



A Newsletter on Refugee and Migratory Movements

# UDBASTU

t h e u p r o o t e d

Issue 23, January- March 2003

## THE 1951 REFUGEE CONVENTION: SHOULD BANGLADESH ACCEDE TO IT?

In the South Asian region countries have been struggling to cope with refugee situations for over more than 50 years. However, none of these countries have acceded to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, or the 1967 Protocol, which are the only international legal instruments to protect rights of refugees. None of these states has adopted any national law to protect refugees, although they have admitted and taken care of refugees whenever the situations arose.

The Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) organised a symposium on *The 1951 Refugee Convention: Should Bangladesh Accede to It?* in Dhaka on 5 October 2002, in collaboration with UNHCR, Dhaka. This programme was part of the Unit's ongoing campaign of promoting Bangladesh's accession to the Convention. In the past, the Unit organised a number of seminars, workshops, conferences, trainings, and publications. In this process, the Unit has secured the support of legal experts, academics, civil society members, government functionaries, public representatives, and human rights activists. Dr. C R Abrar moderated the session that was participated by about 70 persons including academics, human rights activists, representatives of government, international organisations, human rights organisations and research bodies.

Two keynote papers were presented at the symposium. In his paper on 'Principal Features of 1951 Refugee Convention', Dr. Borhan Uddin Khan of the Department of Law of Dhaka University, discussed the sources of international law on protection of refugee rights. He explained the post World War II situation that prompted designing of the Refugee Convention of

1951. Apart from the Convention, other regional instruments were developed in order to address respective regional needs with regard to refugee situations, which were not covered by the 1951 Convention. Dr. Khan discussed different provisions of the Convention. In the end, he highlighted the spirit of the Convention that aims to protect the rights of refugees.

The second paper on 'Why Should Countries Ratify the Convention?' was presented by Professor Shah Alam, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Chittagong. In his paper, Professor Alam argued that a society's cultural level is reflected in how the society treats refugees. He argued that the principles, values and norms of the Refugee Convention are not alien to us. In practice these countries are taking care of refugees, but they are not in favour of acceding to the Convention.

Professor Alam informed that there is a general ignorance whether accession serves national interests, and does not put extra burden on the national economy of the signatory state. He stated that the basic principles laid in the Convention are already covered in different international human rights legal instruments, which Bangladesh has already acceded to. He further argued that countries like Bangladesh should join the Convention to create moral pressure on the European

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countries and the USA that are not accepting refugees. Professor Alam informed that neither the Convention nor Protocol contradicts with any law of Bangladesh, so that it can be easily and directly applicable.

A number of issues came to the forefront in the open discussion after the presentations. Barrister A K H Morshed, Legal Counsel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, argued that all refugee problems have a very strong political overtone. He pointed out that since the development and enforcement of the Convention, efforts to universalise the Convention was mainly espoused by the High Commissioners of European origin. In this connection he referred to High Commissioners Paul Hartling during 1982 and Ruud Lubbers in 2001. He also argued that this Convention still carries remnants of the Cold War. He noted that 'burden sharing' was not covered by the Convention, but is extremely important for developing countries like Bangladesh. Barrister Morshed referred to the Indian Supreme Court, which has taken judicial note of international conventions that India has not even signed.

Syed Imtiaz Ahmed, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, expressed his concern over the possibility of reactions by neighbouring states like India and Myanmar if Bangladesh accedes to the Convention. He raised the issue whether the neighbours will take advantage of Bangladesh's accession by pushing people into Bangladesh and putting pressure.

Sharif Quafi of Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre alleged that refugees may be involved in arms trade, violence and other sorts of activities in Bangladesh affecting law and order.

On the other hand, a number of participants argued for accession to the Convention. Professor Dalem Chandra Burman, Chair, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Dhaka, expressed his concern over the state responsibility to refugees. He argued that Bangladesh, as a state, has responsibilities both for its citizens and also for the people who are not citizens or coming from outside. He urged for framing of laws and principles based on the Convention to protect the interests of the refugees in Bangladesh.

Another issue of discussion was enforcement of the Convention after accession. Dr. Sumaiya Khair, Department of Law, University of Dhaka, highlighted the issue of implementation of the enforcement status of the Convention. She mentioned that although

Bangladesh has signed a number of international human rights conventions, most of them have not really seen the light of day in terms of actual enforcement. She urged to devise realistic approaches to bring the refugee issue on board. Dr. Khair mentioned that a reference point is needed and the way might be through incorporating the provisions of the Convention into our domestic legislation, which can be used to protect the rights of the refugees. In this way the Convention can be used as the supplementary mechanism rather than being the principal mechanism or the legal instrument.

