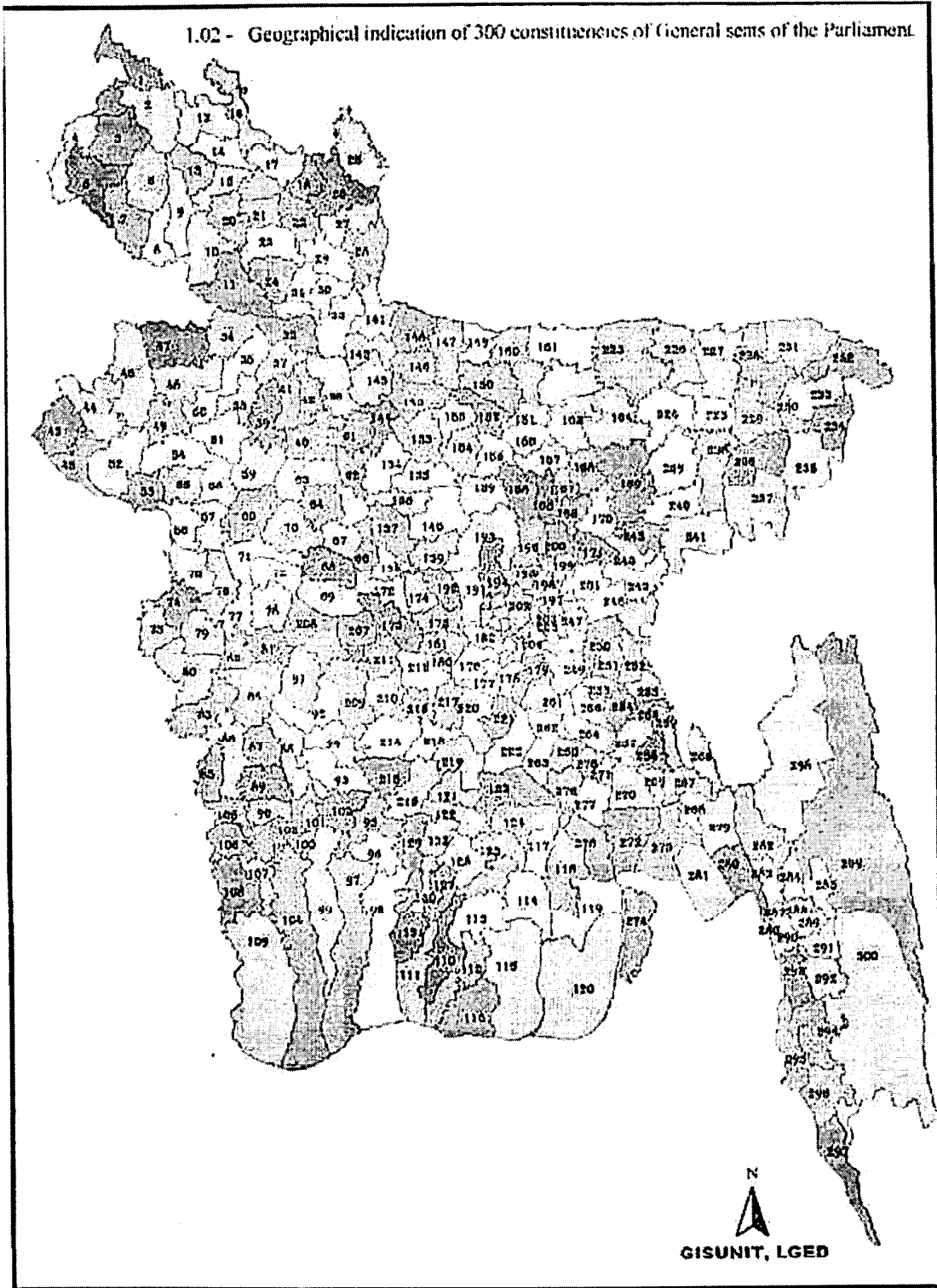


J. Bangladesh Constituency Map

# MAP OF 300 CONSTITUENCIES IN BANGLADESH

1.02 - Geographical indication of 300 constituencies of General seats of the Parliament.



K. NDI in Bangladesh

## NDI in Bangladesh

NDI initiated programming Bangladesh with a survey mission in 1987, during the tenure of the former military leader, President Ershad. Contacts established at that time led to Bangladeshi participation in an NDI election observation mission in the Philippines and to NDI's first multinational observation mission in Bangladesh, in February 1991. That team issued a report urging the development of a program to support non-partisan election monitoring organizations in Bangladesh.

