

Seminar on Gender and Access in South Asia

BRAC Centre Auditorium, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 15-18 November 2006

Organized by the IUSSP Scientific Panel on Gender and the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), with financial support from the World Bank

Background and Purpose of the Seminar

Public discourse on gender in South Asia has tended to focus on the family and culture as the primary culprits in creating gender inequality. Frequently public policies tend to be less effective in addressing the private domain but have a tremendous potential for creating as well as redressing inequalities in the public domain. While policies must work within the cultural context, rigidity or permeability of cultural boundaries remain poorly understood.

South Asia provides an interesting opportunity to address this issue because there are tremendous variations within individual countries in gender relations and cultural norms but at the same time, there are many similarities across national boundaries. So, a regional discourse on gender and access in South Asia has a tremendous potential for informing public policy.

This seminar was set up to provide empirical work on emerging issues in research on gender inequality, especially concerning access to public services, market opportunities and public participation. The Social Development Unit in the South Asia Region of the World Bank, which is undertaking a Country Gender Assessment for Bangladesh, felt that this IUSSP seminar on South Asia was therefore timely and consistent with its own work on Gender.

Selection of Participants

A call for papers was disseminated through emails to the IUSSP membership (2500 members and student associates), and advertised on the IUSSP website. Additionally, in order to reach non IUSSP members in the South Asia region, the call for papers was placed on several regional avenues. The call for papers was advertised in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, a prominent Indian journal as well as *Demography India* the primary journal of Indian Association for the Study of the Population. It was also placed on the website of the Pakistan Population Association. A total of 188 candidates submitted abstracts or papers via IUSSP's online submission system, of which 20 were selected by seminar organizers. One candidate was unable to submit a final paper and thus only 19 papers were finally submitted for the seminar (*See list of papers, Annex 1*). Great effort was made to select diverse participants at different career stage to allow for interesting interaction. Participants varied in their seniority level ranging from graduate students to such senior researchers as the president of the Pakistan Association for Women's Studies.

In addition, several prominent researchers in the field were invited to act as discussants at the seminar, and others were invited as observers. However, their presence as well as that of several other international participants (including the delegate from Afghanistan) was limited by the sudden political turmoil in the form of a nation-wide blockade that locked Bangladesh into a state of immobility throughout the duration of the seminar.

Final participants included academicians and researchers based in educational and research institutions as well as international agencies, working on South Asia from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, USA, UK and Switzerland. They presented papers from the perspective of their respective disciplines of economics, demography, public health, public policy, sociology, gender studies, etc. Apart from paper presenters, policy makers and practitioners participated in the concluding session. (*see List of participants, Annex 2*)

Structure and activities

The seminar was conducted over three days. On the first day, organizers of the seminar, Sonalde Desai (IUSSP) and Simeen Mahmud (BIDS) made welcomed the participants and gave a brief overview of the background and purpose of the seminar. Paper presentations began after the round of introductions of participants and observers. After each presentation, the presenter responded to the questions and comments from participants and observers. The moderator summed up the papers and discussions at the end of each session. A total of eight sessions were held during the three-day period, with three sessions on the first two days and two sessions on the third day. A documentary titled '*I Have Something to Say*' on the rights of garment workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, produced by Simeen Mahmud was also shown on the third day. (*see Seminar Programme, Annex 3*)

A cultural programme was arranged at the end of the second day and a dinner was organized on a riverboat outside the capital city on the third day. The participants spent the fourth day on a full-day fieldtrip in Matlab, a neighbouring district, to observe an ICDDR,B project and get a brief glimpse of rural Bangladesh. The nation-wide blockade that limited city tours and shopping outings was mercifully lifted on this last day of the seminar.

Presentations

The presentations were structured in eight sessions organized around the following issues: 1) *Born Unequal? Gender and Child Survival*; 2) *Engendering Health*; 3) *Seeking Safety: The Shadow of Sexual Violence*; 4) *Access to Education: Leveling the Playing Field*; 5) *Gender and Employment in the Globalizing World*; 6) *Creating Political Space*; 7) *Investing in Women's Health: Policy Instruments*; 8) *Gendered Access: Challenges to Public Policy*.

Copies of papers, including those of presenters unable to reach Dhaka, were made available to all participants and observers. (*see CD with electronic copies of papers*)

Concluding Session

The concluding session, 'Gendered Access: Challenges to Public Policy' consisted of a panel of speakers comprising both policy makers, such as, representatives of the Planning Commission, Bangladesh and the World Bank, as well as practitioners such as Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury of Gono Shasthyakendra who revolutionized peoples' participation in accessing health services in Bangladesh, and Madhu Kishwar of Manushi who redefined access to livelihood and dignity of street vendors through legislation in India.

Papers can be accessed by IUSSP members on the IUSSP website at:
<http://www.iussp.org/Activities/gender-index.php>

Annex 1: List of papers submitted for the seminar.

