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ABSTRACT

Universalization of primary education (UPE) is one of the major priority goals of all countries in the region of Asia and the Pacific. The developing countries in particular, are now engaged extensively in the formulation and implementation of policies, plans, and programs aimed at making adequate and suitable opportunities for primary education available to all children as soon as possible. Lower participation rates of girls in primary education is seen as one of the main obstacles to achieving full universalization of primary education in some of the countries of the region. This volume, one of a series that provides a comparative view of the position of and progress made in UPE in six countries, with particular reference to girls' enrollment and participation in primary education, focuses on Bangladesh. The seven chapters in this volume are: (1) Introduction; (2) The Problem of Girls' Primary Education; (3) Factors Affecting Enrollment and Retention; (4) Physical Facilities and Female Teachers; (5) National Policy and Plans; (6) Special Programmes and Projects; (7) Conclusions and Recommendations. Nineteen data tables are included in this volume. (DB)

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Universal Primary Education for Girls



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PREFACE

Universalization of primary education (UPE) is one of the major priority goals of all countries in the region of Asia and the Pacific. The developing countries in particular, are now engaged extensively in the formulation and implementation of policies, plans and programmes aimed at making adequate and suitable opportunities for primary education available to all children as soon as possible.

Lower participation rates of girls in primary education is seen to be one of the main obstacles in achieving full universalization of primary education in some of the countries in the region.

In 1985, six member countries of the region were supported within the framework of the Asia and Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID), to prepare national studies focusing on problems and issues related to education of girls, programmes and plans for the promotion of girls education and the innovative measures and actions taken to improve their participation in education. The studies were carried out by national institutes and professional groups under the guidance of high level national steering committees for promotion of girls' education which were established by the Ministries of Education in the respective countries, at the request of UNESCO, ROEAP. A list of the members of the steering committee is given as an Annex.

The findings of the national studies were later reviewed and examined at a Regional Review Meeting on the Situation of Girls' Education in the Context of Universalization of Primary Education which was held in Bangkok in November 1985. This series of publications is an outcome of the collaborative and co-operative efforts of the member countries in understanding the tasks involved in universalizing the primary education of girls and the nature and extent of problems and issues associated with it.

This series provides a comparative view of the position of and progress made in UPE in six countries, with particular reference to girl's enrolment and participation in primary education. It is published with the view that the countries in the region, which have similar problems on education of girls, will find the information, experiences and conclusions useful in pursuing their tasks vigorously by drawing on the experiences of other countries with the same goals and objectives.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This study has been sponsored by UNESCO, Bangkok, through the Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO and conducted on behalf of a National Steering Committee by a team of researchers representing the Foundation for Research on Educational Planning and Development (FREPD), Dhaka, during 1985.

The sponsor of the study provided an outline suggesting the specific aspects to be covered. According to this outline, the broad areas of the study are: incidence of the problem of the poor rate of girls' participation in primary education; an analysis of the various facets of the problem and its correlates; national policies, programmes and projects which have been implemented for promoting girls' education, findings of research on the problem and evaluative studies; new directions of planned measures by the national authorities; and programmes and action recommended by the researchers for raising the rate of participation of girls in primary education.

Broadly speaking, the investigation has sought to analyse the situation of girls' education at the primary level over the ten-year period from 1974 to 1984. The overall objective is to identify suitable measures for increasing the participation rate of girls in primary education as well as improving the quality of education. The review of the situation has covered both formal education in primary schools and non-formal education programmes and some other special programmes in or outside the school system. The non-formal education particularly covers various innovative programmes. The population covered are children of 6 + to 10 + years and the educational stages of both pre-primary and primary have been investigated.

Incidence of the problem. The rate of girls' participation has been indicated by the enrolment and drop-out rates at the primary school. The rates are presented, as far as possible, by showing urban-rural and geographical/regional variations. The variations

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in rates have been further examined in terms of socio-economic characteristics of families such as literacy of parents, land-holding, occupation and income. Religious and cultural factors which are likely to have any bearing upon girls' education have also been pointed out. Attempts have been made to show if other special problems such as the problem of having access to educational institutions; the limitations of school facilities including the poor quality of teachers and inadequate physical facilities; the absence of sufficient number of female teachers; or the problem of getting school stationery and proper clothing significantly affect girls' school participation rates. These issues have been examined by an in-depth analysis within the limits of the available data.

Thus the issues of the poor rate of girls' enrolment and retention through to the end of primary school and the factors related to the problems have been brought to focus in studying the incidence of the problem.

National policy. The study has included a review of the national policies which have relevance to girls' education at the primary stage. The extent of implementation of the policies and their effectiveness has been discussed in order to show if the policies have so far brought about any significant change in the situation. Special attention has been paid to the current government policy and its implications in the light of the experience of the past and an assessment has been made of the problem as it appears at present and is likely to develop in the near future.

Programmes and projects. Experiences of specific programmes and special projects that have dealt with the promotion of girls' education in the country constitute an important area of the analysis. Evaluative studies of such programmes have been reviewed during the course of the present investigation in order to show their significance vis-a-vis the national policy for attaining the goal of universal primary education. Projects with innovative characteristics in planning, administration, curriculum, utilization of special indigenous resources, teaching materials and methods, supervision and teacher training have been given particular attention. Administrative and financial provisions for girls' education have been discussed with special reference to the training and employment of female teachers, reforms in the curriculum, use of the media and other technologies, and special incentives.

Research and evaluation. Critical factors in promoting girls' education or the obstacles to the increased participation of girls among various socio-economic groups and appropriate measures for overcoming the obstacles have occasionally been identified in research and evaluative studies. These have, therefore, been drawn upon as the various issues are analysed in the present investigation.

Given the limits of time, the present study is primarily based on secondary sources of data.

Information and documents, published and unpublished, from various relevant agencies have been pooled and presented as required by the study objectives. Statistical information has been used as far as possible from the available documents and reports particularly concerned with the situation analysis and anticipation of future needs in the field of girls' education at the primary level. On policy issues and implementation of programmes, thoughts and opinions of the concerned authorities at national, district and sub-district (Upazila) levels have been collected by directly interviewing appropriate personnel involved in programme management, policy and plan formulation.

It has been observed that available data particularly reflecting on the problems of girls' education are scanty. No empirical study has yet been exclusively concerned with the problems of girls' education. Sometimes reference has been made to their problems only as a part of general problems of primary education affecting both boys and girls. Over the past decade a good amount of literature has discussed the issues and problems of the development of women, particularly inspired by bureaucratic and middle class sensitivity to what has been called the 'Decade of Women' under the patronage of the United Nations. This literature is quite eloquent on the rights and privileges which women should enjoy in order to maximize their potential as human beings and to contribute to national development. It pointed out the deprivations of women in the education sector which largely accounts for their deprivation in other spheres of life and a generally inferior status in society. But such literature hardly included any data specifically on the education of primary school age girls. This is a reflection of the real state of affairs, where previously no government authority or non-government agency concerned itself with systematic collection and presentation of empirical information on primary education of girls.

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The conclusions of the present study aim at firming up realistic action proposals for improving the overall situation of girls' primary education and for creating the conditions which can sustain the increased rate of girls' participation in school for the fulfilment of the objective of universal primary education in Bangladesh. The recommendations point to the special provisions necessary to meet the needs of those who are usually deprived and are likely to remain so unless especially bold attempts are made in the formal and non-formal sectors of education to change their condition.

Chapter Two

THE PROBLEMS OF GIRLS' PRIMARY EDUCATION

Bangladesh covers an area of 55,598 square miles with an exploding population of over 100 million.¹ Over 90 per cent of its population live in rural areas. It is one of the least developed countries of the world. Eighty per cent of its population depend on agriculture for livelihood. Forty per cent of the rural population are landless, 60 per cent suffer from malnutrition and 80 per cent live below the poverty line.² Per capita food availability in the country dropped from 16.5 ounces per day in 1961 to 15.5 ounces per day in 1981. Per capita income in Bangladesh is about 120 US dollars per annum which is one of the lowest in the world. A high degree of illiteracy and unemployment exists.

The population growth rate is 2.36 per cent per annum (1981 census). By the end of this century the population is expected to double itself. The composition of population showed a high dependency ratio with 47 per cent of the population being under 14 years, and will require an increasing quantum of educational facilities every year. Women and girls constitute 49 per cent of the total population. "The most important demographic implication of the age structure in Bangladesh is that every year an increasing number of females will enter the reproductive age, which disproportionately increases the growth potential of the country."³

The above socio-economic and demographic factors pose a general problem to universalization of primary education and participation of women and girls in education. It was revealed by a national level study that while 30 per cent of the families belonging to the upper socio-economic status sent all their children to primary

¹ Government of Bangladesh, *Census Report*, 1981.

² *Ibid.*

³ Women for Women, *The Situation of Women in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1979.

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schools, 56 per cent in the bottom socio-economic group sent none of their children to school.⁴

The socio-economic realities described above indicate that the problem of girls' education in Bangladesh has its origin in the past and is linked with the social and economic set up of this sub-continent. In a tradition-bound society like ours women and girls have an inferior status imposed upon them. They are mostly illiterate and tradition-bound and a vast majority of them are victims of severe poverty, hunger, destitution and malnutrition, as also their menfolk are. But women are more deprived than men.⁵

Equal access to educational opportunity for both sexes has been guaranteed by the constitution.⁶ In spite of that, female participation in education is significantly less than that of men. Female literacy has been as low as 16 per cent against 31 per cent for men. The situation is much worse for the rural women where about 90 per cent of the female population live. This low literacy rate is highly correlated with the participation of children, particularly girls, in education. Ellen Sattar in this regard observed that this had an obvious impact on girls' education so that in the villages less than half the families would send girls to school and they would not object to their dropping out after sending them to school.⁷

Consequently sex-wise imbalances occur in the participation rate between boys and girls. The problems of girls' primary education are also characterised by rural-urban, regional and locational and special group or ethnic variation.

Girls participation in primary education has always been low as compared to boys. In 1983 only 25 per cent of the total primary age population (6-10) of girls were enrolled in the primary schools. Over the last decade the rate of female enrolment remained more or less stagnant and even decreased compared to the steady growth of female population of the corresponding age group. Table 1 shows

⁴ S A Quadir and K S Ahmed, *Role of Education Projections in Educational Planning in Bangladesh: National Contribution*, NFRHRD, Dhaka, 1980.

⁵ FREPD, *Assessment of Female Education in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1980.

⁶ *The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1972.

⁷ Ellen Sattar, *Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1982.

the participation rate of girls of 6-10 age group in primary education over a period of 10 years.

Table 1. Participation rate of primary school age girls (6-10) in primary education in Bangladesh (1974-1983)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Primary school age population</i>	<i>Participating girls</i>	<i>Rate of participation of girls per cent</i>
1974	10,789,000	2,661,459	24.66
1975	11,151,000	2,838,021	25.46
1976	11,413,000	3,116,583	27.31
1977	11,681,000	3,160,658	27.11
1978	11,955,000	3,048,078	25.50
1979	12,236,000	3,040,516	24.85
1980	12,523,000	3,011,024	24.05
1981	13,740,000	3,158,816	22.9
1982	13,750,000	3,400,000	24.73
1983*	13,750,000	3,450,000	25.00

Source: BANBEIS, 1984.

* estimated.

The table reveals that in spite of constituting almost 50 per cent of the primary age population, girls' participation is significantly less than that of boys. The situation has not improved substantially even after the introduction of UPE in 1980 under the Second Five Year Plan (SFYP). The SFYP had set the target of bringing 91 per cent children of primary age-group (6-10) in the schools by the end of 5-year plan period.⁸ In the projected enrolment of both boys and girls it was shown that by 1985 about 92.53 per cent boys and 90.36 per cent girls would come to the schools.⁹ But by the end of 1984 the rate of girls' enrolment looked too gloomy. There was a sharp gap between the projected estimate and the actual performance. The target set for 90 per cent participation by 1985 appears rather unrealistic.

⁸ Planning Commission, *The Second Five Year Plan of Bangladesh, 1980-1985*, Dhaka, 1983.

⁹ *Ibid.*

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Figure 1 and Table 2 show the enrolment situation of both sexes during the same period.

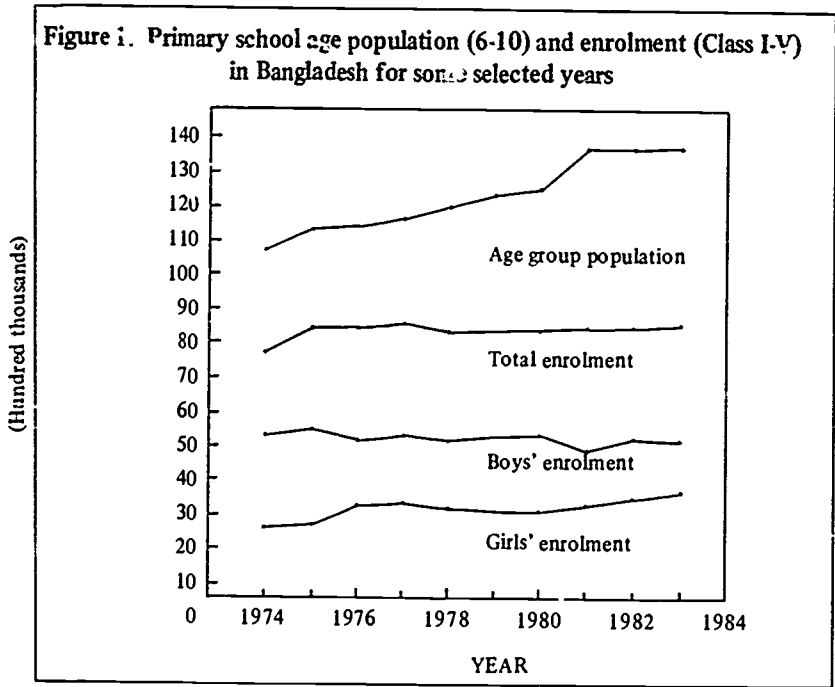


Table 2. Enrolment in primary schools by sex, (1974-1983)

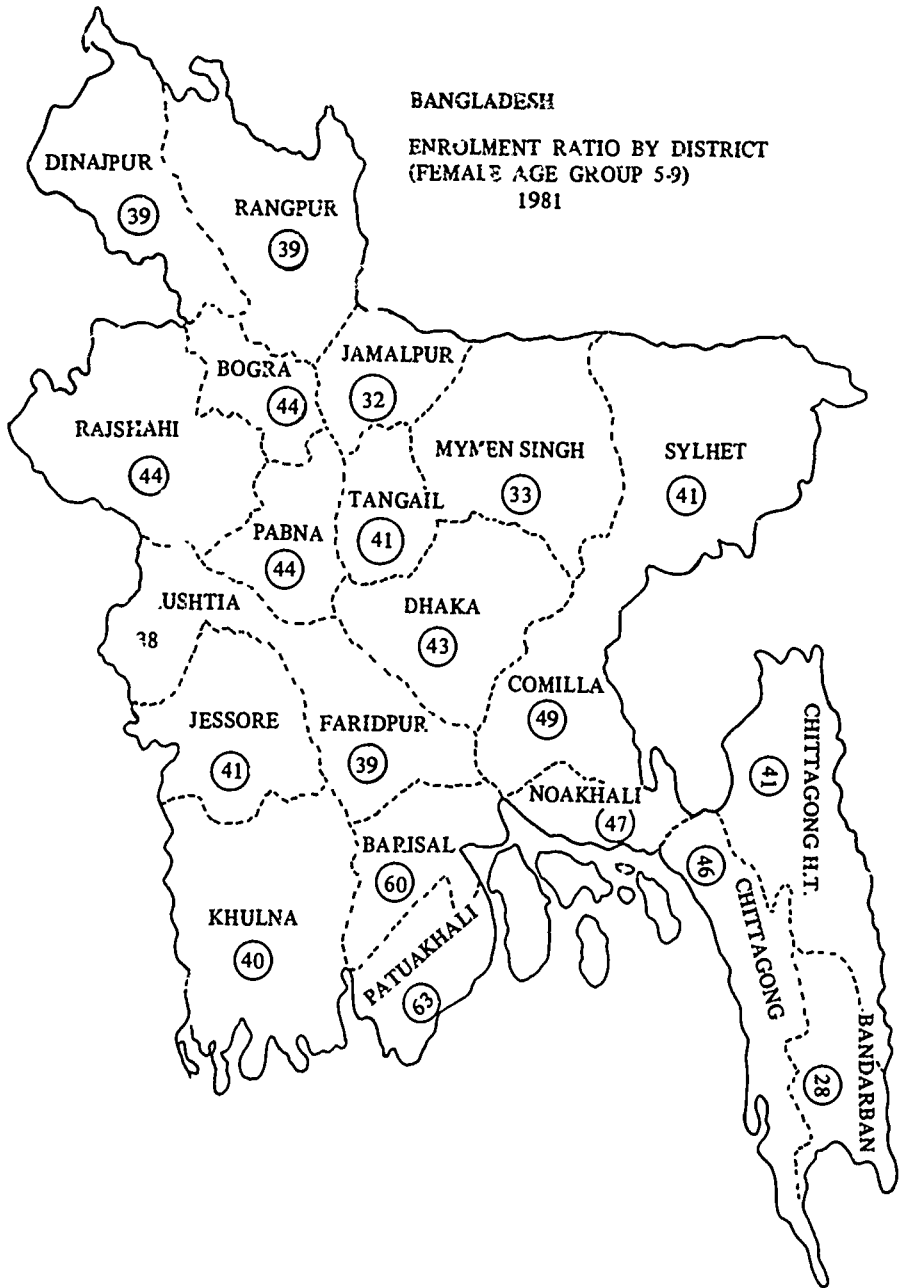
<i>Year</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>
1974	5,186,100	2,661,459	7,747,559
1975	5,510,813	2,839,021	8,349,834
1976	5,172,309	3,116,583	8,288,892
1977	5,257,000	3,160,658	8,417,658
1978	5,179,872	3,048,078	8,227,950
1979	5,187,834	3,040,516	8,235,237
1980	5,178,364	3,011,024	8,219,313
1981	4,810,765	3,158,816	8,285,804
1982*	5,000,000	3,400,000	8,400,000
1983*	5,000,000	3,550,000	8,450,000

Source: BANBEIS, 1984.

* Estimated.

