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# The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2012

## Executive Summary

*The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2012* (SOG 2012) report represents the Institute of Governance Studies' evaluation of governance performance within some of the most crucial and challenging arenas of public service in Bangladesh. In a nation so heavily marked by partisan politics, we consider the intersection of competitive party politics and public service, and ask whether 'unruly politics' affects the quality of our public services. We believe such a meta-analysis to be appropriate to the state of governance since in a democratic system parliamentary bills determine policy which is implemented by the various ministries.

Problematically, the culture of boycotting the incumbent at parliamentary sessions remains largely unchanged. The scenario suggests that parliament still does not truly represent the electorate, and consequently, bills passed towards public policy reflect interests of the incumbent party more than that of nation. Thus we ask: what is the state of governance of our democracy? What is the state of national representation at our Parliament? Does the winner-takes-all configuration of political power affect public service provision? Are some electoral constituents better 'served' than others in terms of resource allocation? How well equipped are the district-level public schools and hospitals, to handle citizen's demands for education and health?

In this year's report, we have presented our findings and analyses such that they may appeal to the specialist working with education and health, but also to the 'generalist' with broader interest into the themes of politics, governance, and national development. The first chapter sets the tone for the Report, elaborates the themes discussed above and introduces some key findings from the district-wise analyses. The second chapter considers the state of parliamentary representation under the label 'voice'. The third and fourth chapters evaluate the state of public school and hospital governance respectively, and do so independently of 'politics'. The fifth chapter re-introduces the theme of politics and representation under the label "concentration of political power", to consider district-wise development expenditure as being related to parliamentary and ministerial incumbency. The sixth chapter resumes the meta-analysis introduced in chapter one, and considers the effects of partisan politics on public service, in light of empirical evidence presented in the previous chapters.

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Methodologically, this year's research effort represents a break from the IGS norm of conducting surveys and focus group discussions with 'samples' of the citizenry. The 'empiricism' of SOG 2012 is mainly based on data-bases from the government ministries. Thus, for the first time we are able to present a detailed picture of district-wise public services and compare it to the state of 'representation' of the electoral constituents (the districts) at the national democratic forum (the Parliament).

Conceptually, as we evaluate 'governance', we have chosen to focus on the 'inputs' of governance in the construction of indicators. By inputs we mean resources and activities through which our institutions can be said to deliver public services. We only consider outputs cross-check the validity of our constructed indicators; to see whether better funded and equipped schools actually result in better equipped students and healthier citizens.

Our empirical findings have verified that competitive and party politics does have an effect on public policy and expenditure. Voice and attendance in plenary sessions is determined by incumbency and such bias ultimately translates into public expenditure in the regions at the district level. We have also found female representation to have improved considerably in the 9th Parliament. Considering that an association exists between female representation and women-related social outcomes, such representation may lead to policy-making favourable to women.

Our study did not specifically identify incumbency bias in the delivery of public health and education. We did establish the fact that school and hospital governance surrounding 'inputs' affect outcomes in both education and health. We also found urbanisation, population density and remoteness to affect the governance and performance of the two sectors. Having found no effect of incumbency in these public sectors, we examined the data-sets for other relationships between politics and public policy. Here, our findings show that ministerial position as well as standing committee membership does reflect on development expenditure in the districts of Bangladesh and that incumbency matters.

We believe that an empirical study using data-sets provided by the Government of Bangladesh brings a heightened degree of legitimacy to our analysis of governance. This can be considered to be useful to both the citizenry and the donors and also to the Government and people's representatives. This endeavour has been made possible with the access to information and computerisation of data in recent years. This particular governance study performed by IGS 'capitalises' on this opportunity and provides a report that is less marked by our own research bias. The use of public information and standard methods enabled us to convey 'facts' surrounding governance that are verifiable, replicable and more open to public critique. We hope that through such strategies we are in a better position to fulfil our role as an agent of transparency and allow us to stimulate further debate towards good governance and public accountability.