

Review of the August 2010 Country of Origin Information (COI) Report on Bangladesh

Prepared for the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI)
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List of Acronyms

ALRC Asian Legal Resource Centre
BBC British Broadcasting Corporation
BDR Bangladesh Rifles
BNWLA Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association
BRAC Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee / Building Resources Across Communities
BSMMU Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University
CAMPE Campaign for Popular Education
COI Country of Origin Information
CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child
DGFI Directorate General of Forces Intelligence
EU European Union
FCO Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
IAGCI Independent Advisory Group on Country Information
ICDDR,B International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh
ICG International Crisis Group
IDMC Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP Internally Displaced Persons
JMB Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh
LSE London School of Economics and Political Science
MOFA Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSM men who have sex with men
NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS National Health Service
PESP Primary Education Stipend Project
UK United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
UN United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
USSD United States State Department
US/USA United States/United States of America
WHO World Health Organisation

1 Introduction

The aim of this review is to provide an assessment of the August 2010 COI Report on Bangladesh and draw attention to any points of concern that may affect the report's quality, as a resource for those involved in the asylum determination process.

The specific objectives of this commentary are as follows:

- To assess how **up-to-date** the August 2010 COI report is by comparing its content to other widely available sources.
- To investigate how **accurate** the information presented in the COI report is, by comparing selected referenced material with source documents and cross-checking the report with the sources cited.
- To consider how **user-friendly** the COI report is as a resource and, in particular, how easy or difficult it is to find information on a specific topic without reading the whole report.
- To determine how **representative** the COI report is by examining the extent to which information cited in the COI report represents a summary of the referenced source material.

To make an assessment of the above criteria, the COI report text was crosschecked with many of the sources it referenced and further widely available sources on Bangladesh were identified. The report was read and checked for errors, inconsistencies, problems with referencing and the user friendliness considered. To assist with specialist knowledge of specific issues, experts on Bangladesh were consulted regarding sections of the report. These were:

1. Ms. Victoria Redclift (an LSE PhD student whose thesis looks at Biharis in Bangladesh).
2. Mr. Delwar Hussain (a Cambridge University PhD student whose thesis and other written work looks at hijras and sexuality in Bangladesh)

Searches were also made for additional information that may be a useful addition to future COI reports on Bangladesh or should have been included in this report to make it more up to date or accurate. This was done on the basis of recommendations from colleagues such as those listed above; personal knowledge and internet searches for particular topics felt to be either missing or not adequately covered in the COI report. This review is illustrated with examples of the issues and problems identified with the report. No claim is made to have identified every possible example of issues or problems identified.

In addition, on the basis of information provided by Richard Lederle, feedback from users of the COI report on Bangladesh suggests that certain topics (listed below) are of particular importance in asylum claims made by Bangladeshis in the UK, and therefore special attention was paid to information in the COI report on these topics and less on, for example, background information and history.

- Political groups and opposition activity: mainstream parties as well as banned left wing groups;

- Medical infrastructure and availability of suitable treatment;
- Judicial integrity (lack of fair trial) and prison conditions;
- Treatment of Women (personal status/domestic violence);
- Ethnic groups: particularly Bihari (Urdu-speakers).
- Issues which figure less frequently are Children; often in the areas of education and legal rights and military service regarding refusal to perform and resultant punishments.

It is not the aim or role of this report to analyse the accuracy of source materials, although on some occasions the reliability of certain sources is assessed.

1.1 Organisation of the Review

This review is organised into two sections. Section 2 concerns general issues about the report. These issues relate to the way the report is presented, written and referenced, rather than to the information contained within the report. These issues are usually followed by examples from the report of where they occur. No claim is made to have identified every possible example of issues or problems identified.

Section 3 concerns specific issues with sections of the report. These relate more to the information contained in the report, and may recommend additional material that needs to be included in the report or clarifications of information given in the report. There is inevitably overlap between the two sections, but the intention is for one to be about the general principles concerning the writing and organisation of the report rather than specialist knowledge about Bangladesh and the other to be about the sources and information regarding Bangladesh.

1.2 Summary of Key Findings

This section summarises issues and causes for concern in the August 2010 COI report on Bangladesh. The section concludes with an overall assessment.

The preface of the August 2010 Bangladesh COI report states that *'the Report aims to provide a brief summary of the source material identified'*. If the report did provide a brief summary of the source material identified, with improved editing and referencing, it would be considerably better, shorter and easier to use. However, currently the report is very long, due to the use of long quotes from source documents. Different information about the same topic from different sources is spread throughout the report making it hard to find and compare sources. Many quotes are repeated several times. Quotations should be used less and only where they clarify or demonstrate something, not where they contain errors or confusions.

[COIS: The next version is intended to present a much more focussed document which will address these comments and observations.](#)

In addition the report could be more carefully formatted and edited to be clearer and more consistent about when text is quoted and when it is written by the author(s). Quotations and written text should be justified in the same manner consistently all the way through the report. Due to the large number of errors found, references should be checked to make sure they are all present and web addresses

are up to date and correct.

COIS: As part of the continuing improvement process the next version will be produced in an improved format which will address the points made.

The report covers a wide range of material and cites a lot of sources. However, more effort could be made to look for Bangladeshi and academic sources rather than relying so heavily on foreign and English language press sources. Some of the press material and sources that the report references on important issues should not be relied upon. Letters and faxes, for example, should not be used where alternatives are available, especially if they are old and contradicted by other more recent and credible sources.

COIS: Identification of suitable and relevant sourcing is an ongoing exercise. While our aim is to utilise accessible material, available in the public domain, it is inevitable, that in the case of Bangladesh, that there may be a preponderance of the more readily available material such as that described above. We would seek to present a balance in the use of sources. The use of more Bangladeshi and academic sources would be desirable but as they are not always easily accessible it can be problematic. We have noted the helpful listing of references attached to this report which will be accessed in preparing the next update.

This review of the August 2010 COI report on Bangladesh evaluated the report for being up to date, accurate, user-friendly, and representative. The report is a large and valuable repository of information about Bangladesh today, which is useful beyond its intended purpose. Most of it is based on sources from the last two years; and it covers a wide range of issues and sources.

However, the report suffers from being too long, repetitive and difficult to use. It fails in its stated aim to provide a brief summary of the source documents. There are some instances when old information is used where there is easily accessible more up to date information. The report has hundreds of errors, typos, problems with referencing and missing references. It also relies at times too heavily on a small number of sources, on press sources and letters and faxes where there is easily accessible alternative information available. These problems lead to doubts about the accuracy of the report. It does not cite well-regarded, relevant sources of data on Bangladesh such as the World Bank, the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh, International Crisis Group, the Campaign for Popular Education, the International Labour Organisation, World Health Organisation, and accessible academic sources and as such it is not representative of the available information on Bangladesh.

COIS: The question of the size of document, a rather cumbersome approach to information presentation and the presence of errors is one that will be addressed in the next version of the report. Sourcing will be refined as above.

