human Development, India.

Binayak Sen, Research Director

- Participated in the *Author Group Meeting for UNDP's Inequality Report* during 23-24 April 2013 organised by UNDP in London.

Sharifa Begum, Senior Research Fellow

- Participated in the international conference on *Labour Mobility-Enabler for Development* organised by the Ministry of Labour, UAE during 14-15 May 2013.

K M Nabiul Islam, Senior Research Fellow

- Attended the international workshop on *Moving from Water Problems to Water Solution: An Assessment of*

the Research Needs for the Eastern Gangetic Plains organised by the International Water Management Institute in India during 7-8 May 2013.

S M Zulfiqar Ali, Senior Research Fellow

- Participated in the 14th Annual Global Development Conference of GDN during 19-21 June 2013 in Manila.
- Attended an international seminar on *Strengthening Institutions to Improve Public Expenditure Accountability* in Indonesia during 7-9 April 2013.

Monzur Hossain, Research Fellow

- Participated in the 14th Annual Global Development Conference of GDN during 19-21 June 2013 in Manila and presented a paper titled *Global Commodity Price Volatility and Global Financial Crisis: Impact on the Performance of the Financial Sector in Bangladesh*.

Minhaj Mahmud, Research Fellow

- Participated in a workshop on *Empirical Study on Risk and Poverty in Bangladesh* in Tokyo during 24-25 April 2013 sponsored by JICA Research Institute.

Abul Basher, Research Fellow

- Participated in the international conference on *Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation in South Asia: Trends, Challenges and Prospects* organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat during 2-3 May 2013 in India.

Tahreen Tahrira Chowdhury, Research Associate

- Participated in the conference on *Fossil-Fuel Subsidy Reform in Developing Countries* organised by the International Institute for Sustainable Development in Geneva during 2-3 May 2013 and presented the key findings of the study titled *Energy Subsidies and Profile of Groups Vulnerable to Reform in Bangladesh*.

Siban Shahana, Research Associate

- Attended a four week long training programme on *Refresher Course in Public Economics for the University and College Teachers of South Asia* organised by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi from 20 May 2013 to 14 June 2013. She was nominated by the South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes (SANEI). ■

Recent BIDS Publications

Research Monograph 22: Household food insecurity in Bangladesh: Concepts, estimates and determinants

The study analyses the factors that affect the food security status of poor households in Bangladesh. It examines the impact of paid employment and self-employment on income and prospects of household food security. The study reports that the extent of food insecurity is still high in the country and reduction of extreme form of food insecurity is a policy priority. For these households, employment guarantee scheme or direct food support could be considered. More employment generation in food deficit areas is an effective means of ensuring food security for the poor households.

Research Report 184: Integration of population and gender concerns into the national and sectoral policies and programmes: Current status and constraints

The study examines the current status and extent of integration of population and gender concerns into the country's development policies, plans, processes and strategies. The study notes that the most important constraint to effective integration of these issues has been the systematic failure and malfunction of the system to address these concerns on a priority basis. An integrated approach by various ministries based on the commitment-cum-ownership concept is required for mainstreaming population and gender concerns into the country's development efforts.

A citizens' guide to energy subsidies in Bangladesh

This exploratory study examines the fossil fuel subsidy related issues in Bangladesh. The study maintains that whether or not energy subsidies benefit Bangladesh is not a straightforward issue, which requires looking at the economic impacts, the parts of society that benefit the most, and, of course, the environmental effects. The study identifies several issues that act as strong impediments to implementing reforms including the absence of strong political will as well as limited capacity of

the administrative tools to provide targeted support for the poor and vulnerable groups adversely affected by reforms.

BIDS Biennial Report 2011-2012

The BIDS Biennial Report 2011-2012 provides information on BIDS activities covering the period from July 2010 to December 2012. The Report highlights the continuous efforts of BIDS to achieve its goal of conducting policy relevant research to help shape policy debates, promote research excellence, and strengthen partnerships for development in Bangladesh.

BIDS Annual Research Programme 2012-2013

The publication provides summary information on the research agenda that the Institute plans to undertake during the financial year 2012-13. It covers a total of 30 research studies, of which 7 studies are funded by the BIDS Research Endowment Fund (REF), while the remaining 23 studies are sponsored by government departments/agencies and national and international institutions. The research programme focuses on a number of major themes, such as agriculture, food security and rural development; water resources development; poverty and deprivations; growth issues and regional development; health and nutrition; manufacturing and finance; macroeconomic and trade policy analysis; energy issues; climate change; and social protection.

BIDS Research 2011-2012: Major findings and policy implications of completed studies

The publication provides the highlights of major findings and policy implications of the research studies that the Institute completed during the period July 2011 to December 2012. It covers a total of 13 research studies. The completed studies focus on a number of major themes, such as poverty and vulnerability, macroeconomic policy analysis, agriculture and food security, governance issues, social protection, population issues and climate change impacts. ■

Call for Research Proposal

The South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes (SANEI), the South Asian arm of the Global Development Network (GDN), is inviting research proposals for its 15th round of Regional Research Competition (RRC) within the thematic focus of *Regional Integration in South Asia*. The proposed research topic could cover a wide range of issues including estimating the economic impacts of SAFTA, regional and bilateral trade agreements, intra-industry trade and trade complementarities, impediments to trade and transaction costs, non-tariff barriers, cross border investments, regional and bilateral trade in services, and energy trade. The proposals should reach the SANEI Secretariat at BIDS on or before 15 July 2013. For details on terms of reference and other guidelines, visit the SANEI website (www.saneinetwork.net). ■

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Mustafa K. Mujeri

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