BRITISH COUNCIL

A LIBRARY LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF BANGLADESH
Terms of Reference

The Library Landscape Assessment of Bangladesh aims to assess the current provision of Library and Information Services (LIS) in urban, semi-urban and rural areas, and will determine what can be done to radically improve the situation. This research and analysis will create a comprehensive understanding of current LIS provision in Bangladesh, mapped against needs, and will identify opportunities and challenges for implementing major improvements.

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Project Title & Description	A Library Landscape Assessment of Bangladesh
Location	Bangladesh
Deadline for expressions of interest	24 July 2014
Timeline for study:	Contract awarded by 24 August 2014. Study to be completed and final report submitted by 31 May 2015

Overview

1. The British Council in Bangladesh wishes to engage an independent research consultant to conduct a Library Landscape Assessment of Bangladesh – a series of interconnected pieces of desk and field research that together will create the data needed to fully understand the information needs of the people of Bangladesh and the current Library and Information Services (LIS) provision within the country.

2. The Library Landscape Assessment will make a major contribution to aligning and mobilising key stakeholders in LIS provision in Bangladesh, who will be instrumental in supporting, prioritising and executing catalytic, sustainable interventions that improve access to information across Bangladesh.

Background and Context

The British Council

3. The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We call this work Cultural Relations. We are on the ground in six continents and over 100 countries bringing international opportunity to life, every day. Each year we work with millions of people, connecting them with the United Kingdom, sharing our cultures and the UK's most attractive assets: English, the Arts, Education and our ways of living and organising society. We have 80 years' experience of doing this.

4. We have been operating libraries in Bangladesh for 60 years. We currently have libraries and resource centres in Dhaka (Fuller Road and Uttara) and Chittagong. We will open a new library in Sylhet in early 2015. Our current libraries are in the process of major refurbishment (to be completed by September 2014), receiving new investment in book collections and resources, and redesigned to include a cultural convening space. They will provide a new benchmark for library design and provision in Bangladesh, and as a result, by 2015 we will have doubled our library membership to over 15,000.

Bangladesh – country context and current LIS provision

5. Bangladesh is a free-market economy, which has achieved annual growth of 5-6% for the last two decades; Goldman Sachs has named Bangladesh as one of its "next 11" emerging economies. However there continues to be very high rates of poverty and illiteracy, especially in rural areas – some statistics:

- The total population is 162 million.
- 51.8% of the population is under 25 years old; 32.8% is under 10.
- Illiteracy rate is 43.2% of total population, with disproportionate number female.
- The 15-24 age group (30 million according to World Bank, 2013) enjoys the highest literacy rate in the country (58%), followed by children between 11-14 years, of whom 56% are literate.

- One-third of the population remains at or below the national poverty line and nearly 80% live on less than $2 a day.
- 80% live in rural areas, where access to information is very low.
- 100% of the population speaks Bangla (with English widely used in cities as a second language).

6. In this context, there is an urgent need for greater access to reliable information for all citizens, including survival information related to health, family planning and sanitation, housing and income support – together with opportunities to develop literacy, acquire skills for employability, build political and social awareness, and participate in collective educational and cultural activities.

7. As part of its planning to address these issues, and for the country to achieve middle income status by 2023, the Government of Bangladesh has established policy to improve provision of public libraries and access to information for the entire population, including plans for digital inclusion.

8. Our preliminary research shows that:

- There is scope for majorly developing the current provision of libraries and information services, both governmental and non-governmental.
- There are gaps between plans for public libraries and information centres and the number that are actually required; and between the planned information services and the real needs of the people.
- Existing facilities have basic ICT equipment.
- Staff and leadership for library and information services require more professional training.
- A major improvement in professional management, customer service, marketing and organizational structure for public libraries is required.
- The current policy framework could be strengthened in order to prioritise action for further, effective improvement of LIS.
- Digital access in rural areas remains at a very low level; there are hardly any internet services offered by ISPs in rural areas.

9. The current provision can be briefly illustrated by the following statistics:

- There are 68 Government Public Libraries, all in urban areas aligned with the national administration structure of Divisions and Districts.
- There are around 1000 Non-Government Public Libraries, which are in need of development; around 250 in urban areas, 750 in rural.
- BRAC has a network of 2650 Gonokendros (multi-purpose community learning centres), mostly located in villages; 50% have basic ICT equipment, 10% have internet connectivity.
- Union Information and Services Centres (UISC) are newly established one-stop service outlets operating in all 4,547 Union Parishads (UP, lowest tier of local government) of the country; these provide limited public internet access.
- There are over 35 million Internet users, mostly urban; internet penetration is 22%, which is about 10% less than the global average; 3G Networks are currently available to less than 0.2% of Bangladesh population.
- About 95% of these users access the Internet through mobile phones, while the rest use broadband Internet from Internet Service Providers (ISPs), which carry out their operations only in major cities.
- 95% of families have and use mobile phones; there are 114 million active mobile phone subscribers.
- The purchase of smart phones has increased dramatically, with a 3,074% growth rate in 2013 as compared to 2012.