BANGLADESH

ENROLMENT RATIO BY DISTRICT
(FEMALE AGE GROUP 5-9)
1981



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Table 2, shows the wide imbalances between enrolment of both sexes and a slight increase in girls enrolment after 1980. During the period 1976-1977, girls enrolment has increased by roughly 300,000 but after that period it continued to decline until 1980. There was a decline in boys enrolment too. This may be mainly due to economic stress hitting the marginal families and partly miscalculation of the enrolment statistics.

The following chart shows the rates of school enrolment (boys and girls) worked out by different research organizations over different periods.

Year	Organization	Percentage and Explanation
1978	NFRHRL	40 per cent (44 per cent for boys and 33 per cent for girls) for the age group 5-10, Computed from indepth Study of 23 villages.
1980	NFRHRD	53 per cent (57 per cent for boys and 48 per cent for girls) for the age group 5-14 Computed from indepth study of 8 villages.
1981	GOB/MOF BANBEIS	Enrolment rate about 68 per cent (79 per cent for boys and 58 per cent for girls) for the age group 5-10.
1983	MOE Mid-term Evaluation of UPE	57.4 per cent (46.4 per cent for girls) for age group 6-10, based on 1 per cent Sample of all schools in IDA area.
1984	BIDS Introducing Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh	51 per cent (58 per cent for girls in all villages), 68 per cent (66 per cent for girls in all IDA") for the age group 6-10.

It appears from the chart that of all the figures, the BANBEIS figure of enrolment is the highest. The mid-term evaluation finds it to be 57.4 per cent and the BIDS study shows the rate of enrolment as 59 per cent for the age-range 6-10. In this regard Qadir and Kundu¹⁰ observe that in every area the proportion of girls enrolment has been lower than boys.

Class-wise distribution of enrolment gives a more dark picture of girls participation in the country which is presented in Table 3.

¹⁰ S.A. Qadir and S.K. Kundu *Introducing Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*, BIDS, Dhaka, 1985.

Table 3. Primary school enrolment by class and sex for 1981

Classes	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
I	2,210,886	45	1,592,464	48	3,803,250	46
II	978,941	20	639,708	19	1,618,649	20
III	742,011	15	475,754	14	1,217,765	15
IV	579,949	12	366,139	11	946,088	11
V	440,839	9	265,730	8	706,569	9
	4,952,626	100	3,339,795	100	8,292,421	100

Source: BANBEIS, January, 1984.

Data presented in Table 3 show clearly that most (65 per cent) of the students in the primary schools are in grades I and II and a very small section (9 per cent) of the total enrolment is in grade V. The number of females in every grade is much less than that of male students. The percentage of female enrolment in Grades I-V in 1981, varied from 48 to 8 per cent. As the girls move from lower to the upper classes, percentages start to fall sharply.

The large enrolment in grade I has been a trend throughout the period 1971-1972 to 1983-1984. This may be due to a hidden baby class in grade I. No data of girls in baby class can be made available. Moreover, several age groups may be clustered together in grade I as a result of late enrolment or failure and repetition.

There is hardly any grade-to-grade difference of enrolment between boys and girls. Enrolment of both boys and girls is higher in the lower grades (I and II) and lower in higher grades III, IV, V. The gradewise enrolment situation points to the fact that out of the total enrolment, very few students cross grade II and still fewer complete grade V.

No matter how small the size may be in respect of enrolment of the corresponding age group, girls' enrolment has started to show an upward trend both at the micro and national level. The enrolment ratio between boys and girls now stands at 59:41. In 1951 and 1961 the enrolment ratio for girls was only 19.30 per cent and 27.18 per cent respectively. This has been observed by different studies carried out by different organizations in the country. The mid-term evalua-

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tion report of the UPE (IDA) project¹¹ presents that overall enrolment rate in the survey areas has registered an annual increase of 7.4 per cent and the enrolment rate for girls has increased about 6 per cent. One study by ISWR¹² and one by IER¹³ showed that female enrolment and attendance increased in the primary schools of the survey areas in 1983.

Despite this improvement in participation rate, there exists a vast majority of out-of-school girls of primary age population. It has also been observed that the proportion of out-of-school girls is alarmingly high compared to out-of-school boys.¹⁴ Considering the primary enrolment of girls about 75 per cent of them remain outside the formal school system. This compares with 64 per cent for out-of-school boys of the same age. Not only is the number of out-of-school girls far greater than that of boys but there is also a wide variation in the proportion of female out-of-schoolers, in different districts of Bangladesh.

The cause of non-attendance or factors affecting girls remaining out of schools are discussed in Chapter Three.

Lack of data both at the macro and also at the micro level on this differential makes it difficult to assess the imbalances between urban and rural enrolment of girls. However, it is an established fact that in Bangladesh there is a marked differences between the urban and rural enrolment rate of girls. An NFRHRD study¹⁵ showed that in 1978 girls' enrolment was higher in urban government schools (44.94 per cent) than rural schools (38.38 per cent). This was also true for the private rural and urban primary schools. The same study revealed that in rural-urban differences, Dhaka division had the lowest percentage of rural enrolment followed by Chittagong. While

11 Ministry of Education, *Mid term Evaluation of the Universal Primary Education (IDA) Project*, Dhaka, 1983.

12 Ahmadullah Mia *et. al* *Situation of Female Enrolment and Drop-out in Primary School*, ISWR, D.U., 1984.

13 Kamrunnessa Begum, *et. al* *Relationship of High Attendance of Students of Class I-V with variables like Teachers, Schools and Families of one UPE (ILA) Project Areas in Brahmanbaria*, IER., D.U., 1984.

14 Shamima Islam, *Women's Education in Bangladesh. Needs and Issues*, (2nd edition), FREPD, Dhaka, 1982.

15 S.A. Qadir & K.S. Ahmed : *op cit*.

Rajshahi Division had the highest percentage of urban enrolment (48.33) followed by Chittagong division. The NFRHRD study also revealed that on an average in all categories of rural schools, 62 per cent of the total enrolment were boys and 38 per cent girls. The corresponding percentages for the urban areas were respectively 56 per cent for boys and 44 per cent for girls. The highest percentage of rural girls (46.66 per cent) was found in Kushtia district and the lowest in Chittagong.

Enrolment of primary school age girls has increased over the decade but the rates of increase in different areas differ widely (see Table 4). Region-wise enrolment of girls in different grades (Table 4) shows that Chittagong Division has got the highest number of girls followed by Dhaka. Rajshahi Division has the lowest number of girls enrolled in different grades. District-wise enrolment of girls against the total primary age-group population of the concerned districts (Ref: BANBEIS) reveals that Barisal ranks highest (30 per cent) followed by Patuakhali (29 per cent). Lowest enrolment was found in Chittagong hill tracts (15 per cent) and Bandarban, followed by Jamalpur and Mymensingh.

There is no such data available on the participating girls coming from the special group/ethnic background at the macro level. The research team could not trace any other study of this category at the micro level either except an NFRHRD study. In Islam's¹⁶ and also in a FREPD study¹⁷, it was found that Rangpur, Sylhet, Dinajpur and Chittagong Hill Tracts had the lower percentage of participating girls. These districts have substantial numbers of different ethnic populations. BANBEIS data also show a low enrolment rate in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Bandarban, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Bogra and Khulna. Low participation also prevails in Haor, Beel, Char and mountainous regions.

Data on participation of girls in primary education by religion is not available. But from the literacy rate of different religious groups it may be said that girls coming from Hindu, Buddhists and Christian families participate more than those from Muslim families in primary education. Muslim families being more tradition bound

¹⁶ Shamima Islam, *op cit.*

¹⁷ FREPD, *Study on The Situation of children in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1981.

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and illiterate do not consider education more valued compared to other aspects of living. Also in the NFRHRD study it was shown that in the survey areas participation of Hindu children is higher (45.09 per cent) than that of Muslim children (42.50 per cent) except in the Srimangal area.

Table 4. District-wise enrolment of girls by age and grades in government primary schools, 1981 (thousands)

District	Grade I	G-II	G-III	G-IV	G-V	Total
	Age (5-6)	(6-7)	(7-8)	(8-9)	(9-10)	
1. Dhaka	151	70	44	33	240	322
2. Faridpur	74	25	20	16	13	148
3. Jamalpur	35	11	8	6	4	64
4. Tangail	45	13	10	8	7	82
5. Mymensingh	96	31	23	18	12	179
Dhaka Division	401	150	105	81	276	795
6. Chittagong	78	34	29	24	18	183
7. Chittagong Hill Tracts	11	3	2	2	1	18
8. Bandarban	2	5	3	3	2	3
9. Comilla	127	57	40	28	19	272
10. Noakhali	56	31	25	21	15	146
11. Sylhet	93	35	26	19	15	187
Chittagong Division	367	170	125	97	70	809
12. Rajshahi	78	39	30	23	13	182
13. Pabna	60	25	17	14	10	125
14. Bogra	37	19	15	19	8	98
15. Rangpur	94	45	33	23	15	210
16. Dinajpur	53	17	13	10	7	101
Rajshahi Division	322	145	108	89	53	716
17. Khulna	56	26	22	18	15	137
18. Jessore	63	27	20	15	12	14
19. Kushtia	36	14	10	7	6	73
20. Barisal	125	32	28	24	17	225
21. Patuakhali	607	14	10	8	7	100
Khulna Division	885	113	90	72	57	549

Source: BANBEIS, 1984.

Universalization and the promotion of girls education in this context will not carry any meaning if the continuation or retention rate does not follow a steady pattern. Unfortunately there is no exact data available on retention and drop-out rate as such at the macro level. However on the basis of official information available on grade and sex-wise enrolment of some selected years, retention together with attrition rates have been calculated. Tables 5 and 6 show primary school enrolment of girls of some selected years and attrition rates of primary school children.

Table 5. Enrolment of girls by grade for some selected years (1977-1981)

Year	I	II	III	IV	V
1977	1,243,692				
1978		663,048			
1979			431,272		
1980				336,330	
1981					265,454 (21 per cent of class I)

Source: BANBEIS, 1984, p. 38.

Table 5 reveals that only 21 per cent of girls of the Class I enrolment has moved up to Class V. This includes the percentage of the repeaters.

Table 6. Enrolment in grade I, II, and III and attrition rates in corresponding higher classes (1973-1975 - 1979-1981)

Year	I	II Enrol	Att. Rate	III		IV		V	
				Enr.	Attr.	Enr.	Attr.	Enr.	Attr.
	thousands								
1973	3,619	1,524		1,081					
1974		1,579	56%	1,243	18%	907	16%		
1975				1,183	25%	947	24%	689	24%
1979	2,644	1,356		1,033					
1980		1,415	46%	1,090	20%	850	18%		
1981				1,218	14%	946	13%	707	17%

Source: Calculated from data of the IER Survey (1973-1975) and BANBEIS Publication 31.

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Therefore it can be said that girls' retention rate is lower in the higher classes which indicates high attrition rate in the lower classes as represented in Table 6. The official figures on which the retention rate have been calculated do not give the number of repeaters in various classes but repeaters are counted as drop-outs. The school mapping survey mentioned on an average 20.32 per cent repeaters for all classes.

Findings of some micro-level in-depth studies also highlighted the problems of high drop-out at the lower classes, which means low retention in subsequent classes. In this regard the IER survey¹⁸ observed that in 1974 of all the classes, the highest repetition rate occurred in Class I both in rural and urban areas. Repetition rates for all classes for both sexes were higher in rural areas and girls repeat more than boys. And promotion rate for boys was slightly higher than girls.

The IER survey mentioned that drop-out rates for girls were higher than boys in all classes and particularly much higher in Classes I and II and also in Class V. The NFRHRD¹⁹ report provides drop-out rates for the year 1973-1978. According to the study, in rural areas 80 students per hundred leave the school and in urban areas it is 63 per cent and in Dhaka city 53 per cent.

The study also reported that on an average 10.69 students successfully complete primary education (pass Class V) from a school. In urban areas the number is 28. Final output per teacher, therefore, works out to be 2.65. This study did not focus any separate findings on girls drop-out rate, but on the basis of the trend it can be said that girls are the major drop-outs. The number of girls completing schools successfully is very insignificant compared to boys in the rural areas.

Another Study²⁰ mentioned that, "the school records for various grades, I through V, from 1980-1984 show a high drop-out rate for each village under study". The report also revealed that the highest drop-out occurred in grades I and II and that those who

18 I.E.R., *Survey of Primary Schools*, Part I, Dhaka, 1977.

19 S.A. Qadir and K.S. Ahmed. *op cit.*

20 Ahmadullah Mia et al. *op cit.*

completed grade II had generally shown a high probability of completing grade V.

All those micro-level research findings indicate a trend which may be represented as the national drop-out situation for girls.

Reasons for dropping out appear to be similar in almost all the studies. These are (i) poverty of parents; (ii) lack of education of adult members of the family; (iii) high opportunity cost as the girls grow up; (iv) malnutrition and disease; (v) social attitudes and taboos; (vi) high indirect cost; and (vii) lack of proper school environment. In this regard, Ellen Sattar observed that drop-out is related to non-attendance. The majority of the non-attenders are girls either from very poor homes or from strict purdah observing homes.²¹

One of the FREPD studies²² maintained that reasons for dropping out appear to vary substantially from area to area. Although the economic factor has been singled out as a major factor, the percentage of dropping out due to this varies among localities.

Given the present context of enrolment and retention situation in Bangladesh, a population and enrolment projection (1985-1995) has been made. Looking at the projection data it may rightly be observed that if 90 per cent children are to be covered with a major thrust to promote girls enrolment under UPE, factors affecting enrolment, retention and drop outs need to be assessed realistically and accordingly improved.

21 Ellen Sattar, *op cit.*

22 FREPD, *Assessment of Female Education in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1983.

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Table 7. Population projection of Bangladesh (medium variant)

Year	Sex	(thousands)					
		Age					
		5	6	7	8	9	10
1985	Total	3,222	3,109	2,999	2,895	2,795	2,699
	Female	1,560	1,504	1,451	1,400	1,352	1,307
1986	Total	3,281	3,203	3,096	2,991	2,888	2,788
	Female	1,569	1,550	1,498	1,446	1,397	1,349
1987	Total	3,357	3,265	3,185	3,084	2,984	2,882
	Female	1,610	1,565	1,541	1,491	1,442	1,393
1988	Total	3,436	3,341	3,249	3,166	3,072	2,976
	Female	1,553	1,606	1,561	1,531	1,484	1,438
1989	Total	3,517	3,419	3,324	3,232	3,148	3,059
	Female	1,653	1,649	1,603	1,558	1,521	1,478
1990	Total	3,602	3,499	3,402	3,307	3,216	3,129
	Female	1,745	1,694	1,645	1,599	1,554	1,511
1991	Total	3,692	3,589	3,482	3,387	3,276	3,209
	Female	1,837	1,744	1,690	1,644	1,594	1,551
1992	Total	3,782	3,679	3,562	3,467	3,346	3,289
	Female	1,847	1,754	1,695	1,684	1,629	1,591
1993	Total	3,882	3,739	3,622	3,527	3,406	3,359
	Female	1,854	1,774	1,723	1,714	9	1,626
1994	Total	3,992	3,809	3,702	3,597	3,476	3,429
	Female	1,889	1,809	1,763	1,749	1,694	1,661
1995	Total	4,092	3,889	3,772	3,667	3,546	3,508
	Female	1,959	1,849	1,818	1,784	1,739	1,701

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics.

Assumption I

Table 8. Projected primary enrolment for 1985-1990
by age and grade, both sexes (6-10 years)

(thousands)

Year	Total	Grade I (6 yrs)	Grade II (7 yrs)	Grade III (8 yrs)	Grade IV (9 yrs)	Grade V (10 yrs)
1985	8,140	2,903	1,913	1,982	1,071	871
1986	8,513	3,075	1,961	1,460	1,120	897
1987	8,896	3,204	2,067	1,504	1,182	939
1988	9,339	3,392	2,158	1,580	1,219	990
1989	9,665	3,431	2,280	1,651	1,280	1,023
1990	10,012	3,541	2,319	1,742	1,337	1,073
1991	10,372	3,655	2,369	1,842	1,397	1,123
1992	10,762	3,775	2,429	1,947	1,467	1,183
1993	11,162	3,905	2,499	2,057	1,537	1,273
1994	11,582	4,035	2,579	2,157	1,617	1,373
1995	12,032	4,125	2,679	2,192	1,705	1,483

Assumption. (1) The enrolment projection made above is based on population projection under medium variant, (2) the rates of repetition, promotion and drop-out used are those of the medium evaluation of UPE (IDA) Project (1983), (3) the initial intake in grade I till 1990 has been increased by 1 per cent annually reaching 75 per cent of the projected 6 year-age population in 1990.

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Assumption II

Table 9. Projected primary enrolment for 1985-1990
by age and grade, both sexes

(thousands)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Grade I (6 yrs)</i>	<i>Grade II (7 yrs)</i>	<i>Grade III (8 yrs)</i>	<i>Grade IV (9 yrs)</i>	<i>Grade V (10 yrs)</i>
1985	8,965	2,905	2,115	1,641	1,269	1,032
1986	9,400	3,112	2,129	1,747	1,325	1,086
1987	9,835	3,251	2,281	1,859	1,410	1,130
1988	10,301	3,407	2,383	1,884	1,419	1,207
1989	10,651	3,450	2,497	1,968	1,520	1,215
1990	11,032	3,550	2,529	2,063	1,588	1,301
1991	11,413	3,650	2,789	2,369	1,407	1,163
1992	11,813	3,775	2,919	2,424	1,547	1,238
1993	12,233	3,800	3,059	2,494	1,667	1,320
1994	12,673	3,925	3,219	2,579	1,797	1,420
1995	13,173	4,130	3,389	2,694	1,937	1,530

Assumption. (1) The enrolment projection made above is based on population projection under medium variant; (2) the intake in grade I includes children of pre-primary group comprising roughly 20-25 per cent of the grade I enrolment.

