



BIDS NEWSLETTER

Vol. 5 Issue 2 December 2017

Research ALMANAC 2017 Held



Inaugural Session of BIDS Research Almanac 2017

A two-day long BIDS Research ALMANAC was held on 6-7 December 2017 at Lakeshore hotel in Dhaka with the theme of "Bridging the Research-Policy Divide." The aim of the conference was to provide an opportunity to undergo public scrutiny of BIDS work and to highlight new research ideas and findings. The event allowed broad spectrum of academics, practitioners, experts and civil society members to be engaged with BIDS research. Spread over a total of six technical sessions, this year's ALMANAC had 21 papers by BIDS researchers. The sessions were titled Agriculture, External Price Shocks and Rural Well-being, Labour Market Issues, Financial Markets and Financial Inclusion, Climate Change, Natural Disaster and Environment, Entitlement, Welfare and Violence and Exports, Firm Performance and Productivity Growth.

Dr. Mashiur Rahman, Economic Affairs Adviser to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, inaugurated the event as the Chief Guest and Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin, former Governor, Bangladesh Bank, was present as the Special Guest. Mr. M. Syeduzzaman, Former Finance Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was present as the Guest of Honour. Dr. K. A. S. Murshid, Director General of BIDS chaired the inaugural session and made the opening remarks. The concluding session "Bridging the Research-Policy Divide" was chaired by the eminent economist Professor Rehman Sobhan with distinguished panelists drawn from the public and private sector. The Conference was attended by eminent scholars, policy makers, development practitioners, civil society members, activists, advocacy groups and journalists and generated a lot of interest as well as provided an effective platform of engagement with key stakeholders. ■



Closing Session of BIDS Research Almanac 2017

From the Editor's Desk

BIDS experienced an unprecedented surge in the volume of academic research in the second half of 2017. Less dependence on external finance for research, infusion of new blood both at junior and senior levels, incentives for quality research and above all the dynamic leadership in charge have helped the institution steer itself towards greater academic excellence. The two flagship events of the institute, BIDS Critical Conversations and the Research Almanac, have very successfully and effectively provided suitable platforms for dissemination of our work. While the former aims at engaging a wide spectrum of civil society, the public and private sector and professional bodies to discuss critical issues confronting the economy, the latter is more academic in nature, where BIDS work is highlighted but external professional inputs are invited to discuss the research findings. The Research Almanac showcases the studies conducted by BIDS over the previous one year. In 2017, the Research Almanac was held on 6-7 December, with 21 academic paper presentations. These covered a wide range of economic and sociological issues which are briefly discussed in this issue.

Each issue of the Newsletter highlights one study, which is deemed to be of greater interest to our esteemed readers. This issue picked up a carefully conducted impact evaluation of a project named 'SWAPNO', which is a 'graduation model' aimed at lifting the distressed and vulnerable rural women out of abject poverty. In a nutshell, in addition to raising the level of income of the beneficiaries, the project helped boost their self-confidence and aspirations, which are perhaps central to the sustainability of project outcomes. An extended summary of this study has been included in the current issue.

The second half of 2017 also saw 6 completed and 11 on going studies. The range of topics these studies dwelt with is quite extensive, indicating the diversity of skill that BIDS possesses. A brief summary of all 17 studies has also been provided in this issue. BIDS hosts seminars on a regular basis. Three important seminars were held during this period on education, export diversification and potential growth.

This Newsletter has tried to take stock of BIDS activities that were carried out over the second half of 2017. We sincerely hope this will serve to inform development practitioners and stakeholders, and generate greater interest and engagement with BIDS. ■

Study Highlights

Impact Evaluation of the 1st Phase of "SWAPNO"