- Sex Ratio in Relation to Fertility and Two-Child Norm in India
(*Sayeed Unisa*)
- Does intra-household discrimination account for the bulk of India's 'missing women'?
(*Amaresh Dubey and Arjan Verschoor*)
- Short-term Morbidity in India: Gender Disparity in Access to Health Care
(*Mitali Sen and Abhilasha Sharma*)
- The Stigma of Dark Skin in Bangladesh: Women's Mental Health and Access to Health Services
(*Rifat Hasan*)
- Women at Mid-Age and Beyond: Menopause and its After-math: A Study of Pakistani Women's Health Needs
(*Tahera Aftab*)
- Socio-Economic and Sexual Securities of Young Women Working in Garments Industry: A Case Study of Bangladesh
(*M. E. Khan, Aditi Aeron, Richard Anker, U. Rob*)
- Judging Sex: Judicial Discourse, Law Reform and Access to Justice for Sexual Violence in India
(*Oishik Sircar*)
- Family values or public access - levers for improving girls' schooling in rural Pakistan
(*Christine Callum, Zeba Sathar, Minhaj ul Haque*)
- Teacher absence as a factor in gender inequalities in primary school access in Pakistan
(*Sharon Ghuman and Cynthia Lloyd*)
- Gender Inequalities in School Enrolment in Nepal: Examining Effects of Geographical Inaccessibility
(*Shyam KC*)
- Changing Identities: Gender and Employment in the Call Center Industry in India
(*Deepthi Shanker*)
- Gender Wage Gap in Urban India: An Econometric Analysis
(*S.Madheswaran, Basudeb Guha Khasnobis*)
- Gender discrimination and returns to self employment: Evidence from rural India
(*Klaus Deininger, Hari Nagarajan*)
- The Emerging Role of Women in Political Decision Making in South-Asia with special reference to India
(*Pamela Singla*)
- Women's Political Participation and Local Governance: Gendered Constructions of the Political Space
(*Stefanie Strulik*)
- Family Planning as an Investment in Development: Evaluation of a Program's Consequences in Matlab, Bangladesh
(*Shareen Joshi and T. Paul Schultz*)
- Overcoming women's constraints to accessing health services: the role of the media
(*Monica DasGupta and Nistha Sinha*)
- Structural Changes in the Economy and Issues in Women's Employment and Access to Resources in Nepal
(*Meena Acharya*)
- Expiry of Multi Fiber Agreement and Gender Equity in Labour Market: A Study in India
(*Indira Hirway*)

Annex 2: List of Participants

Gender and Access in South Asia BIDS-IUSSP Seminar, Nov 15-18 2006

1	Sonalde Desai	Organizer		University of Maryland	sdesai@socy.umd.edu
2	Simeen Mahmud	Organizer		Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	simeen@sdnbd.org
3	Lopita Huq	Seminar Asst./ Rapporteur		Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	
4	Afroz Huda	Event Manager/ Observer		LMS	afroz@bangla.net
5	Tayeba Islam	Event Admn.		LMS	
6	Sayeed Unisa	Paper presenter	Nov 15; Session 1	International Institute for Population Sciences	unisa@iips.net
7	Amaresh Dubey	Paper presenter	Nov 15; Session 1	NCAER	adubey@ncaer.org
8	Rifat Hasan	Paper presenter	Nov 15; Session 2	World Bank	rhasan@worldbank.org
9	Tahera Aftab	Paper presenter	Nov 15; Session 2	Pakistan Assoc. for Women's Studies	pjw_stud@hotmail.com
10	Ubaidur Rob	Paper presenter	Nov 15; Session 3	Population Council	urob@pcdhaka.org
11	Shyam KC	Paper presenter	Nov 16; Session 4	University of Maryland	skc@socy.umd.edu
12	Sharon Ghuman	Paper presenter	Nov 16; Session 4	Population Council	sghuman@popcouncil.org
13	Prof. Nasreen Khondokar	Moderator	Nov 16; Session 5	Dept. of Econ, Dhaka Univ.	
14	Maitreyi Das	Paper presenter	Nov 16; Session 5	World Bank	
15	Deepthi Shanker	Paper presenter	Nov 16; Session 5	Indian Institute of Technology	deepthis77@yahoo.co.in
16	Indira Hirway	Paper presenter	Nov 16; Session 5	Centre for Development Alternatives	07940030160_mh@airtelbroadband.ir
17	Stefanie Strulik	Paper presenter	Nov 16; Session 6	Univ. of Zurich	strulik@gmail.com
18	Prof. Omar Rahman	Moderator	Nov 17; Session 7	Pro VC, Independent Univ. of Bangladesh	
19	T. Paul Schultz	Paper presenter	Nov 17; Session 7	Yale University	Paul.schultz@yale.edu
20	Barbara Kafka	Moderator	Nov 17; Session 8	World Bank	
21	Madhu Kishwar	Panelist	Nov 17; Session 8	Manushi	editor@manushi-india.org
22	Junaaid Ahmed	Panelist	Nov 17; Session 8	World Bank	
23	Zafrullah Chowdhury	Panelist	Nov 17; Session 8	Gonoshasthya Kendra	