Alternative sources of information have been recommended. Most of these fall within the time frame of the current report, those that fall after the cut off date should be considered for the next report. All the recommended sources are available free on the internet. Many sources in the COI report require subscriptions to

publications, passwords to access or are letters. If such material is to be used for use in the report then academic material from journals, of which there is a large quantity, should also be considered.

COIS: The use of sources has been mentioned above. On subscription services – while we have access to a small number of such sources we operate within a limited budget which means that we are restricted in our choice and usage.

2 General Issues and Recommendations for the Report

The COI report on Bangladesh covers a very wide range of issues over 169 pages and references hundreds of documents from 119 sources. Considerable effort has gone in to researching and selecting sources and compiling the report. Looking at the results of all this work, it is disappointing to find the report so difficult to use, repetitive, poorly formatted and edited.

2.1 Length, Repetition and use of Quotations

In the preface to the COI report (*Preface*, paragraph iii) it states that '*The Report aims to provide a brief summary of the source material identified*'. One major problem with the report is that the report has been compiled rather than written, source material is not summarised briefly, it is quoted at length. The bulk of the report consists of long quotes cut and pasted from source documents. This makes the report much longer than is necessary and the length of the report on its own raises issues for user friendliness. There are also a number of issues regarding the use of quotations.

Many quotes, bits of information or parts of quotes that are exactly the same, sometimes from the same source are repeated several times in the report, which adds to the report's length and makes the report boring to read.

COIS: [The structure and purpose of COI Reports can result in a product which exhibits these 'negative' aspects. In producing the next version it is intended that such questions of presentation and structure will be addressed.](#)

For example it is explained through quotations that the Police in Bangladesh are organised nationally under the Ministry of Home Affairs no less than four times in section 8 in paragraphs 8.01, 8.02, 8.03 and 8.22. Two of these explanations (8.02 and 8.22) are from the same source.

COIS: [While there are multiple references to MOHA – the information at 8.01 is confirmed by separate sources at 8.02 and 8.03. However it is agreed that this can be seen as 'overkill'. This will be addressed in the next version. 8.02 deals specifically with 'organisation' while 8.22 deals with 'accountability and impunity'. Further sourcing will be sought for the next version.](#)

The same section of a US State Department report on the freedom of the press is quoted at length in sections 15.01 and 16.01.

Part of a quote on the role of the DGFI in maintaining law and order during the state of emergency is repeated verbatim unnecessarily in sections 8.02 and 8.07.

Repetition of this kind should be removed from the report. Information and data should be presented once and if important or much used, placed in a clearly marked section linked to from other relevant sections. If a greater proportion of the report was written rather than cut and pasted into quotes, this kind of repetition would be reduced and the report would be shorter.

COIS: These points will be addressed in the next version of the report.

In the preface to the COI report (*Preface*, paragraph vi) it states that ‘*no attempt has been made to resolve discrepancies between information provided in different source documents*’. I understand that COI report author(s) cannot comment on the accuracy or relative strength of differing accounts or data but more effort could be made to make contradictory or different information easier to assess and compare for the reader. In some cases different statistics merely reflect difficulties in measuring certain phenomena (such as child labour) whereas in others there may be political agendas at play in the differences between figures given in sources.

Different information about the same topic from different sources was spread throughout the report making it hard to find and compare sources. In these cases different information about the same topic was repeated in different sections without highlighting that in another part of the report another source gave conflicting, or simply slightly different, information about the same topic. While no attempt has been made to *resolve discrepancies*, perhaps some effort could be made to bring information on the same topic together in sections, to clarify or highlight contradictions between sources or draw the reader’s attention to information in other parts of the report that might be relevant.

For example the percentage of children engaged in child labour is given as 7% of children under 14 in paragraph 24.02, 13% of children between 5-14 in paragraph 24.11, and 7.5% of children between 5-17 in paragraph 24.18.

Estimates of the numbers of child domestic workers is given as 421,000 (24.23), 2,000,000 (24.23) and 405,508 (24.18).

The numbers of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh vary between sources, but those in paragraphs 29.07, 29.05 and 29.04 agree that there are about 28,000 in the official refugee camps. Outside the camps an additional 193,000 (29.04) 100,000-200,000 (29.04) 200,000-500,000 (29.05) or 400,000 (29.07) are thought to be in Bangladesh.

The rate of infection with HIV was given as less than 0.2% in paragraph 21.15, less than 1% in paragraph 23.40, or less than 0.1% in paragraph 26.06.

This problem would be solved by greater attention to the variety of sources and facts on the same issue that are presented in the report, more careful writing and editing. In cases where several figures for a piece of information are presented these could be put into a simple table with the date, source and data. This would improve the brevity of the report, present different data neutrally and together and if tables were listed in the contents, allow the information to be accessed quickly and easily. An example table is shown below:

Estimates of HIV Prevalence in Bangladesh

Source	Date	Estimate of prevalence
UN	2005	Less than 1%

UNAIDS	2008	Less than 0.2%
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare / UNGASS	2010	Less than 0.1%

This table, and the process of compiling it, shows that the prevalence of HIV infection is consistently estimated to be below 1% and that over time different pieces of research have made lower estimates of the prevalence of HIV. These facts are not clear from the way the information is currently presented in the report. Having a table like this would make the data much more accessible and easy to find (especially if linked from a list of tables at the start). At the moment the information on HIV prevalence is spread over the section on 'HIV/AIDS anti retroviral treatment' in the chapter on medical issues (26.06) the section on 'health Issues' in the chapter on women (23.40) and the section on 'access to health and welfare services' in the chapter on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons (21.15).

COIS: We think this point is well made and that the suggestion relating to compiling the various statistics in tabular form is sound. We will address this in the next version. We will also address the need for clearer signposting between relevant/linked sections/topics.

Where there is a piece of information in one document cited in the report that has a bearing on information from other sources in the document this should be linked to from the relevant sections to provide context and caveats to assertions made in source documents.

For example in paragraph 24.37 there is a quote from a document from UNICEF on birth registration. This spells out the problems for effective research, documentation and verification of people's ages due to very low rates of birth registration in the country. Without this accurate documentation, many people in Bangladesh do not know how old they are. This poses serious problems such as ensuring school entry at the correct age and tracking people who have gone missing / been trafficked.

This means that it is not possible to make assertions such as that made in paragraph 9.02 that regarding serving in the armed forces, that *'there was no scope for any person to be employed for actual service or combat duty before attaining the age of 18'*. Similarly the ability of anyone to *'certify the fitness and age'* as stipulated is required to employ a child under the age of 18, (24.19) is severely compromised without a proper birth registry. Given the prevalence of forged documents noted in paragraph 32.01, it seems important to acknowledge that it is not possible to be sure about the vast majority of Bangladeshi peoples' ages, perhaps this should added as a caveat or linked to provide context.

