

Local Poverty Reduction Cluster

e UPDATE

February 2008

Annual Work Plan of projects under LPRC approved

The Annual Work Plan 2008 (AWP) for Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) and Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Asset (REOPA-CST) under the Local Poverty Reduction Cluster (LPRC) has been approved by Mr. Manoj Basnyat, Country Director of UNDP. The AWP, amount of total US \$ 15.7 Million, is outlined with the expected outputs for 2008 from the projects and provides a clear vision for planned activities.

Revised REOPA-CST contribution agreement signed

The Revised Contribution Agreement of REOPA-CST has been signed by UNDP and EC on 26th December, 2007. Under this new agreement, a major implementation arrangement has been modified, under which UNDP has given the responsibility of all grant items of the project amounting EUR 18,960,00 equivalent to 98.95% of the estimated total budget of the project.

In order to contribute the sustainable local development, REPOA project will work with the rural poor, especially those who are most vulnerable poor women and men, in six districts (Hobigonj, Narsingdi, Feni, Sirajgonj, Satkhira and Barguna), 41 Upazila, and 388 unions. The duration of the project is for five years from 2007-2012.

Recruitment of the UPPR project staff is on

The recruitment of UPPR project's staff is going on. The job openings were circulated through national newspapers and UNDP mandated job sites. CO had received a pleasing number of applications for 244 positions under 22 different categories of the project.

Successful Closure of SafeRec

"Safe and Environment Friendly Ship Recycling Project" (SAFEREC) closed on 31 December, 2007. SAFEREC was a partnership between the Government of Bangladesh/ Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment, ILO and UNDP. The project was established improving the working conditions of the ship recycling workers and also addressing the challenges faced by the industry on both national and enterprise levels.

SafeRec was the first initiative that helped the neglected ship-recycling sector of Bangladesh, which enhanced awareness of 6333 workers on Occupational Safety and Health issues. The other major achievements of the project are: First Baseline Survey, Training Manual on OSH, ILO Guidelines on Ship Recycling Sector for Asian Countries (Bengali version) and establishment of Training Cell in 24 Yards.

New Staff in LPRC



Mr. Ashekur Rahman has joined in the Local Poverty Reduction Cluster as 'Urban Expert' on 16 January 2008. Ashek is an economist by education and has been involved in the urban governance and development field over the last nine years

through his involvement with *Ghashful*/Action Aid, South Asian Partnership and CARE Bangladesh in different capacities. During his tenureship with CARE Bangladesh, he led the urban portfolio of the mission and also involved in the national policy advocacy campaign to bring the urban poverty issues at the appropriate policy level.

PRSP and Gender

On 24 January 2008, a workshop on “PRSP has lapse to address woman’s advancement” organized by the Gender and PRSP Group (GPG) to review women’s advancement/rights in National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction and their implementation and monitoring related issues.

GPG is an independent collective national platform of the representative of CSO, GoB and DPs, particularly members from LCG WAGE. Currently they are involved to review three critical sectors of Bangladesh - Agriculture, Health and Education for ensuring incorporation of gender objectives including gender budget issues in the forthcoming PRS 2 formulation.

Dr. Kaniz N Siddique, key note speaker and representative of finance ministry, recommended that women’s advancement and rights thematic group should provide inputs into the reports of other 17 thematic groups. The speakers of the workshop also stressed the need for incorporating issues of repression on women in MDG and enacting Uniform Family Code and Succession Act to protect women’s right.

Motahar Hossain, Chief of GED, Fritz Meijndert of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dr Rajani Alexander of Canadian High Commission, Dr Simin Mahmud, Research Director of BIDS and Drs Faustina Pereira, Director of Human Rights and Legal Services of BRAC, were present in the workshop

[..... more](#)