List of Observers

24	Ayesha Banu	Dhaka University	Observer
25	Ismat Bhuiyan	Population Council	Observer
26	Prof M. Kabir	Jahangirnagar University	Observer
27	Nashid Kamal	Independent Univ. of Bangladesh	Observer
28	Nasheeba Selim	BRAC	Observer
29	Faaria Islam	World Bank	Observer
30	Nancy Piet-Pelon	Population Council	Observer
31	Rushidan I. Rahman	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
32	Abul Hossain	PPRC	Observer
33	Humayra Ahmed	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
34	Anowara Begum	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
35	ABM Shamsul Islam	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
36	Tahera Yasmin	Consultant	Observer
37	Shireen Huq	Naripokkho	Observer
38	Samia Afrin	Naripokkho	Observer
39	Quazi Shahabuddin	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
40	Narayan Chandra Nath	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
41	Sharifa Begum	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
42	Salma C. Zohir	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
43	M. Asaduzzaman	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Observer
44	A.M. Zakir Hossain	ADB	Observer
45	Satoko Nadamoto	UNDP	Observer
46	Hameeda Hossain	RIB	Observer
47	Majeda Haq	UNDP	Observer
48	Shirin Jahangir	World Bank	Observer
49	Shamima Pervin	UNDP	Observer
50	Meghna Guhathakurta	RIB	Observer
51	Quazi Mesbahuddin	Planning Commission	Observer

Annex 3: Final programme.

Seminar on Gender and Access in South Asia

BRAC Centre Auditorium, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 15-18 November 2006

Organized by the IUSSP Scientific Panel on Gender and the Bangladesh Institute of Bangladesh Studies (BIDS), with financial support from the World Bank

Day 1 November 15, 2006

9.00 *Opening remarks*

Simeen Mahmud, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
Sonalde Desai, University of Maryland, College Park, USA

9.30 *Participant introduction*

10.00-10.20 Break

10.20-12.00 **Session 1** *Born Unequal: Gender and Child Survival*

Moderator Sonalde Desai

Sex Ratio in Relation to Fertility and Two-Child Norm in India

Sayeed Unisa

Discussion

Does intra-household discrimination account for the bulk of India's "missing women"?

Amaresh Dubey and Arjan Verschoor

Discussion

Sum up by moderator

12.00-1.00 Lunch

1.00-3.30 **Session 2** *Access to Health*

Moderator Simeen Mahmud

Short-term Morbidity in India: Gender Disparity in Access to Health Care

Mitali Sen and Abhilasha Sharma

Discussion

The Stigma of Dark Skin in Bangladesh: Women's Mental Health and Access to Health Services

Rifat Hasan

Discussion

Women at Mid-Age and Beyond: Menopause and its After-math: A Study of Pakistani Women's Health Needs

Tahera Aftab

Discussion

Sum up by moderator

3.30-4.00 Break

4.00-5.00 **Session 3** *Seeking Safety: The Shadow of Sexual Violence*

Moderator Simeen Mahmud

Socio-Economic and Sexual Securities of Young Women Working in Garments Industry: A Case Study of Bangladesh

M. E. Khan, Aditi Aeron, Richard Anker, U. Rob

Discussion

Day 2 November 16, 2006

9.00-10.45 **Session 4** *Access to Education: Levelling the Playing Field*

Moderator Sayeed Unisa

Teacher absence as a factor in gender inequalities in primary school access in Pakistan

Sharon Ghuman and Cynthia Lloyd

Discussion

Gender Inequalities in School Enrolment in Nepal: Examining Effects of Geographical Inaccessibility

Shyam KC

Discussion

Sum up by moderator

10.45-11.15 Break

11.15-12.00 **Session 5** *Gender and Employment in a Globalizing World*

Moderator Prof Nasreen Khundker

Paradox of two Bengals: Robust Growth with Low Women's Employment Rates

Maitreyi Bordia Das

Discussion

12.00-1.00 Lunch

1.00-3.00 **Session 5** (contd)

Changing Identities: Gender and Employment in the Call Center Industry in India
Deepthi Shanker
Discussion

Expiry of Multi Fiber Agreement and Gender Equity in Labour Market: A Study
in India
Indira Hirway
Discussion

Sum up by moderator

3.00-3.30 Break

3.30-4.30 **Session 6** *Creating Political Space*

Moderator Tahera Aftab

Women's Political Participation and Local Governanance: Gendered
Constructions of the Political Space
Stefanie Strulik
Discussion

Sum up by moderator

6.30 Cultural Show

Day 3 November 17, 2006

9.00-11.00 **Session 7** *Investing in Women's Health: Policy Instruments*

Moderator Prof. Omar Rahman

Family Planning as an Investment in Development: Evaluation of a Program's
Consequences in Matlab, Bangladesh
Shareen Joshi and T. Paul Schultz
Discussion

Sum up by moderator

11.00 Break and video presentation "I have something to say"

1.00-2.00 Lunch

