IPA and BIGD Sign MoU for Creating Greater Impact of Development Research in Bangladesh

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Editor's note: This cross-post originally appeared on the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development Blog.

Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) and the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), creating a **collaboration to use high-quality research to support evidence-informed development solutions in Bangladesh.**

IPA is a global research and policy organization with a presence in 20 countries across Asia, Africa, and the Americas. IPA works with partners to generate and use rigorous evidence to guide smarter development investments and ultimately improve the lives of millions of people living in poverty. Over the past 20 years, IPA has conducted over 900 studies in 50 countries to identify what works, what does not, and why.

BIGD, a Bangladesh-based social science academic and research institute of BRAC University, does a range of research work—from large-scale impact evaluation to deep qualitative inquiry to formative research—on important issues around development and governance. It combines the academic excellence and independence of a university with unique access to BRAC, one of the leading global social innovation platforms, to do high-quality, relevant development research.

The organizations' complementary strengths will have a catalytic impact in Bangladesh. IPA's strong technical capabilities around evaluation and its global network of researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and funders will complement BIGD's intimate knowledge of research in Bangladesh, its unique relationship with BRAC, and its ability to attract Bangladeshi researchers. It is expected that the collaboration will strengthen BIGD's technical capacities and attract global researchers and funding for research and policy work in Bangladesh.

IPA and BIGD will jointly design research initiatives, raise resources, and pursue an institutional strengthening program for BIGD through exchanges with IPA staff globally and partner universities. BIGD will offer IPA and its researcher network **meaningful partnership opportunities for rigorous and more context-driven development research in Bangladesh.**

The two organizations will also explore fundraising opportunities for new research initiatives in areas of common interest to better attract researchers from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The organizations believe that these initiatives will increase and improve locally relevant development research agendas.

IPA and BIGD are considering **setting up a team within BIGD to provide advisory services and capacity exchange on monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) in collaboration with IPA's Right Fit Evidence** unit, which is dedicated to developing resources and offering services to help funders and implementers make learning-oriented monitoring and evaluation a reality. Bangladesh has a thriving ecosystem of development innovations, both within the government and nonprofits. Yet MEL practices in the country often fail to support learning and improvement, which can limit effective scaleups. IPA's technical expertise, combined with BIGD's grounding in the Bangladesh context, will help to address this shortcoming. The new collaboration will also accelerate dissemination and policy outreach activities, both within and outside Bangladesh.

Dr. Imran Matin, executive director of BIGD, said: *"BIGD and IPA share the basic belief that good evidence matters in developing effective, scalable solutions. Bangladesh is a rich country of social innovations that can be useful globally. We hope to join forces to empower social innovators with high-quality evidence to create global public goods. I am super excited about this ambition. "*

IPA Executive Director Annie Duflo stated, *"Our partnership with BIGD will further our mission by strengthening the capacity of, and partnering with, a strong local organization to conduct high-quality research and cultivate deep, long-lasting relationships needed to effectively engage with decision-makers to support evidence uptake and ultimately to improve the lives of people living in poverty."*

With millions of dollars invested in poverty reduction in Bangladesh, the stakes for funding what works to improve lives are significant. International research organizations have made some progress in ensuring that high-quality evidence is moving beyond mere publication and into the hands of policymakers. The collaboration of IPA and BIGD in Bangladesh will further this process, generating evidence, disseminating learning, and ultimately benefiting Bangladesh.

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