



RED Update

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Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC

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National Low Birth Weight and Anaemia Survey 2003 Initiated

The Research and Evaluation Division (RED) of BRAC has launched the National Low Birth Weight and Anaemia Survey 2003 in collaboration with the government of Bangladesh and UNICEF.

The low birth weight survey is being conducted in 107 representative clusters (about 300 households per cluster) both in rural and urban areas across the country. A total of 3,210 births are anticipated to be studied. The field survey is expected to be completed by early 2004.

The earlier surveys on anaemia were conducted in the rural areas of the country except the districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The present survey aims, for the first time, to know the prevalence of anaemia in the districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and in the urban areas of the rest of the country. Forty-five clusters will be surveyed. Population of all categories will be studied (8,100). The interviewers have already been trained. The survey is expected to be completed by May 2003.

Education Watch 2002 Draft Report Prepared

Education Watch – a civil society initiative to monitor primary education in Bangladesh is running its fourth year. BRAC researchers have been contributing to it since its inception. The current theme is ‘literacy’. RED has conducted a literacy test on 13,145 individuals aged ≥ 11 years taken from across the country. The draft report is under review. The preliminary findings were presented in two seminars. The literacy rate was

found 41.4%. Of the respondents, 49.3% were non-literate, 9.3% semi-literate, 21% basic level literate, and 20.4% advanced level literate. It was observed that poor quality of education hinders achieving sustainable literacy skills. The final report is expected in May 2003.

Meetings Held with Programmes to Identify Research Issues

A joint meeting was held between RED and the BRAC Health Programme in early this year to identify possible research issues relating to health, nutrition, and population. Subsequently the issues were reviewed and prioritized for undertaking during the year 2003.

A joint meeting of BRAC Education Programme and the education researchers of RED was held in early February 2003 to identify research issues for the year 2003. BEP shared some of the new initiatives and presented the programme update. Nine research issues were identified in the meeting.

Some senior researchers of RED attended a meeting of the regional managers of BRAC Development Programme on 15 March 2003 to identify research issues for 2003. The managers raised a number of research issues that need to be studied.

Study on Nursery Programme Conducted

To provide some inputs in the improvement of BRAC nursery programme RED conducted a study on the nurseries operated by BRAC and the government. The study was conducted to help redesign the nursery programme of BRAC with special reference to ecological distribu-

tion across the country. The study specifically aimed to see the satisfaction of the growers with BRAC nursery seedlings. The knowledge of the common people about medicinal plants and its prospect in Bangladesh were also seen. The findings reveal that people are willing to grow herbal plants, and there is a bright prospect for using medicinal plants in Bangladesh.

Based on the study findings a paper titled “People’s awareness about medicinal plants and its prospect in Bangladesh” was presented by Mohammad Zayed Hossain, Environmental Researcher in the “International Conference on the Role of Plant Taxonomy in Herbal Medicine and Conservation Policy of Floral Diversity” held in Dhaka on 17-19 March 2003.

Research on Secondary School Launched

BRAC Education Programme has started organizing training workshops for improving the quality of secondary school-teachers of mathematics and English. RED has initiated a study to develop tools to identify strengths and weaknesses of the teachers to be trained. It is expected that the trained teachers would be followed up in future to see their developments where information collected through this tool would be used as baseline. RED is also developing another tool for baseline survey of the secondary schools. The study is expected to be completed in April 2003.

Workshop on TB Control held in Basel

Thirteen researchers including 5 facilitators gathered in Basel, Switzerland during 20-24 January 2003 to examine the results, findings and their policy

implications from 4 studies on gender and TB being carried out in Bangladesh, India, Malawi and Colombia. Akramul Islam, Manager, BRAC TB Programme and Fazlul Karim, Senior Research Epidemiologist of RED participated in the workshop. The country-specific preliminary results were shared and reviewed. This was followed by writing of the preliminary findings and submission to the World Health Organization (WHO) for a transnational comparison. However, the workshop came up with future plan of action encompassing a variety of activities to be accomplished by 2003. The major among others were: i) making double entry of all the quantitative data on 6 components of the study to ensure accuracy and consistency; and ii) writing 8 papers including a project report for WHO. However, accomplishment of all the planned tasks of this study will take a longer time than stipulated.

SAFE Study Findings Presented

The SAFE (Skilled Attendance for Everyone) study was conducted in five developing countries including Bangladesh and coordinated by the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. RED has conducted the Bangladesh part. Most of the data were collected from the community and the government district hospitals and the Mother and Child Welfare Centres of Kurigram district. To disseminate the study findings a half-day workshop was held in Rangpur on 31 March 2003. Forty participants representing government, non-government, private agencies, and media from Rangpur and Kurigram districts attended the workshop.