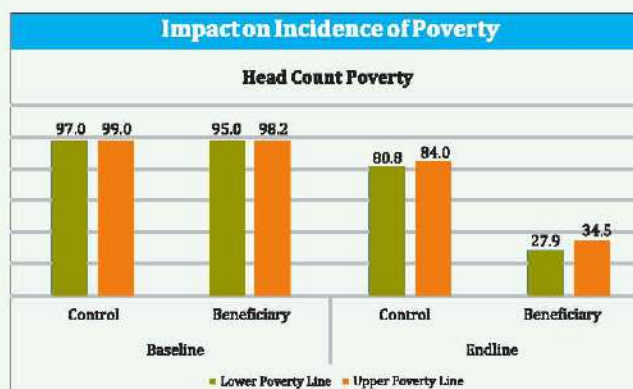
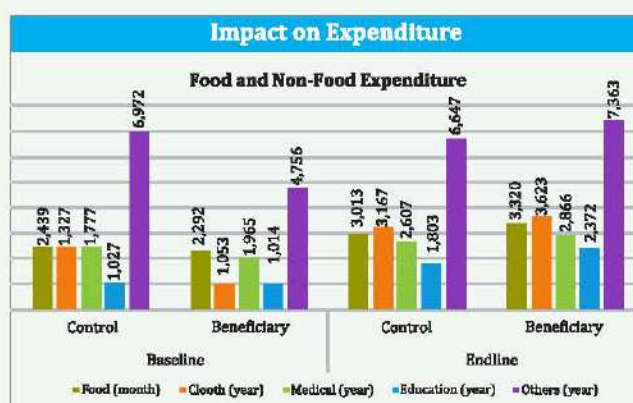
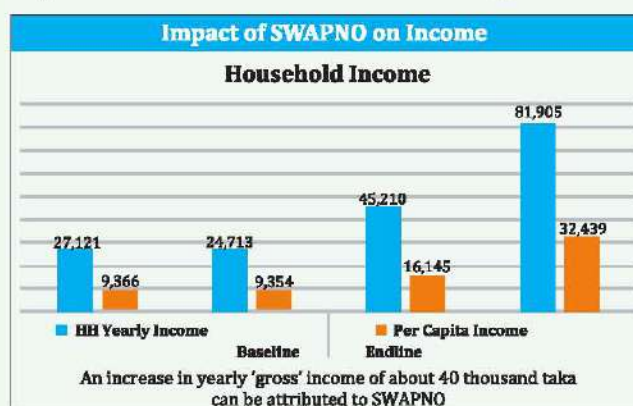
Study Team: Kazi Iqbal (Study Director), Minhaj Mahmud, Tahreen Tahrima Chowdhury, Paritosh K. Roy and Amin Bin Hasib

"Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities," also known as SWAPNO, is a typical public works based "graduation model" targeting distressed and vulnerable rural women. Public works based "graduation model" is argued to be different from direct asset transfer based models on the ground that the former enhances women empowerment and boosts self-confidence and aspiration, which are the key ingredients of the sustainability of the project outcomes. SWAPNO, following global best practices, complements public works with mandatory savings, participation in ROSCA (Rotating Savings and Credit Associations), training on life skills and livelihoods and linkages with local markets and potential employers. Hence, it not only aims at lifting the poor out of poverty during the project period, but also helps them sustain with the higher income level in the absence of the project. The beneficiary women were employed for a period of 18 months, from 16 August 2015 to 15 February 2017, and each beneficiary received a total of BDT 66,450 as cash wage payments, along with the amount of BDT 22,150 as a "graduation bonus," which was built up from the mandatory monthly savings under the project. Along with employment, the SWAPNO women also received seven basic life skills and livelihoods trainings. The idea is that the set of skills learnt from training will help beneficiaries invest their savings for productive purposes which will yield a stream of income when the project is no longer supporting them.

This study assesses the impact of these interventions on the well-being of the beneficiaries. The research design employs a randomized control trial (RCT) to identify the causal impact of these interventions. The baseline survey was conducted in August 2015 on a total of 1,200 households (HHs), which included 800 "treatment" (beneficiary) HHs and 400 "control" HHs, in Kurigram and Satkhira districts. To this end, an end-line survey was carried out on the same treatment and control groups in the baseline sample.

The study suggests that the beneficiary women have higher control over personal and household assets than their non-participant counterparts and are more able to make decisions about IGAs on their own. The fact that destitute women earn, save and build assets on their own gives them self-confidence and self-esteem. The beneficiaries are more mobile outside their community than before, which is an important indicator of women empowerment. They are found to be more optimistic about their future and have higher self-esteem, self-confidence and the aspiration to live a better life in the years to come.