Assumption III

Table 10. Projected primary enrolment for 1985-1990
by age and grade, both sexes

(thousands)

Year	Total	Grade I (6)	Grade II (7)	Grade III (8)	Grade IV (9)	Grade V (10)
1985	1,315	2,905	2,878	2,699	2,581	2,450
1986	14,154	3,112	2,897	2,873	2,693	2,577
1987	14,805	3,251	3,103	2,892	2,867	2,689
1988	15,498	3,407	3,242	3,098	2,887	2,863
1989	16,059	3,450	3,397	3,236	3,092	2,883
1990	16,701	3,550	3,440	3,391	3,230	3,087
1991	17,343	3,650	3,540	3,491	3,330	3,229
1992	17,985	3,775	3,680	3,591	3,430	3,371
1993	18,627	3,875	3,800	3,691	3,530	3,493
1994	19,269	4,000	3,900	3,800	3,639	3,615
1995	20,000	4,150	3,990	3,950	4,880	3,836

Assumption. (1) Enrolment projection made above on population Projection under medium variant, (2) the rate of drop-out assuming to be reduced by 1 per cent annually from the one obtained in the mid-term evaluation of UPE (IDA) project, (1983) and auto-promotion from grade I through V has been assumed, (3) the intake in grade I includes children of pre-primary group comprising roughly 20-25 per cent of Grade I enrolment.

Chapter Three

FACTORS AFFECTING ENROLMENT AND RETENTION

The situational analysis of girls' enrolment and retention in the previous chapter indicates that participation of girls in primary education is a dependable variable in Bangladesh. This is more so because of the facts that primary education is not yet compulsory and the sheer poverty of more than 80 per cent of the people forces them to live below the poverty level. Participation of girls in primary education usually depends on the socio-economic status of the family (income, occupation, land-holdings, size of the family and level of education), the community's attitudes towards girls education, the school environment (physical and instructional facilities, curriculum, teaching), and management factors (supervision management, motivation and community relations).

These factors affecting participation and continuation have also been substantiated by various research studies on primary education. No studies especially meant for promotion of girls' primary education are available but studies done for primary education as a whole covered some aspects of girls also.

The aspects of school participation are defined by Quadir and Kundu¹ as (a) children who never attended school; (b) those who dropped out; and (c) those who are currently attending school. With this definition, girls' participation is usually found to be associated positively with the variables described above. Poverty can be singled out as one of the major obstacles in girls' enrolment and retention in the schools. In the villages, girls start household work earlier than boys. They start performing this helping role when they should be sent to schools. Various studies have found a positive correlation between girls' participation and the socio-economic status of the family.

¹ S A Qadir and S K Kundu, *Introducing Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*, BIDS, Dhaka, 1985.

According to a study by Islam,² poverty and burden of opportunity cost and/or incidental costs were too heavy for about 90 per cent of the non-enrolled cases and as such can be taken to be the reason for their non enrolment. Qadir and Salahuddin mentioned in their study³ that in all categories of families in the survey areas the proportion of boys going to school was larger than girls, the gap being the largest in the mid-category.

Girls' participation and family status. Family status may be referred to here as income, occupation, education, land-holdings, size of the family, attitudes of the family and location (rural or urban area) of the family. In a recent study,⁴ inter correlations among dependent variable participation and independent variable family status were computed. The findings of the study are as follows:

- the highest correlate of participation was the highest level of education attained by the household ($r = .73$), followed by the head's education ($r = .54$), household economic status ($r = .49$) and land ownership ($r = .37$).

The last correlation with land ownership, obviously was low ($r = .25$) for town areas.

The highest family education attained by any member of the household explained 53 per cent and 50 per cent of the variation in IDA and non-IDA villages respectively.

The study maintained that all these correlations were significant because of the large sample size covering both IDA and non-IDA schools.

These findings above also reinforce similar findings of a previous study⁵ carried out in 1980 investigating the status of the family on the enrolment of 5-14 year old children. For the purpose of the

² Taherul Islam, *Social Justice and the Education System in Bangladesh*, Bureau of Economic Research, Dhaka University, Dhaka, 1973.

³ S.A. Qadir and K.S. Ahmed, *Role of Education Projections in Educational Planning*, NFRHRD, Dhaka, 1980.

⁴ S.A. Qadir and S.K. Kundu, *op. cit.*

⁵ S.A. Qadir, *Literacy in Bangladesh Villages, Implications for Development and Micro-planning*, NFRHRD, Dhaka, 1983.

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study villages were categorised under high literacy and low literacy villages. High literacy (Hi Lit) villages, which comprised about 20 per cent of all villages, showed different degrees of development activities and quality of life indicated by income, house, education and liberalisation. The Low Literacy (Lo Lit) villages on the other hand showed a low level development trapped in a kind of tradition-bound life and values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. It was found that there was a significant difference between Hi and Lo Lit villages in the proportion of families sending all their children (71.1 vs 31 per cent) as well as not at sending any children to school (24 per cent vs 54 per cent).

The results of the study can be summarised up as under:

- a) non-enrolment or drop-out of girls was proportionately more than that of boys;
- b) there was a systematic decrease in the proportion of families with children attending schools from the rich to the poorest classes of household; and
- c) percentages of girls among girls coming from different socio-economic classes of Hi and Lo Lit villages varied sharply. Table 11 shows the differences.

Table 11. Girl's school attendance according to family status

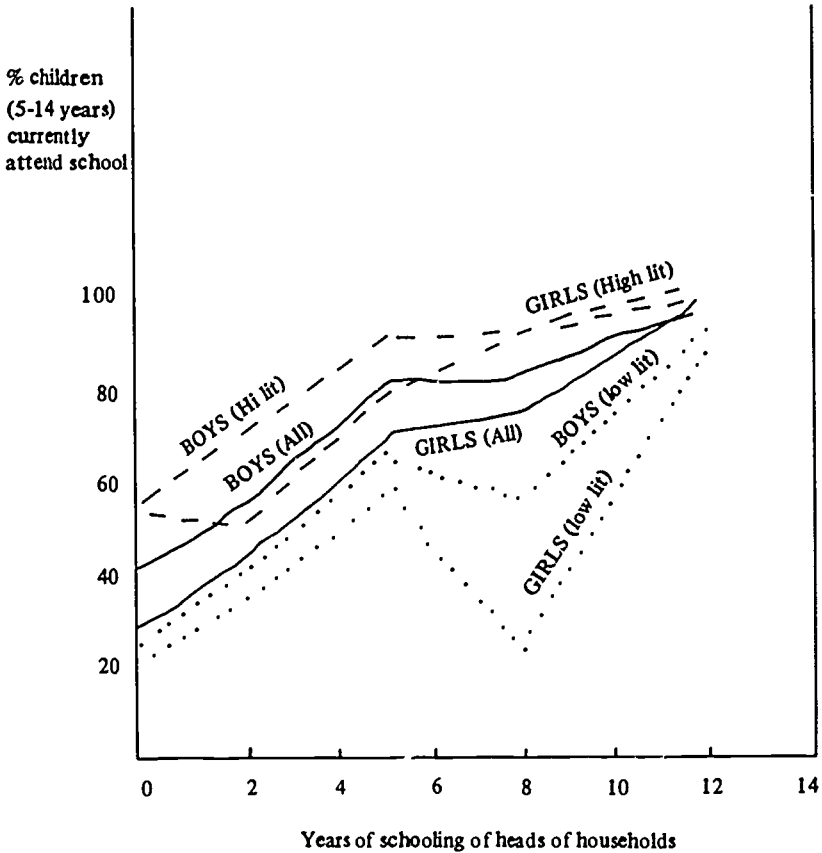
<i>Category of village</i>	<i>Family economic status</i>			
	<i>Upper</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Poorest</i>
	Per cent			
A. High Lit:				
% of Girls among girls	90	74	62	28
% of Boys among boys	95	78	76	32
B. Low Lit:				
% of Girls among girls	61	25	30	9
% of Boys among boys	84	51	53	23

Source: Literacy in Bangladesh Villages, Implications for Development and Micro Planning, 1983.

The proportion of boys and girls of the age-group 10-14 and proportion of school age children (boys and girls) according to education of heads of household are shown in Figures 2 and 3 respectively.

Figure 2. Proportion of school age children (boys and girls) according to education of heads of household in high and low literacy villages of Natore and Manikganj, Bangladesh, 1980

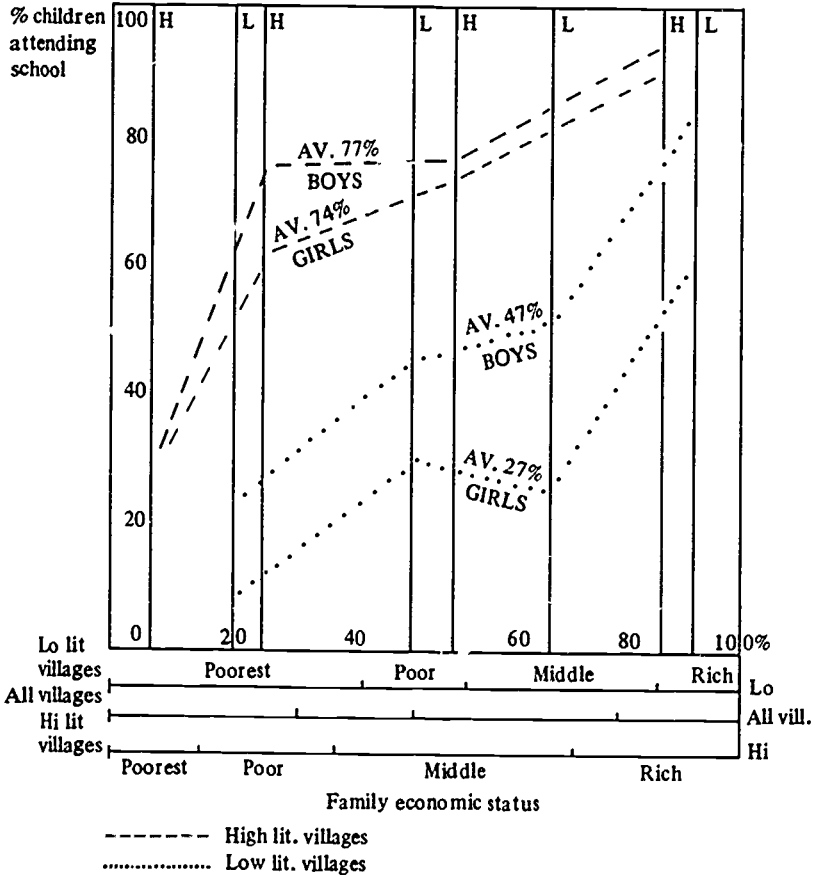
(Individual level)



Source. S.A. Qadir, Literacy in Bangladesh Villages. Implications for Development and Microplanning, 1983.

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Figure 3. Proportions of boys among all boys and girls among all girls. aged 10-14, attending school according to family economic status in high and low literacy villages of Natore and Manikganj, Bangladesh, 1980.



Source S A Qadir, *Literacy in Bangladesh Villages Implications for Development and Microplanning*, 1983.

It can be inferred from the figures that the boys – girls differential in primary school attendance is not significant for Lo Lit villages. The graph also shows that the male-female gap is the largest for households with heads' education at the lower secondary level in Lo Lit villages. It might be inferred from this finding that it is the effect of the traditional value system of keeping girls in "purdah" or seclusion as they grow up.

Occupation and participation are also highly interrelated. The highest participation rate of children and also of girls is observed whose parents are in service agriculture, business and trade, while for the daily wage labourer the participation of children is the lowest. Children, particularly girls of the traditional occupations, i.e. fishermen, carpenters, blacksmiths, barbers, landless and agricultural day labourer, weavers and potters, suffer the worst. Non-participation is very high among them. The results of the previous study showed that:

- a) non-enrolment or drop-out of girls was proportionately more than that of boys; and
- b) there was a systematic decrease in the proportion of families with children attending school from the rich to the poorest classes of households.

Size of family is also an important factor. The upper economic class send all their children to school no matter how many children they have. But for the poor and the poorest classes more children means more burden. They are so much crushed by poverty that they are not in a position to consider how many trained teachers, schools or other materials are provided at their doorstep for the education of their children.

From the above discussion it can be said that the causal chain of relationship between the participation of girls and the socio-economic status of the family stands as such: Income→family→education→occupation→land ownership→family size→girls' participation.

An in-depth enquiry of a BIDS study⁶ also identified some reasons for not sending girls to schools. Non-attendance of girls was attributed to poverty followed by children serving as a helping hand. Overall 11 to 22 per cent of the households stated that the child was too young to go to school, even though she was actually at least 6 years old. The most interesting finding was that children of the upper income households stayed idly at home. The study suggested that seasonally, hourly adjusted "part-time" arrangement of schooling can be provided for the children of poorer and special occupation groups.

⁶ S.A. Qadir and S.K. Kundu, *op. cit.*

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Community perception and attitude. The examples of Hi and Lo Lit villages show the differences among community perception and attitude towards girls' attendance and dropping out from the schools. Socio-religious attitudes towards the education of girls as they grow up is one of the major obstacles in Bangladesh. This is more so for the middle, upper and elite classes in the rural areas. As almost all the primary schools are co-educational, parents who do not like the system do not feel at ease to send their girls to these schools. Besides, poor economic status of the family is also attributed to a negative attitude towards girls' education. One survey study⁷ revealed that extreme deprivation or poverty of some of the families was the reason for a negative attitude or skepticism towards their children's education.

As regards the community's perception on children's primary education, 42 per cent never made any inquiry about the performance of their children, while the remaining 58 per cent inquired only once in a while. One-third of the respondents had no opinion, i.e. knowledge or concern for the school.⁸

School/institutional factors. Girls' participation and retention are affected also by the school environment. There are 36,666 government schools and 7,362 non-government schools, of which about 92 per cent are located in the villages. On an average there is one primary school for every 2 villages. But the schools are not evenly distributed. Inaccessibility to schools or lack of good communication and transport facilities in the rural areas act as one of the main barriers for girls' participation. Different surveys identified communication problems as one of the reasons for children leaving school and also for not attending school.

In most of the rural areas the physical facilities of the school are poor and inadequate. Shortage of classrooms, space, furniture, lack of pure drinking water facilities and separate toilet facilities contribute as demotivating factors for girls' participation and retention in the school system. In this regard Ellen Sattar observed that — "Drop-out must be influenced by the school environment. School is a

⁷ S. Huq, et al, *Problems of Introducing Compulsory Primary Education in Bangladesh from 1980*, IER, Dhaka University, Dhaka, 1981.

⁸ S.A. Qadir and S.K. Kundu, *op. cit.*

crowded, ill lit, often poorly constructed building. The class is overcrowded, the teacher is often very strict in such circumstances".⁹

The BIDS study revealed that even with two shifts almost all the schools suffer from inadequate seating accommodation. Seating accommodation for all days was not available for the children of 53 per cent of the families in non-IDA and 32 per cent of the families in IDA villages. Shortage of seating accommodation generates perpetual quarrels among students as a result of which some are forced to drop out of school. Under these circumstances girls are the main non-attenders and drop-outs of the primary education system.

Teachers and teaching. It is not yet known whether a positive correlation exists between the number of teachers, particularly female teachers, and the number of girls participating in school. No in-depth study is available yet to show the impact of the appointment of more female teachers on the increased participation and retention of girls in the primary schools. However, in the Meher UPE Project it has been observed that parents feel comfortable when their children are under the care of female teachers and female "ayahs" (attendants).

The number of female primary teachers in 1983 was 14,913 constituting only 8 per cent of the total of 189,884. The proportion of female teachers again varies substantially between rural and urban areas. A high concentration of female teachers is found in the urban primary schools.

As regards the quality of teaching the BIDS study presented some interesting findings. Tests carried out in the survey schools showed, in general, extremely poor quality and deficiency of learning by students in every class. This is regarded as a main criterion to evaluate the quality of teaching of the primary school teachers. The study also revealed that only 35 per cent of households in the IDA villages and 15 per cent in the non-IDA villages offered a positive view regarding help from schools in the students' achievement. The difference between these two areas is due to the cluster training programme for the IDA school teachers which raised the quality of their teaching. In the context of Bangladesh where about 80 per

⁹ Ellen Sattar, *Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1982.

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cent of the population are illiterate and poor, a main factor for an early and heavy drop-out is poor quality of teaching and lack of school responsibility for the preparation of the lessons of the children.

Curriculum and textbooks. Before 1978, the primary curriculum was inadequate and irrelevant to the needs of the primary school children. Even today it does not adequately meet the needs and requirements of children coming from heterogeneous backgrounds. There are no special provisions in the curriculum to educate the children who terminate their education either at the end of primary education stage or before that. This is more so for the girls who have to take the responsibility of so many roles at a very young age. Though theoretically six subjects are to be taught in Classes I and II, in practice only Bengali and mathematics are taught in those classes in most of the schools. Similarly, out of nine subjects prescribed by the curriculum committee only six, namely Bengali, mathematics, environmental studies (society and science), English, and religious education are taught in Classes III, IV and V.

The present curriculum is very much urban-oriented and does not prepare rural girls for their actual future roles in life. A village society expects that rural girls should know good home care, food processing, nutrition and child care, poultry and cattle care, good cooking, needle work, vegetable cultivation, correspondence and domestic accounts and so on.

In spite of a free distribution policy, about 75 per cent of households suffer from problems of obtaining textbooks on time. There exists a major problem in distribution management of textbooks. Most of the schools and parents suffer from not having the complete set of textbooks in time, which affects the children's learning adversely.

Learning Materials. A dearth of instructional facilities including blackboards, charts, maps and other learning materials is a common phenomenon in the primary schools, particularly in rural primary schools. The cost of learning materials (exercise books, pencils, pens) has risen greatly over the last ten years. Providing even a low cost school dress for the girls puts a heavy burden on the poor parents.

Supervision and management. Under the Second Five Year Plan, management and supervision of primary education was decentralized from the centre to the local level. For effective administration and supervision 2,500 more Thana/Upazila and Assistant Upazila Education Officers (UEO) and (AUEO) are being appointed. The main functions of the AUEOs are (a) to inspect and supervise schools regularly in order to improve the quality of primary education; and (b) establish and maintain community relationships with a view to motivating the parents to send their children to the primary schools. There are two main aspects in their duties and responsibilities. One is to improve the quality of education and the other is to boost enrolment: by motivating the community and the parents. But studies by IER¹⁰ and BIDS¹¹ revealed that in spite of special arrangements for intensive supervision, the IDA areas, including the towns, could not claim more frequent inspection and supervision of schools both by the AUEOs and UEOs. However, variation in personal interest of the UEOs and AUEOs in this regard was observed.

Due to irregular supervision, teacher absenteeism and consequently student absenteeism, occurs. Proper and effective community relationships cannot be established. As a result, motivational work regarding promotion of participation was being hampered.

Despite the limitation of the present study approach which is mainly based on secondary source materials, the situational analysis of girls' enrolment and retention and factors affecting them may be considered highly indicative. In totality they represent the national picture about girls' primary education. However, subsequent chapters of this study will deal with different aspects of the promotion of girls' primary education in the context of UPE in the country.

