

## BRAC leads anti-poverty effort in post-conflict countries

BRAC is leading a \$15 million initiative to rebuild war-torn communities in West Africa; four organisations supporting the effort announced it on 22nd July.

The Soros Economic Development Fund, Open Society Initiative for West Africa, Omidyar Network, and Humanity United are funding this groundbreaking initiative to support families and prevent renewed conflict.

"This investment in the people of West Africa comes at a critical time," said Stewart Paperin, president of the Soros Economic Development Fund. "With their countries emerging from devastating civil wars, this support gives people the tools to rebuild."

BRAC, one of the world's largest anti-poverty groups, is providing microfinance, health, and agricultural support in Sierra Leone and Liberia. It anticipates that over 500,000 people will benefit from these programmes.

"In the face of overwhelming need, BRAC's work has real potential to create opportunities for hundreds of thousands of families to stabilise their lives and build for the future," said Matt Bannick, managing partner of Omidyar Network. "Our investment will help catalyse this economic and social impact."

Since March, BRAC has opened 20 new microfinance branches in Sierra Leone and Liberia and will add 20 more by the end of the year. BRAC made its first loans in June. Over the next two years, it will provide financial services to tens of thousands of women, as well as agricultural supplies and training to small crop and livestock farmers. BRAC will also prepare four hundred community based health volunteers to provide ongoing essential healthcare and help fight deadly diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, and cholera.

"People desperately need to earn a living," said Fazle Hasan Abed, founder and chairperson of BRAC. "Despite the many challenges these countries face, Liberia and Sierra Leone are uniquely positioned to become models for successful development in West Africa. We are committed to providing training and resources so that the poor, especially women, can unleash their capabilities as entrepreneurs and improve their livelihoods."

BRAC's work in Sierra Leone and Liberia is being funded through a combination of grants and equity, and BRAC is negotiating additional debt capital to finance the loan portfolio. This two-year pilot programme will help BRAC build a long-term sustainable strategy for integrated development in Sierra Leone and Liberia.



At book launch ceremony From left to right: Mr. Anisul Haque, Prof. Syed monzoorul Islam, Prof. Rehman Sobhan, Dr. A. M. M. Shawket Ali, Dr. Mahabub Hossain, Prof. Mustafizur Rahman, Dr. Mashiur Rahman

## BRAC launches 'Freedom from Want' and 'Unnoyoner Ekti Upakkhan'

BRAC hosted an event on July 15th in BRAC Centre, Dhaka to mark the launching of two books - "Freedom from Want", and "BRAC: *Unnoyoner Ekti Upakkhan*" -- both written on the journey of BRAC towards development.

Chaired by former Adviser to the caretaker government MM Shawkat Ali, the event was also addressed by Chief Guest Economist Professor Rehman Sobhan, Prime Minister's Adviser Mashiur Rahman, Prothom Alo Deputy Editor Anisul Haque, Centre for Policy Dialogue Executive Director Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Dhaka University Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam and Dr. Mahabub Hossain Executive Director of BRAC.

Professor Sobhan stated, "BRAC has a major contribution to the country's poverty alleviation and it engages the poor with income generation activities. In addition, it has established itself as a self-financed organisation over the last three decades." He added, "In its long journey, the organisation has tried to discover the inherent causes of poverty, which is very important in poverty alleviation effort. And then BRAC has initiated different programmes that have engaged a huge number of rural poor to fight poverty."

Dr. Mashiur Rahman said, "Women who borrowed from BRAC and set up their own shops have already overcome the social barriers. They will not return to the claustrophobic social space." He stated "It is unfair to treat BRAC only as a microcredit organisation and not to differentiate it from other traditional microcredit institutions engaged only or mainly in small loan operations. BRAC has a more comprehensive approach to development, and credit is one of the many elements in it."

The University Press Ltd published the two books titled "BRAC: *Unnoyaner Ekti Upakhyan*" by Faruq Chowdhury, Subol Kumar Bonik and Sajedur Rahman and "Freedom from Want" by Ian Smillie.



Mr. Rubayat Khan (Chief of Operations, Bangladesh, ClickDiagnostics), Mr. Faruque Ahmed (Director BRAC Health), Dr. Kaosar Afsana (Programme Head, BRAC Health), Ms. Sumala Chowdhury (Country Representative, Alliance Forum Foundation) at Signing ceremony

## BRAC to provide health care through mobile phones

BRAC signed an MOU with ClickDiagnostics Inc., a U.S. based social enterprise, and Alliance Forum Foundation, a U.S. based non-profit public corporation, on 20th July, for mobile-based automation of data management for BRAC Health's Manoshi programme. Mr. Faruque Ahmed, Director BRAC Health, Mr. Rubayat Khan, Chief of Operations (Bangladesh), ClickDiagnostics, and Ms. Sumala Chowdhury, Country Representative, Alliance Forum Foundation, signed the agreement in a ceremony Under this six-month-long pilot, selected health workers held at BRAC Centre, Mohakhali.

