

Non-Formal Education System

Introduction

Poverty and illiteracy are interwoven in Bangladesh. Each is the cause and effect of the other. The Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes education as a fundamental right of every citizen. Access to education with equity and quality is a basis for human development, which in turn paves the way to poverty reduction and economic development. In pursuance of its constitutional obligations and commitments made in the international forums, Bangladesh is determined to ensure education for all within shortest possible period of time. Present government is committed to achieve 100% literacy by 2014.

During the period of 1974-2008, the literacy (15 + age group) rates of Bangladesh published in different Census and study reports in different years are given below:

- Census of 1974 : 25.9%
- Census of 1981 : 29.2%
- Census of 1991 : 35.3%
- BBS, 2001 : 47.9 %
- CAMPE , Education Watch, 2002: 41.4 %
- MOPME , 2002 : 54.8 %
- MOPME, 2003 : 65% (7+ above age group)
- UNESCO, ALSB 2005 : 45.2 %
- BBS report : 2006 : 53.68 %
- UNESCO: 2007 : About 52 million adults & adolescents are remaining illiterates,
- BBS, Literacy Assessment Survey 2008 : 48.8% (15+ age group)
- Annual Report of MoPME 2008 : 63% (7+ above age group).

The half of the illiterate population of the world is living in the South Asia. Bangladesh is one of the countries of South Asia. From various reports as stated above, it was found that about 50% of population of Bangladesh is illiterate. In this regard, there had been implementing literacy programs in Bangladesh from even before independence. The main events and actions regarding literacy programs are presented below:

1918: The first adult literacy program was commenced through establishing night school by an organized efforts.

1926: Establishment of 150 night schools for adult literacy in 12 Thanas (sub Districts) by 'Cooperative Society'. The program was continued up to the 2nd World War.

1954 : Adult literacy program was being implemented again in the country as a part of V-AID Programs.

1956 : A foreigner, named Mr. Bivar, had established adult literacy center in Dhaka. He had written some books for neo-literates (adult literacy course graduates) to enhance the literacy skills, life skills and livelihood skills for the learners. Within four years, 10,000 people had acquired literacy skills by the program.

- 1971: “Bangladesh Adult Education Council” was established in the newly independent Bangladesh. The council established 27 adult literacy center at the village ‘Rowmary’ under Rangpur district. The program was succeeded to eradicate illiteracy from the village.
- 1972: The constitution of the government of People’s Republic of Bangladesh has articulated the Universal Primary Education for all and all people have the opportunity for education as a fundamental right.
- 1972: “Bangladesh Cooperative Union” in collaboration of Mass Education Department, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, had launched a program to eradicate literacy. Through this program the village named “Kachubari Kristopur” under Thakurgaon district were become illiteracy free.
- 1973: The government of Bangladesh has nationalized primary education and made it free of cost to ensure Education for All.
- 1974: Final report of Qudrat-a-Khuda Education Commission was submitted in 1974. The Commission has emphasized on implementation of adult literacy and non-formal education program to eradicate illiteracy.
- 1975: Bangladesh Literacy Council was formed. The Society established mass education centers in 325 villages in 68 thanas under 18 districts and provide literacy skills to 18000 illiterates.
- 1980 : The Government allowed NGOs to experiment with a variety of delivery mechanisms to cater to the basic education needs to the disadvantaged population. In this year, the Mass education Program (MEP) had been launched throughout the country, which continued till 1982.
- 1981: “Each one teach one” program was initiated by the government.
- 1982-87: There were no literacy programs initiated by the government.
- 1988: Mass Education through Small Local Organizations programs was initiated which was ended in 1990.

1990-2008:

Adult literacy movement regained its momentum in early 1990s and was further strengthened with global concern and support. A movement to ensure Education for All gained movement at the regional and international level.

