



Bangladesh

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Bangladesh a Role Model for Transforming Challenges into Success: UN Study on Election

**Dhaka** – An independent study has concluded that the electoral reform process in Bangladesh leading up to the 2008 national elections supported a number of important building blocks that are now better serving the needs and aspirations of the people of Bangladesh.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangladesh commissioned the independent study entitled, “*Elections in Bangladesh 2006-2009: Transforming Failure into Success*”, which chronicles the story of the 2008 elections, and analyzes how the collapsed electoral process was transformed within a relatively short period of time into elections that received national and global recognition for their free, fair and credible conduct.

The unique events of this period are a valuable reference tool for Bangladesh and other countries and provide important lessons for the future.

“The electoral reform process was tortuous but it produced changes that could lead to long-term improvements in governance if they are sustained and institutionalized ...good practices developed in the 2008 elections might help other countries solve or avoid some of the same problems faced in Bangladesh”, the study states.

This transformation, the study finds, was the result of a concerted effort by many stakeholders to identify and improve legal, political and procedural shortcomings. The authors find that key electoral reforms, including the creation of electoral rolls with photographs, the mandatory registration of political parties, and changes to the candidate nomination processes, saw the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) evolve into one of the most trusted and independent institutions in public life in Bangladesh. The independence of the BEC helped many difficult reforms take place, and this independence is critical for future successes.

“Progress on electoral reforms undertaken during the 2008 election period needs to be sustained. For this the independence of the Election Commission is absolutely critical. Also, all stakeholders have a role and responsibility to play in ensuring an environment conducive to the holding of free and fair elections”, said UNDP Resident Representative, a.i. Stefan Priesner.

The study also focuses on some challenges that remain and identifies possible areas for further improvement. The authors conclude that critical to maintaining the success of the electoral reform process is the sustained political will by all stakeholders - the Government, the Parliament and the political parties - to ensure that conditions remain in place for free, fair and credible elections.

### ENDS

#### About the Authors of the Study

The lead author of this study was Peter Eicher, an internationally renowned election expert. The other members of the author team were Dr. Zahurul Alam, who from 2006 to 2009 served as Director of the Election Working Group, a consortium of more than 30 Bangladeshi civil society organizations working on elections, and Jeremy Eckstein, who previously worked in Bangladesh in the area of elections and governance.

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