10. The British Council proposes to address the problems identified in this preliminary research by implementing a major Library Landscape Assessment in Bangladesh.

11. For this study, we will use a definition of LIS that includes:

- physical and virtual spaces for accessing books / other print and digital content / information
- public information centers with digital capacity and access
- educational and cultural centers with community convening space
- physical and virtual infrastructure and content resources that can be accessed by the public
- professional staff that manage the resources and facilitate public access

Objectives

12. The British Council in Bangladesh wishes to engage an independent research consultant to conduct three inter-connected pieces of desk and field research, which taken together will create the data needed to fully understand the information needs of the people of Bangladesh and the current LIS provision. The key objectives of each piece of research are:

a) **To conduct detailed research into the information needs of the people of Bangladesh, in both urban and rural contexts; to understand how different demographic segments are accessing the information they need; to assess the current effectiveness of public libraries and information centres in providing public access to meet those needs; to assess current perceptions of public libraries and information and to identify what is needed to change those perceptions.**

b) **To assess the current status and capacity of public libraries and information services in Bangladesh; to assess the availability of ICT and connectivity in public libraries and the effectiveness of library staff in facilitating public access; to understand government and national policy and prioritization for effecting improvements; and to identify the opportunities for (and barriers to) building a national programme to radically improve LIS provision in Bangladesh.**

c) **To assess the current availability of ICTs to support access to information in Bangladesh; to survey current initiatives of the government, INGOs/NGOs and the private sector for ICT development, connectivity and access to information - and to indicate prospects for further expansion of public access.**

Activities

13. In order to meet these key objectives, the consultant will undertake the following specific activities:

13.1 Initial Stakeholder Consultations

With the support and guidance of the British Council, the consultant will conduct a series of interviews with key stakeholders, including national and local government, national and district libraries, universities and professional associations, international and local NGOs, and the ICT industry.

The objectives of these consultations are to:

- better understand the strategies, initiatives and priorities of principal actors
- explore the options for improving the quality and sustainability of libraries in Bangladesh

- assess the attitude to public access to ICT as a driver for development
- build deeper insight into opportunities and barriers to radical improvement of LIS in Bangladesh
- gauge the appetite and impetus for a major national programme
- create a more informed methodology for the subsequent stages of research

13.2 Conduct desk and field research into three interrelated areas

The consultant will undertake research into three areas related to the provision of LIS in Bangladesh, which are given in detail below. The research will cover the urban, semi-urban and rural population segments of Bangladesh, and a range of socio-economic demographics.

13.2.1 Information needs of the people of Bangladesh

- Understand the public information needs of the people by segment; and how they currently obtain the information they need (and fail to access the information they need).

- Analyse the current use of public libraries and information centers (access, resources and services provided).

- Assess current pattern of digital access and usage by segment; where ICT is being used to meet information needs, use CIMS indicators to build baseline data

- Assess perceptions of public library facilities and services currently held by public officials, library staff, library users and the general public.

- Assess the messages required to change these perceptions, making recommendations.

13.2.2 Current status and capacity of public libraries and information services in Bangladesh

a) Operating Environment of Bangladeshi public libraries:
   i. Legal framework
      - brief overview of legal framework for libraries
      - relationship to federal, state, and municipal government
      - regulations pertaining to information access
      - regulations pertaining to public access (including commercial venues)
   ii. Budgetary framework – budget process for library funding (national budget and local budgets – capabilities and constraints)
   iii. National library development policies: vision, strategy, challenges (highlight positioning library as a local information access point), with special emphasis on sustainability
   iv. Strategies of the principle NGO actors in library and information services
   v. Liaison and relationship between public, non-public and NGO libraries
   vi. Assess the current sustainability issues around the current library provision in Bangladesh, making recommendations

b) Library Leadership:
   i. Library associations and their purpose (representative role of associations with partnering with central and local government on library development: highlighting select advocacy initiatives)
   ii. State Libraries and their role in decision-making on the local and central level (highlighting select advocacy initiatives and partnerships with local government)

        iii.   Identification of model libraries for replication and characteristics of successful libraries

        iv.   Identification of successful library staff and key characteristics

        v.   Identification of Higher Education and college infrastructure to support public library strategy, administration and technical requirements

c) Mapping current provision of Libraries and Information Centres:

        i.   Map current number and location of Public, Non Public and NGO libraries and information centres, including distribution of public access ICT facilities (see http://www.globalimpactstudy.org/2010/09/release-of-public-access-ict-venue-database/).