The results suggest substantial increase in income and assets of the beneficiaries. The project contributes about 40,000 taka increase in income, which has led to a drastic reduction of poverty, both moderate and extreme, according to standard definitions. They are now more food secured as the share of households skipping one or two meals has dropped. The increase in income has resulted in increase in both food and non-food expenditure, particularly education expenditure. At the time of interview, most of the beneficiaries have invested their graduation bonus and they invested in livestock, poultry and other productive assets. Livestock is now the main asset of the beneficiaries. Not only the amount, but the composition of asset has changed - livestock constitutes about 43 per cent of total assets, which was only 13 per cent before SWAPNO. The graduation bonus has also helped the beneficiaries access agricultural land market as they are leasing in land. This shift of occupation from wage labour to a mix of farming and wage labour has tremendous impact on their self-esteem and social status. ■



Completed Studies

An Inclusive Approach to Care of the Elderly in Bangladesh

Unlike most developed countries, old age support programme is a newer concept in most developing countries. There is no comprehensive policy for systematically developing an old age care system. In fact, institutionalised care for the elderly is itself a hallmark of a more evolved society.

This study assesses the gap between needs and current provisions of care of the aged, and suggests measures to develop a policy framework for an inclusive approach for care of the elderly. The study collects data from 136 respondents using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative survey has empirically validated and informed the study on the target beneficiaries who comprise the elderly while the qualitative opinion assessment has thrown light on the overarching issues and way forward.

The findings reveal that elderly are in satisfactory condition in the case of middle and higher income groups. Elderly people among low income families, however, are extremely poor, and find their existence hard. There is a rural-urban and male-female distinction in the attitude, way-of-life of the elderly in Bangladesh. With the breakdown of joint families, the issues of care for elderly are posing additional difficulties, especially among the poorer sections and in urban areas.

This study identified four levels of engagement, which could be worthwhile for creating the inclusive space for the elders of this country. The first level is the Government level, followed by the NGO and development partner level, the Community level and the Individual and Family level. Elderly people must be taught to be able to look after themselves and family members too, and have to be given the right attitudes and skills to foster an enabling environment. Moreover, the study suggests the need to keep a provision of adequate budget for the development of elders.

An Assessment on Coverage of Basic Social Services in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, in pursuit of its own development trajectory and commitment to fulfill the SDGs, continuously invests in social services including health, nutrition, education and child protection. The success of these interventions depends on effective coverage of the targeted beneficiaries. If an intervention fails to provide effective coverage, the related population remains deprived of the intended benefits.

This study assesses the coverage of several basic social services in the areas of health, education, nutrition, child protection, HIV/AIDS awareness, improved drinking water supply, sanitation and hygiene based on data collected from 211,385 households across 64 districts through interview. Measurement for levels of coverage of services is done using the modified Tanahashi approach and UNICEF Global MoRES. The study found that most of the services are not easily accessible and even when the services are available to a section of the target group, not everyone utilises or avail the service. In fact, the drop in coverage of services at different levels reflects the existence of barriers and bottlenecks that restrict access and utilisation of the services. Such "drops" or decreases in coverage estimates call for a deeper look into the situation (and to carry out bottleneck analysis) to find out issues that are impeding

universal coverage of the interventions in terms of access and utilisation. It is also necessary to specifically address issues relevant to outreach and effectiveness.

Burden of Disease on the Urban Poor: A Study of Morbidity and Utilisation of Healthcare among Slum Dwellers in Dhaka City

Bangladesh is rapidly urbanising. Accompanying this rapid pace of urbanisation, there has been a faster growth in the population residing in slums. Slums characterised by crowded living conditions, unhygienic surroundings and lack of basic amenities such as garbage disposal facilities, water and sanitation, which have an adverse impact on the health status of the urban poor.

There are very few studies in Bangladesh on morbidity and health care utilisation by the urban poor. In order to make the urban health care delivery system more pro-poor, knowledge of their morbidity pattern and health seeking behaviour is important. The present study examines the pattern and levels of morbidity and health seeking behaviour of the urban poor living in the slum areas of Dhaka city. It also compares the morbidity and health seeking behaviour of slum dwellers with that of non-slum groups. Moreover, the study examines the individual and household level factors associated with utilisation of professional care. The study is based on a household survey conducted in slum and non-slum locations of Dhaka city. A sample of 800 households living in the slum clusters, and another 400 households from non-slum areas were selected for the study.

The study reveals that poor people and residents of slums are especially vulnerable to illness because of the generally unhygienic conditions in which they live, and their low levels of awareness of preventive care. Within urban areas, the slum dwellers suffered higher morbidity than non-slum dwellers in each age group, income group and education group. Not only are the slum dwellers likely to suffer from higher morbidity, but they are also less likely to receive professional care during sickness. The study suggests only pro-poor, multi pronged health interventional programmes may help them recover from this human scourge.