COIS: We accept the point made here. In the next version of the Country Report we will look to include a form of explanation which highlights the problems relating to and flowing from the birth registration system.

In section 23.16 a quote from the USSD 2009 report claims that Odhikar reported 227 dowry related killings in the year. In the next paragraph 23.17 the 2009 Odhikar report released three months earlier reports 319 such cases. This obvious error should be pointed out or the inaccurate quote omitted. Quotations should only be

used where they help to clarify rather than contain errors that confuse. This is not a case of resolving discrepancies as the source of the data is purportedly the same.

[COIS: This will be corrected, as necessary, in the next version of the report.](#)

2.2 Cross-Referencing

Improved cross-referencing would help make the report more user-friendly. If the report was made shorter with information on topics brought together in single specialist sections, good cross referencing would make the report much better. Places where cross-referencing would help are indicated below, although the recommendations made are not exhaustive.

The press report from the 1st of July about the suspension of staff from BSMMU on page 6-7 should be linked to paragraph 15.04 on violence between student factions or a separate new section on student political groups.

Section 3.10 on the general election of 2008 could be linked to section 6.09 on the supervision of elections (in both directions).

Section 8.23 on corruption in the law enforcement agencies could be linked to chapter 20 on corruption.

Section 11.18 on corruption in the judiciary could be linked to section 12.11 on bail.

Section 15.01 on freedom of political expression could be linked to chapter 16 on freedom of speech and media (although all the material in section 15.01 is repeated in section 16.01 anyway).

Paragraph 11.15, including a quote from the Bangladesh Embassy in the USA claiming that Bangladesh provides legal aid to the poor and destitute should include a statement saying that the paragraph should be read in conjunction with paragraph 11.03 which clarifies that this is certainly not the case.

[COIS: These points and others will be taken forward into the next report.](#)

2.3 Formatting and Spelling

The report needs to be more carefully formatted and edited to be clearer and more consistent about when text is quoted and when it is written by the author(s). At the moment it appears that the intention is to use quotation marks and left alignment to indicate that material is quoted, and justified text to indicate that material is written by the author(s). This system is not very easy to understand, has not been explained to the reader and is not applied consistently. This leads to confusion at times in identifying whether text is written by the author(s) or quoted from a source document. A non-exhaustive list of a few examples:

Text in paragraph 18.01 appears to be aligned left, but is not marked as a quote.

Some text in paragraphs 17.08, 19.12, 19.30, 23.13, 23.33, 23.34, 23.36 and 25.06 is

justified but seems to be quotations.

Quotation marks were used at the start of quotations and at the start of each new paragraph thereafter but were often missing from the end of paragraphs. This is the case in paragraph 24.12 (among many others).

Parts of paragraphs 2.01 and 24.02 are direct quotations and need to be in quotation marks.

Quotations and written text should be justified in the same manner consistently all the way through the report. I would also recommend that quotations be indicated more clearly – through the use of indenting, italics or font changes, and as I have said earlier the use of quotations reduced considerably.

Spellings should be consistent, except where they occur in quotations, when of course the original spellings should be preserved. For example ‘per cent’ is used mostly throughout the document but ‘percent’ is used in paragraphs 21.07, 24.02 and on pg 5 in the news item from 16th July, whereas the symbol ‘%’ is used in paragraph 2.01. Using find and replace in word while editing is a quick and easy way to check this comprehensively while editing.

Where this is inconsistent in text that is not marked as a quotation it raises the suspicion that material from source documents has been cut and pasted and presented as text written by the authors(s) of this report. Sentences in paragraph 2.01 appear to have been cut and pasted from the website of Columbia International Affairs Online but not marked as quotes.

COIS: It is intended that the next version of the Country Report will be presented in a new format and style which will resolve the discrepancies mentioned.

Para 2.01 is sourced to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), we do not have access to Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO). (Of relevance is the fact that the EIU provides CIAO with its Country data).

2.4 Typos

Paragraph 8.23 has been accidentally numbered 18.23 (page 43)

In a quote in paragraph 12.12 (the second paragraph of the quote) there is a typo, which has been reproduced faithfully from the original document but does not make much sense. In the sentence *‘In most cases, the accused or their relatives try to obtain bail at any cost, even when bail is available’* the last word should probably be ‘unavailable’ rather than ‘available’ – quotes should be selected if they demonstrate something clearly, not if they are confusing or seem to have errors in them. A brief summary of the section of the ALRC document would probably suffice.

In paragraph 19.24 in the quote on the sixth line down there appears to be an extra full stop that is not needed.

At the end of paragraph 23.12 the font of the title of a linked report has not been adjusted to match the font of surrounding text.

In paragraph 24.12 (among many others) quotation marks were not included at the end of quotes, and text saying 'section 5' intended to be put in brackets has a second bracket missing.

COIS: Thank you. All typos will be corrected in the next version of the Country Report.

2.5 Inaccurate Referencing

A large number of errors in referencing were identified; the references in this report should be thoroughly checked, as there are undoubtedly further errors that were not spotted by the reviewer. Errors included giving the wrong web addresses for sources, giving incorrect titles or descriptions for web addresses and not including sources in the list of references in Annex E.

On page 4 the latest news item for the 10th of August includes the wrong link and date for the item on the death sentence for five members of JMB.

On page 5 in the title of the latest news item for the 16th of July the text 'Fatwa illegalMoney-laundering charges pressed' has erroneously appeared in the title of an article about madrasas.

The same text has found its way into the titles of the news items cited on page 6 for the 12th and 9th of July.

On page 142 a website is linked, and the text indicates that it is the website of the Bangladesh Election Commission. The link is in fact not to the website of the Bangladesh Election Commission but to a private web site called Bangla2000. The list it links to is of political parties given symbols by the election commission for the 2001 election. This is out of date now given all that has occurred since 2001, the last election was in 2008. No mention is made of what the symbols are or why they are needed. On the electoral commission website a list of registered political parties is provided in Bangla.

A list of parties that contested the 2008 election is available in English in the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) Election Observation Mission Report dated 19th of February 2009 (Forum-Asia, 2009). The Commonwealth (Cassam Uteem, 2008) and EU (EU, 2008) election observation mission reports both confirm that there were 39 registered parties contesting the 2008 election. This is more than is contained in the Asian Forum list (37) but less than the number that contested the 2001 election according to the Bangla2000 list cited in the COI Report.

The list of references in Annex E should also be checked to make sure they are all up to date and web addresses are working and correct.

On page 151, Reference 18 says that it is to the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary

Affairs, (website is: <http://www.minlaw.gov.bd/>) but the link provided is to a website called www.bangladoot.org which does not work or appear to exist.

The text to 'The Bangladesh Citizenship (Temporary Provisions) Order 1972' is available on the website of the Consulate General of the Government of Bangladesh in New York and on the UNHCR website.

On page 165 Reference 82 says that it is to the Directorate General of Health Services (website is: http://nasmis.dghs.gov.bd/dghs_new/) but the link provided is to a website called www.angelfire.com which allows people to construct their own websites.