¹⁰ Salma Akhter and et. al. Role of Assistant Upazila Education Officers in Academic Supervision of Primary School under UPL (IDA) Project, IER, Unesco Illustrative Study, 1984.

¹¹ S.A. Qadir and Kundu, *op. cit.*

Chapter Four

PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND FEMALE TEACHERS

All available official documents and non-government or private research studies were reviewed to identify specific information concerning physical facilities and female teachers in the primary schools run by the government. The documents included scholarly publications by individuals or research institutes, census data, surveys, reports or any other published data provided by the Ministry of Education and other government or private agencies. Particular attention was given to finding information relevant to the improvement of girls' education in the context of universalization of primary education in Bangladesh. However, the available information was inadequate and in some cases no specific information or data could be found.

Little specific or comprehensive data were available concerning the improvement of the education of girls at the primary level. All documents and studies investigated and described the status, progress and the needs of the primary education sector as a whole including both boys and girls of the primary age group.

Physical facilities in the primary schools. The documents reviewed yielded no information regarding the provision of physical facilities for the improvement of girls' education in the government primary schools. During the period under study (1974-1984), a publication of the Ministry of Education¹ listed some physical facilities and supporting services provided to primary education as a whole during the period 1980-1984. These were as follows:

Repair and Renovation of schools	— 6,567 schools
Construction of classrooms	— 6,106 Classrooms in 1,904 schools
Distribution of textbooks to primary children	— 15,283,000 sets

¹ Ministry of Education, *New Life in Education*, Dhaka, 1984.

Distribution of uniforms (up to 1982-1983)	— 3,500,000 sets
Provision of benches	— 95,264 pairs
Sinking of tubewells	— 4,765
Supply of steel cupboards	— 6,920
Construction of toilets	— 2,824
Training of teachers and supervisors of UPE and teachers of PTIs	— 30,000
Improvement and development of existing facilities of PTIs	— 47
Construction of new PTIs	— 2
Development of the Academy for Fundamental Education	— 1

The total number of primary schools (both govt. and non-govt.) in the country was estimated to be 44,200 in 1984. It was 44,119 in 1983, 44,028 in 1982, 44,027 in 1981 and 43,936 in 1980, showing a poor growth rate of schools during the Second Five Year Plan (1980-1985) (SFYP) period.²

The most basic physical facility necessary for primary education of girls or boys is a school housed in some kind of structure providing shelter and protection from rain, wind or the sun. The rate of annual increase of this basic physical facility during the last five years (1980-1984) can be seen in the figures cited above from an official document.

A study by Shamima Islam in 1977³ observed that despite significant improvement in the provision of schooling facilities in 1974, there were imbalances in schooling facilities in different districts of Bangladesh, which means that children did not have equal access to schooling in different regions of the country. Thus males

² Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information & Statistics (BANBEIS), Publication No. 39, Dhaka, 1985.

³ Shamima Islam, *Women's Education in Bangladesh. Needs and Issues*, FREPD, Dhaka, 1977.

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as well as females suffered from a lack of equal access to educational institutions in various regions. The study also found that the absolute number of schools in a given district or administrative area was not an adequate criterion for measuring the educational opportunity of access. The number of schools in a district did not adequately reflect the district's need. A particular district might appear to have the ideally required number of schools but it was found very likely that some of the thanas (upazilas), unions and villages had more than the required number of schools and some had less.

The mid-term evaluation of Universal Primary Education (IDA) Project⁴ revealed that though the supply level of some of the inputs, i.e. furniture, books and uniforms appeared to have increased substantially, particularly during 1982-1983, the civil works programme for physical facilities seemed to be lagging behind the target. The report recommended that to achieve the overall project target in time, an accelerated pace of civil works needed to be maintained during the remaining period of the project. It may be mentioned here that more than half of the total allocation for the project was earmarked for civil works.

Another micro study⁵ of three primary schools under the UPE (IDA) Project identified some progress as well as some inadequacies in respect of the physical facilities provided in the primary education sector.

It was found that each new school building was a significant improvement. Compared to the previous tin-shed school houses the new school buildings provide well-protected shelter. Along with the school buildings there had been an improvement in seating arrangements for children with the provision of new benches. The provision of steel almirah had been of some advantage for the school offices. Some of the newly supplied teaching aids such as maps, counting beads, black boards and pictorial alphabets added attractions for the potential primary pupils.

⁴ Ministry of Education, *Mid-term Evaluation of Universal Primary Education (IDA) Project*, Dhaka, 1983.

⁵ M Ahmadullah and others, *Newly Constructed Physical Facilities and Enrolment of Children*, Dhaka, 1984.

However, the study concluded that the inadequacies with respect to some necessary facilities outweighed the gains that had been made. The following specific inadequacies were noted:

1. The school buildings were too inadequate to accommodate all the classrooms even in two shifts. Several classes were simultaneously held in a single room school building and the whole environment became too noisy for teaching and learning. The classes were not partitioned and there was no ceiling under the roof of the building. Usually it was just the hue and cry of a crowd of children rather than a quiet environment congenial for teaching-learning activities. Sometimes the children of one class did not listen or attend to their teacher, as they found more amusement in watching what was happening to the children in another class sitting next to them. In such a situation, the teachers could not help their students with effective learning activities and they got quickly exhausted and overwhelmed with the task of controlling the behaviour of the children.
2. The school buildings were so constructed that they did not provide adequate ventilation. In the absence of a verandah hallway, the buildings failed to provide the necessary shelter to the pupils while they had to wait outside when a new shift was to begin or while it was necessary to stay in the school during rain. The usefulness of the buildings was substantially reduced in the absence of a verandah, which allowed rain water to get through the buildings easily.
3. The other inadequacies included lack of facilities for pure drinking water, lack of latrine/urinal facilities and inadequate space for recreational activities.
4. Essential teaching aids like blackboards and globes were lacking.
5. Essential support facilities like benches for the students and chairs for the teachers were inadequate.

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An illustrative study on "Supply, Distribution and Utilization of School Furniture for UPE (IDA) Project Primary Schools"⁶ was conducted in 1984 covering nine UPE project primary schools in one union council area under Chuadanga upazila. The main objective of this study was to determine the effects of the supply of school furniture upon variables involving teaching/learning processes and participation rates in primary schools under the project. The important conclusions of the study were as follows:

1. The policy adopted in the original programme of the UPE/IDA project in Bangladesh for supply of furniture to primary schools under the project brought about the desired and expected effects to a large extent. However, the allocated funds in the original project plan for making, supplying and distributing school furniture were not sufficient for the purpose. Besides, the programmes of supplying furniture gradually to selected schools only, was ineffective. In fact, all schools under the project needed adequate furniture. These schools particularly needed more seating and high benches in order to provide sufficient seating capacity to the increased number of pupils and to attract out-of-school children, specially girls, to get themselves enrolled in the schools and to attend school regularly.
2. A large percentage of the total number of schools had remained deprived of the benefits of the project furniture in spite of the fact that they did not appear to possess sufficient furniture for the current enrolment, even though the enrolment ratio was only 54 per cent in the area covered by the case study.
3. Due to scarcity of quality timber it was not possible for the supervising officers to control the quality of wooden furniture and to get the work done in time. Moreover, distribution of furniture to schools and making payments to contractors were delayed because of bad communication facilities. The local engineering staff could not identify the problems arising out of inadequacy or in-

⁶ Mazharul Huq & others, *Supply, Distribution and Utilization of School Furniture for UPE (IDA) Project Primary Schools*, FREPD, Dhaka, 1984.

sufficiency of the furniture supplied to schools due to non-availability of proper transport facilities. As the responsibility of determining the exact requirements of the school is vested in the local Education Officers, the engineering staff could not make any efforts for assessing the precise needs of the schools in respect of furniture.

4. Soft mango or jackfruit timber was used by the contractors to make sitting and high benches for the primary schools under the project. This indicated gross violation of the terms of the tender documents and work orders for manufacturing the benches. Better timber was supposed to have been supplied by the department to the contractors for the purpose. It could not be ascertained if the specified timber had in fact been supplied to the contractors or whether the contractors had misappropriated the quality timber supplied to them. The almirahs supplied to project primary schools were found to have been made more or less according to specifications but poor quality and unsuitable hardboard was found to have been used for making very unsuitable blackboards which had been supplied to the schools by the project. By the time of the survey made for this illustrative study, about 14 per cent of the sitting benches and 5 per cent of the high benches supplied by the project to the schools covered by the study were found to have been damaged, indicating extreme non-durability of the supplied benches.
5. The average length of a sitting bench supplied by the project and the non-project sitting bench were very different. The two kinds of benches (the project and non-project benches) differed widely in respect of other measurements also. These differences were found to have created problems in floor space utilization and had caused inconvenience.
6. Furniture supplied by the project to most of the schools was found to be in good condition. The schools had been using and maintaining the furniture properly. The primary school teachers and the local leaders were generally satisfied with the quality and quantity of the furniture supplied by the project.

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7. The primary schools were found to be in need of more chairs, tables, bookshelves and other basic furniture.
8. In the primary schools there was still an imbalance between the numbers of sitting and high benches. The number of the sitting benches was larger than that of the high benches making it a little difficult for some of the children to participate effectively in the classroom activities.
9. Improvements in the physical facilities of primary schools and particularly improvement in respect of availability of appropriate furniture for primary schools tended to bring about desirable changes in the enrolment ratio, attendance rate, retention rate and sex ratio. They also appeared to facilitate the teaching learning process.

Efficiency of education, particularly primary education, depends to a large extent on the availability and adequacy of furniture and necessary equipment. Suitable school furniture is said to be more important than other physical facilities in the conditions currently obtaining in most of the rural primary schools of the country. So the supply of quality furniture and other appropriate physical facilities to the primary schools will satisfy a basic need for the improvement of primary education of all children and particularly the education of girls of the primary age group.

Female teachers. Next to students, teachers are most crucial inputs in every education system. In Bangladesh the need for an adequate number of female teachers at the primary level was recognized during the early years of the nation because of the widespread belief about the affectionate and efficient role of women in handling children of the primary age group. During the later plan periods the importance of female teachers for the primary stage was doubly emphasized because of their assumed role and ability in attracting and retaining more girls in the primary schools. However, despite the professed intentions of the government the country could not make much headway in the recruitment and supply of female teachers for the primary level.

The number of female teachers in the primary schools in different years and the rate of increase in their number may be seen in the following table.

Table 12. Sexwise distribution of teachers in government primary schools (1974-1982)

Year	Female	Male	Total	Female teachers per cent
1974	5,091	137,733	142,824	3.56
1975	8,051	146,972	155,029	5.19
1976	7,754	147,387	155,141	5.00
1977	9,664	142,084	156,748	6.17
1978	11,924	142,353	154,277	7.73
1979	12,057	144,236	156,293	7.71
1980	11,615	140,273	151,888	7.65
1981	14,600	141,400	156,009	9.30
1982	14,500	141,000	155,500	9.30

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS).

Table 13. Sexwise distribution of teachers in non-government primary schools (1974-1982)

Year	Female	Male	Total	Female teachers per cent
1974	798	6,645	7,443	10.72
1975	346	9,848	9,694	3.57
1976	1,004	16,303	17,307	5.80
1977	1,183	16,453	17,639	6.71
1978	2,485	29,882	31,867	7.80
1979	2,487	28,724	31,211	7.97
1980	2,971	27,477	30,448	9.76
1981	2,000	26,000	28,000	7.14
1982	2,000	26,000	28,000	7.14

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS).

An analysis of the above tables reveals that female teachers working in the primary schools increased in absolute numbers from 5,889 in 1974 to 16,500 in 1982 but in terms of percentage of the total number of teachers, women still constituted only a marginal segment, with 8.22 per cent of total number of teachers, 9.3 per cent

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in government schools and 7.14 per cent in non-government schools. According to the statistics provided by BANBEIS, there were only 14,913 female primary teachers out of a total of 189,884 in 1983 and the number of female teachers in 1984 was estimated to be 15,000 out of a total of 189,900.

According to the "Survey of Primary Education in Bangladesh" (a survey conducted by IER in 1975), only about 15 per cent of rural schools have female teachers at an approximate rate of about 1.5 teachers per school; 32 per cent of female teachers are trained as against 57 per cent male teachers.

The study observed that "while 38 per cent of female teachers in urban schools were trained, only 29 per cent of female teachers in rural schools were found to be trained".

It is evident from the rate of increase of female teachers at the primary level that despite the good intentions of the government stated in all official documents, the number of female teachers still constitutes a very small percentage of the total number of primary teachers. Although the number of female teachers increased in absolute terms, the figures given above show clearly that efforts in increasing the number of female teachers in the primary schools made very slow progress over the last decade. This slow progress becomes all the more acute when one considers the projection made in the First Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (1973-1978). According to that projection, each primary school in the country would have at least one female teacher but until now the actual number of female teachers lags far behind the goal set forth in the First Five Year Plan.

The inadequacy of female teachers is most prominent in rural primary schools. In 1975-1976 out of 33,931 rural government primary schools, only 3,417 schools (10.06 per cent) had female teachers.⁷ In other words, there was only one female teacher for seven government schools.

In the course of this investigation two policy measures to improve the situation were identified. Since 1980-1981 it has been the national policy to recruit 50 per cent female teachers at the time

⁷ Shamima Islam, *Women's Education in Bangladesh* Issues Needs & FREPD, Dhaka, 1977.

of appointment of new primary level teachers if female applicants with the minimum qualifications were available. To encourage the potential women candidates the minimum educational requirement for the female teachers was relaxed for some years. However, this relaxation of qualifications had to be withdrawn due to pressure from the male candidates for appointment as primary teachers.

Two examples of large scale recruitment of female teachers were found. In 1984 there were about 12,000 vacant posts for primary teachers and a large number of female candidates were appointed to fill these posts. In addition to these, 500 female teachers were appointed in the primary schools covered by the IDA sponsored project for universalization of primary education (UPE/IDA Project) in the country.

Secondly, in order to improve the quality of female primary teachers measures were taken to admit an increased number of women to the Primary Training Institutes (PTIs). During the years 1982-1984 approximately 75 per cent of the outside candidates (those who were not already teachers in primary schools) admitted to the PTIs were women. Under a scheme of improvement and development of primary teacher training in the country (1976-1983) a total of 21,447 females were brought under training raising their annual intake from 18 per cent in 1975-1976 to 73 per cent of the total intake in 1982-1983.⁸

There was an assumption in the First Five Year Plan (1973-1978) that there was a direct correlation between the employment of women teachers and the enrolment and attendance of girls in schools. The plan also envisaged introduction of female teachers in rural primary schools as one of the measures to reduce drop-out rates between Class I and Class II where the problem is most acute.

However, no research study could be located about the effectiveness of female teachers in encouraging greater female enrolment and attendance in the rural schools. It was discovered that since the direct correlation had been found in other countries of the world it was assumed by the official planners that it would be effective in Bangladesh also. But this assumption is open to question.

⁸ Ministry of Education, *Evaluation Report of the Scheme Improvement and Development of Primary Teachers Training in Bangladesh (1976-1983)*, Dhaka, 1985, p. 45.

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Realistically viewed, under the present socio-economic circumstances the effectiveness of female teachers will have to cross the biggest hurdle of poverty which seems to account for the majority of non-participating rural children and those who drop out.

In spite of the policy measures taken and the national desire shown in the official documents the absolute number and the percentage of trained female teachers are highly inadequate and in the rural areas these inadequacies are much more acute. The reason for the slow progress in improving the quantitative and qualitative situation of female primary teachers is often linked to a vicious circle that cuts across the boundaries of conservation and social segregation on the part of rural women. There are not enough women teachers, there are not enough girls in the schools, and there are not enough schools which can cater to the needs of girls in this society. Steps taken in the past to increase the number of trained female teachers were both inadequate and half-hearted. There should be a massive, determined and direct effort on the part of the government to improve the situation of female teachers.

Chapter Five

NATIONAL POLICY AND PLANS

Occasional attempts were made under the Pakistan Government (1947-1971) and later under the Bangladesh Government (since 1971) to reform the education system. Yet, the system continues to retain the colonial character of the British rule which sought to make only a few educated to serve the administrative needs instead of making the masses of the country educated and capable of effectively contributing to the economic and social development of the country. Critics usually point to the fact that there have been irregularities in the policies and plans, and as far as the positive aspects of the policies are concerned, there have been serious shortcomings in their implementation and consequently no significant improvement has taken place in the rate of literacy.

Constitutional and legal measures. The legal basis for primary education consists of acts, ordinances, manuals, rules and regulations related to primary education enacted by the government. In the constitution education is regarded as a fundamental human right irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex and social status. Article 17 of the constitution provides that the state shall take measures to establish a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of free and compulsory education according to the economic needs of society. Furthermore it is the constitutional obligation of the state to remove illiteracy from the country.¹ The constitutional provisions thus depict the priority and importance the people attach to primary education.

The history of legal actions to introduce UPE in Bengal is almost 74 years old. A draft law for introduction of compulsory primary education was moved by Gokhale as early as 1911 in the sub-continent. The main legal basis for primary education of the British period was the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930. This act was amended subsequently by the East Bengal Act of 1951

¹ *Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972.*

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and the East Pakistan Rural Primary Education Act of 1957. Under the 1962 constitution of Pakistan education became a provincial responsibility whereby the province was authorized to introduce universal primary education in the country. These acts were promulgated to suit the changing needs of primary education.

An important law of the post-independence period was the promulgation of "the Primary Schools (Taking Over) Act, 1974." By this act the government took a historic step to nationalize 36,666 primary schools. By this law these schools and their teachers became government employees. However, many confusions were created. With the promulgation of Primary School Ordinance, Dhaka Municipality (1980) became the administrative authority of all primary schools under the municipal area. Due to widespread opposition, the government had to promulgate the Primary Education Ordinance of 1981 to clarify the confusions about administration, organization and the status of primary school teachers created by the earlier law. The act of 1981 was superseded by an executive order on 15th August, 1983 for decentralization of primary school administration. According to this order, administration of primary education would be conducted by the "upazila parishad" (upazila is the new concept for decentralisation of administration). The powers of the "upazila parishad" under this order are (i) to appoint, promote, transfer and take disciplinary action about teachers; and (ii) to supervise the functioning of primary schools. Responsibility to establish new primary schools with prior approval of the government was also entrusted to the upazila parishad. A Primary Education Committee has been formed at every upazila. The School Teacher Recruitment Rules, 1983, laid down rules and regulations for teacher recruitment and promotion.