        ii.   Analyse the relationship between demographic profile and community needs.

        iii.   Assess current networks of libraries either at or between divisions, districts, upazillas and union levels:
- do libraries operate as effective clusters?
- are Library Information Services (LIS) clusters a feasible model?

d) Inside Bangladeshi Public, Non-Public and NGO Libraries (in-depth research for a sample of libraries of each type in urban, semi-urban and rural locations):

        i.   Library infrastructure (with urban and rural splits):
- physical condition, electrical capacity
- computer and other equipment and internet connection

        ii.   Library staff and training:
- educational background of librarians
- level of computer literacy among library staff and their mindsets
- available professional training opportunities
- challenges facing library staff.

        iii.   Library services offered by libraries (and which ones charge fees), with a particular look at:
- IT capabilities
- how communities perceive and utilize their library services

        iv.   Library users:
- basic demographic information about public library users
- key information and resource needs of public library users
- relationship of community to public library
- other information sources available to community

        v.   Use of data for library management and advocacy.

13.2.3 How technology is currently used to support access to information in Bangladesh

- Government ICT development policies - vision, strategy, challenges:
  - i.   National plans, funding strategies
  - ii.   Existing international partners

- Public access to ICT - current situation, past and present initiatives:
  - i.   National government strategy and plans pertaining to public access to information
  - ii.   Initiatives of international organisations (UNESCO, IFLA, etc.)
  - iii.   Local initiatives (highlight local govt, local NGO and/or sponsor initiatives on the local level)
  - iv.   Role of the private sectors (Mobile phone operators) and services provided by them

- Information ecology - current situation, trends:

      i.   Internet penetration, PC penetration
      ii.   Mobile phone and mobile internet penetration and projections
      iii.   Social media: Facebook, etc.
      iv.   Other media: TV, radio, print,
      v.   Prominent examples of ICT use in country
      vi.   User needs in terms of ICT and access to services and the digital demographic of users

- Technical pre-conditions for public access expansion - Internet connectivity:
  - i.   Current accessibility and affordability of Internet connectivity throughout country
  - ii.   Prospects for affordable broadband (including the role of private sector)

13.3 Synthesise findings into an Interim Report

The data and findings from the three research projects and the initial stakeholder consultations will be synthesised into a coherent report. It will contain detailed analysis to identify opportunities for and barriers to the radical improvement of LIS in Bangladesh.

An initial draft should be shared with the British Council for feedback. The report will provide a list of preliminary recommendations and issues that can be discussed with stakeholders at a National Symposium.

13.4 Second set of Stakeholder Consultations

In conjunction with the British Council, a second round of consultations with stakeholders will take place in order to discuss the findings of the Interim Report, and to discuss the design and agenda of the National Symposium.

13.5 Attend the National Symposium to review the Interim Report

The British Council will organize a two-day National Symposium to review the Interim Report and to discuss ways forward for LIS in Bangladesh. The consultant will draw on the outcomes of the two-day event to write a Final Report.

13.6 Write Final Report

The consultant will integrate messages and information from the Symposium into a Final Report.

The report will identify strengths and weaknesses of current LIS provision, and the opportunities and barriers for a program to radically develop the sector.

The report will contain a full set of recommendations (including suggested Next Steps).

The British Council will review the advanced draft and give feedback before the release of the Final Report.

Outputs and Timeline

14. The consultancy will result in an **interim report** and a **final report with in-depth and comprehensive** analysis of the gathered data and information**,** as detailed above.

15. Two **Powerpoint presentations** will be submitted along with the interim and final reports, summarising their results.

16. The consultancy will generate **4 primary data sets** and **1 combined secondary dataset** as a result of the research:

- DS1 – Information and public education needs of the people of Bangladesh [both quantitative and qualitative]
- DS2 – Current status and capacity of public libraries and information services in Bangladesh [both quantitative and qualitative]
- DS3 – How technology is currently used to support access to information in Bangladesh [qualitative]
- DS4 – Responses after undertaking systematic Stakeholder consultations [both quantitative and qualitative]
- DS5 – Combined final data set showing all DS1-4 and a summary

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