Dr. Shahdeen Malik, a human rights activist, thought signing of that international instruments are done in a cavalier fashion. He gave the example of CEDAW, of which Bangladesh is a party, and stated that as there has not been any national implementing law nobody can think of protection, utilisation, and get benefit of CEDAW.

Dr. Shahnaz Huda, Department of Law, University of Dhaka, argued that ratification of international instruments is an executive matter. However, in certain cases necessary changes in domestic law in accordance with the international law is not allowed, when certain provisions of the Convention are totally inconsistent with the domestic law. She queried that if Bangladesh ratify the Convention on refugees, how exactly will that affect refugees under the domestic laws of Bangladesh.

In response to points raised by some of the discussants, Professor Shah Alam argued that firstly, Bangladesh has been fulfilling its obligations towards refugees without acceding to the Convention. Secondly, the state has a good constitution, and its provisions allows some rights given to the non-citizens. Therefore, he asked that if everything is done that is needed for refugees without accession, and if accession does not impose extra burden, why Bangladesh should not accept or accede to the Convention. Moreover, according to him, accession gives the following benefits without causing any harm. Firstly, accession gives psychological satisfaction, as it enhances the country's international prestige and image. Secondly, Bangladesh can demand more from the international community as support, which is needed to tackle refugee situations. Professor Alam further argued that a misconception prevails that to enforce and implement an international treaty a national legislation is needed. He pointed out that it is not necessarily the case. If the treaty is not contradictory to national law, it can always

be directly applied in the country. He also referred to Indian courts playing a very important role in this respect. He also referred to this as the dominant international trend.

In response to the open discussion, Dr. Borhan Uddin Khan argued in favour of Bangladesh's accession. He, however, recommended that whenever Bangladesh ratify and accede to the Convention, the enabling legislation should be immediately passed. According to Dr. Khan, there has been serious lack of political will to pass enabling legislation with regard to other international conventions. If that should be the case, then there is no point in acceding.

Dr. C R Abrar, Coordinator, RMMRU, responded to some of the issues raised by the discussants against accession. He stated that the Refugee Convention does not protect those who take up arms or who are engaged in illegal activities, be they in the other country, or in the neighbouring country. He referred to the fact that we live in a region where there are massive economic, ethnic, political and social problems that are likely to trigger various kinds of population movements. It is in this context that distinction must be made between those fleeing persecution in their country of origin and others. Accession to the Convention would enable to develop certain forms, structures, and administrative procedures. He also mentioned that deporting people from neighbouring states who come in search of asylum without due process of law would constitute violation of international customary law i.e., principle of non-refoulement. He stated that giving asylum under international law cannot be construed as an unfriendly act by the countries from where these people are fleeing.

Dr. Abrar also highlighted the principle of burden sharing. He stated that the third world countries are being asked to disproportionately to take care of the refugees. The idea is also being pushed by some quarters that the refugees should be in their own region. He viewed this to be unacceptable, and emphasised the need to build a coalition within the South against this approach. He proposed that 'third country resettlement' should continue to be pursued as durable solutions to refugee problems along with 'voluntary repatriation' and 'local integration'. Dr. Abrar stressed that Bangladesh should be a member of the club of signatories of the Convention to push the developing countries' agenda.

Ms. Machiko Kondo, Representative of UNHCR, Dhaka, in her presentation stated Bangladesh has shown high regard to refugee protection and in practice largely adheres to the principles of the Convention. She proposed for giving it an institutional shape and developing a structure for better management of the refugee flows through formally acceding to the Convention. She further stated that accession to the Refugee Convention might not be an immediate priority for Bangladesh. However, given its geo-strategic location, which is refugee and migration prone, presence of refugees, its prominent participation in the UN Peacekeeping Operations some of which include management of large-scale refugee situations, and considering its membership to the governing body of UNHCR, she urged Bangladesh government to actively consider acceding to the Convention.

In his speech as the Chief Guest, Reaz Rahman, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated that although the 1951 Refugee Convention is the only relevant instrument for refugee protection, it does not cover all kinds of refugee situations, such as cases of mass influx and generalised violence. He further stated that violations of the Convention articles by the signatory countries are rampant. He observed that the 1950 Statute that created UNHCR gives it certain right to interfere in domestic affairs and it was acceptable. However, today many countries are rethinking how much they will allow the High Commissioner to interfere.