It is clear that the main thrust of the laws and regulations enacted after independence are to decentralize administration of primary education and to involve local people in the implementation of universal primary education.

Policy trends. The First Five Year Plan (1955-1960) of Pakistan - Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan in the name of East Pakistan till December 16, 1971 - adopted the objective of universal free primary education. The plan recognized the need for special emphasis on girls' primary education and envisaged increased facilities for their schooling by creating new schools and by making the

existing schools open to them. But in practice, secondary education and college and university education received more emphasis in terms of financial allocations. At the end of the plan period the situation turned out to be no better than that before. In 1957 the Education Reform Commission of the, then, East Pakistan, recommended universal, compulsory and free primary education. In 1959 a National Commission on Education was set up and this Commission too recommended that five year primary education be made universal and compulsory and this policy be implemented within the next ten years and following that compulsory education for eight years be implemented within the next 15 years. But the Second Five Year Plan (1960-1965) did not commit itself to the recommendations of the Commission as such; it however, endorsed the need for more opportunities to the children of primary school age-group (6-10), and the need for more opportunities for girls in particular. New opportunities were conceived in terms of new schools to increase girls' enrolment.

The Third Five Year Plan (1965-1970) of Pakistan reiterated the intention to achieve the goal of universal primary education and to increase the enrolment rate from 45 per cent in 1965 to 70 per cent in 1970, and it recognized that high incidence of illiteracy and poor participation of children at all levels of education had been continuing. It was for the first time that some new measures for increased participation of girls in education were proposed. The measures were: (a) scholarship for girls to provide additional attraction; (b) enlisting the co-operation of women's organizations and humanitarian groups, (c) recruitment and training of female teachers, and (d) co-education in primary school.

What came out indeed over all these plan periods were studies, commission reports and plan documents discussing the problems regarding education and proposals for increasing literacy and promoting education at various levels. But the plans were never implemented to achieve anything close to the stated objectives. As no plan was implemented from the beginning of planned development efforts, the education sector remained chaotic and dismal and agitated the minds of the people and reports and recommendations were initiated by every new regime at successive stages. However, the 1970s experienced, as did the 1960s, a concentration of efforts in higher education benefiting mostly the urban privileged groups.

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The Government of Bangladesh appointed a commission in 1972 to propose a new educational policy appropriate to the needs of the people of an independent country. The recommendations of the commission submitted in 1974 put heavy emphasis on primary education and included the following:

1. Primary education for five years was to be made compulsory and its implementation was to be completed by 1980, and education for eight years was to be completed by 1983.
2. Sufficient facilities in terms of teachers, books, educational materials and school facilities were to be provided in order to implement the new policy.
3. Female teachers were to be appointed in primary schools to attract girls to the schools and separate girls' schools were to be established.
4. A new syllabus was to be prepared to suit the conditions and capabilities of the students, to create a good base for personality formation of the students and to orient them for productive activities appropriate to the individual needs and social demands.

The First Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (1973-1978) took special note of the overall backward condition of women for the reason that women as much as men were to be developed as good human resources for the development of the country. The potentials of literate women to contribute to national progress were identified as their: (a) better home management in promoting nutrition, health care and general wellbeing of family members, and care, education and socialization of children; and (b) contribution to the economic wellbeing of the family by participating in gainful activities outside the home. It was felt that, through becoming literate, the overall status of women would be elevated, thus making them equal partners with men in all spheres of national activities and the age of marriage would rise and the small family norm be accepted in fulfilment of the national population control objective.

The plan regarded the higher incidence of illiteracy among women as most undesirable and the lower proportion of literate girls at all levels of education, compared to boys, an indication of

girls being underprivileged. It was noted that parents and society as a whole needed to change their attitudes towards girls' education and that special measures were necessary to inspire parents to send their daughters to school. The plan laid emphasis on significantly increasing the rate of girls' participation in school and retaining them as a condition to moving towards the fulfilment of the goal of universal primary education.

The plan intended to make primary education equally accessible to all and the overall drop-out rate was to be reduced through some supplementing measures including non formal education and innovative measures like feeder schools, child feeding, employment of female teachers, sports and recreational activities and synchronization of holidays with harvesting and crop-planting seasons. Books and educational materials were to be made available free of cost to all, particularly the poor, to encourage primary education.

But what actually happened in the 1970s was again an emphasis on college and university education. A large number of new colleges were established, secondary schools doubled in number and enrolment at the six universities doubled. Over the years there was consistent underspending in primary education as against overspending in higher education.

Thus during the 1970s neither the goal of equality nor that of efficiency of the education system was achieved. Enrolment of girls at all levels lagged far behind that of boys. By the end of the plan period (1978) the price of text books and school stationery marked a significant increase, the poorer parents were discouraged from sending their children, particularly girls, to school and even withdrew their children from school.²

In 1978 the planning commission sponsored a national survey on the situation of primary education and technical education, especially on their capacity utilization which was conducted by the National Foundation for Research on Human Resource Development. The survey found 40,445 primary schools, of which 90 per cent were

² Ellen Satter. *Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*. University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1982, p.p. 82-84.

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rural and 10 per cent urban. Of the total students, 62 per cent were boys and 38 per cent girls. For the rural primary school age population (5-10) the enrolment rate was 48 per cent and the rate for the urban area was 55 per cent. They studied revealed two big discomforting situations : (a) 80 per cent of the students dropped out before they reached Class V and on an average only 11 students completed primary education from a school; and (b) there was a general under-utilization of existing physical and teacher capacity, especially with the arrangement of double shifts in the school hours, although much improvement was called for in regard to the provision of some essential facilities such as partitioned classrooms, furniture, teaching aids, sanitation and drinking water supply, etc. The study indicated, however, that in view of future possibility of increased enrolment corresponding to population increase and decreased drop-out rate the existing physical capacity would have to be expanded.³

The Two Year Plan (1978-1980) was preparatory to the Second Five Year Plan (1980-1985). In this preparatory phase, the government took a number of special measures which included engagement of consulting and study teams to help in the preparation of the Second Five Year Plan with its major thrust on human resource development, fulfilment of basic needs, appointment of a National Educational Advisory Council to formulate an interim educational policy and commissioning of a comprehensive survey on the problems of introducing compulsory primary education in Bangladesh from 1980.

The Educational Policy, as declared in 1979, stated that primary education would be made universal, compulsory and free, and that it would be implemented by taking Class I in 1979 and then gradually completing all classes up to V by 1983. The policy was a very positive step towards gradual achievement of universalization of primary education having ensured girls' education at an equal level with boys. It also recognized the socio-economic and attitudinal obstacles of the parents.

While the main objective of this policy was to achieve universal primary education, the special attention that it paid to the promo-

³ S. A. Quadir and S. Kundu *Introducing Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*, Human Resource Division, BIDS, Dhaka, 1985.

tion of girls' education was reflected in the following recommendations:

1. Women were to have equal rights and privileges at all levels from the primary to higher education and the governments would ensure that special facilities were available quickly for promoting girls' education.
2. Social pressures were to be built up for inspiring parents to change their attitude towards girls' education and urging women to get education and participate in national development by using all information and publicity media.
3. A new curriculum would be framed to remove prejudices and traditional sex values which discouraged or posed obstacles to girls' education.
4. Female teachers were to be increasingly employed, initially each primary school having at least two female teachers.
5. In-service training was to be given to female teachers who were not already trained and steps would be taken to increase the number of trained female teachers in the primary schools.
6. Each village of the country would be covered by a primary school with 30,000 new schools – one classroom to be constructed with locally available materials each year beginning 1979, to complete the 5 room construction by 1983.
7. As discontinuation (drop-out) or non-participation in school was caused by the problem of extreme poverty in the families of landless and wage labourers, the necessary conditions were to be created by taking such measures as land reform, cottage industries promotion and credit supply in support of the poor.
8. The poor in particular would be supplied with free books and educational materials and supplementary (nutritious) food free of cost, while medicare would be free for all in school.
9. The elementary "Madrasah" (religious) education would be coupled with regular primary education.

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10. The kindergarten schools (privately managed) which were not in harmony with the interests of the common people would be converted into regular primary schools.
11. The curriculum was to be designed to include subjects of arts and aesthetics, history, environment and local features, economic activities, and opportunities for participation in productive activities.
12. School hours and vacations would be fixed in keeping with the local conditions in terms of geographical peculiarities, climate, cropping season, market days, festivals and other socio-economic realities so that retention in schooling was not disturbed.

The National Survey conducted by the Institute of Education and Research (1980) revealed that the enrolment rate of children, 6 to 16 years of age, was 51 per cent and the rate for the girls was 46 per cent as against the rate of 57 per cent for the boys. Of the total enrolled the girls were 37 per cent. The study further revealed that the total drop-out rate was more than 80 per cent before the completion of Class V. Parents who were not positively thinking of sending their children to school stated the reason to be poverty. The study concluded that a large majority of children (68 per cent) in school needed some financial support to be able to complete the primary education and a good proportion (18 per cent) of children could be drawn to school by making the school more attractive to them by increasing school facilities and by improving teachers' quality.

The Second Five Year Plan started with the recognition that the failure of the planned efforts of the past was evident in the fact that the majority of the population "still live in poverty in the darkness of illiteracy and in shanty houses".⁴ The objectives of the Second Plan in the education sector were formulated, relating it to improvement in the quality of life of the people and enabling mass participation in development activities, and so the plan committed itself to the elimination of illiteracy as a step towards the development of human resource of the country. The plan was somewhat

⁴ *Second Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (Draft) 1980-1985*, Planning Commission, Govt. of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1980, XVI, p. 1-2.

different from the earlier official policy documents in its overall character and a special thrust was planned for primary education. The guidelines of the plan stated that "Legal and institutional measures shall be introduced for the attainment of universal primary education by 1990, if not earlier".

The strategy for achieving the plan objective was to mobilize local resources and to lay emphasis on non-formal education for children as well as adults. With support from the supreme political authority of the country the plan placed universal primary education and removal of illiteracy in the high priority list of the national development efforts. Financial allocation for primary education was raised to 41 per cent of the total allocation for all levels of education in the second plan as compared to 17.91 per cent allocation in the first plan (a separate allocation to the extent of 9.44 per cent was for mass literacy programmes). The Universal Primary Education Programme formally began in the country in 1981.

The Second Five Year Plan allocation was an improvement over the past and was intended to raise the participation of children in school, including those belonging to the underprivileged or deprived families but it did not give any particular attention to removing the inequality between boys and girls as far as their unequal opportunity for education was concerned.

On the overall situation of primary education, the government reports in 1982 expressed disappointment. The main problems were stated to be non enrolment and drop-out continuing at as high a rate as before, non fulfilment of targeted expenditure, lack of commitment of the teachers to their job in spite of an increase in their benefits, and widespread corrupt practices in the management of education. Primary education was reported to be facing the danger of contraction. The education system was described as having lost its utility while it suffered from wastage and inefficiency.⁵

Thoughts on a 'New Education Policy'. The Present government, having committed itself to reform at various sectors of national interests, proposed in 1983 a "new education policy". According to the proposed new policy, five years basic education would be

⁵ S.A. Quadir and S.K. Kundu, op. cit. pp. 12-12. The authors have referred to various explicit statements of the then Minister for Education discussing the problems of education.

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compulsorily given to all children of primary school age through effective implementation of the primary education programme. To start with, 50 per cent of the 6-year age group were to be carried through grade V by 1987. The policy proposal contained some other provisions which were claimed to have implications for making secondary and higher secondary education more effective and meaningful and thus would make primary education more attractive.

Meanwhile, a study on the universalization of primary education has concluded that the task has been and continues to be a difficult one particularly in the context of resource constraints. It has therefore been recommended that at least 5 per cent of GDP be devoted to education and at least 50 per cent of that allocation be spent on primary education. Considering the reality that all children cannot be immediately brought within the coverage of the formal school system and that many of the poor children cannot be withdrawn from their work to put them in school, other approaches such as the simultaneous development of non-formal education and feeder schools ("maktabs") have been recommended.⁶

Current implementation and projected efforts. The status of implementation of policy and plan as of 1983, according to the report of the Planning Commission, was as follows:

- a) Provision had been made for one primary school for a population of 2,000 (for a geographic area of 2 sq km) to increase children's accessibility to school within walking distance;
- b) Over the first three years (1981-1983) of the Second Plan period the government had distributed 8.84 million textbooks for encouraging enrolment and preventing drop-out;
- c) Steps had been taken to increase the number of female teachers in primary school to provide special encouragement to girls' enrolment;
- d) A total enumeration of all primary schools had been completed in order to facilitate future planning for providing special encouragement to girls' enrolment;

⁶ S.A. Quadir and S.K. Kundu, *Op cit.* pp. 17-18

- e) A pilot scheme of Community Learning Centres (CLC) had been launched in 50 primary schools where parents, teachers, community workers and government functionaries co-operate in undertaking community development activities and work particularly for the promotion of literacy. A parent-teacher association was formed under each CLC to popularise schooling, to raise the rate of retention and to prevent children from dropping out. The CLC seeks to increase the willingness and abilities of families to give their children basic education;
- f) Attempts had been made to increase the efficiency of teaching and the quality of teachers by preparing a teacher's manual and by imparting in-service training to the instructors of Primary Training Institutes and primary education officers at the Academy for Fundamental Education and also by training secondary school teachers as "leader teachers" to assist in the in-service training of primary teachers; and
- g) Facilities at the Primary Training Institute had been increased to strengthen their training services.⁷

The plan for universalizing primary education is being implemented through two projects. One of them, assisted by IDA, covers 43 upazilas. The other is a national project and covers the remaining upazilas of the country with national resources only. The principal component of the projects is civil works construction of new classrooms and latrines, installation of tubewells, repair and renovation of existing school structures, and supply of furniture. Its objective is improvement of physical facilities. The other components of the projects are:

- a) Supply of textbooks and other teaching/learning materials and school uniforms by the government free of cost;
- b) Strengthening of school administration and supervision, including the improvement of curriculum and classroom instruction;
- c) Encouragement to innovative programmes aiming at increasing enrolment and reducing drop-out;

⁷ S.A. Quadir and S.K. Kundu, *Ibid* pp. 15-17.

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- d) Community involvement in strengthening school activities; and
- e) School mapping exercises.

All these inputs are expected to increase the enrolment of girls.

The UPE programme has the target of 91 per cent enrolment of the 6-11 years age group without imposing any compulsion. A sample evaluative study done towards the end of 1983 revealed some positive trends of increased enrolment, particularly of girls, and a downward trend in regard to drop-out rates as compared to the situation of 1980. Another progress report showed an increase of enrolment rate by 10 per cent and a decline of drop-out rate by 2 per cent. Still another evaluative study (1984) found an overall rise in enrolment by 4.7 per cent and 10.7 per cent rise for girls. There was no noticeable improvement in repetition and drop-out between 1980 and 1983. Achievement in training of teachers and supervisors was far below the target.⁸

The following table shows the progress of the UPE programme with respect to its civil works component during the first three years (1981-1983) of its implementation. It appears the progress had been much slower in the national project than in the IDA project. It is, however, claimed that with the creation of a Facilities Wing under the Ministry of Education, implementation of the civil works programme of the national project will gain momentum. The revised current programme will have a strong training component and will be carried through the Third Five Year Plan period to 1990.

Table 14. Percentage of target achieved in civil works of UPE projects (1981-1983)

	<i>Repair of schools</i>	<i>New class rooms</i>	<i>Tubewells</i>	<i>Furniture</i>
National Project	53.20	13.90	16.22	10.26
IDA Project	50.19	35.08	28.20	23.00

Source Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (Ministry of Education), UPE (IDA) Phase II (60 upazilas) Project Preparation Report, 1984, page 37.

⁸ Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh (Ministry of Education), UPE (IDA) Phase II (60 Upazilas) Project Preparation Report, June, 1984.

It has been reported that the UPE (IDA) project has a better implementation performance and this is attributed to its better organization and staff quality. The financial implementation performance of the two projects (Table 15) during 1981-1983 would indicate that the rate of utilization of available funds has been comparable in both the projects but it did not exceed 78.74 per cent in either of the projects. Considering the revised allocation for 1983-1984 and the proposed allocation for 1984, it has been reported that the rate of utilization would come to 53.3 per cent in the national project as against that of the 140.6 per cent in the IDA project.

Table 15. Financial implementation performance of UPE project (1980-1983)

(Taka in millions*)

	<i>Plan allocation</i>	<i>Annual dev. plan provision</i>	<i>Actual allocation</i>	<i>Actual expenditure</i>	<i>Per cent utilization</i>
National	2,807.26	996.62	718.82	566.03	78.74
IDA	509.53	316.49	316.49	243.86	77.05

Note. Decimal figures rounded off.

Source Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (Ministry of Education), UPE (IDA) Phase II (60 Upazila.) Project Preparation Report, 1984, p. 37.

* Approximately 29.93 Bangladesh Taka = One US dollar.

On the situation of enrolment in Class I, the reported figure may be taken with some caution in view of the fact that a good proportion of children who would have otherwise been lower or higher class are actually enrolled in Class I. Ideally there should be a special grade for the young. And for the higher classes it is noteworthy that, particularly in the rural areas, a good number of children cross the official age limit of 11 years because they enter primary school at a relatively high age (even at 9 or 10). In both the situations, the drop-out rate for girls becomes conspicuous. Because of overcrowding in Class I, interacting with other discouraging factors at the school and in the family, the drop-out rate is high in this class and girls are the first to drop-out. In the upper classes, when the girls approach their teens, they are affected by the traditional cultural restriction that girls' should be confined at home.

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An assessment of the achievement of the UPE programme and of the merit of the future course of action, must be based on a consideration of the factors that operate in the school system, in the family and in the community to influence enrolment and retention in school. The particular socio-economic and cultural factors that are responsible for keeping the girls' enrolment consistently lower have to be overcome by a composite set of actions on all the relevant fronts. That is a difficult and serious challenge for the national government and society in future years.

The UPE programme in the government sector, especially the IDA project, has provided an attraction to the school by improving the physical facilities and by providing textbooks and school supplies free of cost. But evaluative studies have shown the inadequacies with regard to the provision of these facilities. Construction work was not satisfactory and furniture supply was very inadequate to give suitable results. The result was an expectation on the part of the community to have more support from the government on the one hand and frustration of the people about the utilization of the government resources on the other.⁹ On the whole the programme could not effectively address itself to the problems which were responsible for poor enrolment and retention rate, especially of girls.

