

# RED Update

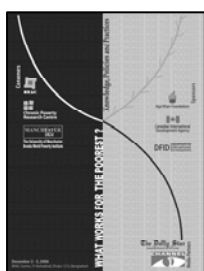


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## International Conference on Extreme Poverty Held



An international conference titled 'What works for the poorest: knowledge, policies and practices' was held at BRAC Centre, Dhaka during 2-5 December 2006.

The conference was jointly convened by BRAC, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, and the Brooks World Poverty Institute at the University of Manchester, UK. The main aim of the conference was to enable greater global understanding of various dimensions and dynamics of extreme poverty, and share the experiences of different policies and practices that have the promise of defeating extreme poverty. The inaugural session was chaired by Mr. Fazle Hasan Abed, the founder and chairperson of BRAC, while Dr. Akbar Ali Khan, the then Finance and Planning Advisor of the Caretaker government of Bangladesh attended as special guest. A total of 265 researchers, academics, and practitioners working on poverty from 13 countries participated in the conference. The conference was funded by CIDA as a part of the BRAC-AKFC Learning Partnership Project for CFPR/TUP and DFID.

## Education Research Update

### Workshop on assessing primary competencies held

RED organized a workshop on assessing primary competencies of the students during 23-26 November 2006. Competencies related to Bangla and English languages and mathematics were the main focus of the workshop. Four

experts on various fields of education Prof. Nazmul Haq, Prof. Shamsul Haque, Ms. Shamoly Akbar, and Mr. Ruhul Amin facilitated the workshop. Eighteen participants from BRAC (nine from BEP and nine from RED) attended the workshop. Following the workshop RED researchers have started some in-depth work on competencies assessment at primary level.

### Report on competencies achievement of BRAC Primary School students released

Under a broader aim of exploring the quality of BRAC Education Programme (BEP), this study examined the level of competency achievement of the BRAC primary school students graduated in 2005. Randomly selected 5,946 students (65% girls) from 298 schools under 150 BEP programme areas were sampled for the test. In addition, background information of the students, schools, teachers, programme organisers, and area managers were collected. In general, the students did very well in the test with an average achievement of 22.7 competencies, and 10% of the students achieved all the 27 competencies of the test. Proportion of contents in the textbooks taught in the classes, duration of attachment of programme organisers with the schools, experience of area managers and religion of the students came out as significant predictors of performance of the schools. A number of suggestions were also made.

## World Development Report 2007 Launched

The World Bank and BRAC jointly convened a seminar to disseminate the World Development Report 2007 titled *Development and the next generation*. This report focuses on youth – the

crucial capabilities and transitions in a young person's life: learning for life and work, staying healthy, working, forming families, and exercising citizenship.

RED disseminated its latest research monograph titled *Adolescents and youths in Bangladesh: some selected issues*. This monograph brings together a number of primary research studies of BRAC focusing on some selected issues that will help understand the aid policies and practices to improve the lives and livelihoods of the adolescents and youths of Bangladesh.

## Report on the State of Governance in Bangladesh Launched



The State of Governance in Bangladesh project, a joint research collaboration between BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division and BRAC University's

Centre for Governance Studies has launched its first report "*The state of governance in Bangladesh 2006: knowledge, perceptions, reality*" on 14 December 2006. Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud was the chief guest at the launching ceremony. Many distinguished scholars, citizens and donor agency representatives attended the event. The State of Governance project aims to enter the debate on governance in Bangladesh by examining the evidence and analysis of the governance issues. In particular, it intends to assess changes in governance over time. The present report is the first in what is intended to be an annual series designed to monitor the governance situation in Bangladesh. The present report reviews extensive

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literature and evidence on governance and presents findings of targeted primary research in order to provide a foundation for further empirical governance research and analysis.

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## **WASH Baseline Survey Begins**

BRAC Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programme (WASH) aims to cover 150 Upazilas and bring them under safe water, sanitation and hygiene by 2011. RED is responsible for the research and evaluation part of WASH programme. RED is involved in designing the household census of 150 selected *upazilas* (in three phases) for the execution of the intervention by the programme. Simultaneously, RED has also designed a baseline survey to assess the impact of the intervention and further research in future. The first phase of baseline in 50 *upazilas* has begun in November this year. In this phase 30,000 households will be surveyed for *upazila*-wise estimation of WASH indicators. Gradually, the baseline survey of the remaining 100 *upazilas* will be covered along with the programme census.