Mr. Rahman identified a number of problems with regard to the Convention. Firstly, the Convention was developed in a different era. Secondly, there is a shift from Europe to the third world countries with regard to definition of refugees. The definition in the statute as well as in the Convention of 1951 reflects the European aspects of Nazi war-time persecution. He argued that since the late 1980s, there has been major outbreak of civil wars, ethnic and communal conflicts, and generalised violence and the situation was different to individually targeted persecution. Governments are thus not inclined towards the expansion of the Convention grounds and criteria. Thirdly, there is an absence of burden sharing mechanism within the Convention. Mr. Rahman argued that it is not based on refugee claims, but the political priorities or the diplomatic relations with sending countries that are guided for political considerations. Fourthly, the Convention implies exile as a solution. He argued that the principle of non-refoulement now is not always respected. Fifthly, the Convention confers no right to the refugees unless they reach a signatory country.

There is no assistance to internationally displaced person who are potential refugees. Sixthly, the Convention imposes no obligation on countries for not expelling their citizens. Seventhly, the Convention takes no account of political, financial and social impact of large numbers of asylum seekers in the receiving countries. Eighthly, there is difference of treatments between the camp and the Convention refugees. He termed the Convention being too simplistic in many ways. Mr. Rahman expressed his concern over the issue of meeting the obligations that would require elaborate administrative machinery and large expenses. At the end, Mr. Rahman informed that the government was examining the factors of social and economic burden. The State Minister observed that in reality Bangladesh is implementing many of the provisions of the Convention.

Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, Chair of the session, emphasised that the refugee problem has to be seen from a humanitarian point of view, and therefore, Bangladesh must actively consider acceding to the Refugee Convention as well as adopting a national refugee law. Barrister Ahmed referred to the misplaced notion of better service provided to the refugees than the citizens. Barrister Ahmed also emphasised the issue of enactment of enabling law after ratification. The Chair noted, accession to the Convention will enable us to deal with refugees in a more formal and organised way.

**Reporter:**

*Shahzada M Akram*

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## CHT PEACE PROCESS: FIVE YEARS OF THE PEACE TREATY

Arifur Rahman

### Introduction

The fifth anniversary of the signing of the CHT Peace Accord was observed among confusion, distrust and fears about its implementation. Though a section of political analysts was optimistic that the Peace Accord could bring peace to the CHT people after a prolonged bloodshed, it appears that the Treaty has brought to an end the armed conflict, it could not as yet generate peaceful condition.

### Implementation of the Treaty

The prospects for implementation of the Peace Treaty received major attention after the change of the government led by the BNP.

The leaders of *Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity* (PCJSS) stated that the Awami League government, though implemented many of the clauses of the treaty during a period of three years and eight months after this signing, it remained indifferent to other matters, leaving hill tracts people deprived of their legal rights. The matters that have remained unimplemented include settlement of land claims through a land commission, cessation of army operation, withdrawal of temporary army, armed police and *Ansar* and VDP camps, rehabilitation of the repatriated and the internally displaced and preparation of voters list of the permanent inhabitants of the hill tracts region (*The Independent*, 1 December 2001). In addition, the PCJSS leaders said that they waged armed struggle for long 24 years, if need be they would return

to the bush for securing total implementation of the Accord. They demanded full implementation of all provisions of the peace accord. The tribal leaders referred to a recent statement of BNP legislator Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury and stated that a section of the leadership was seeking to turn the CHT into a Muslim dominated region. They expressed suspicion at the government's attitude and viewed that full implementation of the accord would not be possible without launching a fresh struggle (*Bangladesh Observer*, 3 December 2002).

The PCJSS highlighted the following issues with regard to its claim of non-implementation of the Treaty.

- The voter list was not properly prepared, and hence they boycotted the general elections of 2001 on this ground.
- PCJSS claimed that only 31 camps had been removed out of 500, and BDR and armed police were posted in their place.
- PCJSS alleged that no opinion was sought from hill people in the formation of the Land Commission.
- Land distribution among the landless *pahadis* had not taken place as promised.
- No effective measures were taken for rehabilitation of internally displaced *pahadis* and returnee *pahadis* from India.
- PCJSS demanded revision of the *Parbattaya Zilla Parishad Act*.