FIGHTING MONGA

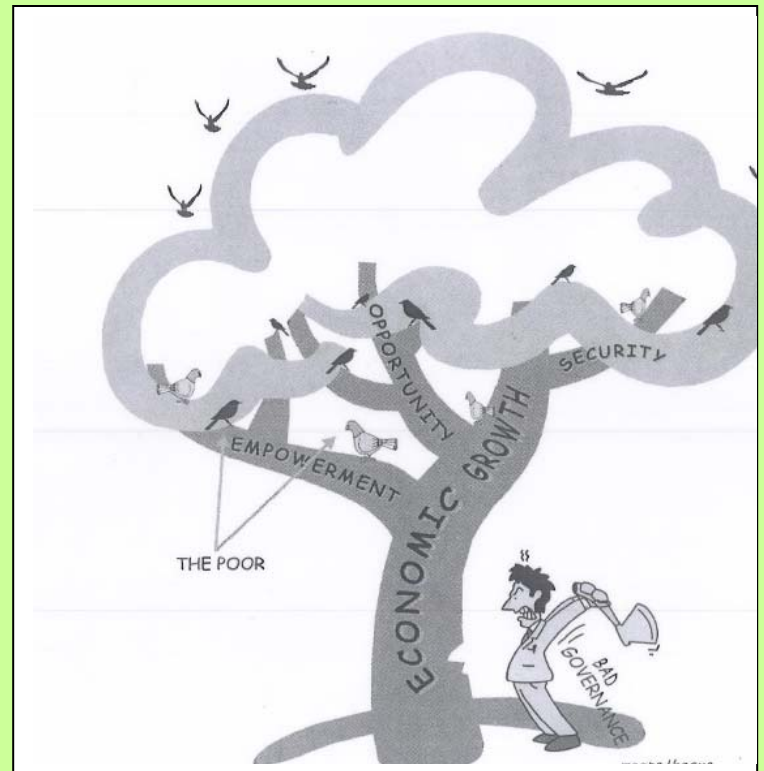
Government unveils plans for the north

(The Daily Star February 3, 2008)

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed announced an action plan to rid the country’s northern region of Monga, through well-coordinated programme of the government, NGOs and private sector. The Council of Advisers also nod to the Caretaker Government’s 14-point programme for the rapid socioeconomic development of the country’s northern region (especially Rangpur) during their first meeting in Rangpur on February 3, 2008. A committee headed by Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman has been formed for taking quick and coordinated steps for multidimensional solutions by formulating an effective strategy to fight Monga (famine like situation).

The months of October and November are known as the “monga” the period in Bangladesh when food stocks run out and job opportunities dry up in some northern districts before the main harvest season in December. As a result, thousands of poor people go without adequate food for weeks.

[.....more](#)



SME

Empowering women entrepreneurs towards a shared economic Growth

(The Daily Star February 14, 2008)

Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed has asked banks and other financial institutions to engender their lending procedures for women SMEs by easing the system while addressing the opening ceremony of 2nd National SME Woman Entrepreneur Conference on 13 February 2008. He pointed out four steps to overcome the hurdles that stand in the way of flourishing SMEs run by women.

These are:

- Banks should waive collaterals and lower lending rates for any SME scheme taken up by women.
- All private and public commercial banks should set up SME operation units or desks in their organizations for speedy and easy delivery of loans to women entrepreneurs.
- Every bank and financial institutions should create woman-friendly environment to provide loans for them.
- Tariffs should be made SME friendly to facilitate the sector in contributing more to the national economy.

[.....more](#)

For further details on UNDP’s work on local poverty reduction, please contact

Local Poverty Reduction Cluster, United Nations Development Programme
IDB Bhaban, E/8-A Begum Rokeya Sharani, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, G.P.O Box 224, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

www.undp.org.bd



Govt unveils plans for the North

The Council of Advisers at its first meeting here yesterday gave a nod to the caretaker government's 14-point programme for the rapid socioeconomic development of the country's northern region, especially Rangpur.

The programmes include close and round-the-clock supervision for ensuring the Boro production in the coming season, formation of a committee headed by an adviser to resolve Monga problem, setting up of a full-fledged university in Rangpur, activating the airports of the region and taking measures to export more manpower from there.

The meeting was held at Rangpur Circuit House with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair. The meeting started at about 12:00 noon and lasted for three hours.

This was the first-ever meeting of the Council of Advisers held outside the capital. It was attended by all advisers, special assistants to the chief adviser and secretaries concerned.

The programmes also include construction and maintenance of roads, railways, bridges and embankments, making Birol, Banglaband and Sonar Hat land ports functional, taking steps to increase employment and expand businesses, ensuring healthcare services and expanding inland tourism.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, the chief adviser said the specific decisions were taken after detailed discussions and directives have been given accordingly.

Responding to a question, he said meetings of the Council of Advisers will be held in other districts of the country gradually.

About holding the meeting in Rangpur, the chief adviser said there are some regional issues that need to be dealt with regionally, otherwise these problems will remain unaddressed.

Asked if the next government would continue the works taken by the present government, he hoped that the future government would continue the good works initiated by this government.

Giving details of the meeting, the chief adviser informed that a committee, headed by Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman, has been formed for taking quick and coordinated steps for multidimensional solutions to Monga problem. "Involving all concerned, this committee will formulate an effective strategy," he added.

He said his secretary has been entrusted with the responsibility to create skilled manpower by coordinating training programmes initiated by different ministries.