On page 151, a long list of articles accessed on the BBC website are listed; only a fraction of them list the date that the article was accessed. This is clearly important given that online articles are subject to changes and editing.

The same is true of articles listed from the Daily Star, list beginning on page 155. If the dates at the end of the lists are the days when all the articles above them were accessed then this should be indicated.

The quote in paragraph 23.17 says that it is from page 43 of the Odhikar 2009 report, but it is actually from page 44.

The reference '52e' is referred to many times in the text, sometimes the date the reference was accessed is given (24.08) other times the title of the document is given (although differently) (24.33, 24.07) and in one place (24.24) the foreword is referred to as 'forward'. Sources should be referenced consistently with the same information each time.

The link for reference 58h to a UNICEF document on birth registration in Bangladesh does not work, perhaps because the document appears to be out of date.

The web address listed for reference 3, the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board did not work, and the sub sections were not searchable or apparently available on the website of the organisation.

Many links to websites either didn't work (bangladoot), or required log in or subscription to access (Economist, Columbia International Affairs Online).

Details for references number 34, 43a, 86, 94 and 133 in the list in Annex E are not included.

COIS: The dash indicates no source allocated. This will be made clearer in the next Country Report.

All questions of sourcing will be dealt with and corrected where necessary.

2.6 Acronyms

Acronyms should be explained the first time they are used, or when they are introduced after a long gap, but this should only be done once in a section rather than repeated several times.

For example on page 36 the Ministry of Home Affairs is mentioned for the first time in paragraph 8.01 but the acronym is not given. In paragraph 8.02 and 8.22 the acronym 'MOHA' is given in brackets after the full name of the ministry. In paragraphs 8.03 and 8.04 the acronym is not used, but the full name of the ministry is. The acronym is not given in the list of acronyms in Annex D.

In section 23.33 the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) is first referred to as the 'Bangladesh National Women Lawyers'. Next the acronym is spelt out again, but this time correctly before a different acronym is given – 'BSEHR'.

In the following section 23.34, the acronym is again spelt out, but given wrongly as 'Bangladesh National Women's Lawyer Association', and then the same organisation is referred to again as 'BSEHR'.

I understand that these typos are in quotations, but quotations containing obvious and confusing errors should not be used. Quotations should also be formatted in a way that makes it obvious that they are quotations, in this case the sections were justified as if they were normal text.

The organisation BSEHR is referred to several times, but the acronym is never explained and is not included in the list in Annex D.

In the section on HIV/AIDS – Anti Retroviral Treatment, (26.06, 26.07) there are several acronyms that are not explained. These are 'MARF', 'STD' and 'ART'. AIDS and HIV are of course so well known that they do not need to be explained. None of these are in the list in Annex D.

[COIS: The usage and recording of Acronyms will be examined and regularized.](#)

2.7 The order of Introducing Information

Acronyms and names should be explained the first time they are introduced, for example, in paragraph 23.32 someone called Dr. Ameen is cited, but it is not explained who this person is or why they are being quoted. Dr. Ameen is mentioned earlier in the chapter on women but it would help if after several pages, a date or reference was inserted after her name to remind the reader that she is the author of a book cited.

Again this general problem, which there may be other examples of, which would be much improved if the report was written rather than cut and pasted.

[COIS: The point concerning repeat citation is taken. The structure and intended use of the report precludes the production of such a written report.](#)

2.8 Representativeness and Balance

I feel that more effort should be made to look for recent Bangladeshi and academic sources rather than relying so heavily on foreign and English language press sources. The report relies too heavily on USSD reports, the Economist Intelligence Unit, press reports and out of date, inaccurate letters or faxes from the British High Commission in Dhaka. If sources are going to be used for this report that require log in, subscription are books published only in Bangladesh or are private letters and faxes, then why can more academic material and books not be used?

Bangladeshi NGOs such as BRAC, ICDDR, B, CAMPE, international organisations such as ICG and UN agencies as well as accessible academic sources provide much more rigorous analysis.

COIS: As stated previously, the helpful listing of references attached to this report will be accessed when preparing the next updated report. Budgetary constraints will restrict our access to subscription sites and academic material.

2.9 Caveats about Source Documents

Unfortunately, good reliable data and information on Bangladesh is hard to come by. This is for two main reasons, one is the lack of capacity for accurate record keeping, data collection and analysis and the other is the highly politicised environment of information and debate.

Most sections of the report present data in an unproblematic way, with no information about how reliable or representative they are. In some cases, information presented as quotes from source documents are difficult to interpret because of a lack of information about how the information was generated. This is particularly the case with US State Department reports, which tend not to cite their sources. Whilst this is beyond the control of the COIS, the author(s) of the Bangladesh report could consider a caveat to that effect. The note included at the end of paragraph 24.12 is an effective example of how this could be done.

COIS: We will endeavour to bring as much clarity as possible to the content but we are unable to include analysis, opinion or speculation.

In some cases, further information about the source of information and who produced that information may be useful. Whilst many of the source documents in the COI report come from well-known organisations (e.g. Amnesty International, the BBC), some are more specific to Bangladesh and require further explanation. Examples from the report are Odhikar and Ain O Shalish Kendra

COIS: Thank you, we will consider for the next Country Report.

2.10 Clarification of Non-English Terms

There are a number of non-English terms used in the COI report, such as *Jatiya Sangsad*, *crore*, *mohajot*, *jawans*, *Gram Sarkar*, *upazila* and *kothis*, which are usually translated in text. The COIS author(s) could consider including a glossary.

COIS: Thank you, we will consider for the next Country Report.

2.11 Subheadings

Use of subheadings to clearly demarcate sections helps the user friendliness of the report. Generally this was good, but there were some places where extra subheadings would be useful.

For example, above section 19.07 there should be a new subheading perhaps reading 'the state and religion' to separate this section from the previous subheading 'family law'.

COIS: Thank you, we will consider for the next Country Report.

2.12 Use of Faxes and Letters as Sources

Letters from the British High Commission in Dhaka (26.09) and the Bangladesh High Commission in Canada (31.03) from 2003 have been used in evidence in this report. In both cases the letters are old, and in both cases more up to date and credible sources were available on-line. Letters should not be used in this way unless absolutely necessary.

A fax from the British High Commission in Dhaka from 1998 is used as a source for the names of student/youth organisations in Annex B on page 142.

COIS: The use of faxes and letters, particularly from sources on the ground has validity. We will endeavor to ensure currency and that secondary sourcing is used where available.

3 Specific Issues with Sections of the Report

3.1 The Differences between Sylheti and Bangla

In paragraph 1.04 the difference between Sylheti and Bangla is discussed with reference to the website of Hampshire County Council.

The assertion that Sylheti is *'quite different to standard Bangla in its sound system, the way in which words are formed and in its vocabulary'* is highly debatable.

Better sources of information on this would be: Chalmers, (1996) and Zeitlyn, (2008).