The teachers and the poor quality of their teaching, their lack of professional commitment and inappropriate manner of dealing with the students, the problem of not giving individual attention to the students in class and outside class, insufficient physical accommodation in the school houses, lack of partition between classrooms, the poor teaching/learning environment in the class, unattractive methods of teaching and the absence of recreational facilities in school were responsible for the low level of interest of the students leading to a high drop-out rate. These problems were present even in the IDA project schools.

The poor parents did not find any incentive for sending their children to school. The majority of the rural parents, being poor, were unable to send their children to school, or keep them there, by giving the children a minimum of meals, school clothing and school supplies. Want of proper clothing especially prohibited the girls

⁹ Ahmadullah Mia. et al., *Newly Constructed Physical Facilities and Enrolment in Primary School. Case Study of three schools* ISWR, DU Dhaka, 1984.

from attending school. The UPE programme could hardly bring about any notable improvement in this regard, nor could it change the cultural beliefs that educating the girls would not bring any return, particularly for the very poor parents.

Although the teachers, parents and community leaders were expected to be working in close collaboration with each other to promote the schooling of children, especially of girls, in practice lack of interest and lack of co-operation among them was evident in the IDA project villages. The local community as a social unit was not organically linked with the school, rather the school was viewed by the community as an agency to be looked after by the government as much as the teachers were paid by the government. The community could not assist or inspire the poor parents to enrol their sons and daughters and have them continue in school.

A few innovative projects in the non-government sector for the promotion of primary education provide some useful experiences. In the rural areas, these projects have created some attraction to the parents. The major characteristics of these projects are: (a) the schools are seen as a part of community development activities; (b) the poor parents find opportunities for raising their income and through an education motivation process in the community they may realise that education of both boys and girls are normatively desired in the community and would be socially and economically rewarding; (c) non-formal education may give the parents a special background favourable to their children's education; (d) feeder schools or provision for entry in infant/baby class and continuing through Class I facilitates universalizing enrolment in the formal system; (e) older children may find school attractive to them when they are oriented to, or get involved in some gainful activity as they continue with schooling; and (f) the community develops a willingness and gets involved in building up and maintaining school facilities. It has been observed about the innovative projects that "once organized, rural communities are most willing to work and contribute for the welfare of their own children".¹⁰

An empirical study has clearly shown that even in the poverty situation parental literacy and a high literacy village (as against a low

¹⁰ Ellen Sattar, *Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*. University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1982, p.120.

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literacy village) are strong favourable conditions for children's education.¹¹ Female participation in school is especially low in low literacy villages, both non-enrolment and drop-out rates are higher for females, compared to those for males, in such villages. In low literacy villages girls are particularly considered to be helpful in household affairs for both poor and solvent families. Illiterate parents are less interested in girls' education and similarly community encouragement to girls' education is conspicuous by its absence. The UPE projects have not been addressed to these problems in any significant way.

Administration . A new step towards decentralization. The Planning Commission of the Ministry of Planning is the highest body responsible for educational planning within the framework of national planning for economic development. The commission works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education which is the highest body for overall educational policy making as well as its implementation. The Directorate of Primary Education is responsible for executing all government programmes and policies for that stage of education. Primary education is supervised at the upazila level by an upazila Education Officer (UEO) and Assistant Upazila Education Officers (AUEO's) under him.

With the latest policy of the government to decentralize administration of all programmes under all the ministries, the planning and execution of programmes for universalizing primary education within the framework of national policy have become the responsibility of upazila administration. According to the present implementation arrangement, some positive steps are to be taken at this level of administration. These are:

- i) Establishment of one primary school for every 2,000 people or for an area of 2 sq km at a suitable place in order to maximize the accessibility of the school to the population it is supposed to serve;
- ii) Increasing the number of AUEO's to strengthen the supervision of primary education and promote community

¹¹ S A Quadir, *Literacy in Bangladesh Villages Villages Implication for Development and Microplanning*. National Foundation for Research on Human Resource Development, Dhaka, 1983, pp. 75, 85

participation and parent-teacher-community co-operation;
and

- iii) Recruitment of more female teachers for primary education to at least 50 per cent of total new recruitment.

In the new arrangement, functional efficiency of the UPE programme will rest heavily on the honest and efficient exercise of the authority of the upazila administration, particularly on how effectively the Education Officers carry out their supervisory responsibility. In this regard, the need for both pre service and on-the-job training of these officers can hardly be over-emphasized. In the supervisory structure, the role and authority of the head teachers of primary schools are also critical. Management and supervisory training should enable the head teachers to gain increased capabilities, along with increased authority, to ensure better task performance and the accountability of the primary teachers.

Teacher training. Obviously, in the context of universalizing primary education, teachers will have a direct and critical role to play. They should be able to clearly understand their role and responsibility and their training should strengthen their abilities to perform their role satisfactorily so that they can attract and retain children, especially girls, in school. Various activities in relation to the community and parents are to be adequately managed by them, adequate orientation to such activities and skills for management should be some important aspects of the training of these teachers. The existing 49 government Primary Training Institute (PTIs) and three private PTI's will have to be strengthened and utilized for this purpose to their full intake capacity. New schemes for the training of trainers and a new curriculum for the training of teachers will be necessary for the improvement of the quality of training.

Chapter Six

SPECIAL PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

This chapter describes special and innovative programmes in the government sector and some selected non-formal education projects. All the programmes, projects and experiments included in this section are aimed at the promotion of primary education of all children including girls. No programme or project meant for the primary education of girls alone was found. However, the girls of the primary age group appear to have benefited more from some of the special projects than boys.

Innovative programmes in the government sector.

The Second Five Year Plan gave high priority to the introduction of UPE programmes with a view to accelerating the pace of enrolment of primary age children by 1985. One of the main objectives of the plan was to broaden the base of primary education. In the First Plan the share of primary education declined from 17 per cent to 12 per cent of the allocation for education but the share of university education went up from 10 per cent to 30 per cent. One of the cumulative effects of such a policy was that the literacy scene remained more or less stagnant during the First Plan. The educational strategy of the Second Plan sought to reverse the trend.

UPE/IDA project. The universal primary education (UPE/IDA) project was the first venture in the UPE programme. It was undertaken within the Second Plan programmes to promote school enrolment among primary school age children including girls. The UPE/IDA project covered 42 upazilas in seven areas having 4,053 primary schools.

The major objectives of the project were to:

- i) increase primary school enrolment, especially of girls;
- ii) reduce wastage caused by drop-out and repetition;
- iii) improve the quality of instruction;

- iv) reduce unit costs;
- v) provide school buildings and other basic facilities for learning;
- vi) improve school-community relations; and
- vii) strengthen administration and supervision of the primary school at the local level.

The project has been organized and managed by the Directorate of Primary Education under the Ministry of Education. Initially the project was to be completed within five years by 1985, but recently the period was extended by one year, so it is now scheduled to end in 1986.

At the time of launching the project its estimated cost was Taka 6,537 lakh of which IDA's contribution was US\$ 40 million. This budget was expected to rise to Taka 8,125 lakh due to price escalation and unforeseen contingencies.

The project has been receiving technical assistance from UNESCO, the British Council and some individuals on the basis of personal service contracts. UNESCO has been providing technical assistance in the categories of general advice, planning and organization of training and project research and evaluation.

A mid term evaluation of the project was carried out in 1983 by an evaluation committee appointed by the Ministry of Education of the Government of Bangladesh.¹ The important conclusions of the evaluation were as follows:

1. There was increasing enrolment in school of the primary age group children, particularly of girls, in 1983 compared to the base year 1980. The overall enrolment rate had been estimated at 57.4 per cent, thus registering an annual increase of 7.4 per cent. The enrolment rate for girls alone had been estimated at 46.4 per cent recording an annual increase of about 6 per cent. However, in spite of this significant increase in enrolment, the participation rate of the primary age children at the time of the evaluation

¹ Ministry of Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, *Mid term Evaluation of UPE (IDA, Project, Dhaka, 1983.*

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stood at 61 per cent only. Thus the target set in the Second Plan to achieve 90 per cent participation by 1985 was unrealistic and a more realistic target should be fixed.

2. The drop-out rate in the primary schools in the project areas showed a downward trend for all classes from 1980, which indicated higher retention. However, in the absence of summative base-line data for comparison the inferences about the reduced rates of drop-out were based on official records only.
3. The training of teachers and field supervisors appeared to have been intensified during 1982-1983 compared to previous years.
4. The civil works programme for the project schools appeared to be lagging behind target. To achieve the overall target in time an accelerated pace of civil works had to be maintained during the remaining period of the project.
5. The supply level of other inputs, namely furniture, books and uniforms appeared to have increased significantly, particularly during 1982-1983.
6. Poverty, malnutrition and attendant child labour had been identified by parents, whose eligible primary age children were not attending schools, as the preventive factors for non-participation. In these circumstances, provision of mid-day meals, supply of free uniforms and cheap but durable writing materials may be useful to enhance the participation rate of these children.
7. It was felt that the desired improvement in enrolment and attendance as per target by the year 1985 would require serious involvement of the non-government organizations as well as co-ordinated efforts of all concerned government functionaries in a more effective manner through the upazila Education Officer under the supervision of the upazila council. For this purpose suitable training modules should be developed.
8. It was felt that for overall improvement of primary education in the country, community participation was vitally

important for successful implementation of the UPE Programme.

Impact experiment. The IMPACT experiment (Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers), a component of the UPE (IDA) project, is an innovative programme or strategy to achieve quality education, to increase participation and retention rates and to reduce the cost of primary education. It is claimed that this strategy was tested and adopted in some countries in Southeast Asia. The IMPACT experiment in Bangladesh started in 1981 and was expected to be completed in December 1984. Demonstration and Evaluation Year was to take place from January through December 1985. It covers 18 schools in one area of the project.

The experiment was to be implemented in three stages:

- Stage I: Project planning, key personnel training and instructional materials preparation.
- Stage II: Systems tryout in four pilot schools to pre-test the whole system.
- Stage III: Experiment of the system in 18 schools and its evaluation.

The IMPACT system was pre-tested in four pilot schools to modify the original IMPACT model and make it suitable to the local conditions, the original model having been used in the Philippines.

The system try-out in the four pilot schools with the co-operation of the community leaders, parents, teachers and students was completed in 1984. The findings of the research were used to make adjustments for the implementation of the IMPACT system experiment in 18 schools. According to the design of the experiment, it was to be demonstrated in the schools and then the results of the experiment were to be evaluated in 1985.

Meher Universal Primary Education Project. The Meher Universal Primary Education Project is a community based education project using non-formal schools to supplement the local primary schools in order to attain universal enrolment and retention of primary school age children. It began in 1976 as a pilot project on universal primary education when four non-formal schools were

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built by the villagers of a local multi-purpose co-operative, the Meher Panchagram Co-operative, in Meher Union, a rural union situated 22 miles west of Comilla.

The schools were built on land donated by the members of the community who also contributed materials and labour. These schools were called "feeder schools" because they would educate the children for one or two years and then "feed" them into the primary schools.

By 1977 the scheme had expanded to all the 24 villages of Meher Union (north) and, in total, 22 feeder schools were built by the community. There were eight primary schools in Meher Union and the feeder school children were sent on to those schools at the beginning of Class II.

The purpose of the Meher UPE project, initially a pilot project under the Ministry of Education, was to ascertain, by action research, whether it was possible to develop a community-based educational structure which would lead to the universalization of primary education.

In the mid 1978's when the project started, only about two-thirds of the primary school age children enrolled in school. Of those, 60 per cent dropped out by Class III. The distribution of enrolment in any rural primary school was far from the norm, with two-fifths in Class I and less than one-tenth in Class V. There were few women primary school teachers. School facilities were poor and few schools had enough benches to accommodate even 100 children easily let alone the average 250 they were each meant to hold. Thus the attainment of UPE would entail costly expansion of facilities and a rapid doubling of the teaching force. In such a situation the Meher UPE Project wanted to find out if community contribution was possible, how non formal schools could be integrated with the formal schools to improve enrolment and retention, how to encourage enrolment, especially of poorer students and of girls, and how to utilize more women as teachers in order to help girls' enrolment.

The onus of the project is on the local official and the Union Education Committee. The community participation is vital and their continuing interest sustains the project. This local element is one of the most important features of the scheme. It is a scheme

whereby the local community has to contribute and has to sustain interest. A second important feature of the project is the employment of local people. The members of the Union Education Committee, together with all the employees, make over 100 individuals concerned with education. Thus a large number of people in the project area are interested in and aware of the educational activities and their progress.

Two independent evaluations of the Meher UPE Project could be identified.² By and large both reached positive conclusions and praised community involvement, girls' enrolment, low costs and replicability of the project. However, the study by Mazharul Haque and others noted some inadequacies also. The important findings of the evaluation were as follows:

1. Although the feeder school system made a significant achievement in attracting almost all children of the age group to the innovative class called pre-1 (a pre-primary class), the system could not do so for Class I and Class II. In fact, nearly two-thirds of the enrolment in the pre-primary class appeared to consist of children of other age groups who might have been attracted unduly to the pre-primary class and retained in it for years.
2. The impact of the project upon primary education as a whole in the area was not very impressive. The classwise distribution of enrolment showed a very clear imbalance which was similar to the situation in Bangladesh as a whole.
3. It was found that about four-fifths of the total enrolment in Classes I to V of the schools in the project area belonged to the proper age cohorts. The participation rate was 60 per cent of the potential population for enrolment in Class I to V. The situation was only marginally better than that obtaining in the country as a whole.

²(1) Mazharul Haque et al, *An Evaluation of the Meher Panchagram UPE Pilot Project*, Dacca, 1980.

(2) D.B. Gupta and M.D. Hossain, *Universal Primary Education Meher Comilla*, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Comilla, 1980.

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4. The feeder school system seemed to have been successful in attracting girl students to each class, in maintaining a sex balance with almost 50 per cent of the enrolment constituted by girl students, and in motivating these girls to continue their primary education. The percentage of girls in the total enrolment in Classes I to V went up rather rapidly (from 36 per cent in 1976 to 49 per cent in 1979). The situation regarding the enrolment of girls elsewhere in Bangladesh was not known to have changed so rapidly. This achievement was largely attributable to the existence of a large number of female teachers and "Ayas" in feeder schools in the system.
5. The attendance rate for the primary education system in the project areas was found to be around 75 per cent of the enrolment. This was not much better than the attendance rate in the country as a whole. However, the attendance rate of girls appeared to be higher than that of boys in the project schools.
6. The project had not been able to effect universalization of primary education in the area in spite of a huge effort although it had set the process in motion.
7. There was a wide variation in respect of physical facilities in the feeder schools and the primary schools in the project area and many of the feeder schools and some primary schools did not have the basic facilities required for such institutions.
8. It was revealed that economic problems were the main obstacles to the achievement of UPE. Although innovative projects like other UPE can achieve impressive results, there was a limit imposed by the socio-economic constraints. Unless these constraints are removed, true universality in primary education was likely to remain unaccomplished.
9. The communities in the project area were willing, but only slightly able, to donate, on a co-operative basis, to cover only a part of the cost of primary education.

10. Universalization of primary education, either in terms of five years of schooling or achievement of literacy, was not achieved as envisaged primarily because of non-participation of children of the age groups for Classes II to V.
11. Rural educated women were motivated to work as teachers on a very small salary and few benefits.
12. An adapted version of the project may be introduced for universalization of primary education in the country. But its introduction elsewhere should be preceded by organizing rural co-operatives consistent with the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the communities.

Community Learning Centres. Another innovative programme launched by the government to promote primary education of both boys and girls is the community learning centre (CLC). In order to make each primary school the pivot of all community activities, the Ministry of Education claimed that it had established, up to 1984, community learning centres in 200 primary schools. Parents, teachers, community workers and government functionaries engaged in various development activities are the members of the CLCs. Under each CLC, there is a parent teacher association to look after the welfare of the school, and prevent dropping out. Under the guidance of the CLC, the primary school is being used not only for the education of children but also as a learning centre for the entire community. Community members are helped and encouraged to improve their occupations and to participate in nation-building activities.

The community learning centre programme began only recently and its effectiveness and impact on primary education have not yet been evaluated.

The "Shawnirvar" experiment. "Shawnirvar" means self-reliance and as a movement launched by the government it began in the late 1960s and gathered momentum in the 1970s under dedicated leadership and using cadres of village level volunteers.

Until 1980 the Shawnirvar experiment was primarily concerned with raising agricultural output, enhancing family planning acceptance and utilizing local resources through self-help efforts. In 1980

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the experiment became involved with the mass literacy movement. However, under this project the benefit to the primary education of children including girls appeared to be indirect. The primary schools in Shahnirvar areas are reported to be above the national average in all classes, the enrolment is said to have been enhanced, the distribution of students between classes is claimed to conform more nearly to the norm and the ratio of boys to girls is shown to be 56:44.³

It has been observed that as the general standard of living in the Shahnirvar areas rose somewhat over the past few years, there was a spin-off effect into education. More parents sent their children to school and girls' enrolment increased more quickly in the Shahnirvar areas in the rest of rural Bangladesh. Though the drop-out rate is still high in these schools, there can be reasonable hope of a continuing improvement of retention in the Shahnirvar primary schools.

Religious educational projects. The "maktab" is a kind of religious school found in Bangladesh villages. The "maktabs" are informal schools imparting elementary religious teaching. Small children – both boys and girls – go to these schools to learn their prayers and recitations from the Quran (the Muslim holy book) and "Diniat" (the Muslim way of life). Usually the local "Imams" (religious leaders) take these classes and the pupils may meet on a mosque premise or in a homestead guest house. Normally up to 10 or 15 children attend these religious schools early in the morning before going on to primary school at 10 a.m. For some village children these "maktabs" are the only educational experience they ever have.

The "maktabs" and the "Imams" are a potential means of helping to achieve universal primary education in Bangladesh. It has been estimated that there are over 200,000 mosques in Bangladesh.⁴ Except for prayer times this vast investment is unutilized. Nearly every mosque has a "maktab" attached to it and so the mosques can be utilized as schools for literacy as well as for religious instruction. The mosque is the real community centre for the Muslim in the rural areas and mosque schools could cater to the needs of adult literacy as

³ BACE, *Primary Education, Mass Literacy, Family Planning and Women's Programme in Ten Shahnirvar Thanas of Bangladesh*, Dacca, 1981.