Meeting of the INDEPTH Network Held

The 3rd annual general scientific meeting of the INDEPTH Network, an international network of demographic surveillance system field sites with continuous demographic evaluation of populations and their health, was held on 2-3 February 2003 in Accra, Ghana. Theme of the meeting was "The INDEPTH Network and the fight against poverty-related diseases." One hundred and sixteen participants from 25 countries attended this meeting. M Showkat Gani of RED represented the *Watch Project* of BRAC,

an INDEPTH field site, in the meeting and presented a poster titled "Construction of complete life tables for BRAC female members using the incomplete data set." HIV/AIDS and malaria were highly focused in the meeting.

Recent Publications

(Arranged alphabetically)

Journal articles, books and book chapters

1. Ahmad JK, Goldar BN, Jakariya M, Misra S. Willingness to pay for arsenic-free, safe drinking water in rural Bangladesh - methodology and results. Dhaka: Water and Sanitation Programme - South Asia. Dec 2002:16p (Field note).
2. Ahmed SM. Differing health and health-seeking behaviour: ethnic minorities of the Chittagong Hill Tract, Bangladesh. *Asia-Pacific J Public Health* 2001;13(2): 100-8.
3. Ahmed SM, Rana AKMM, Chowdhury M, Bhuiya A. Measuring perceived health outcome in non-western culture: does SF-36 has a place? *J Health Pop Nutr* 2002; 20(4):334-42.
4. Ahmed SM, Rana AKMM, Chowdhury SM, Mills A, Bennett S. Substance and drug abuse: knowledge, attitude and perception of school going adolescents in Bangladesh. *Regional Health Forum* 2002;6(2):59-71.
5. Bhuiya A, Chowdhury M. Beneficial effects of a woman-focused development programme on child survival: evidence from rural Bangladesh. *Soc Sci Med* 2002;55:1553-60.
6. Bhuiya A, Chowdhury AMR. Come ridurre la poverta: l'esperienza del Bangladesh. *Qualita Equita* 2001;6(21-22):71-85.
7. Chowdhury AMR, Nath SR, Choudhury RK. Equity in primary education provision in Bangladesh: hopes and concerns. In: Biswas AK, Bricchieri-Colombi JSA, Chowdhury AI, Rasheed KBS (Editors). *Contemporary issues in development*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, Third World Centre for Water Management, and Academic Press and Publishers Limited, 2002:281-304.
8. Hadi A. Integrating prevention of acute respiratory infections with micro-credit programme: experience of BRAC, Bangladesh. *Public Health* 2002;116: 238-44.
9. Husain AMM. Bangladeshe daridra bimochon: obhigyata o karaniya (In Bangla). *Farm Econ* (The Journal of the Bangladesh Agricultural Economists Association). n.d. 11:175-82.

10. Husain AMM. Agricultural development in Bangladesh and the role and effectiveness of NGOs: the case of BRAC. *Farm Econ* (The Journal of the Bangladesh Agricultural Economists Association). n.d. 11:27-42.
11. Karim F, Chowdhury AMR, Gani, MS. Rapid assessment of the endemicity of lower-limb clinical rickets in Cox's Bazaar district of Bangladesh. In: Combs GF, Jr. (Editor). *Improving health and economic development: approaches to preventing diet-related rickets*. Proceedings of an International Symposium. New York: Cornell University, 2001:44-54.
12. Karim F, Chowdhury AMR, Gani MS. Rapid assessment of the prevalence of lower limb clinical rickets in Bangladesh. *Public Health* 2003;117(2):135-44.
13. Mahbub A. Health service utilization by rural women: a reflection of healthcare priority (In Bangla). In: Ahmed ZU, Chowdhury M (Editors). *Charcha*. Dhaka: Jahangir Nagar University, 2001:163-70.
14. Nasreen H, Chowdhury M, Bhuiya A, Ahmed SM, Aziz A. Communication network in reproductive health information dissemination to the adolescents (In Bangla). In: Ahmed ZU, Chowdhury M (Editors). *Charcha*. Dhaka: Jahangir Nagar University, 2001:180-92.
15. Nath SR. The transition from non-formal to formal education: the case of BRAC, Bangladesh. *Int Rev Edu* 2002;48(6):517-24.

Editorials, executive summaries, letters and abstracts

16. Ahmed HS. How to make developing country journals more attractive to western readers/subscribers (Editorial). *Bangladesh J Commun Publ* 2002 Dec;1(2):77-80.
17. Chowdhury AMR, Choudhury RK, Nath SR, Ahmed M, Alam M (Editors). A question of quality: state of primary education in Bangladesh - overview of the main report. Dhaka: Campaign for Popular Education and the University Press Limited, 2001. 19p.
18. Chowdhury AMR, Nath SR, Choudhury RK, Ahmed M. Renewed hope daunting challenges: state of primary education in Bangladesh - overview of the main report. Dhaka: Campaign for Popular Education and the University Press Limited, 2002. 16p.

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