The year of 1990 was a significant year in history of Education in Bangladesh as the signatory of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtein, Thailand. The need for basic education was strongly articulated in the World Conference on EFA. A Summit Conference of Nine High Population Countries on Education for All held in New Delhi, India in 1993. The EFA goals were reaffirmed in the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000. The notion of Education for All was made concrete and placed within the international development agenda in the UN Millennium Declaration. The EFA comprises six interrelated goals that together reflect a holistic conception of education development. The MDG have also education related goals. The government of Bangladesh is committed to these declarations and has been

implementing various programs on formal primary education and Non-Formal Education in general, adult literacy in particular, to achieve the EFA goals as well as to achieve at least 50 per cent improvement in level of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

As a follow up to the WCEFA, Bangladesh prepared a realistic National Plan of Action (NPA) for EFA in 1995 with the following targets towards achieving EFA goals by 2000 :

- Increase gross enrollment at the primary level from 76% to 95%,
- Increase completion rate at the primary level up to 70%,
- Reduce dropout rate at 30%
- Increase the rate of literacy from 35.3% (1991) to 62%.

Target of NFE Program (1995-2010)

Age group	1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	Total (Million)
6-10	6.69	12.11	7.05	6.49	32.34
11-14	1.58	9.41	5.32	7.28	23.59
Total	14.49	32.39	12.62	13.77	73.28

Initiatives taken by Government so far :

Bangladesh took pragmatic measures in accelerating its Formal Primary Education Program as well as Non-Formal Education Program in the light of global awareness in the education sector as well as its national goals. These include:

a) Formal Primary Education:

- Enactment of Compulsory Primary Education in 1990.
- Introduction of Food for Education Program in 1993.
- Introduction of Stipend Program for Primary Students in 2002.
- Implementation of development projects to achieve the objectives of primary education.

b) Non-Formal Education

In line with the global and national EFA goals the government of Bangladesh undertook the following NFE Programs for reducing illiteracy from the country during the last two decades:

Integrated Non Formal Education Program (INFEP): The government of Bangladesh launched a major Non-Formal Education program titled “Integrated Non Formal Education Program (INFEP)” in 1991 while the literacy rate was 35.3%. For expanding primary and Mass Education Programs in a well organized manner, the Government constituted the Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) in 1992

The main objectives of INFEP were to increase the rate of literacy up to 62% by 2000 and to build an organized nationwide NFE infrastructure.

The components of INFEP were:

1. Pre-primary Education (4-5) Age group: Childhood development and Preparedness program for the children of 4-5 age groups aiming to make them mentally and physically prepared to adjust in primary education as well as to ensure quality education. The course duration was 1 year.

2. Basic Education (6-10) Age group: Basic education program for the children of 6-10 years age group who never enrolled in or dropped out from primary schools due to poverty or other various reasons, the program provided them basic education and life skills based education as second chance opportunities and it helped them to be included in main streaming of education. The course duration was 2 years.

3. Adolescent Education (11-14 Age group): The program had provided basic literacy and life skill based education to the Adolescents of 11-14 age group who never enrolled in primary school or dropped out due to poverty, working for earning etc. The course duration was 2 years.

4. Adult Literacy (15-45) Age Group: The program provided basic literacy and life skills for the illiterate adults of 15-45 age group to make them as literate and enlightened citizens. The course duration was 10 months.

5. Continuing Education(11-45) Age Group: :

Moreover, under Adult Literacy Component, there were three types of program delivery approaches like (a) Center Based Approach (CBA), (b) Total Literacy Movement (TLM) and (c) Primer Distribution Approach (PDA) to philanthropic organizations and persons. About 2.47 million peoples were provided with literacy services against 1.67 million as targeted in the program. Under the TLM Approach of INFEP program, Lalmonirhat and Chuadanga districts were declared illiteracy free. Programs of INFEP continued up to 1997. As a result of the program intervention stated above, the literacy rate went up to 51.01 % in 1996.

Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) : As the success of INFEP, the government has given more emphasis on expansion of NFE sector and hereafter in 1995 **Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE)** was formed under the development budget. DNFE extended its activities throughout the country during the period of 1996-2002. The NFE programs implemented under DNFE were: (1) Non-Formal Education Project-1, (2) Non-Formal Education Project-2, (3) Non-Formal Education Project-3 and (4) Non-Formal Education Project-4 (TLM). Besides Gram Shiksha Milon Kendra as continuing education center and Family Life Education Project has been implemented in this period.

Targets and achievement of different projects under DNFE

Name of the Project	Duration of the Project	Duration of the Course	Target Learner	Target	Target Achieved
NFE Project -1	January 1996- June 2001	CBA-10 Month TLM -9 Month PDA	15-24 years illiterate People	29.50 Lakh	29.61 Lakh
NFE Project -2	July 1995- June 2002	CBA-10 Month TLM -9 Month PDA	11-45 years illiterate People	59.02 Lakh	36.18 Lakh
NFE Project -3	January 1996- June 2004	CBA- 24 Month	8-14 years working children	2.70 Lakh	3.51 Lakh
NFE Project -4	April 1997- June 2003	TLM -9 Month PDA	11-45 years illiterate People	228.89 Lakh	92.25 Lakh

Success of such NFE programs brought wide international acclamation, which found expression when the prestigious “UNESCO Literacy Award 1998” was accorded to Bangladesh.

NFE-1, Learners Achievement

Change of attitudes, values, habits of Socio Economic status

Change of attitudes, values, habits of Socio Economic status	Previous Status % male	Post Previous Status % female	Previous Status % male	Post Previous Status % female
Savings	23.25	49.28	15.04	39.57
Family Planning	28.57	62.24	39.49	68.54
Income Generating Activities	30.36	49.76	12.22	25.21
Credit Program	6.02	11.57	5.64	12.31
Sending the children to school	24.68	44.81	34.54	54.96

Life Skill Consciousness :

Life Skill	Previous Status % male	Post Previous Status % female	Post Previous Status % male	Post Previous Status % female
Drinking Water of tube well	70.12	29.64	71.20	28.80
Washing hands before and after eating	34.70	62.53	36.58	60.34
Harvesting vegetables in house compound	31.57	65.24	29.06	67.86
Using Sanitary latrine	26.30	71.95	25.30	70.68
Refraining from child marriage	20.48	70.36	22.82	70.51

Up to September 2003 a total of 18 million individuals have been provided with illiteracy services and national literacy rate has been increased up to 65% and 7 districts Lalmonirhat, Chuadanga, Rajshahi, Magura, Joypurhat, Gazipur and Sirajgonj were declared illiteracy free. The Primary and Mass Education Division has been transformed into a full-fledged ministry titled “Primary and Mass Education (MoPME)” in 2003.

Later on, the TLM program was discontinued in 2002. There were only 4 NFE programs like (1) Basic Literacy for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children, (2) Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project-1(PLCEHD-1) within 32 districts (3) Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project-2 (PLCEHD-2) within 29 districts (4) Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project-3(PLCEHD-3) within 2 districts (Piloting) and Family Life Education (TA Project).

Estimated Costs (BDT.) Per Learner under Non-Formal Education Project 1 to 4

Project 1, 1st & 2nd phases: CBA	495.0
Project 1, 3rd & 4th phases: CBA	577.9
Project 1, 5th phases: CBA	599.7
Project 1, 1st phase: TLM	202.5
Project 1, 2nd phase: TLM	395.8
Project 2, CBA	495.0
Project 2, TLM	202.5
Project 3, CBA	1,846.0
Project 4, TLM	313.1

Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project (at a glance)

Name of the Project	Project Duration	Course Duration	Age group of target learner	Target	Target Achieved
PLCEHD-1	January 2001 - December 2007	3+6 = 9 month CBA	15-24 neo-literate and Drop out	16.56 Lakh	71%
PLCEHD-3	January 1996- June 2004	3+6 = 9 Month CBA	15-24	0.63 Lakh	100%