Impact of Natural Barrier on Competitiveness of Selected Bangladeshi Exportable Agricultural Products in the International Market

This study estimates the export potential of selected agricultural exportable products (fruits/vegetables) by estimating protection and competitiveness measures of these products in the international market. While doing so it differed from the existing literature by estimating and incorporating widely defined "natural barriers" in the estimation. Natural barriers are defined as transaction costs incorporating both implicit and explicit costs. Real life transaction costs were estimated through collecting information from different market actors and exporters. By incorporating this cost in the estimates of protection (nominal and effective) and in Policy Analysis Matrix (PAM), the research has shown relative importance and effect of both natural and policy barriers to export. Through PAM analysis it suggests different policy options available for the exporters.

Estimating Potential Growth for Bangladesh: A Production Function Approach

This study estimates potential output growth for Bangladesh over the 1985-2015 period. Potential growth, as different from actual growth, determines how much growth the economy is capable of achieving by deploying its trend capital stock as well as the natural level of employment at a point in time. Data paucity is the main challenge to calculating potential growth in any developing economy and Bangladesh is not an exception in this respect. While data on capital stock can be framed with fewer disputes, various labour data generate widely different measures for potential growth. After determining the capital stock, this study considers different estimates of labour and suggested a more acceptable approach to eventually calculate potential growth for Bangladesh. Despite various versions, this work found potential growth to remain at least one to two percentage points higher than actual growth particularly in the most recent decade, suggesting the presence of policy gaps that made the economy perform less than at its potential level.

Additionally, the trend of potential growth shows gradual slowdown after the early 2010s, requiring some policy steps to review whether both actual and potential growth can be accelerated in the medium term.

Baseline Survey on Estimating Socioeconomic Benefits of Renewable Energy Technology (Ret) Systems In Bangladesh

The purpose of this study was to carry out baseline surveys on socio-economic benefits of each of the four Renewable Energy Technology (RET) systems of interest, namely-solar mini-grid, solar irrigation pump, Improved Cooking Stoves (ICS) and biogas plant to facilitate the estimate of socioeconomic benefits of the interventions. All the potential users (e.g. households and enterprises in case of solar mini-grid electricity) were interviewed and information was collected to make comparisons between treatment and control groups. Separate surveys were conducted for each of the 4 RETs of interest: mini-grid, solar irrigation pump, ICS and biogas plants. In addition, community surveys on all the 4 RETs complement aspects that are not covered by household surveys. ■

Ongoing Studies

Women Entrepreneurs in SMEs: Bangladesh Perspective 2017

Women entrepreneurship development in any country is associated with that country's government policy, support from financial institutions and other supporting organisations. According to the Economic Census 2013, total number of establishments in Bangladesh is 7.82 million, of which only 7.21 per cent are owned by women. Out of 7.4 million working proprietors, only 5.9 per cent are women. Though 98 per cent of the enterprises fall in the category of micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME), presence of women in these enterprises is not significantly visible.

SME Foundation conducted a comprehensive study on "Women Entrepreneurs in SMEs: Bangladesh Perspective" in 2009 with a view to identify the impediments to the development of women entrepreneurship and formulate programmes based on the study recommendations. To explore the current situation of women entrepreneurship development and design appropriate interventions on the basis of those findings for more advancement of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, a comprehensive study is necessary. Therefore, with support from the SME Foundation, BIDS has initiated a study titled "Women Entrepreneurs in SMEs: Bangladesh Perspective 2017."

An Evaluation of SME Foundation's Activities towards Development of SMEs

The SME Foundation was created under the Ministry of Industries (MoI) as an apex institution for SME development in the country through a gazette notification in 2007. The Foundation is intended to work as a one-stop service delivery window for SMEs.

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the degree of effectiveness of the Foundation towards the development of SMEs through implementation of its mandated activities. For this reason, the study intends to make an in-depth evaluation in terms of both impacts of its activities and the processes it follows. Therefore, the evaluation will follow the activities of different wings of the Foundation.

Evaluation of Industrial Estates of BSCIC

The industrial estates of BSCIC have been promoting small and cottage industrial sector and thereby creating employment opportunities, attaining poverty alleviation and balanced regional growth, ensuring optimum utilisation of economic and human resources and accelerating overall economic growth of the country. It is important to assess whether the current industrial estate model of BSCIC is sustainable and it has accomplished the mandated activities in line with the previous industrial policies. The evaluation will be conducted in the light of the following aspects: evaluation of infrastructure facilities of industrial estates, capacity needs, policy relevance and constraints; economic (tertiary) and social impact of industrial estates, such as investment impact, employment impact, gross value added, technological innovations and transfers, spillover impact, sustainability of BSCIC industrial estate model, etc.; and future policy directions for BSCIC industrial estates and alternative sustainability approaches.