There is a difference between the way in which Bangla and Sylheti are perceived in the UK and Bangladesh. Hence the reason why Hampshire County Council's view needs to be qualified, see the quote below:

In Bangladesh Sylheti is one of several different but related speech varieties and is thus considered a dialect of Bangla. In the UK by contrast, Sylheti is the ordinary means of communication for a large group of people relatively uninfluenced by 'standard' or *'shuddho'* Bangla and could thus be seen as a distinct language. One test Chalmers refers to of assessing the relationship of two languages is whether they are mutually intelligible; Sylheti and standard Bangla, according to academics that Chalmers cites, are nearly mutually unintelligible.

The reality is more complicated, most Sylheti speakers can understand a great deal of Bangla and vice versa. They are very closely related and speakers of Sylheti and Bangla in Bangladesh are exposed to each other and learn to communicate. No one in Bangladesh speaks standard Bangla exactly as it is written and taught. Standard Bangla is the language of the majority of literature, education, film, media and official communication in Bangladesh. Almost everyone in Bangladesh can get by in standard Bangla even if they speak a very different dialect or language at home. (Zeitlyn, 2008:2)

[COIS: Thank you. This new sourcing will be considered for inclusion in the next version of the Country Report.](#)

3.2 History Timeline

In the History Timeline in section 3.07 the attempted assassination of Sheikh Hasina in a cinema bombing in August 2004 is not mentioned. See: Datta, S, (2004).

[COIS: Thank you. This will be included in the next version of the Country Report.](#)

3.3 Data on Bangladesh

The COI report relies very heavily on one or two sources of information and more on-line sources could be consulted, some specific recommendations are made below, but generally the World Bank provides a wide range of well regarded, up to date data on their website. A collection of links to data on Bangladesh is also available on the Princeton University website.

COIS: This new sourcing will be considered for inclusion in the next version of the Country Report.

3.4 Data on Poverty and the Economy

Chapter 2 on the economy relies very heavily on the Economist Intelligence Unit Bangladesh Country Profile of 2008. Some of the data about poverty, cited in paragraph 2.01 from this source is from 2005.

The World Bank provide much more up to date and accessible data on economic indicators, the structure of the economy, trade, poverty, and employment in the 'at a glance' web publication (World Bank, 2009a).

The Bangladesh Bank also publishes economic data on its website.

COIS: Thank you. This new sourcing will be considered for inclusion in the next version of the Country Report.

3.5 Data on Migration and Remittances

In paragraph 2.04 a BBC news article is cited giving statistics for the number of Bangladeshis working abroad. The World Bank or Bangladesh Bank would be better sources of information about this; The World Bank has a wealth of information about migration and remittances on their website. They publish an annual Migration and Remittances Factbook, which has a Bangladesh entry (Ratha, D., Mohapatra, S., and Silwal, A., 2010).

The Bangladesh Bank also has data on remittances on its website.

COIS: This will be considered for the next Country Report.

3.6 Data on HIV/AIDS

In paragraph 21.15 a UNAIDS report is cited that claims that the prevalence of HIV among male sex workers is 0%. This seems unlikely; consultation of other sources confirms that male sex workers are in a high-risk category for HIV, so it is strange that the average prevalence for this group should be lower than the national averages cited elsewhere in the document. Other sources put the rate as under 1%. See: ICDDR, (2007), World Bank, (2009b), and Azim et al., (2008).

COIS: Further sourcing will be utilised to clarify the situation. 2.1 of this report also refers.

Placing data on HIV/AIDS in the section on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people perpetuates prejudices about these groups of people being the source of the disease. For this reason as well as the reasons of user friendliness covered in the first part of this review there should be a separate section on HIV/AIDS with all the relevant information collected that is linked from other sections such as the health section.

COIS: This point is agreed. The next version of the country report will be presented in a new format and style. As part of a 'Medical Issues' section HIV/AIDS will be dealt with as a separate topic with appropriate cross-referencing and links included.

3.7 Information about Madrasa Education

On page 5 a press report is cited from the 16th of July, stating that the Madrasa Education Board has topped the success chart for the fifth straight year.

This could give the misleading impression that madrasa education leads to higher attainment than other forms of education, when most credible sources say that madrasas perform very poorly in terms of attainment, infrastructure, training levels of teachers, teacher punctuality and gender equality. Below is a quote from the Education Watch 2008 report:

... madrasas are lagging behind in most of the quality indicators. Poor educational provision in these institutions is partly to blame for this. The ebtedayee madrasas which are basically independent institutions providing primary education is at the bottom of the league table. These institutions use separate textbooks and a majority do not have basic minimum infrastructure and learning facilities. Lack of trained teachers is a serious problem in the madrasas. Women's participation in teaching, school leadership and SMC is the lowest in madrasas. (Nath and Chowdhury, 2009: xxxviii)

The specific section on madrasa education (24.34) cites only one source written by a foreign intern at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in Delhi. The report appears to have been written without any empirical basis.

The section makes no mention of any of the issues raised by Nath and Chowdhury (2009), who are Bangladeshi, base their findings on serious research and evidence and have visited madrasas.

Other papers which mention madrasa education are Al-Samarai, (2007), Ahmed et al. (2007), Ahmed et al. (2005).

[COIS: Thank you. These useful sources will be included in the next version of the Country Report.](#)

3.8 Education Generally

The following summary from Nath and Chowdhury, (2009) (Education Watch, 2008) gives a good brief summary of the different types of school in the country. Which might help make sections 24.30 and 24.31 clearer. At the moment the section is based entirely on non-specialist sources, the sources recommended below would help to make it stronger.

There are 10 different types of primary educational institutions in the country which follow three different curricula. The government schools, non-government schools (registered and unregistered), community schools, experimental schools, non-formal schools, and primary-attached to high schools follow the curriculum of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). The ebtedayee madrasas and the ebtedayee-attached to high madrasas follow the curriculum of the Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board (BMEB). The English medium schools follow the British curriculum (London and Cambridge). (Nath and Chowdhury, 2009:6)

The annual Education Watch reports are available on-line at: <http://www.campebd.org/content/download.htm> and are a very good source of data and analysis of education in Bangladesh.

The Consortium for Research on Educational Access Transitions and Equity also has a number of research papers on education in Bangladesh. <http://www.create-rpc.org/publications/>

Other research which would help to make the section on education more rigorous are: Hossain, N., (2009); Al-Samarrai, S., (2007); Al-Samarrai, S, (2008); Cameron, S., (2010); Hossain, A., (2010) and Hossain, A, and Zeitlyn, B. (2010)

COIS: Thank you. These further valuable sources will be utilised in the next version of the Country Report.

3.9 Girls in Education

In sections 23.03 and 24.09 there is a section on girls and women's access to education. This section could cite sources such as: Raynor, J. and Wesson, K. (2006). About the stipend programme for female education in Bangladesh, this is mentioned in section 24.09, but much more detail is given in the sources recommended. Bangladesh has achieved near parity in enrolments of boys and girls, which is great progress but should not be seen as a sign of equality, girls are still disadvantaged.

