

Education For All : Commitment and Reality in Bangladesh

Position Paper of Civil Society

**Prepared for Presentation before the
GCE Asia Pacific Regional Consultation, Bangkok**

4-6 October 2004

**Developed by: Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)
In cooperation with: Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF)**

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PREFACE

This Position Paper on 'Education For All: Commitment and Reality' has been prepared as a review of the status of literacy and basic education in Bangladesh, with a focus on the major concerns regarding EFA following the Dakar Declaration. The paper has highlighted some issues that require serious attention toward achieving the EFA goals. The purpose is to prepare a basis for advocacy and campaigning around the critical issues like quality basic education, ensuring access to all children of school going age including the poor and the disadvantaged/ marginalised, sufficient financing and good governance within the sector particularly in Bangladesh, but in a way pointing at concerns that may also find global relevance.

The process of the preparation of the paper started by drafting a theme paper based on secondary information, which was put through a series of consultation at the grass-roots level by way of having two workshop meetings in two districts in Rajshahi and Khulna Divisions. The consultation meetings had wide participation of agencies representing both government and NGOs/CBOs engaged in, and relevant to, activities to contribute to EFA. Following the consultation workshops as sample exercise at district level, in order to reflect the ground level situation, a national-level workshop was held in Dhaka with the stakeholder groups. Finally, the position paper was enriched by having drawn upon the outputs of the three workshops and further developed with the insights gained from the consultations and by having an extended search into the available documents for a critical review.

The issues and findings of the paper were available to Bangladesh delegates from Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), for sharing in the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation Meeting held at Bangkok on 4-6 October 2004. Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and OXFAM GB East Asia Office jointly organized the meeting, in order to support the advocacy role of Global Campaign for Education (GCE). The GCE is a world forum having its network around the globe and seeks to promote efforts at national, regional and international levels for achieving the

EFA goals, which were committed by the world community of nations and the aid giving agencies in the year 2000. Thus, the usefulness of the Position Paper developed on behalf of CAMPE, (which is a coalition of NGOs engaged in activities promoting basic education in Bangladesh and works in co-operation with forums and networks at regional and international level in education and related sectors), can be viewed as a contribution to the preparation for advocacy initiatives not only in Bangladesh but also beyond the limits of Bangladesh by concerned agencies working at different levels seeking to influence EFA processes.

Ahmadullah Mia

Acknowledgement

The Position Paper on 'Education For All: Commitment and Reality' in Bangladesh has been prepared to fulfill the interest of CAMPE, to serve as a background note to share with the participants in the Asia-Pacific Consultation Meeting held on 4-6 October 2004 in Bangkok. The meeting was in preparation for finding out important areas of advocacy intervention by Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) for furthering the EFA processes at national, regional and international levels in achieving the EFA goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) for Bangladesh provided financial support for the preparation of the paper, which involved a process of conducting local and national level consultation through a number of workshops in Bangladesh. Thus many people representing government organizations, NGOs, INGOs, and local level CBOs and CSOs were participants in the process of preparing the paper. Every one involved is hereby remembered with gratitude.

Particularly mentioned for their keen interest and co-operation are Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Syed-ul-Alam Kajal, M. Shahidul Islam and Rowshan Ara of CAMPE; and Rupa Rezina Khan of CEF.

Kajal, Shahid and Baby were of great support in pooling documents out of which information were derived. Kajal has also contributed by giving comments on the draft of the paper. Nihar R. Sarcer provided remarkable support in compiling the information for systematic analysis and preparation of the preliminary draft. All of them deserve my sincere thanks. Without their supports it would have been impossible to prepare the first draft within a short time before the Bangkok meeting. They assisted further in preparing the final version of the paper with more of relevant and available information. Thanks are also due to Rumana Sultana Rumi of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, who did the computer composition of the paper. My sincere appreciation to all of those who participated in and facilitated the workshops in preparation of this paper but could not be named within the limit of this page meant for acknowledgment.

Ahmadullah Mia

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CE	Continuing Education
CFLC	Child Friendly Learning Community
CEHD	Continuing Education for Human Development
DFA	Dakar Framework for Action
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	Education For All
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GPS	Government Primary School
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSC	Higher Secondary School Certificate
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NPA	National Plan of Action
PEDP	Primary Education Development Project
PLCEHD	Post-Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development
PNGO	Partner Non-Government Organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSPMP	Primary School Performance Monitoring Project
PSMP	Primary School Monitoring Project
RNGPS	Non-Government Primary School
ROSC	Reaching Out-of-School Children
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TLM	Total Literacy Movement
UPL	University Publishers Limited

UHFWC	Union Health and Family Welfare Centres
UN	United Nations
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Executive Summary

Following the Dakar declaration (2000), the Ministry of Education, GoB developed the National Plan Action Plan-II (2003-2015)* with four major components: i) Early childhood care and education (ECCE), ii) Formal primary education programme, iii) Non-formal education programme and iv) Programme for female education.

The plan has laid special emphasis on universal school enrolment and quality education. Targets for net enrolment rate are 83 percent in 2005 and 92 percent in 2010. Drop out rate would be reduced from 33 percent in 2000 to 25 percent in 2005, 14 percent in 2010, and to 5 percent in 2015. Completion rate of primary cycle of education would be increased from 67 percent in 2000 to 75 percent in 2005, 86 percent in 2010 and 95 percent in 2015. Adult literacy rate (15-24years) would be increased from 66 percent in 2000 to 73 percent in 2005, 82 percent in 2010 and 95 percent in 2015. Adult literacy in the age group 15-45 years would be increased from 56 percent in 2000 to 70 percent in 2005, and 90 percent in 2015.

ECCE programme would contribute to enrollment and continuation in school by promoting school preparedness of young children and parental interest in children's schooling.

Current Literacy Status

As far as current literacy is concerned, Education Watch (2001) reported adult literacy of 41.6 percent (in 11+ years age group). Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) of the Government reports literacy rate at 45.3 percent for population of 7+ years in the year 2001. This is an increase from the rate of 32.4 percent in 1991 to 45.3 percent in 2001. However, disparity is noted with higher rate in urban than that in rural areas, and higher for males than females in both urban and rural areas. BBS (2001) also reports that literacy rate in Chittagong Hill Tracts is very low (20 percent) in comparison to national rate. Among the major religion groups, the Buddhists have the lowest literacy rate (37.95 percent).

* National Plan of Action - I was implemented during 1991-2000.

Quality Concerns in Basic Education

With the increase of enrolment during the recent years, quality issue has become a major concern, and poses a challenge to overcome, as it has several ramifications to work upon.

(a) Regularity of Attendance of Children in School

According to the report of the Primary School Performance Monitoring Project 2000 (PSPMP-2000), the average enrollment in Government Primary Schools (GPS) was considerably higher than in Non-governmental Schools (RNGPS). The report pointed out that the attendance rate of children was alarmingly low, particularly in the non-governmental schools. Teachers in non-government primary schools mark more children present than actually they are. Teacher absenteeism also tends to be little higher in non-government schools.

(b) Teacher-Student Ratio

One survey (UPL, 2000) indicated that the mean number of teachers per school was the highest for ebtedaiye madrasahs (5.40), followed by private schools (5.38), mainstream government schools (4:3); and the lowest was in non-formal schools (2.45), as they had fewer classes. The highest teacher-student ratio was observed in madrasahs (more than 3 teachers per 100 students), and the lowest in mainstream schools (less than two teachers per hundred students).*

(c) Proportion of Female Teachers

There is a clear dominance of male teachers in the primary schools, as female teachers make 43 percent of total teachers in GPS and 26 percent in RNGPS. Smaller number of female teachers in the schools work as disincentive for the girl students of the rural areas to attend schools.

A large majority of teachers (80%) in GPS are trained, while trained teachers in RNGPS are less than one half.