About 25 BSCIC industrial estates will be selected as treatment areas and 10 more areas, where BSCIC is going to establish new industrial estates, will be selected as control areas for qualitative data collection. A total of 500 firms within and outside BSCIC estates will be surveyed.

Bangladesh Integrated Food Policy Research Programme

The Bangladesh Integrated Food Policy Research Programme is one of the key components of the Modern Storage Facilities Project being implemented by the Ministry of Food with a World Bank investment. The project is designed to undertake three sets of activities: (1) enhance institutional capacity of the FPMU and DG-Food to carry out their mandates; (2) identify analytical gaps and carry out collaborative research with cutting edge methods; and (3) help develop an evidence-based policy framework to improve the efficiency and performance of the country's overall food storage system and management systems.

Through a competitive bidding process, the contract was awarded to an IFPRI-led JV in partnership with the BIDS and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.

Under the collaborative agreement, BIDS will adjust and adapt the work plan depending on the mutually agreeable changes in the project priorities with the following specific deliverables:

- (a) **Collaborative Research:** BIDS will lead or co-lead research on assessment of the FPMU and DG-Food, food quality and safety, food price stabilisation, and alternative public investments.
- (b) **Training and outreach:** BIDS will serve as the key partner in carrying out in-country training and outreach in collaboration with IFPRI-Dhaka. The BIDS involvement will include both conducting training with direct BIDS staff involvement and making its facilities for outreach/training events.
- (c) **In-country facilitation:** BIDS will support IFPRI and its partners in carrying out field works, meeting with the policy makers/stakeholders, as well as other challenges or emergencies that researchers from the partner institutions might confront.

How Much is Mobile Money Worth? bKash Experience in Bangladesh

Today more than 80 per cent of the mobile financial transactions in Bangladesh are done through bKash, which serve around 23 million customers.

Under this study both household and enterprise surveys will be conducted using quasi-experimental design in which the units of households and enterprises will be randomly drawn from randomly selected areas with and without concentration of bKash services. The key research question is to assess the role of bKash in transferring money through mobile technologies and its impact on users (both consumers and producers), clients, traders, businesses, and all those connected to its operation. Possible benefits of bKash include financial inclusion, faster, more secure, more confidential and less costly transactions; savings, empowerment of the poor and women, positive impacts on financial markets because of low default, allowing impersonal transactions, positive impact on trades, services, market expansion, and ultimately having an economy wide impact.

Implication of Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP) to Reduce Disaster and Gender Vulnerability

Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP) of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) is a cash-based workfare programme targeted to the rural extreme poor that provides a hitherto unavailable element of employment guarantee. The main objectives of this study are to assess the extent to which the EGPP has achieved its stated objectives, to assess the impact of the programme on the target beneficiaries in terms of reduction of disaster vulnerability and increased resilience, and to explore the effectiveness, relevance and efficiency of the programme for the poorest segments of the society in order to reduce disaster and gender vulnerability.

The present study will be based on primary data collection and interviews covering 20 districts. In each district, the sampling frame will comprise two upazilas and two unions. Thus, two upazilas from each district and a total of 40

upazilas and 40 unions from 20 districts will be selected for the study purpose. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be used.

Assessing the Current Situation of Solar Home System (SHS) Programme of IDCOL and Recommending Action Plan

Since its introduction in 2003, the SHS programme of IDCOL has ensured supply of solar electricity to 18 million people. The programme reached its peak in 2013 when average installation of SHS was about 71,033 per month. However, the average installation rate started declining since then, which now stands at about 5,012 per month. This has posed a serious threat to achieving IDCOL's target of 6 million SHS installation. Introduction of alternative SHS at a lower price by a new supplier, a significant increase of grid connection by REB, and the distribution of SHS under KABI/TR programme or absence of new demand are perhaps the key factors that contributed to the drastic decline of IDCOL's SHS installation. Along with this problem, IDCOL is facing two other important challenges. First, a substantial number of SHS customers who have connected to the grid have returned their SHS systems because of massive expansion of grid electricity. Second, customers who are currently using SHS did not return the system and stopped paying their due installments. Overall, the SHS programme of the IDCOL is in jeopardy to the brink of abandonment. Therefore, IDCOL wishes to assess if and how this situation may be improved for the future viability of the programme. Against this background, the present study will assess the current market situation of the SHS programme and recommend necessary measures to improve the situation.