⁴ Shamsul Alam, *Role of Mosque and Maktabs in Removing Mass Illiteracy*, Islamic Foundation, Dacca, 1979.

well as primary school age children. The mosque as a centre of learning is well established in Islam and to utilize the mosques and the Imams for primary education would be a logical step in the Islamic tradition.

This idea was used in the 1960s by Akhtar Hamid Khan, the then Director of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) in Comilla, when he established "Imam feeder schools" around Comilla. The Imams taught the children reading and writing as well as religious studies and they were sent on to the primary school after one or two years. This scheme died out after the emergence of Bangladesh, but some years later the idea was taken up by the "Shawnirvar" movement in co-operation with the Islamic Foundation of Bangladesh. The Imams are now trained by the Islamic Foundation, a government organization, the Mosque Society of Bangladesh, a non-government voluntary organization, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Imam training courses aim at equipping these rural religious leaders with basic knowledge in agriculture, community health and other related fields. After the training they are sent back to their mosques to help in the local development work. The Imam training courses can include a component of primary education.

During the last few years the idea of Imams as teachers of school children is reported to have been incorporated into the training sessions. The Mosque Society of Bangladesh started a programme in and around Dhaka city through which the Imams would teach small children. Under this programme matching funds are provided to the community in order to pay the Imam a small honorarium and to supply books to the children. These mosque schools teach Arabic and Bengali along with traditional religious teachings. This idea was developed further by the Islamic Foundation which started a pilot scheme of "Maktab Feeder Schools" in 1981. Given the present socio-economic conditions obtaining in the country, especially poverty in the rural areas, attaining universal primary education through the formal schools only seems an extremely difficult task. The problems involved are so gigantic that the country needs to utilize all available facilities and people to achieve universal primary education by the year 2000. "Maktab feeder schools may yet prove as important an innovation in Bangladesh as the Sunday schools of

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England which originated with same end to make the children literate along with imparting religious teaching.”⁵

Such schools may be of special value to girls. Girls do attend “maktabs” and many of them receive informal religious training from tutors at their own homes. As girls are more often-attenders at school than boys and as their general literacy rate is lower, the use of “maktabs” to concentrate attention on the educational need of girls could be of great significance to them.

Religious charitable organizations also give strong support to education through the establishment and maintenance of “madrasahs”, orphanages and non formal education activities through development programmes for the poor and disadvantaged. Such institutions could do far more in the formal primary education sector if assistance and support was extended to them on a continuing basis. In terms of cost also support to improvement of existing institutions is far cheaper than establishing new ones. So it seems logical that some recognition and financial assistance should be given to “maktabs” and “maktab feeder schools” which can be included in the drive for the universalization of primary education.

Non-formal education

A growing realization of the need for the promotion of girls' education through the non-formal approach has been observed in recent years among the official policy makers and others interested in increasing the enrolment and retention of the primary age children. Indeed, non-formal programmes seem to have the potentiality to improve significantly the participation of girls at the primary level and to reduce their drop-out rate. A large number of girls who are not covered by the formal education system and those who drop-out of the system could be reached and educated by non-formal programmes of education.

Until recently there were no systematic efforts to organize non-formal education programmes for women and girls in Bangladesh. The few programmes that do reach girls and women now are not adequate to reach the target clientele.⁶

⁵ Ellen Sattar, *Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*, University Press Ltd., Dacca, Bangladesh, 1982, p. 109.

⁶ Shamima Islam, *Op. cit.*, FREPD, Dhaka, 1982.

Till now all the efforts of the government have been concentrated on adult literacy programmes. In 1963 the government set up an adult literacy section in the Education Directorate. In 1977 the then President of Bangladesh declared his determination to liquidate illiteracy within a specified period for the 11-45 age group. As such a crash literacy programme was launched for them. On the basis of this policy the Second Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (1980-1985) acknowledged that, "illiteracy is a barrier to socio-economic development", and hoped to make all illiterates of 10-45 age group (numbering about 40 million) literate during 1980-1985 at a cost of Tk. 960 million.⁷ A Mass Education Scheme was devised and launched. But later in 1982 an evaluation was done of the mass education programme and subsequently the scheme was abandoned by the government. The findings of the evaluation of the Mass Education Programme showed that:

An estimated 25.4 lakhs* learners (24 per cent of whom i.e. 4.89 lakhs are female) got enrolled at the literacy centres from February 1980 to June, 1982 as against official figure of 68.7 lakhs. The learners belonging to the age-range 11-35 years represented 87 per cent of the total enrolment . . . It appears that participation and achievement of females of rural areas in the literacy programme have been increasing.⁸

During the second plan period Community Learning Centres (CLCs) were set up in order to promote girls' education in the rural areas. Besides these efforts the Social Welfare Directorate under the Ministry of Social Welfare and Women's Affairs runs a few homes or "Sadans" for the children of the primary age group. These homes follow the curricula of the formal school system and provide some skill training. The Bangladesh Rural Development Board (formerly IRDP) organizes some literacy centres for women and children in collaboration with DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency) which has its own Mass Education Programme.

⁷ I REPD, *Assessment of Female Education in Bangladesh*, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Dhaka, 1983

* One lakh = 100,000

⁸ Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, *The Report of the Mass Education Progress Evaluation Committee*, Dhaka, 1982.

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As stated earlier almost all the efforts of the government and non-government agencies to promote non-formal education for women are concentrated on the adult females. A few of the NGOs who have been successfully organizing non-formal education for the 6-10 year age group with special innovative features have been discussed in this section.

These programmes cover only a very small percentage of the target groups. In terms of location these are mostly concentrated in urban areas or in areas easily accessible from Dhaka city. Any evaluation of these innovative programmes is yet to be done but it seems that their experiences can be utilized for micro-planning of further programmes. A brief description of these projects should be useful in promoting girls' primary education. These organizations are: (i) Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC); (ii) Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE); (iii) the Mass Education Programme of DANIDA, (iv) the Under-Privileged Children's Education Programme (UCEP), (v) the Village Education Resource Centre (VERC), (vi) the Gono Pathsala of Gono Shayestha Kendra; and (vii) Suravi.

Non-formal primary education programme of BRAC. The Non-formal Primary Education Programme of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) started in March, 1985. BRAC is a private non-profit organization involved in socio-economic development activities for rural men and women. Since its inception immediately after the War of Liberation BRAC has been running a project on adult education which is known as "functional literacy programme". But the Non-formal Primary Education Programme (NFPE) started in 1985 has been undertaken mainly for the children in the rural areas who have never been enrolled in primary schools or are drop-outs. Target pupils are the rural disadvantaged children between 8-11 years and 50 per cent of them should be female children. The target pupils are the children of the landless families under the development projects of BRAC in different parts of Bangladesh.

The main objectives of the non-formal primary education programme of BRAC are to:

- i) provide basic education to children of 8-10 years age group in 40 centres;

- ii) increase the enrolment ratio of female children;
- iii) relate instruction more closely to the needs of rural children;
- iv) improve the quality of rural primary education;
- v) maintain students' interest and participation in the educational programme;
- vi) experiment with different modalities of community participation with a view to developing a community organization model in support of NFPE programme for future adoption on a national scale; and
- vii) devise appropriate curriculum and methodology for pre-school children and to assess the performance of these children in formal primary schools and in the NFPE centres who have completed pre-schooling earlier.

The NFPE is scheduled to be tested in 40 villages in two phases. There will be one centre in each village. Twenty centres will be opened in the first year and 20 in the second year. Each centre has 30 children. At present girls' enrolment is higher than that of boys. The average enrolment of girls is 52.65 per cent in the project areas.

The BRAC has developed its own instructional materials for primary and pre-primary pupils and training materials for the teachers. Candidates having 8-10 years of formal schooling are being recruited as teachers. In recruiting teachers BRAC puts more emphasis on the use of non-professional female teachers. An intensive 10 days training session is organized for the teachers. Moreover, to maintain the teachers' skill and motivation, a subsequent high level 3-day course will be provided for them after every four months.

Books and classroom supplies are provided free of cost and these are designed to keep costs to a minimum. A village level committee is formed and it is responsible for integrating the NFPE into the community. The committee is responsible for contacting and motivating the parents to send their children to the school and it also has other management functions.

The NFPE programme intends to add 5 pre-school groups of 15 children each in the age group of 5 to 7 years as an experimental feature.

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After two years of pre-school exposure and after they have reached primary school age, the children will be encouraged to enroll in the formal primary system. The pre-school programme is relaxed and enjoyable for the children. The curriculum provides opportunities for development in other areas besides intellectual or cognitive growth.

Since NFPE and Pre-schools are new projects started only in March 1985, no evaluation of their achievement has yet been done.

Meher universal primary education project of BACE. Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE). Since its inception in 1977, the Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE) has been involved in various educational and development activities. BACE has undertaken several projects in the country and Meher UPE is one of them. It is a community based non-formal school system to supplement the formal education system. It has been described in the section on innovative programmes in the government sector.

The mass education programme of Danish International Development Agency. The Mass Education Programme (MEP) of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) started in January, 1979. It was planned to be executed in two upazas of Noakhali in two phases over a six-year period.

The primary goal of the programme was to support the poorest section of the population, particularly the landless and marginal farmers, women and non-attending school children aged between 6-11. All the MEP centres have been organized on the basis of the following principles. (a) easy to reach for students, (b) average number of students in each centre is about 800 of whom 45.50 per cent should be girls; (c) each student may participate for three years; (d) the centre should have a close dialogue with the local people; (e) it should be home based, have a school committee with 5-7 members who will nominate the teacher, and (f) it should be low cost so that a model may be developed which can be used in other parts of the country.

All the centres are located in already existing facilities such as 'Kutchery' or outer houses, 'maktabs' and private homes. The MEP does not provide any funds for the maintenance of the centres, which is the total responsibility of the community.

The students of the centres are divided into three groups according to capabilities. group 'A' is the beginning and group 'C' consist. of the advanced students. Nobody is graded according to age. At present approximately 35,000 children are enrolled in about 800 MEP centres. The drop out rate is high. But considering part-time attendance, the actual drop out rate is 5-8 per cent. It is due to the fact that the poor parents need the children's help in the farming and domestic work.

There are 750 teachers, with an average education equal to S.S.C. They undergo internal training on three modules for a three day period with an interval of three to four months. The MEP has 50 field organizers and co ordinators for motivational field work in every village in the project areas. Before setting up new centres they discuss problems of the non-attending school children, aged 6-11 years old. Basically, teacher training, among other things, is based on folklore. Drama, songs, and traditional dances are used as means of expression in the training sessions. The MEP has formed a travelling folklore group which aims to motivate the people in continuing education.

From a pedagogical point of view, the mass education of children is closely linked to "learning by-doing". There are two models, (a) learning skills (3 Rs, dramas, songs, hygienic issues), and (b) survival issues centered activities including gardening, plantation, poultry, bookkeeping, student "fee" and fishponds.

After completion of their schooling the children receive 'MEP Graduation Certificate' stating their participation and its duration.

Under-privileged children's education programme (UCEP). Founded in 1973 by an individual, the UCEP was originally designed to educate 400 street children in Dhaka city. At present UCEP has 21 schools and nearly 10,000 children of the 9-14-year age group in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna. Of the total enrolment, about 1,000 are working girls. There are separate shifts in the UCEP schools, particularly for girls, in Dhaka and Chittagong. In Dhaka there is a separate UCEP girls' school. In other UCEP schools in Dhaka working girls constitute about 25 per cent of the total enrolment.

The objectives of UCEP schools are to:

- i) provide basic education to the working children;

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- ii) provide facilities to the students to learn while they earn;
- iii) provide training in a trade so that the trainee is able to improve his earning capacity;
- iv) inculcate among the pupils a sense of dignity of labour, self-reliance and responsibility;
- v) provide, within the limits of resources, other ancillary facilities like health care, nutritive diet, physical education and games to the children along with schooling; and
- vi) develop the overall personality of the working children in order to mould them as good citizens of the country capable of making a contribution to society. Over the last ten years UCEP has expanded its programme in different parts of the country.

UCEP recruits new children from among working children twice a year in June and December. In recruiting new children UCEP seeks permission of the children's parents or employers to allow them to attend classes. Close contact between the parents and employers and the UCEP schools is maintained throughout the time children stay in school.

UCEP schools are housed in a building or land donated by the local and community authorities. They are located in urban and semi-urban areas.

In UCEP schools students earn a living for themselves and their families. Only those working children who are nine years old can be admitted to the UCEP schools. Shortening the duration of the courses from one year to six months is also a prominent feature. The UCEP pupils spend only two hours a day in the school as most of the boys are working. The short duration of the school and the completion of each class in six months have necessitated a shortening of the syllabus. Discipline is maintained through a system of self-government. Special provision has been made for the health care of the students. Social workers provide a strong support to the programme by maintaining close contact with the pupils, guardians and teachers.

The impact of UCEP on different aspects of life of students was measured by an evaluation study⁹ which revealed the following:

1. About 84 per cent of the students used their leisure time in more useful ways like reading, writing and helping parents instead of spending time in playing, loitering and gossiping.
2. Most of the students observed that the hopes and aspirations of their life had changed.
3. Almost all the students reported that after joining the UCEP schools the attitude of parents, guardians and neighbours towards them changed favourably.
4. About 28 per cent of the students reported an increase in their earnings, 63 per cent said income had not been affected and only 9 per cent reported a fall in their income after joining the UCEP schools.

Over the years UCEP schools have become a comprehensive project which attempts to raise the quality of life of underprivileged urban working children in Bangladesh.

Children's education resource centre of village education resource centre (VERC). Of all the activities and programmes of VERC, which was established in 1977, the Children's Education Resource Centre (CERC) project deserves special mention as its objectives are directly linked with primary education in the non-formal sector.

To promote non-formal education programmes for out-of-school underprivileged children a CERC was established by VERC. To attract poor and delinquent children to education, CERC developed innovative techniques and educational resources. There are six classes in this school from K.G. to Class V. The age of students ranges from 5-12 years. The children are given non-formal education by two salaried teachers. They use books and resources developed by VERC experts using local resources. These includes nursery rhymes, "Elomelo" rhymes, "Tak-Dhina-Din", vowel learning, clay alphabets,

⁹ M.A. Momen, et al, *An Evaluation of Under-Privileged Children's Education Programme (UCEP) in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1983.

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match box train, abacus, zig-saw puzzle, jute-stick and seeds. This school is run as a model non-formal laboratory school. From Classes III to V the national syllabus is used.

After attaining competency in basic education through intensive learning activities some children go on to formal primary schools and some stay on to acquire income generating vocational skills. Some students complete primary education here and go on to secondary schools.

An analysis of VERC's CERC indicates that the objectives are to:

- i) prepare the underprivileged illiterate children of the society with a minimum basic education;
- ii) help the school drop-outs to acquire income generating skills;
- iii) develop in the poor children appropriate attitudes and behaviour to enable them to function as future citizens of the country;
- iv) make them ready for formal schools;
- v) develop a non-formal curriculum for children; and
- vi) disseminate these ideas and techniques to other interested groups and individuals.

These objectives are intended to be achieved through regular classes, home visits, parent-teacher meetings, prize giving ceremonies, exhibition of children's work and study tours.

An evaluation of CERC's programme shows that an average of 50 students regularly attend classes in all the centres. It appears that the parents of the economically disadvantaged children have been successfully motivated to send their children to the centres. The reasons for the children's attendance are presented in Table 16.

The items in the table give insight into some of the preconditions for promotion of girls' participation in the primary schools. The table indicates that more than 85 per cent of the respondents stated that the reason for their participation in these centres was the teachers' love and care for them.

Table 16. Reasons mentioned by teachers, organizers and development workers why children were interested in attending these centres.

N = 14

<i>Reasons for coming to these centres</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Teaching with much care and love	12	85.50
Maintenance of link with parents	6	42.75
Supply of books and aids free of cost	6	42.75
Lack of proper socio-economic standard to seek admission to formal schools	9	64.35
Time of attendance is convenient for them	5	35.56

Source: Report of the Evaluation of VERC Programmes.

The evaluation report on VERC's performance tried to collect information as to why underprivileged children did not join these centres. Table 17 shows the reasons why a large percentage of underprivileged children did not join these centres.

Table 17. Opinions of 22 teachers and organizers about the reasons why many deprived children are not coming to the centres

<i>Reasons for not coming to the centres</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Children help parents at home	8	36.40
Children earn a livelihood	7	31.40
Schools have limited accommodation	8	36.40
Lack of parents' motivation	6	27.28
Other reasons	3	13.64

Source: *Op. cit.*

The table shows that the reasons for non-participation of children are a conglomeration of economic, social and psychological factors. Girls' participation rate can be improved only through removing the causes of these problems.

VERC's educational programme is innovative in producing educational resources from local and indigenous products. Also the programme aims at developing a positive attitude among the children

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towards basic education. Girls' participation in primary education is likely to be promoted by using and learning from the experiences gained from educational programmes of VERC.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the evaluation of VERC's educational programmes:

1. Love and care of the teachers is a fundamental common factor and a natural need which should be satisfied.
2. Non-formal educational programmes are more dynamic and less rigid which can fulfil the needs of the children of poor socio-economic background. High opportunity costs involved in sending children to formal schools could easily be reduced in the non-formal system.
3. A non-formal curriculum, which is to be developed by the VERC personnel is likely to be of great help not only for VERC but also for other similar organizations. The curriculum could be an important factor in the promotion of education of the underprivileged boys and girls.

Suravi. Only two-fifths of the child population (5-14) have been found to be enrolled in schools. Extreme poverty of the families, low educational status of the adult members, malnutrition of the child population, high infant mortality rate, serious incidence of disease and sickness coupled with general ignorance of the population tend to create a socio-economic, even physical environment which is most uncongenial and adverse to the education of the child population.¹⁰

This is a sad picture indeed of the children of Bangladesh. Overall child enrolment is low. Many hidden imbalances in the participation rates among boys and girls, and even girls of different socio-economic status, poses a complex problem which has been discussed in the earlier chapters. It has been noted that the urban participation rate is better than the participation rate in the rural areas. However, if the child population of the urban slums is considered, an acute imbalance is seen. Bypassing these unfortunate young people, universalization of primary education is impossible.

¹⁰ CREPD, *Study on the Situation of Children in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1981.