(d) Educational Materials and Teaching-Learning Process

Many schools, particularly RNGPs do not receive adequate number of books. Also, these schools are more frequent not having necessary teaching aids. Large

* Education Watch 2001, Number of teachers per school was 6.7 in madrasahs in non-formal schools during 2000.

majority of teachers in both GPS and RNGPS go to class without any preparation. School monitoring information shows poor performance by students in almost all subjects, especially in Mathematics.

Unserved Children, Disadvantaged/Marginalized and Children from Indigenous Population

Educational opportunities for girls and rural children have been particularly limited in Bangladesh. However, special efforts to attract girls to school through food for education, now replaced by cash stipend programme. Special incentive in secondary education in terms of tuition waiver and also female stipend have contributed to achieving gender parity. Sixty percent of the enrollees are girls and their retention rate is almost cent percent.

NGOs paid special attention to disadvantaged groups, which did not access formal primary education. Their NFE programmes complemented the government programme. Government implemented several NFE projects for basic education with the participation of NGOs. But these short-duration projects suffered from limitation, particularly in terms of low retention rate of basic literacy. Some limited efforts are being continued in the form of catching up with the literacy gains and further learning/skill training for livelihood improvement through post-literacy and continuing education for human development (PLCEHD).

National Plan of Action II (NPA II) 2003-2015 was drafted with the objective to eliminate illiteracy, improve quality in basic education and to prepare the neo-literate groups for engagement in income generating activities based on skill learning. But disappointingly, the NPA has not been given its final shape for implementation, although two years of the plan period have already passed. Meanwhile, Primary Education Development Programme II (2003- 2008) has been launched in the formal primary education sector, The key objectives are:

- i) Increase primary school access, participation and completion in accordance with government's EFA and other policy commitments.
- ii) Improve the quality of student learning and performance outcomes (i.e. achievement)

PEDP II will overlap with the major national initiative of Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP). PEDP II has stated that by the year 2015 the net enrollment rate among the children, 6-10 years, will be 95.4 percent. But given the likelihood of drop out children at every successive stage through the secondary level, there will be a large number, which will need NFE for livelihood improvement. The estimated prospective learners in ECCE programme (3-5 years) and the basic NFE programme covering 6-10, 11-14, 15-24 and 25-45 age groups, and also the PLCE targets will make a large population of 11.7 million, given the present population structure and the prospective population growth.

Other Critical Problems

One of the complicated issues to be dealt with is child labour linked to poverty hindering school participation, as the child labour is currently estimated at 7.5 percent of a total child population of 42.3 million, which is a large number in the country. Families of children at work are mostly those who cannot afford to have their children in school because of the private cost involved. It is also observed through research studies that the opportunity cost of children being at school is further complicated by the parents' perception that some education, primary or secondary, is not rewarding for them in practical life.

Madrasah education, which makes a major sub-sector at primary and higher levels, gives poorer quality graduates compared to other streams of education.

The most outstanding problem to be confronted in the next decade would be to ensure quality, while achieving gender equity at different levels (especially at higher levels) and ensuring access for all disadvantaged groups including the madrasah participants, ethnic minority and tribal groups already falling behind others. The other problems to deal with will be teacher absenteeism, improving teacher quality and teachers' training, adjusting curriculum to practical life situation, rising cost of education and making schools more accountable to parents and local community.

Although gender disparity at primary level has been eliminated, drop out rate among female increases at higher levels. Besides, illiteracy among women is still predominant. The constraints to achieving equal participation among girls and

women are rooted in historical continuity of discriminatory attitude typical of patriarchal society, traditional cultural and social practices, poor economic condition, lack of support and facilities for women at home and school, and safety and security consideration given the deterioration in law and order situation.

Areas Identified for Advocacy

Advocacy and campaign issues are identified from the above analysis. Following are the areas of advocacy and campaign at various levels:

- ❖ Gaps in enrollment, school attendance and school completion rates. School authority/teachers, parents and local community are to be brought into focus.
- ❖ Child labour. Advocacy initiatives have to address parents, school authority, employers, the society at large, and the national policy makers and managers in the sectors of education and technical training, labour and manpower employment, agriculture, industries, youths, women's development, and other sectors involved in poverty reduction efforts.
- ❖ High indirect and hidden private cost. This has to be considered together with the issue of child labour.
- ❖ Gender and regional disparity. In this regard important is to develop more facilities to attract girls to school and their continuation, raise motivation of families and communities for having women's education as a popular movement. Similarly more facilities are to be developed in the remote and disadvantaged/underserved areas.
- ❖ Poor Quality of Education. This would require higher levels of investment in having sufficient number of schools, adopting appropriate policy for teacher employment and development, providing qualified and properly trained sufficient number of teachers in schools, making available sufficient teaching-learning materials, and improving methods of assessing learning achievement of students. Encouragements are to be extended to

NGOs and CSOs for their involvement in piloting activities dealing with various aspects of quality promotion and their experiences are to be harnessed in the mainstream education.

- ❖ Indigenous and ethnic minority groups. National authorities together with local government institution need to have policy and programmes with sufficient provision of funds to develop more facilities for such groups.
- ❖ Madrasah education. This is a sensitive issue but requires considered view for rationalizing the education in relation to the nature of demands of market and modern social realities. It is necessary to build up national consensus for policy in this regard.
- ❖ Determining equivalence of non-formal education. NGOs were the pioneers and promoters of NFE, and subsequently government support was available with its direct involvement and partnership (in limited sense) with NGOs. Lately there seems to be undermining of NFE, as far as government support and involvement are concerned. This tendency is not well warranted. Policy of the government has to draw upon the strength of NGOs and their contributions need to be enhanced by supporting their capacities and by opening the opportunity for NFE participants to enter formal education and training at appropriate level according to the competency of NFE graduates.
- ❖ State finance in education sector. Compared to any other country in this region, public allocation for expenditure as percent of total national budget is low in Bangladesh. In absolute terms allocation has increased over the years, but relative allocation has had a declining trend since 1995. Education expenditure as percent of GDP is the lowest among many developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Larger civil society has to put up its voice in this regard. Very low per student annual expenditure is one important factor explaining poor quality of education in Bangladesh. Shares of primary education and vocational training at secondary and higher levels are necessary to have raised significantly for

achieving EFA goals and poverty reduction through human resource development.

- ❖ Community financing. Some experiments and pilot activities have demonstrated the possibility of community ownership and contributions to the operation of schools for promoting the quality of primary education. Such experiences deserve serious attention for dissemination and capitalisation of them for advocacy. National policy change can use such experiences for appropriate designing of primary education in order to encourage participation of local community in education financing.
- ❖ Low level of donor support. Inadequate donor support since the Dakar conference is a matter of disappointment. This has arrested the progress towards EFA in most of the developing countries. Worse of it is that, whatever aid has been available, in many cases donors have contributed not to those countries which deserve most, but to those which are found to be closer to the donor countries in terms of policies other than educational. This non-rational or prejudicial consideration has to be put off from aid giving policies and the rich countries have to fulfill their pledges for establishing a much better world than what it is today. Regional and international forums and consultative groups working with the UN and other financing institutions at global level have to take this issue up for strong advocacy and campaign.
- ❖ Governance. This is a critical issue politically and managerially influencing not only planning and designing education programmes, but also in resource procurement and utilization, and removing disparities between socio-economic classes and regions in the country. Misadministration and corruption erode transparency and accountability. These ills at higher levels of authority are affecting education management at school level. Political environment and local influential groups having unholy alliance with the national level politicians or party politics act to vitiate the situation of education management throughout the whole system. The larger civil society has to be sensitive to it and mobilise all concerned units to correct this situation without any loss of time.