How Teenagers Use Smartphones to Exercise Freedom

This study will examine how teenagers in Dhaka city use smartphones to exercise freedom, specifically, how the young users avoid parental and social supervision. Instead of reproducing the binary dichotomy of good and bad usage, this study will investigate what youngsters do with smartphones, specifically, when they are relatively free from supervisions. The study plan is to interview students who own or regularly use smartphones. Fifty in-depth interviews of high school students from five different areas (Uttra, Gulshan, Mohammadpur, Khilgaon, and Old Dhaka) will be conducted. To examine potential differences of experiences along the gender line, 50 per cent of the respondents will be girls. Fifty separate interview reports will be prepared and translated into English. Subsequently, NVivo—a specialised software for processing qualitative data—will be used to analyse the interview reports. This study aims to contribute to finding an appropriate balance between necessary supervision and required independence of young, inquisitive minds.

South Asia WASH Results Programme: Household Endline Survey

The objective of South Asia WASH Results Programme (SAWRP) is to promote and enable sustained use of hygienic household toilets and the practice of hand washing with soap by men, women and children in poor rural communities within 12 districts of Bangladesh.

The primary aim of the End-line survey is to enable measurement of results achieved by the programme, not to evaluate the impact. The outcome targets which the survey will need to provide evidence are:

- Poor people across 12 districts continue to use reliable, safe drinking water sources;
- Poor people across 12 districts continue to use basic or improved latrines; and
- Poor men, women and children across intervention districts continue to practice hand washing with soap at critical times.

The end-line survey will involve a household survey among randomly selected household members aged 15+ and they will be interviewed to measure outcomes of sanitation, hygiene and water interventions.

Preparation of Formulation Assignment for the New Project on “SDG Implementation and Monitoring”

The Support to Sustainable and Inclusive Planning (SSIP) project of UNDP played an instrumental role in helping General Economics Division (GED) of Planning Commission undertake initiatives toward creating an enabling environment within government for implementing SDGs.

Given the broad scope of SDGs and the proactive initiatives taken so far, the Government of Bangladesh requires technical assistance for upgrading its current capacity for both implementation and monitoring. In this backdrop, UNDP has contracted BIDS to design a follow-up project to SSIP which “will foster the partnership between the Government and the UNDP and take forward the efforts made so far by the GED for achieving the goals of SDGs.”

The methodology for designing the new project largely relies on stakeholder consultation and reviewing of documents, particularly the ProDoc, Midterm Review and other outputs of SSIP project. The BIDS team will primarily consult with GED, PMO and BBS, the three potential stakeholders of this project. The team will also meet the representatives from private sector (e.g., FBCCI, BGMEA, etc.) to learn about their views on potential role of the private sector in SDG implementation.

An information collection tool will be prepared for the stakeholder’s consultation. The specific questions of the

information collection tool will be discussed and finalised with GED. The information collection tool will be sent to the relevant stakeholders before the consultation meeting, allowing them adequate time for effective responses.

Key informant interviews will be organised with the relevant officials and representatives from research, academics, business enterprise, and prominent practitioners from development sector.

The interviews will follow a certain set of queries/questions as a frame of reference. The idea will be to capture the relevant focal persons’ concerns, opinion and recommendations in planning a comprehensive capacity building approach of the action plan. An aggregate finding from these KIIs will provide a certain road map, which will eventually help design the project.

Study on Injury and Occupational Disease in the Leather Sector of Bangladesh

Workplace injury in Bangladesh is perceived to be high, but the issue has received inadequate attention. It is necessary to create a broad consensus among government, employers and workers organisations on the need for a National Employment Injury Protection and Rehabilitation (NEIPR) scheme.

GIZ is working in the broader leather sector and the Government of Bangladesh has shown keen interest to work with the GIZ in setting up a national EII (Employment Injury Insurance) scheme. An effective design of NEIPR requires a comprehensive “establishment survey” for developing a clear idea on the type and extent of workplace injury in leather sector of Bangladesh.