Despite increases in enrolment, girls in Bangladesh are still less likely to complete secondary school, gain an academic qualification, study subjects that have a good marketable value, or to move on to paid employment. Girls are still significantly less likely to be entered for secondary school exams or to pass them – so despite equal enrolment what happens in school is not equal (Raynor and Wesson, 2006:7). It should also be noted that the girls secondary school stipend is disproportionately claimed by the relatively well off rather than the poor (Hossain and Zeitlyn, 2010).

COIS: Further sourcing will be sought for inclusion in the next Report.

3.10 The Primary Education Stipend Project

Paragraph 24.32, which mentions the primary education stipend project (PESP) could be qualified with information from Ahmed et al. (2007).

Although PESP is envisioned as an equity-promoting intervention, investigations into its operation have raised questions about proper targeting, administration and application of eligibility criteria. Data from the 2003-04 *Education Watch* household survey in ten upazilas found that stipend recipients were more or less evenly divided among four socio-economic categories based on food security status (always in deficit, sometimes in deficit, break-even or surplus). Further suggesting poor targeting, over two-thirds of children from the poorest category were not selected as recipients, while 27 percent of children from the most affluent households received the stipend (Ahmed et al, 2005). The survey found that on average recipients did

not receive the full amount, students from GPS received more than those attending other eligible schools, and boys received more than girls. Focus groups discussions also pointed to the manipulation of eligibility criteria by school managing committees and head-teachers, and to management problems such as "cuts" being taken from the stipends.

Moreover, though PESP seeks to increase enrollment, regular attendance and progression among children from poor families, it has been revealed that these children may in fact have genuine difficulty in meeting the eligibility criteria (Ahmed et al, 2005). It has also been suggested that age and non-financial considerations may also work to undermine the stipend's effectiveness in ensuring attendance and progression in particular. Because both direct and opportunity costs increase as a child ages, the stipend may not be sufficient in offsetting these costs. (Ahmed et al, 2007:48).

More recent research has found similar problems with the targeting of the stipend and the extent to which it is claimed by the relatively well off as well as the poor. Paragraph 24.32 mentions the costs of education, these are calculated in Hossain and Zeitlyn (2010) as:

Tk. 3,812 per year, per child. This is more than three times the value of the stipend offered by the government, which is Tk. 1,200 per year per child. (Hossain and Zeitlyn, 2010:22)

The costs of secondary education were calculated by Education Watch 2005 as:

On an average, Taka 8,874 per male child and Taka 7,411 per girl child were spent annually by households for children's secondary education. (Ahmed et al., 2006:xxxvii)

[COIS: Thank you. The suggested sources will be considered for inclusion in the next Country Report.](#)

3.11 'Private Schools'

Paragraph 24.33 quotes the state report on the Convention of the Rights of the Child from 2007 saying that 98% of secondary schools were private, but that the government paid over 90% of the teacher and staff salaries for these schools. These schools then are not wholly private, they are maintained by the government and are known in Bangladesh as Registered Non Government Schools. They must follow the curriculum set by the government and are financed from a huge proportion of the state education budget.

A large proportion of the education revenue budget is allocated to personnel costs. In fact, approximately 98% of the revenue budget allocated for primary education is for salaries and allowances, a percentage which has not changed since the beginning of the decade. A similar pattern prevails in secondary although given the much greater proportion of the budget going to support the

salaries of teachers in non-government secondary institutions over 99% of the revenue budget is for teachers. (Al-Samarai, 2007:10)

COIS: Thank you. Source consideration as above.

3.12 Information on the Caretaker Government

Section 3.08 on the Caretaker government draws only on the USSD background note. It does not mention anywhere that this was a military backed regime during which a lot of basic human rights legislation was suspended. Although this is noted later in the report in sections 4.04, 6.03, 8.02, 8.05 and 8.06, perhaps this information should be clearly marked in the section on the caretaker government.

The International Crisis Group reports on the caretaker government and elections are a good source of information on this time. ICG, (2008a and 2008b)

COIS: Source consideration as above. Clarification suggestion agreed.

3.13 Information on the General Election of 2008

The section on International observer reports of the election could include reference to Forum Asia, (2009). The Commonwealth (Cassam Uteem, 2009) and EU, (2009) election observation mission reports are referred to indirectly via press reports but given that they are available on-line it might improve the report if they were referred to directly rather than via press sources. As indicated above the International Crisis Group have some good reports about Bangladesh, including on the 2008 election.

COIS: Thank you. Source consideration as above.

3.14 War Crimes Committed in 1971

Section 4.06 only draws on one source for this hotly contested area.

Channel 4 Dispatches' investigation from 1995 presents evidence about this, and about some alleged war criminals living in the UK. There is also an on-line archive of news, film and articles about the 1971 genocide called Genocide Bangladesh.

Since the recent trials of suspected war criminals there have been numerous reports of the Government of Bangladesh's actions and the entreaties of the UN, EU and NGOs such as Amnesty International (2009) and Human Rights Watch (2009) for a fair trial.

COIS: Thank you. Source consideration as above.

The section on war crimes in 1971 (4.06) is much shorter than the following section (4.07) on the trial of murderers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, although the scale of the crime and the number of people affected is much greater.

COIS: Consideration will be given to expanding this section as necessary.

3.15 Natural Catastrophes

Perhaps section 4.14 on natural catastrophes should mention cyclone 'Sidr', even though it occurred in 2007 as it is still often referred to. See Bird, (2007).

COIS: This topic will be included in the next version of the Country Report.

3.16 Role of Bangladesh Army in the UN – Reputation, Role in government and BDR Mutiny

In the section on the Bangladesh Army (8.05) it could be mentioned that Bangladesh is a major contributor to UN peacekeeping missions around the world, contributing around 17,000 troops. These missions are lucrative and prestigious for the army. See the Bangladesh Army UN Mission Website and Buerk, (2006).

This contributes to sensitivity in the army over international perception of them – which explains the military's lack of enthusiasm for continued involvement in government. See (ICG, 2009a). This lucrative work also leads to jealousy from the Bangladesh Rifles who are not allowed on international missions, which is cited as a possible motivation for the mutiny. See: Phillipson, (2009).

COIS: This subject will be considered for inclusion in the next version of the Report.

3.17 Police Reform

The quote given in paragraph 8.26 by the country director of UNDP at the inauguration of the country's first victim support centre about a '*significant shift that has taken place in the police mindset*' should not be included in a report like this as serious evidence. The comment was surely part of a good-natured optimistic speech with motivational language rather than a serious evidence based assessment.