Introduction

The Dakar Framework for Action (DFA) stressed among others improvement in the quality of education. It underscored the need for special efforts to ensure measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy and basic life skills of the young learners. Following the Dakar declaration (2000), the Ministry of Education, GoB developed the National Plan Action Plan-2 (2003-2015),*. The major components being:

- Early childhood care and education (ECCE)
- Formal primary education programme
- Non-formal education programme
- Programme for female education

In the NPA-2 special emphasis was given on universal school enrolment and quality education. It was proposed that the present trend of enrolment and admission among boys and girls (as in 2000) would be maintained, rate of dropouts and absenteeism reduced, rate of attendance increased, retention rate increased and specially, and selection of teachers, teaching learning methods and methods of presentation of teaching materials would be improved.

The NPA-2 emphasized transparency and accountability in employment, transfer, promotion of teachers, students' enrolment and attendance, evaluation of teachers' performance, local level supervision and monitoring, purchase, procurement and use of educational materials.

In the NPA-2 targets were set for the year 2003 to 2015, based on the achievements in 2000. Targets for net enrolment rate were set from 80 percent in 2000 and 83 percent in 2005 and 92 percent in 2010. Drop out rate would be reduced from 33 percent in 2000 and 25 percent in 2005 and 14 percent in 2010, and to 5 percent in 2015. Completion rate of primary cycle of education would be increased from 67 percent in 2000, to 75 percent in 2005, 86 percent in 2010 and 95 percent in 2015. Adult literacy rate (15-24years) would be increased from 66 percent in 2000 to 73 percent in 2005, 82 percent in 2010 and 95 percent in 2015.

* National Plan of Action - I was implemented during 1991-2000.

Adult literacy in age group 15-45 years would be increased from 56 percent in 2000 to 70 percent in 2005, 78 percent in 2010 and 90 percent in 2015. Some data are already available to examine how the programmes are operating during recent years.

1. Enrollment and Dropout Rates

Education Watch, 2001 reported that there was no appreciable change in gross enrollment rate between 1998 and 2000. It was 107 in 1998 and 108 in 2000. But there was some change in net enrolment which rose from 77 percent in 1999 to 79.87 percent in 2000. There were no change in attendance rate, class room capacity or proportion of female teachers. However, proportion of children completing 5 year-cycle of education increased for GoB schools and madrasshas. Enrollment rate by residence and sex in Bangladesh during 2000 is shown in Table-1.

Table-1: Enrollment rate by residence and sex in Bangladesh (2000)

	Rural Areas	Urban Areas	Bangladesh
Girls	79.7	81.4	79.9
Boys	75.5	81.6	79.8

Source: Education Watch, 2001. CAMPE, June 2002.

Variations in enrollment were observable among the six division of Bangladesh. Highest enrollment rate was observed in Khulna (91%) and lowest (75%) in Sylhet. Enrollment rates in urban areas were found to be significantly higher those in the rural areas (81.5 percent and 79.6 percent respectively).

Completion rate for primary cycle was only 75.7 percent. Children required 6.6 years on the average to complete the 5-year cycle.

Dropout rate continued to be high. A cohort study found a dropout rate of 40-50 percent before entering the 5th year (UPL, 2000). The above study observed that completion of 5-year cycle of primary education required 8.7 years on an average. These figures indicate a wastage of national resources.

2. Adult Literacy

Education Watch (2001), reported adult literacy of 41.6 percent (in 15+ years age group). They observed that rural females had a lower rate than rural males and

the difference between males and females was more pronounced in the urban areas.

Table-2: Adult literacy rate by Area of Residence* (2000)

	Female	Male	Both
Rural	39.9	42.9	37.5
Urban	55.5	68.5	62.3
Bangladesh (Total)	35.8	47.3	41.6

Source: Education Watch 2001, CAMPE, 2002, Page-8

Literacy rate was lower in the slum areas compared to non-slum areas and literacy rate in younger generation (15-24 years) was significantly higher than that in older generation indicating an improvement in the enrollment rate among the young people. According to population census report (2001), female literacy (46.2%) was lower than that the males (53.6%) for all ages (BBS, July 2003). Literacy rate for people 7+ years rose from 32.4 percent in 1991 to 45.3 percent in 2001*.

Gender disparity, females having lower literacy rate was reported in 2001 for both rural and urban areas. Disparity was found higher in urban areas, 46.3 percent for females, compared to 55.4 percent males. The rates for females and males were 29.7 percent and 35.5 percent respectively in rural areas. Although participation of rural people in literacy programmes is increasing, rural-urban differences continue to remain a challenge to overcome.

BBS (2001) reported that literacy rate in Chittagong Hill Tracts is very low (20 percent) in comparison to national rate of 47.5 percent. Among the major religion groups, the Buddhists, have the lowest literacy rate (37.95 percent). (BBS, 2003, P-76). The Buddhists in Chittagong Hill Tracts and other ethnic minority groups are lagging behind in education as they are economically disadvantaged groups.

* According to World Development Report 2003, Literacy rate for 7+ years population is 41 percent. Education Watch 2003 reports literacy for 11+ years population is present. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) report literacy rate for population of 7+ years at 45.3 percent.

3. Quality Concerns in Basic Education

The major quality concerns identified in the NPA-2 were the following:

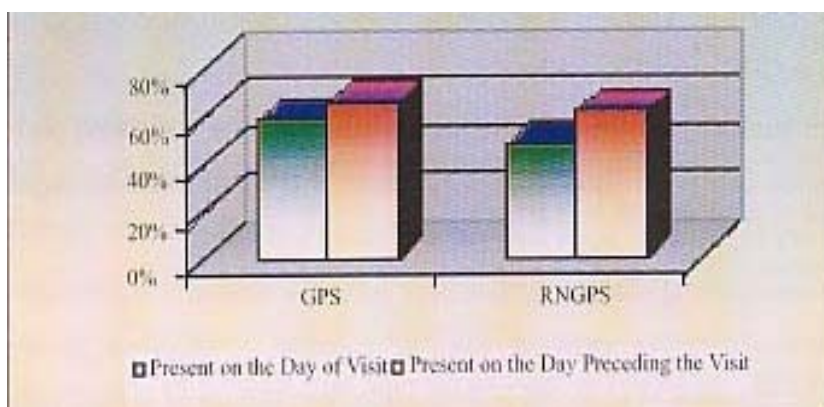
1. Maintaining of the enrollment rates of boys and girls achieved in 2000 (Boys 96%, Girls 97%).
2. Improvement in attendance rate of students in the primary level at both formal and non-formal institutions.
3. Maintaining high level of retention in the primary classes and reduction of absenteeism.
4. Improvement in the process of selection of subjects, teaching-learning process, and presentation of teaching materials.

Progress in terms of enrollment and closing the gender gap has been significant. But the quality has not matched with quantitative achievements. Several specific aspects that matter in this regard are to be looked into.

(a) Regularity of Attendance of Children in School

According to the report of the Primary School Performance monitoring project 2000 (PSPMP-2000), the average enrollment in Government Primary Schools (GPS) was considerably higher than in Non-governmental School (RNGPS). The average class size was also bigger in GPS. The study observed that the attendance rate of children is alarmingly low, particularly in the non-governmental schools. They noted that teachers in non-government primary schools mark more children present than actually they are. Attendance rate of children by school type is presented in Chart I.

Figure - 1: Attendance rate of children by school type*



* Source PSMP (2000, P- 4)

The figure shows that on the day of the visit of the study team about 60% of the students attended the sample schools, but on the previous day, attendance was about 40%. On the day of the visit, the study team found 88 percent of the teachers present in GoB schools, where as in the Non-government schools 86% of the teachers were present. Many teachers (23% in GPS, and 36% in RNGPS) were found to be appearing too late in the school (PSMP-2000, P-5). It was observed that the number of teachers in almost all schools was less than the number of sections/grades. The situation is worse in RNGPS schools (Table-3).

