



## **Perceptions, Attitudes and Understanding: A Baseline Survey on Human Rights in Bangladesh**

**Dhaka, 1 November 2011:** The findings of a baseline survey on human rights in Bangladesh were presented in Dhaka today. The survey was conducted by DMA and BLAST for the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRC) and the results will be published in a report entitled "Perceptions, Attitudes and Understanding: A Baseline Survey on Human Rights in Bangladesh."

The Honourable Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Barrister Shafique Ahmed, spoke at the launch as the Chief Guest, and Mr Stefan Priesner, Country Director, UNDP, also addressed the audience as the Special Guest. The welcome address was given by Mr Kazi Reazul Hoque, the full time member of the NHRC. Mr Sheikh Abdul Ahad, Secretary NHRC, NPD BNHRC-CDP, thanked all participants for the fruitful discussion. Finally, the concluding remarks and a proposal for the way forward were provided by the Chairman of the NHRC, Prof. Dr Mizanur Rahman.



The main objectives in conducting the baseline survey were to gain an understanding of the perception among citizens of the current human rights situation in Bangladesh; to serve as a

basis to measure public awareness of the NHRC and its mandate; to define the types of awareness-raising activities that need to be conducted by the NHRC; and to identify the priorities of the NHRC for advocacy in regards to policy and law reform.

At the event, the leader of the consultant team responsible for conducting the survey and producing the final report, Mr Greg Moran, provided a comprehensive presentation of the key findings. Key findings highlighted included the fact that half of the survey respondents had not heard the word human rights, and there is a general lack of knowledge among citizens about their rights, and the protection of these rights under the laws of Bangladesh.

The survey report recommended the urgent need to raise awareness around human rights, accompanied by a campaign to inform people of where they may go to seek redress if their rights have been violated. Also highlighted in the survey results was the fact that gender-based violence remains a great concern in Bangladesh.

The Chief Guest and Honourable Minister, MoLJPA, Barrister Shafique Ahmed, stated that the Government takes very seriously its obligation to protect human rights and highlighted the provision of legal aid to help those most vulnerable to human rights violations, women and children, to be able to seek redress.

The Honourable Minister commended the survey and hoped the deliberations that would take place as a result will go a long way towards addressing human rights issues, as identified by the survey.

The Chairman of the NHRC, Prof. Dr Mizanur Rahman, noted that the survey was important in providing recommendations for the way forward in the Commission's work. He stated that the time for delivery has come and the NHRC will not shy away from the work to be done.

The Chairman noted that the recruitment process to hire 28 staff for the Commission has just been completed, and will enable the Commission to speed up their work and meet their important mandate.

Mr Stefan Priesner, UNDP Country Director, congratulated the NHRC for conducting the baseline survey, and, in doing so, reaching another milestone towards fulfilling its mandate as the major national human rights watchdog for monitoring implementation of state obligations to respect the protection and fulfillment of human rights.

Mr Prisener praised the survey report for providing recommendations for a number of inroads for policy changes and urged the Government of Bangladesh and the NHRC to work together to move policy forward for the benefit of the people of Bangladesh.

The presentation of the report was followed by a plenary discussion moderated by Prof. Dr Niru Kumar Chakma, honorary member of the Commission. Also on the panel were Mr

Sheikh Abdul Ahad, Secretary NHRC, and the members of the consultant team, Mr Greg Moran, Ms Sara Hossain, Professor Kazi Saleh Ahmed and Mr Maqbul Bhuiyan. During this session the audience actively engaged in a question and answer session, where they also provided suggestions for the way forward.

The NHRC has a key role to play in promoting human rights and human dignity in Bangladesh, through public education, advocacy and lobbying the Government of Bangladesh to adopt or amend legislation to bring it in line with human rights norms and standards.

The team of consultants, from Data Management Aid (DMA) and Bangladeshi Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), include Mr Greg Moran, team leader and international human rights expert; Ms Sara Hossain, human rights, gender and law expert; Mr Maqbul Bhuiyan, lead quantitative survey expert; Professor Kazi Saleh Ahmed, consultant statistician; and Ms Mirza Hassan, justice sector institution and governance expert.

**Ends**