The overall objective of the proposed study is to assess a comprehensive “establishment survey” to generate data on accident rate as well as to make contribution to the knowledge of understanding the nature of the accident in the leather sector. This study will also cover the characteristics and sources of occupational diseases occurring in leather sector. ■

R&P Meeting Held

The BIDS Research and Publication Committee (R&P) met on 15 October 2017 at the BIDS Conference Room to review the status of research activities and progress of publications of BIDS. The meeting was attended by all BIDS

researchers and several decisions were taken to further streamline research and publication activities of the Institute. Dr. K. A. S. Murshid, Director General, BIDS presided over the meeting. ■

New BIDS Professional Staff

Dr. Azreen Karim, Post-Doctoral Fellow

Joined BIDS as a Post-Doctoral Fellow on 21 August 2017. Before starting a research career as a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Dr. Azreen Karim served as a Teaching Fellow (Lecturer and Course Coordinator) at VUW (New Zealand) from 2014 to 2017 and had taught 2nd and 3rd year core economics

courses on International Trade and Open-Economy Macroeconomics, Monetary Economics, Building Economics and Project Management. Her pre-doctoral qualifications include a Masters in Economics from York University, Toronto, Canada and an intensive programme on Economic Modelling from the National University of Singapore. ■

DVD-based Learning Programme for University Entrance Exams: Experimental Evidence from Rural Bangladesh

BIDS organised a seminar titled “DVD-based Learning Programme for University Entrance Exams: Experimental Evidence from Rural Bangladesh” on 7 November 2017 at the BIDS Conference Room. The presentation was made by Professor Hisaki Kono from the University of Kyoto, Japan. Professor Kono evaluated a unique DVD-based learning programme, targeting students who aim to take university entrance exams in rural Bangladesh. He also suggested that the DVD based learning programme substantially increases the probability of students passing entrance exams and that such effect largely explained by their non-cognitive abilities such as self-control abilities rather than cognitive scores. Also, there is potential demand for DVD based learning among rural students, even at higher prices. The seminar was attended by BIDS researchers and Dr. K. A. S. Murshid, Director General, BIDS chaired the seminar.



Presentation of Prof. Hisaki Kono at the BIDS Seminar

Import Substitute Protection and the Challenge of Export Diversification

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) organised a seminar on “Import Substitute Protection and the Challenge of Export Diversification” at the BIDS Conference Room on 05 October 2017. Dr. Zaidi Sattar, Chairman, Policy Research Institute (PRI), made the keynote presentation. He highlighted on the evolution of Bangladesh trade policy and issues, particularly related to tariff structure and export diversification challenges. Dr. K. A. S. Murshid, Director General, BIDS chaired the seminar.



Dr. Zaidi Sattar Delivering His Lecture at the BIDS Seminar

Estimating Potential Growth for Bangladesh: A Production Function Approach

A seminar on “Estimating Potential Growth for Bangladesh: A Production Function Approach” was organised on 9 August 2017 in the BIDS Conference Room. The seminar was chaired by the Director General of BIDS, Dr. K. A. S. Murshid, with the presentation being done by Dr. Biru Paksha Paul (Visiting Fellow, BIDS) and Ms. Rizwana Islam (Research Associate, BIDS). They showed that Bangladesh’s potential growth has remained close to 8 per cent which is higher than the current actual growth. Economic reforms and liberalisation have boosted potential growth since the mid-1990s. However, potential growth shows a decelerating trend since the early 2010s. The authors suggested further enhancement of labour quality of capital efficiency to make potential growth move upward. Researchers from BIDS, Bangladesh Bank, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and private agencies attended the seminar. ■



DG, BIDS Addressing at the Seminar

Extension of Tenure of Dr. K. A. S. Murshid, Director General, BIDS

The BIDS Board of Trustees met on 06 November 2017 under the chairmanship of Mr. A. H. M. Mustafa Kamal, FCA, MP, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. The Board was pleased to extend Dr. K. A. S. Murshid’s tenure as Director General for a second 3-year term, beginning 1 April 2018. ■



A View of the BIDS Board of Trustees

BIDS Researchers at International Meetings

Dr. K. A. S. Murshid, Director General

- Represented BIDS and Bangladesh in the annual meeting of the Asian Think Tank Network (ATTN) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 20-21 September 2017. This was the 5th meeting of the Network which is supported by ADB. This year's host was the Institute of Policy Studies in Colombo. The theme of the conference was "Financing Sustainable Urbanisation."
- Participated in the annual conference of GRECEST (The Global Research Consortium on Economic Structural Transformation) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia during 12-13 December 2017. Dr. Murshid moderated the panel on Special Economic Zones where a total of five country papers were presented. In addition, Dr. Murshid presented a paper on Bangladesh's experience. He later took part in the Steering Committee meeting of GRECEST to review membership applications and chart future policy.