Table-3: Number of teachers by sex and type of schools*

Type of school	Number of schools in sample	Mean number of teachers	Percent of female teachers	Attendance on the day of visit
GPS	103	4.9	43	88
RNGPS	47	3.9	26	86
Both	150	4.6	38	87

Source: PSPMP-2000: Primary School Performance Monitoring Project, Dec, 2001, Page05

(b) Teacher-Student Ratio

According to one survey (UPL, 2000) the mean number of teachers per school was highest for ebtedaiye madrasas (5.40), followed by private schools (5.38), mainstream schools (4.3) and lowest in non-formal schools (2.45). The same picture emerged when one calculated the number of teachers per 100 students. Highest ratio was observed in madrashas (more than 3 teachers per 100 students), and lowest in mainstream schools (less than two teachers per hundred students).* Results of a mini-survey by World Bank showed that in the sample schools, teacher-student ratio ranged from 60.5 to 135 and students per class ranged from 73 to 135 in the primary schools (UPL 2000, P397). Thus in the majority of schools teacher student ratio was unfavourable.

(c) Proportion of Female Teachers

According to PSMP-200, about 43 percent of the teachers in GPS and 26 percent of the teachers in RNGPS are females thus giving a clear dominance of male teachers in the primary schools.

* Education Watch 2001, Number of teachers per school was 6.7 in madrashas in non-formal schools during 2000.

Smaller number of female teachers in the schools work as disincentives for the girl students of the rural areas to attend schools. Female teachers have to offer many benefits to the girls students other than the knowledge of 3Rs.

(d) Teachers' Qualification

Variations exist among teachers' academic qualifications and training. About one third (32%) of the teachers in GPS and one seventh (15%) of the teachers in RNGPS were graduates. About one third of the teachers (33% in GPS and 30% in RNGPS) have HSC level of education, 55 percent teachers in RNGPS and 34 percent teachers in GPS are SSC passed. There were very few (1% in GPS and none in RNGPS) teachers below SSC level. Majority of the teachers in GPS (about 80%) were trained, while about 40 percent of the RNGPS teachers were trained.

(e) Educational Materials and Teaching-Learning Process

One of the quality concerns of the NPA-2 was the improvement in selection of subjects and teaching learning process and presentation of teaching materials.

The PSPMP-2000 found that many schools in the sample (66 out of 150) did not receive text books on time while many schools, mostly RNGPS did not receive adequate number of books. Many schools did not have any books other than the text books and these was no culture of borrowing/lending books by the teachers and students. Many schools do not have adequate number of teaching aids, particularly the RNGP-schools are in a chronic crisis of teaching materials (Table-4).

Table-4: Availability of teaching materials and aids by type of schools

Item	Average number of items per school		
	GPS	RNGPS	Both
Books (other than text books)	66	13	49
Books available for home issues	18	6	15
Charts, Posters, Pictures	28	14	23
Globes	0.4	0.04	0.3
Maps	6	1	4
Teacher's guides	25	9	20

Source: PSPMP-2000, P-3.

According to PSPMP-report-2000, more than two thirds of GPS and four-fifths of the RNGPS teachers attend class without preparation. Many of them were not certain about the lessons to be facilitated and did not know what they would accomplish in presenting their lessons. In most of the schools, the teachers did not allow participation of students in discussion and did not use teaching aids. The classrooms were poorly managed.

(f) Achievement of Pupils

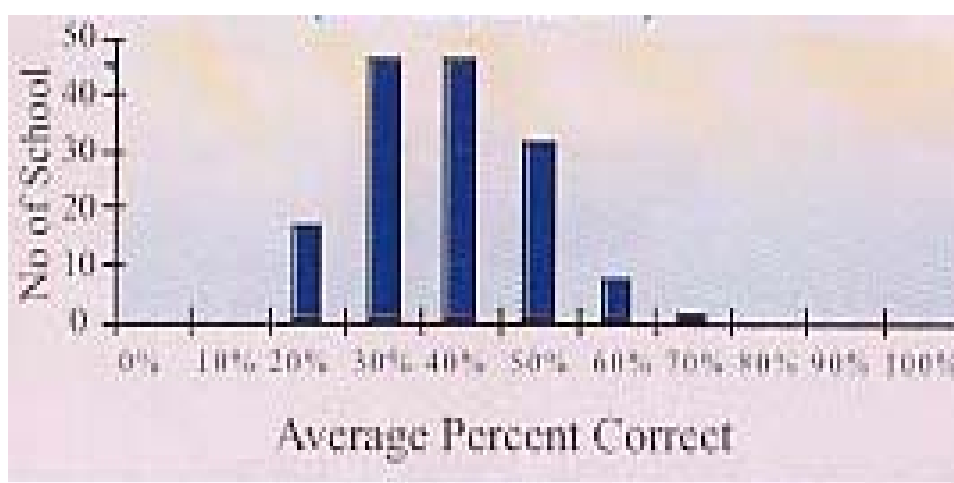
An assessment of student's performance by PSMP (2000) showed that most of the students in 5th grade performed poorer than expected. The results of assessment are shown in Table-5.

Table-5: Achievement scores of 5th graders in percent for 150 selected schools

Subject	Mean percentage and SD of scores	
	Mean*	SD
Bangla	41	15
Mathematics	18	9
Science	33	10
Social Science	40	13
All	33	10

The results showed poor performance by students in almost all school subjects. Poorest scores were observed in mathematics. However, distribution of schools in terms of percentage of marks obtained showed a normal distribution. Some schools performed better than average scores in all subjects (se Fig.2).

Figure-2: Overall achievement composite (N= 150 Schools)



Schools showing poor performance should be identified and measures for improvement in important inputs should be ensured to produce better results.

4. Unserved Children–Disadvantaged/Marginalized and Children from Indigenous Population

Educational opportunities for girls and rural children have been particularly limited in Bangladesh. Recently all other categories of disadvantaged groups are under the preview of educational and economic development plans. One approach to address disadvantaged illiterate population was adopted by Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and simulated by many NGOs, is known as non-formal primary education programme. The NFE follows flexible time schedule for schooling and offers a three year curriculum that includes language, mathematics, basic science, social studies, and health education. The teachers are professionals and mothers or heads of households who are trained and supervised by professional staff. The NFE achieved considerable success. The school staff reported that drop out rate in this system was less than two percent. By 1988, the programme was operating 730 centres that enrolled 20,000 students. More than 90 percent of the 1st batch of graduates were admitted into the 4th grade in GoB primary schools. Sixty percent of the enrollees were girls and their retention rate was almost cent percent.

Drawing experience from NFE, GoB was planning to launch a satellite school project with 200 lower primary schools in villages. These pilot schools will predominantly employ female teachers and follow a flexible time schedule that is suitable for rural women and men.

The government is taking the following efforts to meet the needs of the under-served:

1. To recruit more female teachers and assign them in their own community
2. To improve physical facilities in the school (e.g. providing closed latrines for girls)
3. To collect gender sensitive data that enable GoB to monitor progress regarding gender equity in education
4. To extend support for the female education scholarship programme. Dropout rate decreased from 15 percent in 1979 to 4 percent in 1987

due to implementation of the female education scholarship programme.

(*Source Malon 1989: Improving equitable access, Page - 165) In: Maratain E. Lockheed Adian M. Verspoorant associates. Improving Primary education in Dev, Countries/World Bank.

Initially the NFE programme were run for mixed groups of people like un-enrolled, dropouts, adolescents and adults. Gradually it was transformed into a single tract literacy programme for 11-14 years children. The current NFE programme of GoB aims to contribute to reducing illiteracy rate by at least 50 percent by 2015 keeping in view of/or in conformity with the goals set in the EFA. The National Plan of Action-2 (2003-2015) aims at alleviating poverty as projected in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) through quality NFE, skill training, supporting socially acceptable income generating activities and other CE programmes.