In contrast to the stubbornly positive tone of the section of the COI report on police reform, the opening paragraph of the International Crisis Group report 'Bangladesh: Getting Police Reform on Track' (ICG, 2009), which is not cited in the COI, report says:

After decades of misuse and neglect, Bangladesh's police are a source of instability and fear rather than a key component of a democratic society. Human rights abuses are endemic and almost all Bangladeshis who interact with the police complain of corruption. With an elected government in place again, there are now opportunities to reform this dysfunctional force. But there are also significant obstacles. If the government fails to move beyond the current modest reform process, the democratic transition could falter should deteriorating security give the military another chance to intervene, using, as it has in the past, the pretext of upholding law and order to justify derailing democracy. (ICG, 2009)

Using only press sources and press releases from government sources as the section does will not lead to an accurate and balanced picture. The ICG report provides a much more serious analysis. See: ICG (2009).

COIS: It may be correct that the UNDP comment was 'good-natured' etc, but it would be difficult for COIS to comment or give opinion in the absence of analysis. Further sourcing as suggested will be considered for the next version of the Country Report.

3.18 Freedom of Political Expression

The section on freedom of political expression (15.01) only covers newspapers.

Perhaps the banned books of writer Taslima Nasreen could be mentioned, see BBC News Website, (2007) or the temporary banning of Facebook due to concerns about religious sentiments, see RSF, (2010).

COIS: Thank you. We will consider these suggestions for the next version of the Country Report.

3.19 Student Political Violence

The section on opposition groups and political activists should include a section specifically for student political groups as these are the most active. Good recent information on student political groups in Bangladesh is hard to come by (I am working on it) but a few sources are listed here:

See: Nelson, M. J. (2009); Upadhyay, R., (2007); ICG, (2008a); and Mahbubul Alam, G., and Shahjamal, M. M., (2008)

Press sources are also the next best option a summary of recent coverage is provided in Haider, F., (2010).

The section on student/youth organisations in Annex B needs to be based on more recent and credible source than a fax from the British High Commission in Dhaka from 1998.

Political parties and their affiliated student organisations not included in this list include:

- Khalafad Moslish - Islami Chattro Moslish
- Communist Party - Chattro Union
- Jashot (Socialist Party) – Jatiyo Shamasto Shamshid Dal / Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)
- Chhatro Federation

See: International Socialism, (2009), ANFREL, (2008).

Some of the small left wing student groups have been active in recent years in activism against mining companies in Bangladesh and sexual harassment of students.

COIS: The whole area of Student political involvement is to be considered for the next Report. The suggestions given here will be factored in.

3.20 Anti Corruption Commission

It is not clear why paragraph 18.04 is in this section. The article referred to explains a change to the emergency powers legislation enacted by the caretaker government in 2007, but does not refer to the Anti Corruption Commission.

COIS: This paragraph will be removed.

3.21 Biharis

The origins of the Biharis are a little more heterogeneous than section 20.05 suggests, including West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh etc. There was also migration of 'Urdu-speakers' to the region began before Partition (particularly from Bihar, Orissa and Assam) see Redclift, (2007, 2009).

COIS: Noted, thank you.

In paragraph 20.7 – the text '*some Biharis declined citizenship in 1972*' is a little misleading. Those who had been displaced by the war and were living in temporary shelters in 1972 were asked by the International Committee for the Red Cross to choose between settlement in Bangladesh or Pakistan. They were not explicitly offered citizenship of either. (Redclift personal communication, 2010) see also Parveen, S., (2008).

COIS: Noted , thank you.

The information in paragraph 20.08 is wrong; the 2008 supreme court decision covers all the 'Biharis'. In May 2008, the Supreme Court observed that as per the 1951 Act "every person born in Bangladesh after commencement of this act shall be a citizen by birth" and as per the Bangladeshi Citizenship Order of 1972 all those who have been in the country since 1971 are also eligible. See: UNHCR, (2009).

COIS: Noted, thank you.

Section 20.9 is also potentially misleading, not all Biharis now have ID cards (they are all eligible for them but not everyone chose to apply - anti-citizenship groups within the camps generated fears of camp evictions etc). (Redclift personal communication, 2010)

COIS: The section on Biharis will be expanded to clarify the position. The points made and the suggested sources will form part of this action.

3.22 Gay, Strait or MSM?

Information on the differences between gay and MSM could be included in section 21.02. Regarding the differences and origins of these categories, which are often connected with education and class. See: Hussain, D., 2009a; 2009b; 2009c.

COIS: This will be considered in the next version of the Country Report.

3.23 Women Employed in the Garments Industry

Paragraph 23.03 has a quote about rising female employment, but does not mention that this is largely due to the expanding garments industry where 80% of workers are women – discussed in paragraph 23.09 (perhaps this could be linked).

COIS: This will be included in the next version of the Country Report.

Other sources of information on this include: Kabeer, N., and Mahmud, S., (2004), and Khosa, N., (2009).

COIS: Thank you, noted.

In paragraph 23.09 a quote from a USSD report states that pay in the garments sector was roughly comparable for men and women. Other sources such as Quasem, A., (2006) and War on Want, (2009) contest that.

COIS: The next report will consider such discrepancies and if appropriate, present a balanced view.

3.24 Child Care and Protection

In a similar way to the way a quote from the director of an NGO is used in the section on police reform, in paragraph 24.21 a quote in an article from the Daily Star from the executive director of an NGO called 'Incidin Bangladesh' urges the government to provide 'adequate provision' in the national budget to establish a night shelter for street children.

I am not sure what this quote or evidence adds to the report. The fact that the head of an NGO, which works with street children and want to run night shelters, urges the government to fund such shelters is not very useful information.

COIS: The quote provides some context to the NGO's view of the situation and the numbers living on the streets.

3.25 Birth Registration

The paragraph on birth registration (24.37) quotes a UNICEF document which is no longer on line, and appears to be out of date, stating that '*the strategy aims at registering all by the end of 2008*'. Low rates of birth registration is still a major challenge in Bangladesh.

Irin (2008) is slightly more up to date, and includes some explanations of the problems caused by lack of birth registration.

COIS: This section will be updated as suggested.

3.26 Mental Health

The paragraph of the report which deals with mental health (26.09) relies on information in a letter from the British High Commission in Dhaka from 2003. The letter states with no apparent irony intended: '*While that standard of care provided in government hospitals is not necessarily fully up to UK standards, most doctors also run high quality private practices where fees are minimal compared with the UK*'

It appears that the British High Commission in Dhaka are unaware of publications on the issue which appeared before 2003, of the fact that mental health provision in the UK is of a relatively very high standard and is free through the NHS, and that it is

pointless comparing the relative costs of services between a country as poor as Bangladesh and one as rich as the UK. Letters from other parts of the British government should not be used as sources in this document unless absolutely necessary, particularly when they display this level of ignorance.

COIS: The value attached to information provided by local contacts was discussed above at 2.12.

Any information provided by the BHC Dhaka would be in response to a specific request. In this case information on the availability of psychiatric care. Cost of service, whether private or public and comparison to UK services are irrelevant for the purposes of the report; any comment on those subjects would be valuable only in terms of context and background. Given the age of the source it will be removed in the next version of the Country Report.