- PCJSS demanded that the *pahadis* should be given priority in employment opportunity in the CHT.
- The Circle Chief should give certificate of the permanent resident ship to the *pahadis*.
- The *pahadis* should be given loan on easy terms.
- It demanded that the non-tribal settlers should be rehabilitated from CHT to outside with due dignity.
- The Ministry of CHT Affairs should not be under the control of the Prime Minister.

The leaders of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), viewed to be opposed to the peace treaty, alleged that none of the fundamental rights of the hill tracts people got secured in the peace treaty. They said that nothing was stated in the peace treaty about the fundamental matters like recognition of the hill tracts people's entity as a nation in the constitution, their right to land, rehabilitation of the Bengalees and withdrawal of Army. They viewed that the government, instead of the hill people, benefited from it and they expressed their determination to extend their helping hands to the new government and the PCJSS if they paid heed to their demands (*The Independent*, 1 December 2001).

Awami League, that signed the peace accord with PCJSS five years ago, stated that the government by failing to implement the remaining provisions of the peace accord is trying to throw the region into a fresh turmoil. Local leaders of the party said terrorist activities increased manifold since the BNP came to power. They also demanded arrest of terrorists and recovery of illegal arms (*Bangladesh Observer*, 3 December 2002).

The government assured that the peace treaty would be implemented phase by phase. However, some confusion arose due to some controversial comments by ministers. After assuming power, LGED Minister and General Secretary of BNP, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, declared that the treaty would be reviewed and necessary steps should be taken to assure equal rights to the hill people (*The Independent*, 23 October 2001). This statement of the Minister drew sharp response from *pahadi* leaders. According to them the CHT area has been regarded as the tribal area in which the Regional Council and three District Councils are operating based on the law that is stated in the article A of the Treaty but they expressed doubts whether it could be operative. They thought it would be effective and their interests would be served if a non-tribal holds the post of the Vice-Chairman created for both Regional and District Councils. Besides the Bengali

leaders hoped that the BNP government should come forward to solve the inequalities between the *pahadis* and the non-tribal stated in the treaty. They viewed that their basic rights were violated in the treaty. They said that the existing provision of the election of the Chairman of the Regional Council from the tribal peoples was unconstitutional. In its place they demanded that either the post of the Chairman should be made contestable for all communities or the Vice-Chairman's post should be held in reserve for a Bengali. Food Minister Abdullah-Al-Noman is on record stating that the peace treaty should be revised and the laws and by-laws that were unconstitutional should be reviewed (*The Independent*, 11 June 2002).

The leaders of the Bengali community have felt that they have been deprived of the civic rights due to the enactment of laws and by-laws and by their application. The leaders of the community who were rehabilitated in the Hill Tracts region stated that BNP, then party in the opposition when the accord was signed, protested the Peace Treaty and assigned 18 reasons in support of their contention and took the issue to the streets. But now they are not sure of the attitude of the BNP and its allies as to what they would do to ensure their rights (*Independent*, 1 December, 2001). Moreover, they expressed determination to advance their opposition to the treaty at the fifth anniversary of the Treaty. They accused PCJSS for killing 30,000 non-tribal in the Hill Tracts and set on fire the effigy of Shantu Larma. They also threatened to retaliate if the government failed to take action against the tribal terrorists for repression and killing of non-tribals. They demanded that CHT Regional Council chairman Shantu Larma should be brought to the dock for the killings (*Bangladesh Observer*, 3 December 2002).

### **Law and Order**

At present the law and order situation remains tense. As noted earlier, lack of implementation of key articles of the accord has frustrated the PCJSS leadership and they have threatened to take arms if their demands were not fulfilled.

According to the Government statistics there have been 61 incidents of armed fighting between the UPDF, PCJSS and the security force during since the signing of the Treaty. There were 4, 9, 4, 12 and 32 incidents of gunfight in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively. Over the five years following the signing of the treaty, 83 armed fights took place between the *pahadis* and the Bengalis.

**Table 1: Incidents of Clashes between Bengali-Pahadi community in CHT**

Type of Conflict	Parties	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
Armed fight	UPDF, PCJSS vs. Security force	4	9	4	12	32	61
Armed fight	Pahadi vs. Bengali	17	14	12	24	16	83
Killing		19	21	39	34	46	159
Kidnapping		19	35	7	133	119	313
Injury		83	53	38	54	84	312

Source: Prothom Alo, 12 December 2002.