Several quality assurance measures have been suggested during the plan period including adequate screening, keeping entry level achievement scores, adequate monitoring, standardizing tests and assessment procedures, mainstreaming mechanism etc.

It was proposed that the disabled and children of indigenous minority groups would be given special facilitates for education. Attempts would be made for mainstreaming the disabled children. They would be given technical aids for learning. Thus education programme is being planned to make it an inclusive one with special attention to different ethnic minority and tribal population groups, which were so long marginalized. Those who will miss the opportunity to access formal education for any reason would be covered by non-formal education (NFE). It is envisioned that special programmes would be undertaken to ensure basic education for such groups. A special NFE programme now being implemented is Post-literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development (PLCEHD). Another is in planning process, known as Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) to go into implementation very soon.

Number of participants available in the NFE sub-sector in next 12 years

According to PEDP II (2002) the formal primary sector includes eleven different types of schools; more than 87 percent of them are mainstream primary and

semi-primary (community and satellite schools). All these schools in 2002 had 93.39 percent of all students in primary education. Of the 11 school types, GPS, RNGPS, Experimental, Community and Satellite Schools, High School-attached primary sections enrolled 16.11 million in 66,091 schools. Estimates suggest a net enrolment rate (NER) between 75 percent and 81 percent and a gross enrolment rate between 97 and 107 percent. As per projection in PEDP II, 2003 the net enrolment rate of children, 6-10 years would be 95.4 percent during 2015 and the number of enrolled students would reach 16.68 million.

But given the reality that there is a large number of dropout children at every successive stage from primary to secondary and higher levels of education the need for non-formal education is likely to be increased. National Plan of Action II (NPA II) provides estimates of target groups for non-formal education for the years 2005-2015 as in the Table below:

Table-6: NFE targets by selected programs and NPA II Phases (in' 000s)

Program coverage by age group	Benchmark	Clientele targets by NPA II Phases		
	2000/2001	2005	2010	2015
ECCE: 3-5 (hardcore 40% of total)	4132	1019	1868	1245
NFBE:6/8-10 (50% of dropouts un-enrolled of 2001 base +)	6120	1545	2721	1854
NFBE: 11-14 (2001 base)	6031	1535	2600	1896
OSA/Y: 12-19 (pilot project)	168	18	30	120
Young adults: 15-24 (50% of the illiterate group)	5369	1431	2339	1599
Adults: 25-45 (50% of the illiterate group)	10804	2701	4862	3241
PLCE targets, no addition, 50% of remaining 11.602m	5800	1450	2610	1740
Total	38424	9699	17030	11695

The estimate shows that by 2015 there will be about 11.6 million students in different non-formal PLCE programmes in the country.

NPA II proposed that NFE-ECCE program would cover 40 percent of the baseline figure of 10.37 million 3-5 year old children, and 50 percent of the illiterate persons of 15-45 years, illiterate children of 6/8 – 10 and 11-14 years and neo-literate persons coming from TLM program (NPAII, 2003).

5. Child Labour and Poverty

a) Child Labour Situation

An estimated 0.28 million children in 5-9 age group and some 4.4 million in the age group 10-14 years were at work in economic activity in 2002-03. A significant proportion of children engaged in economic activity are child labourers.

Table-7: Child labour (current status) by gender and rural/urban residence

Characteristics	Rural		Urban		Bangladesh	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Child population	17627	15302	5062	4396	22689	19698
Working children	5471	1952	1041	367	4430	1584
Child labour	1911	560	550	158	2461	718
Child labour as % total child population	10.8	3.7	10.9	3.6	10.8	3.6

Source: BBS, National Child Labour Survey, 2003, Page 60, Table-5.17

It was observed that out of a total of 7.4 million (5.47 million + 1.952 million) working children 3.2 million were child labour. The population of child labour to total child population was 7.5 percent, and proportion of child labour to total working children was 42.8 percent. The proportion of male child labour was three times higher than female child labour.

b) Education and Child Labour

It was revealed in the National Child Labour Survey (2003) that out of 33.3 million (7.2%) aged 5-17 years were attending school as well as working as child labour. Analysis of data for working children aged 5-17 years revealed that among working children two thirds (66.6%) had no schooling at all. Of these having some education, 41.3 percent had primary level education (grade 1-5) and 41.7 percent had grade 6-8 level and 4.2 percent had grade 10-12 level of education. In another analysis, it was found that out of 3.2 million child labour 837,000 or 26.3 percent were currently attending school. About two-thirds of the child labour currently attending school worked for 5-19 hours a week and about 14% child labour currently attending school worked for 40 hours or more per week.

The above study reported that there were 33.3 million children aged 5-17 years currently attending school out of 42.3 million children. The proportion of child labour is 2.5 percent (837 thousand) of the children who were currently attending school (i.e. 33.3 million). The proportion of child laborers among currently attending school children in rural areas (27%) is higher compared to urban areas (2.0%).

It is quite obvious that the literacy rate of the non-child labourers was significantly higher than that of the child labourers. This was true for all age groups and genders (Table-8).

Table-8: Literacy rate of child labourers and non-child labourers by gender and age group

Age group and gender	Bangladesh		Literacy rate Urban		Rural	
	Child labourers	Non-child labourers	Child labourers	Non-child labourers	Child labourers	Non-child labourers
Both Sexes						
Total	52.1	62.1	54.0	66.1	51.5	60.9
5-9	19.4	27.7	20.6	29.8	19.1	27.1
10-14	53.5	93.4	52.6	94.9	53.8	93.0
15-17	60.3	85.2	64.7	91.0	58.6	83.3

Among the major causes of not attending school for boys and girls were inability of the family to bear educational expenses and working for wages to maintain own living and family (Table-9). About 70% of the parents said they sent their children to work for helping for more family income. It is obvious that these families were extremely poor or were unable to understand the importance of education for their children.

Table-9: Reasons for not attending school by child labourers*

Reasons	Percentage of Responses	
	Boys	Girls
No suitable school	0.8	1.4
Unable to bear educational expenses	26.0	16.6
Working for own living	8.9	5.5
Weak in education	9.5	3.1
Unwillingness/failure in examination	8.3	3.5
Household work	4.6	8.4
Work for salary/wages	19.5	10.0
Engaged in HH economic activity	15.6	45.4
Engaged in own business	2.5	0.3
Family does not want school	2.4	2.1
Others	1.9	3.6

*Source: BBS (2003): Report on National Child Labour Survey, Dec.2003, P-99

6. Madrasah Education

Of all children enrolled in the primary schools of Bangladesh 61 percent were enrolled in GOB primary schools, 18.4 percent in private schools, 7.1 percent in non-formal schools, 5.3 percent in madrasahs, 2.1 percent in English medium schools and the rest in other schools (Education Watch, 2001). Another study reported that a significant proportion of total enrollment in post-primary education came from madrasahs. The gross number at that level was 1.59 million of whom 91.5 percent were enrolled in rural madrasah and 9.5 percent in urban madrasah. Highest number of them are in Rajshahi Division (511249) and lowest in Sylhet (46333). Girl students were 40.22 percent of total and 93.9 percent of them were enrolled in rural areas (Bangladesh Education Sector Review, Vol I, Page 16, UPL, 2000). A survey by BIDS indicated that 4th grade students of madrasah were lagging behind students of all other schools in proficiency in English and Bengali.