World Health Organisation sources would be more recent, realistic and credible. The organisation's Bangladesh website states:

In Bangladesh, mental health activities are generally concentrated on hospital-based psychiatry, which is grossly inadequate.

And:

Based on global estimates, there are 14 million mentally ill people in the country. 0.5% of the population are mentally disabled. There are seventy qualified psychiatrists and 1 hospital bed for 200,000 people in the country.

Easily accessible, credible internet sources such as the WHO / AIMS report on mental Health in Bangladesh from 2007 paint a picture very different from the impression that the British High Commission in Dhaka seemed to be under:

There is no specific mental health authority in the country. There are 50 outpatient mental health facilities and no facility provides follow-up care in the community. There is no day treatment mental health facilities in the country. There are 31 community-based psychiatric inpatient units for a total of 0.58 bed per 100,000 population and on average patients spend 29 days in the facility per discharge.

WHO, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, (2007)

Action Aid (2008) confirms these depressing accounts:

Across Bangladesh, there are only 100 psychiatrists to look after a population of 140 million. Between 50 and 60 of those are based in Dhaka which leaves around 40 for the rest of the country.

COIS: Thank you. These useful sources will be considered for inclusion in the next Country Report.

3.27 Omissions from the Medical Issues Section

The medical issues section makes no mention of arsenic poisoning (the largest mass poisoning in history), diarrhoea (mentioned on 24.03 as one of the principal causes of child death), cholera, pneumonia, malaria or diabetes. See: Mehovic, J., and Blum, J., (2004); ICDDR,B, (2008a); ICDDR,B, (2008b).

COIS: The Medical Issues section will be expanded to include comment on the above.

The large health NGO ICDDR,B, is a good source of health information for Bangladesh. It's publications are available here: <http://centre.icddr.org/pub/>

COIS: Thank you. The above sources will be considered for inclusion in the next version of the Country Report.

3.28 Freedom of Movement

The section on freedom of movement quotes the USSD 2009 report saying that '*The law provides for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration and repatriation...*' but does not mention the various bans on female migration that have been in place for much of the last few decades on the pretext of protecting women from exploitation.

... in Bangladesh, even adult women are legally required to take the permission of the father, husband or other male head of household for acquiring a passport, applying for a visa, and so on. (Ghosh, 2009:9)

See also: White, M., Gammage, S., Sharmin, T., Afsar, R., (2007)

These sources contradict the USSD reports of 2008 and 2009, and a letter from the Bangladesh High Commission from 2003, which is used as a source in section 31.03. A caveat to this effect should be inserted, and letters should not be used as sources where alternatives are available.

COIS: We will use the suggested sourcing to qualify, as appropriate, existing conditions.

3.29 Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

A more recent report from IDMC exists from December 2009, (IDMC, 2009) which can be cited instead of the 2006 report quoted in section 28.01. The report also includes a list of web links to further resources on IDPs in Bangladesh.

COIS: Thank you.

3.30 Citizenship and Nationality

Section 30.02 makes it sound as if the Government of Bangladesh will not allow dual nationality, when in fact they will. The procedure is outlined on the website of the Bangladesh High Commission in London as follows:

1. A Bangladeshi national who has entered UK with a Bangladeshi passport and subsequently obtained British Passport is not required to obtain separate dual nationality certificate. Similarly the children of Bangladeshi father who has obtained Bangladeshi passport before obtaining British passport is also not required to have separate dual nationality certificate. Foreign spouse of a Bangladeshi national may also apply for a dual nationality of Bangladesh.
2. Dual Nationality Applicants are required to fill up the specific form. available in this website in All Forms section)
3. Dual Nationality Applicants are required to deposit the filled up application form along with other related documents, in person to the High commission where they will be interviewed by the concern officer
4. After satisfactory interview the application form along with related documents will be sent to Ministry of Home affairs in Bangladesh.
5. After investigation Ministry of Home Affairs in Bangladesh will issue the dual nationality certificate and send it to the High Commission.
6. On receipt of the certificate from the Ministry, the High commission will either inform the applicant to collect the certificate or the same may be sent to the applicant by post.
7. On the basis of dual nationality certificate the applicant can obtain Bangladeshi passport from the High Commission.

Children of Bangladeshi men and, since 2009, Bangladeshi women married to foreigners can claim Bangladeshi citizenship. (Daily Star, 2009)

COIS: [The question of dual nationality will be clarified in the next version of the Country Report.](#)

3.31 Annex A

The Chronology of major events in Annex A should include the language movement of the 1940s and 1950s. See Banglapedia Entry on the Language movement.

COIS: [This will be included in the next version of the Country Report.](#)

4 Conclusions

The August 2010 COI Report on Bangladesh is a large and valuable repository of information about Bangladesh today. It is a report, which I have previously used to guide me to relevant research; it is useful beyond its intended purpose. Most of it is based on relatively recent sources; and it covers a wide range of issues. One of its principal strengths is the way it guides the reader to a huge volume and variety of research and data on Bangladesh. To build upon this strength the accuracy of referencing, and coverage of available material need to be kept to the highest standards.

This review evaluated the report on the basis of whether it is up to date, accurate, user-friendly, and representative. On all four of these criteria the report was found to be lacking. Many of the problems identified in this review do not require specific country knowledge regarding Bangladesh for identification.

The report is too long, repetitive and difficult to use. It fails in its stated aim to provide a brief summary of the source documents. There are some instances when old information is used where there is easily accessible more up to date information. The report has hundreds of errors, typos, problems with referencing and missing references. It also relies at times too heavily on a small number of sources, on press sources and letters and faxes where there is easily accessible alternative information available. These problems lead to doubts about the accuracy of the report.

There are inevitably, more sources available than could possibly and practicably have been included in a report like this. However, there are shortcomings in the range and age of sources cited in this report. It does not cite enough Bangladeshi and academic sources and relies heavily on foreign and English language press sources. Some of the press material and sources that the report references on important issues should not be relied upon. Letters and faxes should not be used where alternatives are available, especially if they are old and contradicted by other more recent and credible sources. If letters, material which requires subscriptions and passwords, as well as books published only in Bangladesh are to be used as sources in the report, then perhaps more use of academic material from journals should be considered. Alternative sources of information have been recommended. Most of these fall within the time frame of the current report, those that fall after the cut off date should be considered for the next report.

For example, the report does not cite well-regarded, relevant sources of data on Bangladesh such as the World Bank, the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh, International Crisis Group, the Campaign for Popular Education, the International Labour Organisation, World Health Organisation, and accessible academic sources and as such it is not representative of the available information on Bangladesh. A list of references referred to in the review is given below, the vast majority of these are before the cut off date, and all of them are freely available on-line.

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COIS: [The above listed sources represent a useful and valuable resource which we](#)

will utilise in the next version of the Country Report.