Description of Learners by Trade, Gender and Location

Trade	Total		Gender		Area	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Town (%)	Village (%)
Tailoring	625	52.1	26.2	78.1	55.7	36.4
Cow Fattening and Goat Rearing	241	20.1	36.2	4.0	17.6	31.4
Milch-Cow Rearing	219	18.3	23.4	13.0	16.2	27.2
Poultry	114	9.5	14.2	4.8	10.5	5.0

Status of Employment of Learners Before and After PLCE by Trade

Trade	Before PLCE				After PLCE			
	Total (Number)	Wage-Employed (%)	Self Employed	No IEA (%)	Total (No.)	Wage-Employed (%)	Self Employed	NO IEA (%)
Tailoring	460	11.5	73.7	14.8	460	16.7	75.0	8.3
Cow Fattening and Goat Rearing	392	17.9	74.5	7.7	392	18.4	78.8	2.8
Poultry	86	25.6	64.0	10.5	86	27.9	69.8	2.3

Impact of the above massive NFE programs implemented by INFEP and DNFE :

- Increased literacy rate from 35.3%(1991) to 65% in 2003 (MOPME 2003)
- It has to be mentioned that the above program has a positive impact on primary education and other cross cutting issues like health & nutrition, family planning, child & maternal health, water & sanitation, HIV/AIDS, other life skills and livelihood skills as human resource development through its curriculums, training, issue based discussion, trade-based technical training, social mobilization, orientation and mass gathering activities.
- According to the Report of MOPME (2008), the present status of literacy & primary education are given below:
 - ✓ The rate of literacy has been increased up to 63% at present while in 1991 the literacy rate was 35.2%.
 - ✓ Rate of Gross Enrollment : 98.8%
 - ✓ Rate of Net Enrollment:91.1%
 - ✓ Rate of Completion : 87.79%

The DNFE was defunct on 01/11/2003 and the projects : Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children(BEHTRUWC) and Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project-1(PLCEHD-1)were implemented directly under the MoPME. Due to this reason PLCEHD-2 project was suspended. Thereafter the literacy rate was decreased due to discontinuation of massive literacy programs.

Challenges & Problems before Bangladesh for achieving EFA goals:

Basic literacy program at the national level mostly remain discontinued for last few years. The consequence is that around half of the population of the country is still illiterate. According to the final report of NFE Mapping 2008, there are 373.50 lakh illiterates of 11-45 years age group in the country. As per the report of UNESCO: 2007, there are about 52 million adults and adolescents who do not know how to read and write and caculate. At present the data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (Literacy Assessment Survey 2008) indicate that the adult literacy rate in Bangladesh is 48.8 percent (15+’ age group).

So the challenges before Bangladesh for achieving EFA goals are still a big one

NFE Goals

The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has emphasized the expansion of education especially for primary and mass education in line with the following global and national EFA goals:

1) DAKAR Framework for Action (related to adult education):

- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs.
- Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in level of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

- 2) **NSAPR-2** : The National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction, NSAPR-2, popularly referred to as the PRSP of Bangladesh, has given priority on Human Resource Development and set targets for adult literacy, such as the rate of adult literacy (15 + age group) will be increased up to 100% by 2015.
- 3) **NPA-II**: The target of National Plan of Action-II (NPA-II) related to adult literacy is to increase the rate of adult literacy up to 90% by 2015.
- 4) **Mid-Term Budget Framework (MTBF)**:Mid-term Budget Framework (2008-09 to 2010-11) asserted that, the rate of literacy of the country will be increased up to 80% by 2010.
- 5) **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**: Non-Formal Education especially literacy and continuing education for adults and youths including life skills & livelihood skills development, is considered as the process of empowerment that contributes to human resource development and poverty reduction.
- 6) **NFE Policy Framework**: Asserting the strategic needs of literacy in reaching the national and global target of Education for All, the national Non-Formal Education Policy was adopted by the government of Bangladesh in 2006. The policy stressed on creating a community-based network of learning centres, extending opportunities for effective skill training and continuing education, and creating lifelong learning opportunities.