7. Possible Changes in Emerging Social and Economic Conditions and Interface with Education Sector in Next 12 Years

Analyses on human development aspects consistently suggest that education is linked with poverty, health, fertility, morbidity and mortality. During the next 12 years, health services will continue to grow and fertility will continue decline. The country has already got as large a population size of nearly 140 million. The

momentum of population growth is difficult to contain. Fertility and mortality situations in Bangladesh are still considered serious impediments to poverty reduction measures. TFR remains constant at 3.3 since mid 1990s, maternal mortality is high (302 per hundred thousand live births as in 1998-2001). Reproductive health care is still limited to rural areas only and targeting the pockets of poor urban population living in slums and squatter settlement remains a far cry. Significant socio-economic differentials exist in maternal health care. About 69 percent women from poor households are out of reach of health care system. Consequently, morbidity is high. According to BBS (2000), morbidity is 188 per thousand population. HIV/AIDS is gradually emerging as a menace. However, diarrhoea, malaria, TB, anemia, filarisis, goitre, kalazar, whooping cough and other killer diseases have been controlled while CHD, Hypertension, arsenicosis, diabetes, mental health problems, violence and traffic accidents have increased. Morbidity due to illnesses is 11 percent higher for females and the poor are more vulnerable than the better off families.

While education has expanded quantitatively, quality appears to grow sluggishly. There is also a gender gap in enrollment rate in the 16-20 age group which is more conspicuous after age 21. There is also the problem of dropout, especially among the extremely poor. The major problem facing the next decade would be to achieve gender equality in education, improving the quality of traditional education including madrasah. There is a need to modernize the content of education at all levels which will have to be mostly science and livelihood oriented. Demand for globalization comes from achievements world-wide in computer science and information technology.

There are many weakness in the current pattern of delivery of education, health and public services. There is dissatisfaction among the stakeholders over teacher absenteeism, maldistribution and leakage in food for education and stipend schemes for girls attending secondary schools, low quality, and rising cost of education. Research revealed paucity of teaching materials and lack of teacher training.

Most stakeholders expressed concern over the gradually widening gap between the rich and poor. The poor were lagging behind in giving their children quality

education. Consultations with stakeholders suggested multidimensional action program involving development of uniform curricula, lengthening of contact hours, raising teaching student ratio, training of teachers, increasing supervision and reactivating school management committees.

The next few years of development efforts will have also to give serious attention to improving health conditions in the rural and urban areas. The stakeholder consultation recommended that the existing union Health and Family Welfare centres (UHFWC) and Thana Health Complexs should be fully utilized. Improvements are needed in the availability of training doctors, diagnostic facilities and reduction of hidden costs of medicare. Increased efforts should be engaged in preventive measures including provision for improved sanitation and safe water for all.

Both Health and Education sectors in Bangladesh have already been enriched by involvement of NGOs. An enhanced role of the NGOs in the education sector as a provider of primary and secondary education, beyond their traditional involvement in non-formal education, was suggested by stakeholder groups.

Broad-based consultation by expert groups around the issue of poverty reduction strategy of the country have confirmed considerable gains in poverty reduction and social development during the last decade. But the concerned elite groups of the country must be working against regressive tendencies that are discouraging NGO involvement in economic and education sectors. The consultation group has identified a number of concerns to be addressed by civil society during the coming years. These are: law and order situation amidst incidence of organized crimes, extension of economic violence, lack of effective local government and decentralization, poor quality of education, health, safe water supply and sanitation, lack of coordination among development agencies and institutions operating at local levels, lack of remunerative employment and economic opportunities, lack of social capital at the community level resulting in low level of collective action, and lack of democratization of political processes.

8. Gender as Cross Cutting Issue

a) Status of Female Education

One of the major factors determining the status of women in the society is level of education in the country. Education helps a country to improve effectively the human resources for national development. Education is the key to breaking the vicious cycle of ignorance and exploitation and empowering women and girls to improve their lives (Huq 2000). The critical gender lag in education is an indication of the synergistic mechanism of disadvantages plaguing women early and long records of work, poor nutrition and ill health. Wide spread early marriage, early child bearing — also in conflict with schooling. In countries like Thailand where the gender gap has narrowed considerably, female autonomy is relatively high, inheritance practices are gender neutral, coresidence is more commonly with wife's than the husband's parents and conjugal relations are reasonably egalitarian (Kondel, 1994).

In Bangladesh, women's status *vis a vis* their participation in productive work can definitely be improved through narrowing down the gender gap in women's literacy. Improvements should be done in many indicators of participation of women in education.

Some studies in Bangladesh showed that during 1998 adult literacy rate (for 15+ years) for rural women was 37.8 percent against 57.3 percent for males. Similarly, in urban areas, female literacy was 59.7 percent compared to male literacy of 77.1 percent. It was observed that the ratio of literate male to females at ages 15-24 was 130 for rural areas and 127 for urban municipal areas (Table-12). (Population Census, BBS, 1991)

Thus there is a predominance of literacy rate among the males. Though there is a tendency of narrowing the gaps in primary school enrollment rate, there is a higher dropout rate among girls at primary and secondary levels (Table-10).

Table-10: Net enrolment rate of primary school children (6-10 years) by six and areas (1998)

Sex	National	Urban	Rural
Boys	80.0	82.1	79.8
Girls	82.9	83.8	82.8

Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 1998, BBS & UNICEF

It was reported that the dropout rate is higher among the females than the males. However, it increases with the grade levels. The highest dropout rate is at the level of grade X. At this level total dropout is 19 percent. The female dropout ratio is 20.5 percent compared to 17.6 percent in case of males. Thus higher dropout rate of females is a critical concern for women's education.

b) Constraints to Equal Participation of Girls and Women in Education

It is highly desirable that the discrepancies between male and female in education be eliminated. In this regard the following constraints need to be addressed:

1. Gender discriminatory patriarchal attitude prevailing in the society.
2. Socio-economic and cultural constraints such as:
 - (a) Gender discrimination in family as manifested in unequal distribution of opportunities for development
 - (b) Gender stereotyping in socialization
 - (c) Perceived non-relevance of formal education for girls particularly in rural families
 - (d) Pressure on rural parents for early marriage
 - (e) Low levels of education among rural parents
 - (f) Lack of safety and security (in the street) and inadequate transport
 - (g) Deterioration of law and order situation
3. Poverty
 - (a) Pressure to engage in work before completion of schooling
 - (b) Need to help domestic chores
 - (c) Hidden cost of education (uniform, book, stationery, examination fees etc.)

4. Others

- (a) Inadequate facilities for women teachers
- (b) Lack of gender sensitivity in text books
- (c) Lack of participatory planning and implementation
- (d) Inadequate funds for education
- (e) Delay in supply of text books to children etc.

[Reference. Salma Khan (ed). PFA & NAP Implementation in Bangladesh, NGO Coalition on Beijing Plus Five, Bangladesh, P.179-192; Kondel, John (1994). Gender and Schooling in Thailand, working paper No 60, the Population Council, New York].

9. Advocacy Issues

The study revealed several areas of concern which need to be addressed in order to fulfill the pledges made in the Dakar Plan of Action. Some of these are:

a) Gap in the Enrollment Rate: It was observed that about 80% of the children (6-10 years) were enrolled and 20 percent left behind. In addition, one fourth of children dropout before primary level (V) is completed. Thus about 40 percent are out of school before 5th grade. The major reasons for this state of affairs are:

- Parents think their children are too young to go to school at age 6 years
- Their parents cannot bear educational expenses
- There is no school in the vicinity of their homes
- Education does not pay

b) Child Labour: About 10.8 percent of boys and 3.6 percent of girls are currently engaged as child labour. This high proportion of child labour is an impediment to development of children through proper education. Economic hardship of the parents and lack of concern for the children are the major reasons for employment of children in income earning activity. Such parents may be encouraged through motivational work and through provision of educational loans to provide education to their children.

c) High Indirect and Hidden Private Cost: Though primary education is free and books are supplied free of cost, the parents have to bear a significant amount of money on food, dress and other accessories. Measures must be thought out to reduce such indirect cost and opportunity costs of enrollment for the poor groups. Children from very poor families should be the primary targets for poverty alleviation projects aiming at young children because, they are far behind in nutrition and learning readiness.

d) Gender Disparity and Regional Differences: Reducing disparity among different geographical and administrative regions and between boys and girls is a challenge.