But there are differences in the reports of the Government and the district police administration. The following table illustrates a good number of cases have been lodged (according to the police report):

**Table 2: Number of Crime in the CHT in the Last Five Years**

Type of Crime	Cases
Murder	200
Rape	50
Snatching	195
Extortions	130
Theft	165
Robbery	105
Drug trafficking	120
Arms case	130
Smuggling	65
Women repression	217
Suicide	70
Road robbery	165
Injury	105
Burn	70
Occupied land	76

Source: Prothom Alo, 12 December 2002.

But the unofficial statistics shows huge differences with that of official and the police report. Press reports suggest that 255 persons have been killed and more than 1,000 people have been kidnapped over the last five years.

### Environmental situation

The environmental situation in the CHT region has been remained under threat due to deforestation, extinction of wild life, “unplanned” *jhoom* (slash and burn) cultivation, hill cutting and land erosion. Besides, brick kilns in four upazillas of Rangamati

have posed threat to ecological balance due to massive use of firewood instead of coal. The brickfield owners with the connivance of corrupt officials rampantly use firewood in 18 brick kilns of the district destroying huge forest resources. Although the government imposed a ban on use of firewood in the brick kilns, defying the ban, an average of 250,000 - 400,000 bricks are burnt in a single kiln. It has been reported that on condition of anonymity, that 5 million bricks are burnt in some brick kilns here. Not only that the brickfield owners are depriving the government of huge revenue for burning additional bricks, local timber traders are allegedly supplying firewood to the kilns collecting valuable trees illegally from the government reserve forests (*The Independent*, 1 March 2001).

Massive deforestation is also taking place due to activities of illegal timber traders who are transporting valuable timber from the hilly forests. In this regard the ecological balance of this region is at stake. Analysts view that weak management, lack of initiatives to preserve the forest products, and administrative irregularities are rampant. According to the internal source of the forest division, during the 1960s the area of forest in the CHT was 75%, but it reduced to 62% during 1980s. At present the forest area has been further reduced to 50.55%. But due to massive deforestation the hilly forest areas have been decreased significantly. Another relevant statistics showed that the percentage of extractions of trees in the three hill districts was 3.7%, and in the 1980s and 1990s it increased to 9% and 16% respectively. On the other hand, the tribal people are destroying the trees taking advantage of the Peace Treaty. Some sources suggest that 80% of the tribal people has generated their income by cutting woods of these hilly forests (*Sangbad*, 22 July 2002).

Worried at the depleting forest resources, the government has taken up a massive afforestation programme in the three hill districts. Under the programme, some 250,000 saplings will be planted on 25,000 acres of land in the districts with financial assistance from the European Commission. Official sources said Synergy Conservation Ltd., a sister concern of UK-based Synergy Conservation Foundation, got approval to implement the afforestation project. An environmental supervisory agreement was signed between the CHT authorities and Synergy Conservation Ltd., under which, works on three environment supervisory projects got underway in cooperation with the European Commission from the date of signing the agreement. To provide the

saplings, nurseries have been set up on 245 acres of land in Barkal upazila of the Rangamati district. Three farms have been set up to supervise the plantation programme. A good number of poor people are also expected to get jobs in the afforestation programme (*The Independent*, 28 July 2001).

The Ministry of Forest and Environment issued orders that no hill and no tree would be cut without prior permission. Moreover, Moni Swapan Dewan, Deputy Minister for CHT Affairs, said that the government would formulate a new action plan soon to conserve and sustainable utilisation of the forest resources of the hill districts. The Ministry of CHT Affairs would soon discuss with the Ministry of Forest and Environment to initiate necessary steps towards extraction and marketing of forest products from private lands and, at the same time, protecting forest resources in the reserved forests. The deputy minister also said that extraction of timber under ‘free permit’ or ‘jot permit’ and shifting cultivation are taking toll on forest resources, adding that the ministry of CHT affairs has decided to initiate some steps to discourage shifting cultivation for proper conservation of forest products. The deputy minister urged the timber merchant community to set up timber-based industries in the CHT for sustainable development of the hill districts instead of supplying timbers outside as raw materials (*The Independent*, 2 June 2002).