Asked when a full-fledged university would be set up in Rangpur, the chief adviser said it's a time-consuming matter but the directive has been given to undertake a project in this regard.

He said proposals have been received from Bangladeshi expatriates to operate services in Syedpur, Ishwardi and Takurgaon airports. "Subject to implementation of the proposal, these airports will be activated," he said.

Under the development programme, the chief adviser said Begum Rokeya Memorial Centre has been brought under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

The Daily Star February 14, 2008

Ease lending system for SMEs run by women entrepreneurs

Star Business Report

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed has asked banks and other financial institutions to ease their lending system so that loans at a reduced interest rate for any SME (small and medium enterprise) scheme taken up by women entrepreneurs are ensured. "All private and public commercial banks should set up SME operation units or desks in their organisations for speedy and easy delivery of loans to women entrepreneurs," the head of the caretaker government said inaugurating the second National SME Women Entrepreneurs Conference 2008 at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka. He identified collaterals, high lending rate, inadequate market information, traditional management culture and family obligations on women's part as some hurdles that stand in the way of flourishing SMEs. Fakhruddin asked the banks to waive collaterals and lower lending rates. The theme of the conference this year is 'empowering women entrepreneurs towards a shared economic growth'. Chaired by SME Foundation Chairperson Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, the opening session was attended among others by Mahbub Jamil, special assistant to the chief adviser, Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Bangladesh Bank governor, Hua Du, ADB country director, and Ayub Miah, SME Foundation managing director. Fakhruddin Ahmed said since SMEs have been playing a vital role in the national economy through generating employment and empowering women, every bank and financial institutions should create woman-friendly environment to provide loans for them. He also advocated making tariffs SME-friendly to facilitate the sector to contribute more to the national economy. Lauding female workers' contribution to the ready-made garments sector, Fakhruddin pointed to the fact that local apparel exporters have been showing their good performance even in the quota-free global business regime due to strong support from these RMG workers. Mahbub Jamil laid emphasis on launching some model and pilot projects for the development of the SME sector in the greater interest of industrialization. "SME sector should be developed for raising women's participation in mainstream economic activities," Jamil said. Salehuddin Ahmed said Bangladesh Bank (BB) has defined the SME as a micro-level sector to facilitate small entrepreneurs' easy access to credit. According to the central bank definition, SME is an enterprise having a capital ranging from Tk 50,000 to Tk1crore.

The BB governor said BB has a fund of Tk 606 crore, of which Tk95crore has been kept earmarked especially for the women entrepreneurs at maximum 10 percent interest rate. Salehuddin Ahmed expressed his dissatisfaction over the attitude of the commercial banks and financial institutions towards loans for the SME projects run by women entrepreneurs. "If necessary, BB will enhance the amount of reserved fund for the SMEs run by women entrepreneurs," he said.

He suggested that women should come forward to invest money in sectors like agro-processing, RMG and furniture.

Hua Du said SME development can contribute a lot in removing gender discrimination and skill development for the women in ICT.



Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed addresses the opening of the 2nd National SME Women Entrepreneurs Conference 2008 at a city hotel yesterday. SME Foundation Chairperson Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury and ADB Country Director Hua Du are also seen.

A Review of Women's Advancement and Rights Issues in National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR) their Implementation and Monitoring

Discussion Points

- Gaps in the PRSP of Bangladesh in terms of addressing women's advancement and rights issues in the process.
- Gaps in the PRSP of Bangladesh in terms of addressing women's advancement and rights issues in the content.
- How and how well the recommendations made in this area are being implemented.
- Some concluding remarks

1. Gaps in Consultation Process

- **Grassroots level consultations:** Women's advancement and rights issues were not discussed fully and comprehensively in a mainstream framework as a crosscutting issue.
- **Focused group discussions:** Omitted many important groups such as female members of UPs, female household heads, women workers from the non-garment, women workers in construction sector, recipients of VGD, food for work benefits and widow allowances, sex workers, women from minority groups, street cleaners etc.
- **National level consultation:** No consultation was organized exclusively with the members of the women organizations, NGOs and civil society to discuss women's advancement and rights issues only.