Efforts should be made to improve facilities for education in the areas lagging behind. Enrollment rates in Sylhet Division was lowest (75.5%) and literacy rate in Chittagong Hill tracts was the lowest (20%). Special attention should be given to improve communication infrastructure and establishment of primary schools in remote villages in these districts.

Gender disparity in education still persists. School attendance rate for girls is lower than that for boys at all age groups. Literacy rate for females was 35.6 percent against 47.6 percent for males (Education Watch 2002). Proportion of female teachers in primary schools is lower than that for males. PSMP (2000) showed only 43 percent of the teachers in GPS and 26 percent of the teachers in RNGPS are females. Low proportion of female teachers in schools make the schools less attractive to girls.

Efforts must be made to attract more female teachers and students into primary schools.

The following measures may be suggested to improve female participation in education:

- (a) Security of the girls at home and through their way to school should be increased. Law and order situation should be improved and social awareness to the situation should be raised.
- (b) More female teachers should be recruited in primary schools
- (c) Early marriage of girls should be discouraged

e) Poor quality of Education is a Problem for Universal Literacy

Education should aim at developing prescribed competencies in the children so that education can become practical and effective. This can be done through adequate training of the teachers and giving practices of competency-based tests for the students.

Quality of education also depends upon number of teachers per school and availability of educational aids/materials. At present the average number of teachers for school is lower than the number of classes/grades in each school. Therefore, all vacant posts must be filled up and provision must be made for more than one teacher per class to teach difficult subjects. There should be adequate supply of teaching materials. All teachers should be provided teacher-training.

The headmaster should make monitoring visits of class-rooms to ensure that teachers are following lesson plans.

f) Indigenous and Minority Groups

School enrollment as well as literacy rate is extremely low in some remote areas and among indigenous minority groups, such as in Sylhet and Chittagong Hill tracts. Such areas should be specially marked and schools should be established in those areas on a crash program basis. Minority indigenous groups (such as Marmas, Murangs, Santals, Garos) are specially disadvantaged/marginalized and should be given adequate support for their economic and social advancement. Improvement in this area requires political commitment.

g) Madrasah Education

According to National Education Commission report (2003), there are 18268 Ebtedaye madrasahs in the country who are teaching at the primary level. Following these Ebtedaye madrasahs there are 9,206 Dhakil, 1180 Alim, 1180 Fazil and 180 Kamils madrasahs in the country. The curriculum in the madrasahs is heavily loaded with Islamic theology, at the cost of physical, biological and social sciences.

The equivalence of madrasa education with mainstream education at all levels from primary to tertiary (graduation/post-graduation) levels is a matter of controversy which must be sorted out. The national education commission suggested to increase supply of educational materials free of cost and improve system of management and training of teachers, but did not suggest any measure to increase relevance and utility of such education in the context of globalization of world economy in 21st century.

h) Co-linearity between formal and non-formal education

Co-linearity between formal and non-formal education is a problematic issue. Non-formal education extends from primary level to infinitely higher levels in the form of continuing education. In the primary level the out of school children and adolescents learn basic literacy skills and some children join the mainstream at any level from class I to V, but practically there is no entry of the non-formal pupils at higher levels.

The major problems of NFE education are that NFE programs have no standardized length or duration of the course, no standardized curriculum, no defined learning outcomes, and no specific target population. Currently there is a lack of NFE evaluation results for all systems of NFE. Therefore it is difficult to ascertain the acquisition, retention and application of skills learned through NFE. To create equivalence, the NFE should follow the NCTB curricula and classify students by age levels.

i) State of Education Finance in Bangladesh

Nominal budgetary allocation for education sector has increased almost two and a half times during the last ten-year period (FY '94 – FY '04). Every year the nominal allocation is growing and it has emerged as a lead allocation sector in the budget. Apparently this growth is quite impressive. However, as a share in the total budget or of GDP, Bangladesh is still investing much less than what is ideally desired for a sharp breakthrough in education. Some Asian countries which have made significant achievement during the recent years, had their public spending on education at a much higher level. Also, as

a share of total budget the allocation of education sector in Bangladesh is declining over the years and as a share of GDP, it is almost stagnated at around 2.2 percent for more than a decade.

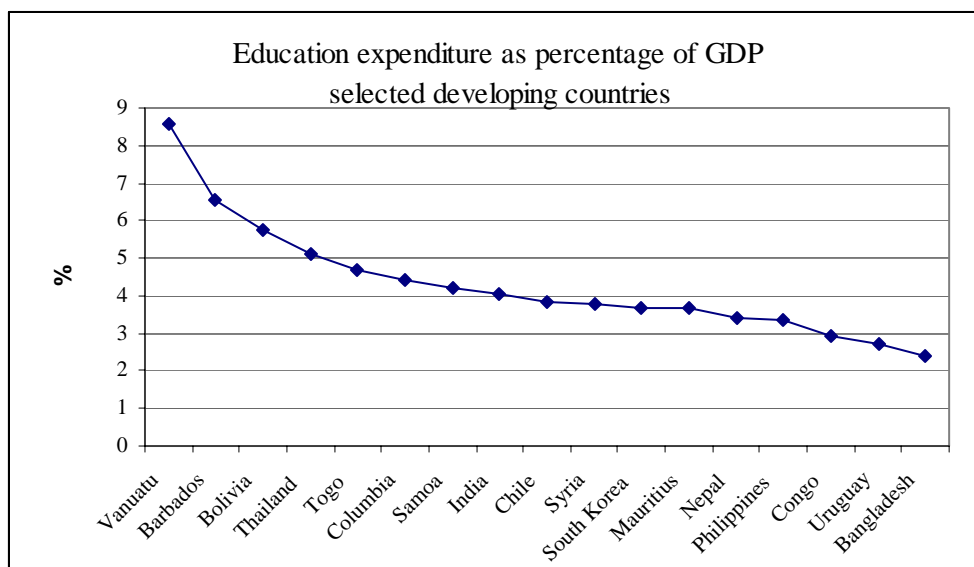
Table-11: Allocation for Education Sector

Year	As % of total budget	As % of GDP
1994	16.44	2.0
1995	15.82	2.4
1996	15.87	2.1
1997	15.65	2.2
1998	15.33	2.2
1999	14.99	2.2
2000	15.03	2.3
2001	14.69	2.2
2002	14.90	2.2
2003	14.01	2.0
2004	13.70	2.2
Change 1994-2004	-2.74	+0.2

Source: 1. World Bank Education Sector Review, 2000
 2. Education for All: National Plan of Action (202-2015) Draft
 3. Budget Review by a Civil Society Organization (Samunnaya)
 4. Budget Brief, MoF, GoB (different years).

The share of education expenditure as percentage of revenue budget during early 90s was as high as 20 percent (particularly in FY93). Within the subsequent period of about ten years it has come down to about 15 percent (FY03). The current budgetary allocation for education sector (2004-2005), as percentage of revenue budget is even lower — 14 percent. On the other hand, in the year 2004 education sector allocation as percentage of total budget has come down to 13.70 per cent from 16.44 percent in 1994 (Table-11).

Seen as a share of GDP, the scenario is not encouraging either. If we compare at global level, Bangladesh has one of the lowest levels of public expenditure for education in the world, expressed as ratio of GDP.



Source: UNESCO Institutes of Statistics

Bangladesh is spending only 2-2.5 per cent approximately of its GDP for education. During last ten years the ratio remained almost stagnated showing sign of no considerable improvement.

Allocation for Primary and Mass Education — State Finance

According to the constitution of Bangladesh, provision of basic/primary education to all citizens is a state responsibility. But within the education sector, allocation for primary and mass education sub-sector, although highest, is gradually declining as percent of allocation for the total education sector.