### Development Initiatives

Post conflict situation of CHT has witnessed various development projects to uplift the socio-economic status. Under the government initiatives Tk 2,240 million have been spent for the implementation of the development projects during 1998-99, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 fiscal years and every time the cost of the projects has been increased, which might be focused in Table 3.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) received grants for various development projects. It was implementing 173 uplift projects in three districts taken up during 2000-2001 at a cost of Tk 100 million. It was disclosed at a review meeting of CHTDB that of the total, 91 projects have been implemented involving Tk51.8 million till May 2002, and the rest are expected to be completed by 2002. Besides, Tk 74.2 million have been allocated for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of Integrated Social Development Project. Tk 40.3 million was spent till May 2002. Moreover, construction work on 310 area centres has also been completed where 310 area workers and 100 officials

received training. Four residential schools had also been constructed where 700 students have been studying. It was also disclosed that Tk 237.9 million was allocated for 45 more projects under special allocation of the Board (*The Independent*, 14 June 2002).

**Table 3: Allocation for the Development Projects in CHT**

Fiscal Year	Taka (million)
1998-99	689
1999-2000	932.5
2000-01	1,316.4

Source: Sangbad, 7 July 2001

Development activities in the area remained suspended since February 2001 following the kidnapping of one British engineer and two Danish architects in Rangamati. Following an extensive survey in the region, the CHT GOB-Donor Joint Risk Assessment Mission, coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has recommended resumption of development work in the CHT as quickly as possible. According to a report of UNB, of the 29 upazillas of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari districts, the mission found 22 upazillas of minimum risk, four of medium risk and only one upazila, Mahalchhari, of high risk. The mission recommended several steps including strengthening the risk management system, improving civic law and involvement of community people and finding out means and a mechanism to address long term issues like the land issue. UNDP Country Representative disclosed sanctioning a new level of the standard prescribed by the UN agency to ensure minimum security. He added that the whole range of development activities in the region should be to provide small enterprises, social services, health, and education, develop skilled personnel and improved rural infrastructure (*The Independent*, 14 June 2002).

### Conclusion

There remains a lot of uncertainty in the CHT region due to the limited implementation of the provisions of the Peace Accord. It is true that armed confrontation between the state and the hill people has come to an end, but more determined effort is needed for effective implementation of the peace process. It is hoped that the leaderships of different parties and the government would do their best to reap the benefits of the peace accord that has very important bearing for the overall national development.

## PUBLICATION

*Displaced within Homelands: The IDPs of Bangladesh and the Region*, Chowdhury R Abrar and Mahendra P Lama (eds.), Dhaka: RMMRU, February 2003, pp. 214, Tk 300.00, US\$ 20.00

Over past few decades millions of people have become displaced within the borders of their own countries for various natural and manmade reasons. In recent years, the South Asia region witnessed movements of large numbers of people within state boundaries. However, very little progress has been made to assess the magnitude and depth of the problem. While countries of the region have shown tremendous resilience in coping with the refugees and displaced persons, it has become necessary to develop proper institutional structures, legal framework and rehabilitation designs to deal with the IDPs, in a more orderly manner.

This volume consists of a number of articles that deal with various facets and dimensions of IDPs. Most of these papers were presented at a conference on *The Internally Displaced Persons in Bangladesh: Towards Developing Research and Policy Agenda*, organised by RMMRU in February 1999 at Dhaka. These articles have been contributed by a diverse group of academics, researchers, lawyers, non-governmental and human rights activists both from Bangladesh and other countries. In a way, this volume is a collection of articles with inter-disciplinary perspectives.

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## ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIT October – December 2002

**Seminars and Talks:** RMMRU organised a symposium on *The 1951 Refugee Convention: Should Bangladesh Accede to It?* in CIRDAP, Dhaka on 5 October 2002, in collaboration with UNHCR, Dhaka. State Minister for Foreign Affairs attended as Chief Guest and was participated by about 70 persons including academics, human rights activists, representatives from government offices, international organisations, human rights organisations and research bodies.

**YRF Monthly Meeting:** In the November 2002 meeting of Young Researchers' Forum (YRF), Md. Jalal Uddin Sikder presented preliminary findings of his ongoing research *Cross Border Population Movements and Smuggling*.

**Field Work:** Field visits were organised in Dhaka, Gazipur, Rajshahi, Jessore and Chittagong in September – October 2002 for a study on *Assessment of Migrant Workers' Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS*. The study was commissioned by HIV/AIDS and STD Alliance Bangladesh (HASAB) with Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui as the lead researcher.

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