

Note from the Editor

Let me begin with an apology. Due to a matter of personal dislocation coupled with a slight technical glitch, the January 2013 issue of the e-Journal got delayed. Probably such delays would not have mattered much a few years ago, but it does today. The reason being, and I am happy to report, that the number of people taking interest in the e-Journal has increased phenomenally. I have been inundated by enquiries from general readers and the authors since the very first week of January. My apologies to all and to compensate I am offering a very rich collection of articles in this issue.

The most notable of these are a set of six papers on violence and deprived children put at the end of the issue. These open with three papers on violence, the first of which by Kazi Tobarak Hossain and Md. Saidur Rashid Suman lists the various types of violence perpetrated on the women in Bangladesh. They collate data from various sources and present a comprehensive picture of violence and attempt to explain their nature and causes.

The second of these deals with domestic violence. We have dealt extensively with this subject in our previous issues but they concerned mostly Bangladesh. This time we have a paper on Nigeria by Peter Ezeah with a difference as the nature of marriage and marital life differ considerably from those in Bangladesh. As Ezeah notes "females are frequently married in childhood to older men who may be unknown to them. At the time of marriage, young women know little about marriage and sexuality, which can be a traumatic experience. (But) it is permissible among the people for young married women to desert their husbands to 'attain maturity'. In this sense she is free to engage in prostitution at the end of which she is expected by her husband to return to him with some material gifts which can be regarded as 'bride wealth'", so that the nature of domestic violence takes on a whole new meaning in these contexts.

The third of these by Asima Hassan and Aneesa Shafi portray the impact of violence on the mental make up of the people in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This Indian state has been at the centre of conflict between India and Pakistan since 1947 and they have fought as many as three all out wars on it and today a part of the state is occupied by Pakistan and the rest remains with India under strict military presence and, as the authors note, often the military outnumber civilian population. An active "militancy", as a force of resistance, has also risen to become a part of the daily life of the people in the state. The authors report, how under these conditions, the people, particularly the women, who have lost their husband, son or a brother, cope with the day to day reality and failing which suffer tremendous mental agonies, yet refuse to take proper measures fearing stigma.

These are followed by three papers on the deprived children in Bangladesh. In the first of these, Md. Nazmul Alam and Rizwana Hussain look at the plight of the children of the "Street Based Sex Workers" in Dhaka. The stigma of their mothers' occupation coupled with the ensuing poverty and isolation put these children in a very precarious situation. Their future is laden with uncertainty and perhaps for the girl child an inheritance of the mother's profession and for the boys a life of drudgery and drug addiction.

Children of broken families all over the world suffer from a set of problems unique to them. These become doubly difficult to deal with when their lives are set in poverty. Shirin Akhter follows the lives of a few such children from the city of Khulna, living mostly in the slums. The curse of poverty for some is combined with the dreaded "step mother" while for others a life with poorer single mothers. The harshness and the frustrations of the lives of these children are best portrayed by their refusal to see their parents reunited or in their denial to even interact with the other parent.

Perhaps the greatest challenge a child faces is when he has to leave home to earn a living, often for the whole family. His/her trials and tribulations are multiplied many folds when the legal system fails to support him/her or is absent. He is literally thrown to the beasts. But that is a reality millions of children world over have to face every day. These include about 8 million children in Bangladesh alone, working mostly in the informal sector that has little or no respect for the legal system in any case. Sharmin Akhter and Abu Syead Muhammed Abdullah noting the plight of some of these children focus on the lack of legal protection for these children workers. They not only lament the lack

of proper laws but make valuable suggestions to change the fate of these children. Fortunately, as I write this introduction, the Bangladesh Government has just passed a bill covering much of what the authors have suggested, attesting to the timing and the need of such research.

Rest of this issue covers a rich collection of articles from all over the world. As of before, Nigeria again features very prominently. Besides the article on domestic violence noted above, there are two more papers, the first one by C.I. Ezech, C.O. Anyiro, L. K. Ogbonnaya and N. Q. Obioma dealing with the advantages accrued to the women contract farmers as opposed to the non contract farmers in the Anambra State. In the process, the article paints a picture of poverty among these women farmers and shows how the contract farmers have more to benefit from the Agricultural Development Programme.

The third paper on Nigeria deals with the stark reality of organizational politics, this time in a university setting. A. S. Adebusuyi, M. O. Olasupo and E. E. Idehen show that the non- academic staff in the Obafemi Awolowo University perceive politics “three times more” than the academic staff. “This may be due to the less clear cut rules and policies for promotion in the non teaching section of the university as compared to the academic staff”. In any case the junior employees feel that they have to obey whatever is dished out to them by the seniors.

In South Africa the Batho Pele principles were launched in 1997 “to promote quality and efficient service to all citizens”. This unique attempt was set to improve consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency etc. of the government servants. Its aim was to progressively raise the standards of service. The findings of a research conducted by T.L.Ngidi and N. Dorasamy and presented here show that, “while initiatives are in place to ensure the application of the Batho Pele principles, challenges still exist”.

Zimbabwe has been undergoing tremendous economic upheavals in recent times and different classes of people try to mitigate sufferings in various innovative ways. Bernard Chazovachii, Leonard Chitongo and Jenias Ndava in their paper demonstrate how through as simple a step as selling of fuel wood, people in the city of Masvingo have built up a whole network of successful business enterprises to avert poverty. They however, caution that the success should be tempered by keeping in mind that too much and unregulated exploitation of the woods may become counterproductive.

We have in the past published a number of papers covering various facets of education. This issue also presents another paper on education, this time on the quality of education in the Indian state of Assam. Shahidul Ahmed using the achievement scores in maths and sciences try to estimate the quality of education imparted to the students in the primary schools of the state. His findings show that Muslim students have a much lower level of achievement. He also argues that it is the quality of education and not the quantity, meaning increasing the number of students and schools, which the education system should try to attain.

And the last, though definitely not the least in importance (the paper is the first one of this issue), is the concern over the world economic crisis expressed by Mustafa Murshed and Mosammat Mustari Khanaum. The authors go into a detailed discussion of the nature of this crisis as it unfolded since 2008. The issue they focus on is the extent of government control over the economy, to what extent the market should be allowed a free hand. It is an age old question and has divided the world since the birth of capitalism. The authors take on a challenging position that if in the event of a crisis the government is expected to intervene, and it does, to protect the citizens, the government should then, legitimately and for the same reason, intervene at all times..

Thus, in all we present a dozen papers in this issue. The issue was supposed to be a landmark issue commemorating the 10th anniversary of the publication of the e-Journal. Unfortunately, due to some unavoidable reasons we could not hold the celebrations. We, therefore, launch this issue with the hope of a future celebration of our success.