Table-12 below shows the Government's Revenue Budget, Development Budget and Total Budget respectively, over the years from 1993-4 to 2002-2003. It is indicated that over the last decade, the allocation for education as a percentage of total government revenue budget has fallen steadily from 19.7 percent in 1993-1994 to 15.9 in 2002-2003. It is also observed that the allocation for primary education declined as a percentage of revenue allocation for total education from 47.0 percent in 1993-94 to only 38.8 percent in 2002-2003 though in absolute monetary figures there was an increase in the budget. If the inflation rate over the last few years in discounted, the education budget actually diminished significantly.

Table-12: Government allocation primary education in Taka amount and as percent of total education sector allocation

Year	Primary Education (Tk.m.)			Primary education % of total education		
	Revenue	Development	Total	Revenue	Development	Total
1993-4	8,478.80	6,285.90	14,764.70	47	65.8	53.5
1994-5	8,659.60	8,577.90	17,237.50	43.1	56.5	48.9
1995-6	9,504.40	7,895.10	17,399.50	44.2	57.6	49.4
1996-7	9,982.00	8,059.10	18,041.10	43.5	51.9	46.9
1997-8	11,475.10	6,821.20	18,296.30	42.6	46.0	43.8
1998-9	11,990.00	8,171.20	20,161.20	40.4	46.7	42.7
1999-2000	13,120.80	9,364.50	22,484.50	40.3	47.3	42.9
2000-2001	13,700.00	11,225.80	25,008.60	41.0	49.8	44.7
2001-2002	14,280.00	11,477.70	25,757.70	38.2	53.7	43.8
2002-2003	14,770.00	15,900.00	30,670.10	38.8	54.7	45.7

Source: Official data from Primary and Mass Education, Government of Bangladesh; quoted in Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II), 2003-2008, January 2003.

Allocation in the development budget for primary education, however, increased from the 6.286 million in 1993-94 to 15900 million in 2002-2003. But as percentage of total education allocation it has declined from 65.8 percent in 1993-94 to 54.7 percent in 2002-2003. Considering the total budget, that is, revenue and development budget together, allocation in primary education has shown an increase in total Taka amount from Tk.14764.7 million in the year 1993-94 to Tk.30,670.1 million in the year 2002-2003. But the allocation as percentage of total allocation in education consistently marks a decline from 53.5 percent to 45.7 percent. The allocation only in 2002-2003 makes a small departure from the declining trend, as the allocation has been 45.7 percent, which is an increase from the allocation of 44.7 percent, the highest total education budget in the previous years between 1997-98 and 2001-2002. About the allocation figures one comment is due for careful audience that actual expenditure was less than the allocation. Precise figures of expenditure are not available for reporting in the absence of published documents.

Impact of Low Public Expenditure

An obvious consequence of low level of public expenditure is compromise with quality. It has been said that Bangladesh maintains one of the lowest cost education system by means of paying its teachers very low, oversized classes (i.e. a low teacher-student ratio), and expending least, sometimes almost nothing, for teaching-learning materials and training (The World Bank, 2000). Thus expenditure per student at primary school is equivalent to around \$13 per year. This results in very poor competency achievements by students. According to a recent research conducted by CAMPE – an NGO platform for campaign for education¹, few (less than 2 per cent) primary school graduates achieve the expected level of competency.

Inadequate Donor Response

In Dakar in 2000, rich countries pledged to provide extra aid necessary to enable the poor countries to achieve education for all. The UN calculated that at least US \$ 5.6 billion will be required per annum to materialize this promise. It was agreed that all the donor countries would contribute at least 0.7 percent of their gross national income (GNI), and to devote at least 4.14 percent of that aid to basic education. But unfortunately only 22 countries came forward with helping hands to keep the promise. If all the countries would do this, there would be enough aid to enable all children in the world go to school.

During 2002 estimated gross disbursement by 22 countries to basic education was 1139.93 million US dollars with an average of 51.81 million dollars by each country.

France, United States, Netherlands, UK and Japan made major contributions. Calculation shows that 22 countries contributed between 0.001 percent to .060 percent of their GNI as aid to basic education. On an average, all those countries donated 0.018 percent of their GNI. It appeared that they contributed only 36.64 percent of what was expected from them as per their own promise.

¹ Manzoor Ahmed and others (2003). *Literacy in Bangladesh: Need for A New Vision*. Dhaka: CAMPE

In order to achieve education for all the bulk of the basic education aid has to go to the poorest countries as they are most dependent on financial support and face most difficulties in meeting the international educational targets. It is reasonable also to support some middle income countries to improve their education program in specially poor areas. But it is gradually becoming clear that too many rich countries are determining which countries should receive aids for reasons other than poverty reduction such as cultural, economic, political or military links. This is hampering progress towards education for all. It is extremely urgent that the rich countries take a fresh look towards the poor countries that are following democratic rules and practising good governance.

Prospects for Community Financing

Existence of individual household level expenditure on private tutoring provides an opportunity to mobilize local level resources and to ensure greater and active community participation. Recent experiences from a project implemented by Dhaka Ahsania Mission in similar line lend strong support to this idea. CFLC – a child centered community development project, implemented in collaboration with Plan International Bangladesh – a US based PNGO, and sponsored by USAID, has a component on community participation in financing and management of “community tutorial support” for primary school students. Tutors are employed locally, trained and provided with locally developed materials to provide tutorial support to students before and after regular school hours. This project is being implemented in three sub-districts on a pilot basis. Evaluation shows that both rates of community participation and improvement in performance levels of students are encouraging. DAM is now actively seeking support to replicate the model in few more sub-districts and designing an advocacy campaign drawing on evidences from success of the project.

Poor quality of learning at school and, sometimes, school teacher's tendency to “holding back” instructions at classrooms compel parents to employ private tutors at home or send children to “coaching centers”. In poverty-ridden rural areas the poor parents are compelled to spend about Tk50-100 per month before the

examination periods. The figure for urban poor is slightly higher, Tk200-250². Findings of some other studies conducted on private expenditure of primary education suggest similar findings.³

i) Governance

Maladministration and corruption in the educational sector has far reaching effects in all tiers of the society. Hence, NPA-2 emphasized the need for transparency and accountability in teacher's employment, transfer, promotion of teachers, evaluation of teachers and students. It also emphasized the need for honesty and transparency in purchase and use of education materials, local level supervision and monitoring. Local beneficiary groups and vested interest groups are involved in pressurizing school administration for narrow interests. The most recent example of the negative effect of malpractice on education is the disruption of the non-formal education system in Bangladesh. The blame for maladministration and corruption has equally been labelled against GoB and NGOs. The external influential quarters, policy makers, public administration and its officers cannot deny their failure in keeping the system fully functioning.

The political environment marked by a strong competition for deriving financial benefits has vilified the educational management. The civil society is expressing their despair at the educational administration which is controlled by the government. The position of the local influentials in the traditional system of education is very strong and because of lack of reflection of public interest in their political agenda, public sentiments and concerns for good quality education has no place in the administration.

Most of the school committees are formed by influentials having political links, but no strong commitment to education.

The objective of the NPA-2 regarding transparency and accountability in all aspects of school administration is to improve the quality of education.

² Mia and Hassan (2003). *Cost of primary Education: Bangladesh Country Case Study*. Dhaka: Dhaka Ahsania Mission.

³ c.f. Rahman, Ali and others (2004). *Primary Education Budget Watch*. Dhaka: Power and Participation Research Center.

All activities in the management of education should be decentralized and vested on the district council for education. Educational activities and programmes of all districts should be integrated with other development programmes of the district. At lowest level of local government institution, the educational activities of the union/ward, should be coordinated by the district education council. The district education council should represent all strata of the society and aim at achieving the objectives of education through participation of the local community.