With the transition to multiparty democracy begun by protests in 1990 and culminating in the election of February 27, 1991, NDI focused on building the capacity of domestic monitoring groups and deployed a small delegation to observe the election. While NDI joined the international community in characterizing positively those historic elections, the Institute raised concerns over problems with the voters' list, election day violence and the widespread belief that free and fair elections could only be held under the auspices of a non-partisan caretaker government.

NDI organized a series of meetings and conferences in 1991 and 1992, and in 1993 received a grant from USAID to support Bangladesh's Parliament, the Jatiya Sangshad. Bangladeshi Members of Parliament were given the opportunity to meet both their counterparts from other countries and to share ideas on ways in which parliamentary reforms could be brought about.

During 1994 and 1995, in the face of a continuing opposition boycott of Parliament, NDI worked with Bangladeshi NGOs in a process that culminated in the founding of FEMA on January 28, 1995. An umbrella organization made up of over 100 partner groups, FEMA aimed to become a comprehensive national election monitoring group, and to build on the limited but credible efforts mounted previously.

Various organizations mounted separate monitoring efforts in 1991, but they differed in their geographic coverage and methodologies. A lack of coordination was exacerbated by accusations of partisanship leveled at some monitoring groups and by the ineffective attempt by the Election Commission to ban domestic observers from the polling stations altogether on the oft-heard grounds that "no one in Bangladesh is neutral." This prohibition was later lifted, allowing a variety of groups to monitor by-elections and local elections during 1994 and 1995, and FEMA was permitted, despite last-minute problems in receiving accreditation, to monitor both the February and June 1996 elections. NDI assisted FEMA in its capacity building efforts in 1995-96. FEMA's deployment of more than 15,000 observers for the June 1996 elections gave it credibility and national standing.

In contrast to the difficulties surrounding accreditation of domestic observers, the government of Bangladesh, its political parties and the Election Commission have always welcomed international observers. NDI deployed small teams to monitor both the February and June 1996 elections, the former a small staff-led initiative and the latter a 25 person international delegation. The Institute found the June elections to have been broadly free and fair, despite some instances of manipulation and violence.

Following the election, NDI continued its work with MPs from all political parties, renewing the focus on the role of committees within Parliament. Following a series of roundtables and other

forums the new AL government agreed to several recommendations arising from NDI's initiative, including a ban on Ministers serving as committee chairs and allowing opposition members to assume the chair of some committees. Despite the boycott of Parliament by the BNP, that party continued to attend committee meetings, making those organs the only nominally functioning branch of government during the Seventh Parliament.

Efforts continued to be made throughout the term of the Seventh Parliament to encourage politicians and civil society leaders to work together. These efforts included the 1999 visit to Australia by a delegation of parliamentary and civic leaders funded in part by the Australian Agency for International Development, to study the parliamentary process.

In 2000, NDI began working to provide polling agent training to the political parties, in conjunction with its work on parliamentary reforms and civil society. While polling agents are legally permitted to observe election day proceedings, their recruitment and training has been haphazard and often incomplete. Polling agents have often engaged in arguments and conflicts with election officials, contributing to rather than diminishing any problems in the polling stations.

The Polling Agent Training Program (PATP) worked directly with over 700 party trainers from three of the country's four major parties (the AL used NDI material and national level training along with its preexisting polling agent program), including the two main coalition partners in the new government elected on October 1; it concluded with the distribution of 600,000 NDI-produced polling agent manuals for party activists across the country and across the political spectrum. The polling agent manuals were seen in use throughout the country on election day and in subsequent by-elections and municipal elections, and were seen by observers to have had a positive impact.

During the week of the October 1 election, NDI representatives visited a small number of polling stations and participated in joint meetings with the heads of other international delegations. On October 8, three NDI teams contributed to the international monitoring effort in three constituencies where re-polling took place, following the suspension of voting on election day due to various problems or technicalities, and has since participated in the monitoring of various by-elections and municipal elections.

Before, during and after the election the Institute was called upon by the EC and other agencies to provide assistance, training material, and copies of the Polling Agent Manual. The UN, US Embassy personnel, the EU and many small political parties and groups took advantage of technical expertise including lectures, training advice, and material offered by NDI.

In addition to the projects described above, the Institute continues to work with the political parties, the EC, the government, domestic monitoring groups, NGOs and the international community on a range of projects including political party democratization, opening the Parliament building to citizens, and a range of other activities aimed at both national level leaders and the grassroots.