Dr. Kazi Ali Toufique, Research Director

- Attended the proposal writing workshop on, "Dried Fish Matters: Mapping the Social Economy of Dried Fish in South-East Asia for Enhanced Well-being and Nutrition" held at the Department of Fisheries, Bangkok, Thailand from 28 to 31 August 2017, sponsored by the Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand.

Dr. Anwara Begum, Senior Research Fellow

- Attended and presented a paper at the "Stockholm Resilience Conference" held in Sweden from 20 to 23 August 2017.
- Participated in the "2017 Asian Evaluation Week" held in Hangzhou, China from 04 to 08 September 2017, sponsored by ADB.

Dr. Mohammad Yunus, Senior Research Fellow

- Attended a conference titled "Understanding the Dynamics of Informal Cross-border Trade in Agricultural Products in Eastern South Asia" held in New Delhi, India on 04 August 2017, organised by the CUTS International.

Dr. Nazneen Ahmed, Senior Research Fellow

- Attended the workshop on "Gender Equality in Global Supply Chains" and "Ethical Trading Initiative" held on 20-23 November 2017 in Manchester, UK. The workshop was organised by the University of Manchester, UK.

Dr. Minhaj Mahmud, Senior Research Fellow

- Attended the 32nd Annual Congress of the European Economic Association (EEA) and 70th European Meeting of the Economic Society (ESEM) from 21 August 2017 to 25 August 2017 in Lisbon, Portugal.
- Attended and presented a paper at the "3rd IZA/DFID GLM-LIC Research Conference: New Research on Labour Markets in Low Income Countries" held in Washington D.C., USA during 19-21 October 2017, invited by Institute for Labour (IZA), Germany. Dr. Mahmud also visited RAND Corporation in Washington (23-25 October 2017) to work on a joint research project on Bangladesh Labour Market.
- Attended and presented a paper at the conference on "Agriculture and Rural Transformation in Asia: Past Experience and Future Opportunities" held in Bangkok, Thailand during 12-14 December 2017, sponsored by IFPRI.

Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, Research Associate

- Attended the "ASEAN & South Asian Youth Mission to Japan" held at the University of Tokyo, Japan from 18 to 25 October 2017, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan and the University of Tokyo. ■

BIDS Publications

BDS Special Issues in honour of Mahabub Hossain

The papers have been contributed by Mahabub Hossain's colleagues and friends who overlapped with him at Cambridge during his graduate student years there, and colleagues from the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies where he spent the bulk of his professional/academic life, including serving as its Director General.

The contributions incorporate many of the concerns that were close to Mahabub Hossain's heart. The Bangladeshi contributors have largely drawn upon their research on Bangladesh's fast changing rural context while others have written either on the Indian experience or taken a more pan-South Asian view. The topics span a large canvas but are joined together with a common refrain around agriculture, rural development and poverty-inequality, including both 'thought pieces' and assessment of specific interventions and programmes, combining policy, application and practice.

The papers and essays are distributed across all four numbers of BDS volume 40. Numbers 1 and 2 (March-June) contain the contributions subsumed under "Agricultural Transformation, Structural Change and Policy Reforms," while numbers 3 and 4 (September-December) deal with "Poverty, Labour Markets and Microcredit." ■

Call for Journal Articles

Articles are invited for the 'Bangladesh Development Studies' (quarterly journal published in English) and the 'Bangladesh Unnayan Samiksha' (annual journal published in Bangla) from researchers and academics who are interested in development issues of Bangladesh and other developing countries. The topics could cover a wide range of socio-economic development issues such as agriculture, rural development, industry, population, energy, environment, education, international relations, gender and macroeconomic issues. For details on submission procedure and authors' guidelines, please visit the BIDS website (www.bids.org.bd/publications) ■

■ Editor

Kazi Iqbal

■ Editorial Team

Md Meftaur Rahman

Nahin Rahman

■ Published by

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)

E-17, Agargaon, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar

G.P.O. Box No:3854, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh

Phone: 880-2-9143441-8, Fax: 880-2-8141722

E-mail: publication@bids.org.bd

Website: www.bids.org.bd

Facebook: www.facebook.com/bids.bd

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