From the urban Manoshi programme (for maternal, neonatal and child health) will use special software-equipped mobile phones developed by ClickDiagnostics to collect patient data which will then be used for real-time screening of risky patients and strategic interventions for patient management.

## BRAC and Islamic Development Bank sign agreement for support to cyclone victims

BRAC is pleased to announce that an agreement was signed on July 26th, with the Special Assistance Office of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) under which IDB will provide USD 5 million for operating and administer-

ing the agricultural component of the "Fael Khair" programme for cyclone victims in Bangladesh.

The agreement was signed by Dr. Mohammed Hassan Salem, Head of the Special Assistance Office, and Dr. Mahabub Hossain, Executive Director of BRAC.

Under the terms of the three year agreement, BRAC will implement the agro component initially in the Bagerhat, Barguna, Satkhira and Khulna districts, severely affected by cyclone Sidr and Aila.

The "Fael Khair" is a USD 130 million IDB trust relief assistance to the victims of cyclone Sidr. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between IDB and the Government of Bangladesh in December 2008 for the implementation of the trust's objectives. A part of the trust is to be used for the agricultural rehabilitator of victims of cyclones and other natural calamities in the form of interest free loans for inputs for crop production and fisheries.



Dr. Mohammed Hassan Salem (Head of the Special Assistance Office) and Dr. Mahabub Hossain (Executive Director of BRAC) in the signing ceremony.

## Dutch Ministers visit BRAC in Khulna and Bagerhat

Mr. Bert Koenders, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, and Ms. Tineke Huizinga, the Dutch State Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management, visited BRAC programmes in Khulna and Bagerhat on 5th July, 2009. They were accompanied by the Dutch Ambassador, Ms. Bea ten Tusscher, Dr. Mahabub Hossain, Executive Director of BRAC and the BRAC Directors Dr. Safiqul Islam and Dr. Babar Kabir.

The delegation first visited a BRAC Adolescent Development Centre in Moubhog. They spoke to the adolescent girls group and inquired about their reproductive health awareness. Then the delegation visited a BRAC Primary

school in upper Moubhog and another one in Narkeli Chandpur. The Ministers spoke to the students about their studies. They also spoke to a differently abled student and inquired about the facilities being provided her by the BRAC school. The Ministers were treated with a song and dance routine by the school students. Later on the Ministers also visited a Government Primary school.



Mr. Bert Koenders (Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation), Ms. Tineke Huizinga (Dutch State Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management), Ms. Bea ten Tusscher (Dutch Ambassador), Dr. Mahabub Hossain (Executive Director of BRAC) and Dr. Safiqul Islam (Director of BRAC Education) in a BRAC School, Bagerhat

The delegation then met with a BRAC Village WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) Committee in Kajdia. The field visit was concluded with a short meeting with local government officials and BRAC staff at the Rupsha BRAC Office.

Reflecting on his first field visit in Bangladesh, Mr. Koenders said that it had been a very exciting and useful experience. He expressed his appreciation for the important and successful efforts that were made by BRAC to provide basic social services such as education and sanitation, to isolated rural communities. He emphasised that these services are a basic human right and essential for human development. He also added that he was very pleased to note in the field the constructive collaboration and cooperation between Government and BRAC.

## World Population Day observed by BRAC

BRAC Health Programme observed World Population Day on July 11th along with Bangladesh Government. This year the theme was "Responding to Economic Crisis: Investing in Women is a Smart Choice".

The day started with a rally that was led by Health Minister A.F.M. Ruhul Haque. Dr Haque read a message

by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the inaugural function of the World Population Day at Dhaka's Osmani Auditorium. The BRAC Health Programme also set up a stall at Osmani Auditorium. Manoshi (Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Project: Urban) took the initiative to show a short film "Kalo-jochona" on consequences of early marriage and early pregnancy in the slum areas of Dhaka city among the deprived, underprivileged urban population to mark the day.



Md. Golam Mostafa, Manager, BRAC Hatchery Srimongol, receiving the 2009 Bangladesh National Fisheries awards from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on July 30th at the "National Fish Week 2009" event in Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka.

## BRAC Fisheries bags National Fisheries award

BRAC Fish Hatchery and Brood Improvement Centre in Srimongal bagged the "Silver Medal" in the 2009 Bangladesh National Fisheries awards. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina awarded the medal on July 30th during the "National Fish Week 2009" event in Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka. BRAC Fisheries won the award due to their high quality carp fish production.

## Branding BRAC

BRAC is in the process of re-evaluating and re-energising its existing brand in the face of emerging challenges and opportunities arising from its global expansion. A Global Brand Manager was recruited in January 2009 to spearhead this process. The core branding team includes individuals from the Public Affairs & Communications and Publication units. The process is being overseen by the Chairperson's Office. All questions and comments regarding the brand development process can be forwarded to Mr. Ishraq Dhaly, Global Brand Manager at [ishraq.d@brac.net](mailto:ishraq.d@brac.net) or directly through the BRAC PABX number +88 02 9881265 extension 2105.