2. Gaps in the content

- Insufficient inclusion of gender disparity profile in NSAPR
- Women's contribution in the society was omitted
- Limited Analysis of the Dimension of Poverty among Women
- Lack of emphasis on the implementation of CEDAW
- Weak recommendations in the area of improving political participation of women:
- Absence of an assessment of the effectiveness of the current women's machinery
- Omission of gender perspective in addressing governance issues in the narrative part of NSAPR
- Omission of gender perspective in addressing service delivery in the narrative part and matrix of NSAPR
- Weak in recommendations made in the area of eliminating violence against women
- Legal reforms necessary for making women's status equal to men was not addressed sufficiently
- Insufficient inclusion of women's advancement and rights issues in Agricultural Sector
- No analysis of women's advancement issues in Small and Medium size Enterprise and Informal Sector discussions
- Weak recommendation in the area of improving social status of women
- Omission of women's issues in caring for the environment and sustainable development discussion and policy matrix
- Omission of women's issues in Tourism Development
- Gap between the recommendations made in Women's thematic group's paper and what is included in NSAPR.

3. NSAPR Implementation

The government has started to introduce a Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) process which intended to support the implementation of NSAPR.

- During FY07 in preparing the FY08 budget, GoB successfully integrated poverty and gender concerns relevant to the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR), into the strategic phase of the budget cycle through Budget Call Circular 1 (BCC1)
- In section one, the ministries are expected to state the missions and visions of the respective ministries
- In section two each ministries are expected to mention the strategic goals that they are trying to achieve as stated in NSAPR. In this section ministries are also required to mention what are the medium-term targets, what key activities they are taking to achieve these objectives and the names of the implementing agencies.
- In section three, ministries are asked to explain how, by achieving strategic objectives through the activities of the ministries will help in reducing poverty and ensuring women's advancement and rights.
- In Form-4 of the BCC1, ministries are required to list all their activities (projects and programs) of the ministries. Each of these activities has to be ranked in terms of their impacts on reducing poverty and enhancing women's advancement and rights. Ranking are in terms of negative, neutral, low, medium, high and targeted.

4. NSAPR Monitoring and Evaluation

- Within the government GED has identified a framework for monitoring progress of NSAPR. They have taken an initiative to produce two reports on monitoring progress of NSAPR
- One report has been structured according to the thematic groups monitoring format provided in the NSAPR. For nineteen thematic areas and sectors NSAPR has already identified various monitoring indicators to be monitored.
- To monitor progress in the area of women's advancement and rights NSAPR identified progress in seven strategic objectives. For monitoring each of these seven strategic targets 24 input indicators, 26 output indicators, and 21 outcome indicators (21) are identified in. However, the monitoring report being prepared by GED included nine indicators in the area of women's advancement and rights.
- Another report is being prepared by GED, which has been structured to monitor progress in achieving MDGs.
- The third MDG is promoting gender equality and empowering women. There is one target that is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.
- Four indicators are identified to monitor progress in achieving these two MDG goal and target. These are (i) ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; (ii) ratio of literate women to men, 20-24 years old; (iii) share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and (iv) proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

5. Conclusions

- Women's advancement and rights thematic group needs to provide inputs into the other seventeen thematic groups' reports so that women's advancement and right issues are well addressed in an integrated manner in the context of each sector and issue.
- At the grassroots level consultations, women's participation should be ensured in all thematic groups' discussions and their needs and concerns must be reflected in the thematic groups' reports and also in the PRSP.
- For the formulation of the second PRSP, national level consultations are going to take place with various stakeholders after a draft PRSP is formulated. At this level there needs to be one consultation workshop which will address exclusively women's advancement and rights issues as addressed in the second PRSP.
- Inclusion of women's advancement and rights issues in the content of standalone and crosscutting sections needs to be more analytical and grounded on the reality of women's advancement and rights situation. Details are provided in Chapter 3.

- MWCA can play an important role in bringing effective collaboration between women's advancement and rights thematic group and other seventeen thematic groups. Civil society also can assist MWCA and thematic groups in forging effective collaboration.
- The report of the women's advancement and rights should be published. MWCA can take an initiative in this respect.
- In implementing NSAPR through MTBF process attention is given to women's advancement and rights issues in an explicit manner, particularly in the activities of sixteen ministries that accounts for more than 60 percent of total allocation. To assess the effectiveness of NSAPR implementation the process needs to be developed fully
- Formulation of budget under MTBF will both be deepened and widened in the future. The reporting system, in terms of allocation and expenditure on pro-poor and pro-women's advancement activities needs to be refined and published on a regular basis.
- Impact assessment or analysis of policies, programs and projects from poverty reduction and women's advancement aspects should be done during design, and post implementation evaluation.
- In terms of monitoring, inclusion of progress indicators in the area of women's advancement and rights needs to take into account two important factors.
 - First factor: What variables indicate women's advancement in a meaningful way in the context of their status in the society, their roles and responsibilities, and various constraints that they face in economic, political, and institutional arena
 - Second factor: What data is available and how meaningfully this data can be used in developing indicators for monitoring women's advancement.