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## **BRAC's Livelihood Support Programme in Sri Lanka Evaluated**

BRAC Sri Lanka started rehabilitation and livelihood support programme in the coastal areas of Sri Lanka after the devastating Tsunami of December 2004. The evaluation intended to see whether programme participation has any influence on the income and assets of the beneficiaries. Using length of participation as a proxy for programme impact, we found strong influence of the programme on income and asset of the beneficiaries who have received grant. However, the impact of loan is not as pronounced as grants. It is probably too early to see the impact of microfinance, which started at the end of 2005.

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## **Formative Research on MANOSHI Programme Begins**

The MANOSHI programme was launched in November 2006 to reduce death and illness in mothers, newborns, and children in the urban slums in Bang-

ladesh through the development and delivery of an integrated, community-based package of essential health services. The 5-year project is funded by the Gates Foundation under its Community Health Solutions programme. The research support to the programme will be provided jointly by BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division and the Public Health Sciences Division of the ICDDR,B. A MOU has been signed. As a preliminary activity, formative research on certain priority issues such as current pregnancy and newborn practices and felt need for services, mapping of services available, exploration of the newly started "birthing hut", characteristics of the slum community, etc. have started in November. Besides, a detailed research agenda has been finalized incorporating impact surveys, operations research, cost analysis, and process documentation.

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## **Conference/Workshop Presentation**

Hasan Shareef Ahmed delivered a lecture on 'How to peer review a manuscript' on 18 December 2006 in the Workshop on Peer Review of Research Proposal organized by the Bangladesh Medical Research Council, Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka.

Syed Masud Ahmed presented a paper on 'Reaching the poorest of the poor with health services: the case of BRAC's CFPR/TUP programme in Bangladesh' at the conference titled What Works for the Poorest: Knowledge, Policies and Practices held on 3-5 December 2006 in Dhaka.

Imran Matin presented the highlights of research on CFPR/TUP to DFID's staff in London on 05 October 2006. He also made another presentation on BRAC's approach to microfinance at the All Party Parliamentary Group on Microfinance in the House of Commons, London, UK.

Following three papers were presented in the 8th IUNS International Symposium on Clinical Nutrition (ISCN) and 5th Asia-Pacific Clinical Nutrition Society (APCNS) Conference during 15-18 October 2006 held in Hang Zhou, China:

a) *Change in food and energy consumption among the ultra poor: is the*

*poverty reduction programme making a difference?* by Farhana Haseen

- b) *The effect of anthelmintic treatment on helminth infection and anaemia among the female workers of the Ayesha Abed Foundation in Bangladesh* by Marufa Aziz Khan
- c) *Home fortification for controlling anaemia among young children* by Nuzhat Choudhury

Samir Ranjan Nath gave following three presentations during the last quarter of the year:

- a) 'Students' assessment at the beginning of secondary education' at the UNESCO-BAFED Educational Researchers Forum held on 25 November 2006 in Dhaka.
- b) 'Education provisions and exclusions: evidence from Bangladesh' at the conference titled What Works for the Poorest: Knowledge, Policies and Practices held on 3-5 December 2006 in Dhaka.
- c) 'BRAC's partnership with the UN Agencies in Bangladesh' organized by UN ExCom Agencies held on 14 December 2006 in Dhaka.
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## **Recent Publications**

(Arranged alphabetically)

### **Books and book chapters**

The state of governance in Bangladesh 2006: knowledge, perceptions, reality. Dhaka: Centre for Governance Studies, BRAC University and BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, 2006. xvi, 149p.

### **Research monograph series**

Adolescents and youths in Bangladesh: some selected issues. Dhaka: BRAC, 2006. vi, 162p. (Research monograph series no. 31)

### **CFPR/TUP working paper series**

Ameen F and Sulaiman M. Social capital and economic well-being. Dhaka and Ottawa: BRAC and Aga Khan Foundation Canada, 2006. vi, 32p. (CFPR/TUP working paper series no. 15).

Sulaiman M and Matin I. Using change rankings to understand poverty dynamics: examining the impact of CFPR/TUP from community perspective. Dhaka and Ottawa: BRAC and Aga Khan Foundation Canada, 2006. vi, 25p. (CFPR/TUP working paper series no. 14).

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