Most children of the slum areas are poverty stricken. Even at a tender age they pull rickshaws, work hard on roads, break pebbles, work as day labourers, collect dry leaves in the more prestigious city areas, pull carts, sell flowers to the rich people, beg in the city centres, work as servants of the rich families, and do many other odd jobs. It is common knowledge in the cities of Bangladesh that slum children are doing these for a living, which would be considered illegal child labour by international standards. But in these children have to do these jobs to survive and to support their old or sick parents. The voluntary organization that aspires to solve the problems of these unfortunate children is 'Suravi'.

The meaning of the Bengali word "Suravi" is aroma or fragrance. The name indicates the objective of this locally financed non-formal organization engaged in education and technical, vocational and skill training of the multitude of underprivileged children. The main aim of this organization is to give hope, meaning and light to these unfortunate children of the big cities.

Initiated and managed by a notable woman social worker, Suravi has undertaken the responsibility to offer a bright future to the poor urban children and has earned a reputation for its work. The headquarters of Suravi is situated at the founder's own house which she has donated to Suravi. In 1979 Suravi started its work with only six children. At present there are 82 branches of Suravi in the big cities of Bangladesh with 72 branches in Dhaka city alone. The number of students at Suravi schools now is 95,000. That in six years the enrolment figure of Suravi rose to an astounding figure of 95,000 speaks eloquently of the dedication and success of its founder, workers and organizers.

The aim of Suravi is to reshape the future of the teeming millions of the underprivileged urban children of Bangladesh. Here the founder's vision offered an alternative approach. The students of Suravi belong to the roads. They have no fixed rules and regulations guiding their living and profession. They are ill-clad, bare-footed and dry-haired but when they come to Suravi they are all alike. Suravi is financed through the personal efforts of the founder.

Suravi is primarily an educational organization of the non-formal type. It has offered the urban hame nots with free education, books, stationery, school clothing, free rations, medical check-up and

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guidance whenever necessary. There is no rigid regulation about the age of admission. The younger children aged about 6 are admitted to Class I. Older students with a poor educational background are given a condensed course and then admitted to Class III. The students are taught in a regular, systematic manner. They are evaluated thrice a year through examinations. The main branches of Suravi work in three shifts. The curriculum of the formal school system is used with necessary modifications and adjustments. There are 550 paid teachers working at the different branches.

Suravi is basically engaged in the education of the rootless children of the city as. Its programme includes a provision for offering technical and vocational training to students in order to improve their chances of earning and self-employment. Suravi's technical centres offer training in shoe-making, ceramics, tailoring, tie and dye, cane articles making, doll-making, making of leather goods, chalk-making, pot plant, block print training, candle making, flower making and book binding. Their products are sold at various city centres at competitive prices.

A visit to Suravi's main centre and an interview with the founder would provide good evidence about the conviction of its organizers and teachers.

Savar "Gone Pathshala". "Gonobidyalaya" means people's school. It is a component of Saver Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK) introduced by a charismatic social worker of Bangladesh. "Gonoshasthaya Kendra" means People's Health Centre.

. . . there are only 12.16 primary school teachers per thousand school age children, 58 per cent school age boys and 37 per cent girls in rural areas are enrolled in schools. . . Drop-out rates are very high, 80 per cent drop-out before reaching Class V and it is the poorer children who are forced out. The organizers of Gonoshasthaya Kendra introduced the educational section to alleviate this dismal struction.¹¹

"Gono Pathshala" means people's primary school. It is a part of Gonobidyalaya. Here the problem of rural illiteracy and poverty is attacked from a different angle. The organizer understood the

¹¹ Report of Gono Pathshala No. 8 (memo) July 1984, p. 1.

basic realities of the poor people and set up an experimental school in an alternative system accommodating within the school programme the duties that rural children perform at home and devised a curriculum suitable to village life. Gono Pathshala's primary purpose is to spread education among the children of landless and marginal farmers who otherwise have no opportunity for education. The students are involved in activities in which they would find interest and which would develop in them skills considered valuable by their families. The teachers teach 5 days a week and spend one day supervising village schools run by student teachers. The founder of Gono Pathshala visualized the realities of Bangladesh and realized that there were few benefits to be gained by parents in the formal system of primary education and that the poor parents did not have the means to afford the cost involved therein.

Table 18. Savar Gono Pathshala's intake April 1984

<i>Classes</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Total</i>
Nursery	53	42	95
I	30	37	67
II	20	29	49
III	20	28	48
IV	5	10	15
V	10	12	22
	138	158	296

Source Report of Gono Pathshala No. 8.

The school started with 100 students in 1978 and the number increased to 296 in 1984. There is increasing demand for more accommodation and more place for children. The GK authorities do not accept government assistance to avoid intervention and to develop the spirit of self-reliance. Gonopathshala has two big rooms divided into seven rooms. Unlike other schools, the students sit on the floor for the sake of economy. There are three blackboards and necessary toilet facilities. The students have their own wall-board for information about the villages and news on health and nutrition. Students are given a printed survey sheet for information about villages which they fill up in their own hand and discuss in the class. This exercise helps to raise their consciousness about the village social structure and their own place in it.

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The school programme is devised in such a way that absence of students is not marked if his service is demanded during harvesting period or at home. Besides, during harvesting season the whole school may go and help to harvest. Students are accepted in the nursery for a tentative three-month period. They are taught basic literacy and numeracy during the first two years. Civics, geography, crops, climate, demographic features, national historical background and the struggle for liberation, plant and animal biology, primary health care, personal hygiene, sanitation, and environmental care are included in the curriculum of Classes III-V. The school programme also includes music, dance, recitation, drawing, drama, physical exercise and swimming lessons to add variety to the programme and for a balanced mental and physical development of children.

The curriculum is unique for its group theme, Mixed by age and ability the children are divided into 21 groups and work daily on agricultural plots to make learning life-oriented. The older children teach the younger ones in the morning classes. Lessons for Classes III-V are given after lunch.

The younger children go back to villages with the school 'ayah' and teach their family members. They are called 'child teachers' and at present there are 48 such teachers. Their problems are reviewed in monthly meetings. The students are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the school premises. The school programme is a unique example of co-operation and group work. The children not only learn but also take the responsibility of teaching.

Despite the concern of the organizers the high drop-out rate persists. The children drop-out because of poverty. For example, a promising girl dropped out for a job in a local factory as she needed it. With her, her five younger siblings also dropped out. However, the authorities claim that their rate of drop-out is lower compared to the 80 per cent drop-out rate at the national level of primary education.

Drop-out rates are very high in Jamalpur, the sister project of Savar Gonobidyalaya, where poverty is very high. However, it was found in Gono Pathshala that the rate of drop-out can be kept to a minimum if students are involved in the school programmes.

It is a part of the philosophy of the non-formal programme that the young learners in Savar Gono Pathshala teach others what they

learn. The student teachers teach in the afternoons, especially their family members and school drop-outs. There are ten village schools with 88 regular women students in these schools. In general after two years of study in these schools a student learns to read and write and his level is equivalent to that of Class III. The teachers of Gono Pathshala spend one day a week supervising these student teachers to review their problems and progress.

The total number of Gono Pathshala teaching staff is nine. To promote women employment they employed eight women teachers out of the total. In the formal education system only 5.17 per cent of teachers are women.

The qualifications of teachers are not very high as qualified teachers sometimes do not like the method used in Gono Pathshala, according to the authorities of Gonobidyalaya.

Table 19. Qualifications of teachers

Teachers N=9		
S.S.C.	4	44.44
H.S.C.	2	22.22
Graduate	2	22.22
Post Graduate	1	11.12
	9	100

Source: Report of Gono Pathshala No. 8.

Table 19 shows that qualifications of teachers are rather moderate. Nevertheless the success of the school programme encouraged the authorities to appoint less qualified women teachers and to give them necessary on-the-job training. They proved to be dedicated and they learnt from their training, particularly in village work, adult education and special methods used in Gono Pathshala. The authorities believe that the work of committed workers is an essential pre-requisite for bringing fundamental change. A visit to the centre (GK) will substantiate the belief that women's liberation and women's participation in various kinds of economic activities can be channelled and attained through literacy and education. Moreover, the problem of primary education vis-a-vis girls' participation

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could be effectively solved through non-government organizations like Savar Gono Pathshala.

Savar Gono Pathshala is a unique example of absorbing rural children in an education system which seems to be realistic and life-oriented and which can cater to the need of rural girls. It helps to raise the consciousness of the poor children. The realistic and life-oriented time-table and curriculum of Gono Pathshala can be replicated on a wider scale. The non-utilization of chairs and benches for students reduces the total cost whereby more schools can be established with modest resources. Schools with insufficient staff could replicate the experience of Gono Pathshala to utilize students for teaching. In summing up the innovative features of Gono Pathshala a researcher who made an evaluation of the school commented, "While systematic skill training and health education activities may not be possible on a large scale, the approach to education as more than book learning has to become a part of all non-formal education programmes".¹²

¹² Syeda Rowshan Qadir, *Education of Out of School Children, Some Case Studies*, London, 1984.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of universal primary education and, in that context, the necessity of taking special measures for the promotion of girls' education have been explicitly recognized in the national education policy. Declared as a fundamental human right in the constitution of the country, basic education or literacy has also received support from the highest political leadership, in the form of a Presidential declaration. Further, that literacy is an essential condition for national progress has clearly appeared in the national development plan documents. Indeed, policy and plan initiatives for making the national population literate have repeated themselves, with reinforcements in ideas and schemes, at subsequent plan periods since 1974. Yet the dissatisfaction over the poor level of achievement the current low enrolment and retention rates of children in primary schools, particularly of girls, reflect among others the bureaucratic organizational failure in dealing with the problems that account for low school participation rates.

Plan implementation has been plagued with a number of paradoxes. Despite policy declarations in favour of literacy promotion, resource allocation has been disappointingly lower than the desired level, and actual spending has been disproportionately higher for secondary and higher education favouring mostly the urban and privileged groups. When increased resources were made available for literacy or primary education, mismanagement and wastage of resources were conspicuous. The overall development efforts of the country over the past plan periods have not brought about any improvement in the household condition* of the majority of the population, nor have they positively changed the parental outlook in regard to children's education. Whereas the vast majority of the national population are poor and live in rural areas, new facilities or

* Household condition includes level of income, outlook of life, parental attitude toward children's education.

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resource spending dynamics hardly go for compensating the deprivations of the poor and masses.

Study commissions, expert committees and research bodies, with or without government sponsorship, have repeatedly identified the factors at the levels of individual students, parents or family members, household economy, community and culture, school environment (including teachers, teaching quality and physical facilities), local geophysical structure and the overall employment structure which are unfavourable to children's school participation. But it is obvious from the still present low enrolment rate, a high drop-out rate, especially in the first and second grades of primary school, and a much lower participation rate of girls, that the steps which have been taken so far have not made any significant changes in the crucial factors accounting for such low participation.

The increase in the number of schools has not kept pace with the increase of school age population. Neither school houses nor classroom facilities are adequate for attracting and retaining girls, particularly older girls in school. Improving the school facilities is necessary, but it is not a sufficient condition especially when the large proportion of the parents, who do not send their daughters to school, need to overcome poverty and its related problems. Poverty in the family, interacting with the traditional social expectancies regarding woman as housewife, is responsible for the feeling that girls' schooling means a mere wastage of time and resources, and a loss of domestic help during school hours. Parents who are unable to provide two meals a day or to give minimum clothes or to pay for school supplies do not naturally want schooling for their daughters. On the other hand, parents above poverty level but being illiterate themselves, consider girls' schooling not a useful investment after compensating the losses due to their schooling.

Poor teaching at school, particularly the teachers' lack of commitment to their responsibilities does not encourage the enrolment and retention of girls, given the overall social environment which is unfavourable to girls' education. The school curriculum is not culturally appropriate, as far as girls' education and parental expectations are concerned. The location of schools at distant places or with difficult access for children (because of bad communication facilities) is inhibitive to girls' school participation.

Creating favourable community conditions for girls' education, improving family situations and improving road communication facilities to increase accessibility to school are the functions of development efforts outside the sector of education. But planning for development in these sectors does not correspond to their possible relationship with the promotion of school participation. Therefore, any significant improvement in school participation can be expected only when investment in the education sector outweighs the disadvantages posed by the low level of development in the other sectors.

The present policy of supplying textbooks free of cost by the government is a positive step; but the management of this has become a cause of disappointment. The poor management of textbook supply adds to loss of credibility of government programmes in general. Poor management is also reflected in poor teacher behaviour.

Some special projects in the government sector, administered on a small scale, with heavy inputs mostly for physical improvement in schools, peripherally touch the problems related to low enrolment and retention rates, particularly of girls. This small improvement in the situation is overshadowed by the lack of efficiency in the implementation of the projects.

On the contrary some innovative projects, generally in the non-government sector, try to address themselves to the needs and abilities of the children in a flexible way and also to the parental problems so that positive changes toward children's education become more natural. Some of these projects use special learning contents; some others adopt special teaching methods and materials, some of them try to integrate children's primary schooling with economic activities of the locality and use a flexible time schedule, and some others maintain the close link of parents and community with the school within a network of economic and social programmes particularly for the poor. In fact, the projects in the non-government sector, with their multifaceted activities covering multiple sectors and target groups, including women, generate a total effect highly in favour of girls' education. It is interesting that one such successful project makes use of indigenous seating arrangements on locally available inexpensive mats which is advisable in coping with the accommodation problem. This project provides a novel example of

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having a high rate of school participation among the poor. This and other NGO projects combine various elements, including innovative teaching methods and learning materials suitable to the children, and at the same time work on the motivation of the parents and community for children's (including girls) education.

Looking ahead. As far as future prospects are concerned, two broad observations are warranted by an objective assessment of what has taken place so far. The Third Five Year Plan (1985-1990) manifests a noble desire to achieve 70 per cent enrolment of the primary school age population and minimize the inequality between sexes while moving towards achieving 90 per cent enrolment by the year 2000. The goal is a highly desirable one. The national plan on primary education is not yet formally declared, which is an indication of some degree of uncertainty of the fate of any UPE programme, particularly on the question of financing the plan. Nevertheless, the Plan envisages substantial financial investment for the improvement of physical facilities, instructional materials, teacher training, teaching aids, curriculum planning and supervision of teachers' activities. The Plan also provides for raising management efficiency through a number of measures such as management training for the various levels of relevant personnel, development of project support communications, involvement of local level administration (Upazila Parishad) and increased participation of parents, community and teachers in the promotion of primary education. These are the positive wishes of the plan. The current policy of increasing the number of female teachers is also a positive element when other elements would act in favour of girls' enrolment and retention.

But the implementation of the Plan may not turn out to be as good as the Plan commitments. Lack of honest fulfilment of responsibilities or lack of serious commitment of the officials in the education sector may not be overcome unless honesty, sincerity and efficiency prevail in the overall bureaucracy encompassing all the public and private sectors. The religious education centres, that is, Maktabs which constitute a powerful indigenous institution drawing a large number of children, specially girls, even of the poor illiterate parents in rural and urban areas, are not systematically drawn into the arrangement for the implementation of the universal primary education programme. Left with the heavy burden, as it has been in the past, in making primary education free and universal, the government

programmes in the present structure will perhaps make only a little improvement in the situation, as in the past.

With the nationalization of primary schools, the local community has become less interested in sharing the responsibility for promoting primary education. It is not only economic poverty, but also what may be called a "culture of poverty" that hinders community involvement and parental interest in school management and promotion of education. The new Upazila administration is likely to open a new prospect provided every one involved demonstrates a firm commitment.

Recommendations

The foregoing discussions suggest that universalization of primary education and, in particular, promotion of girls' education, calls for the adoption of specific measures in several dimensions. Briefly indicated below are the measures recommended.

- a) Measures for increasing the interest of girls in schooling should be addressed to childhood personality factors as well as the school situation. In regard to the conditions which should positively influence childhood personality factors the following measures are important:
 - i) Teachers should be required to assist and guide students, particularly girls, by paying adequate attention to each individual;
 - ii) Young girls at the lower classes should be treated with special care they require, and older girls' of the higher classes be treated in a culturally appropriate manner;
 - iii) Learning activities should include skills in solving day to day problems in their immediate environment;
 - iv) Learning exercises be combined with recreation within and outside the class setting;
 - v) Teaching/learning materials should be diversified and enriched, and such material be developed through special projects; and

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- vi) Teachers should make home visits, as a part of their job, to help girls overcome any difficulty experienced in connection with schooling.
- b) Measures for the improvement of the school situation should include:
 - i) An adequate number of schools in a given locality to correspond with population size;
 - ii) Adequate classroom seating accommodation for girls so that they do not have to compete with boys to get seats;
 - iii) Provision for separate classrooms for each class so that an appropriate learning environment can be ensured;
 - iv) Provision for enough teachers so that classes are well managed;
 - v) Provision for female teachers to reach the target of a minimum of 50 per cent of the total teachers;
 - vi) Maintaining school building properly and ensuring a fund for regular maintenance;
 - vii) Provision of recreational facilities suitable for girls;
 - viii) Development of a system of constructive group activities outside class to promote the habit of sharing responsibilities and the pleasure of some achievements or fulfilment of social responsibilities;
 - ix) Construction of separate toilet facilities for girls;
 - x) Keeping the school building and access road safe for the girls;
 - xi) Having class hours suited to local conditions thus enabling girls to help their families in household activities, especially economic activities; and
 - xii) Provision for multiple entry points so that older children or drop-outs can get themselves enrolled in higher classes.

- c) Measures for improving the conditions at the level of family should aim at creating effective support and motivation of the parents for girls' education. These should include:
- i) Education of parents, especially mothers, through special education programmes and raising their consciousness about the necessity and importance of girls' education, skills training and delaying their marriage;
 - ii) Making school a focal point of community activities for diffusion of suitable economic activities for the poor mothers, and developing Mothers' Centres through which they will gain motivation and increase their ability to put their daughters through school;
 - iii) Providing incentives to families in the form of textbooks, stationery, school uniform, one meal during school hours, school health services free of cost or at a subsidized rate; and
 - iv) Providing stipends to girls, especially of poor families, enabling them to continue their schooling in the higher classes.
- d) Measures for developing a community situation favourable to girls' education shall be concerned about positively changing the community perception about the importance of girls' education, promotion of normative demands for schooling of girls and establishment of community support systems for improving the school situation. Such measures shall specially include:
- i) Annual listing of all households, births and the school-age children of the villages served by each school, keeping a register of households indicating those which do and do not send their children to school, in order to facilitate educational, motivational or counselling work with the parents or children as necessary;
 - ii) Formation of a Village Education Council/Parent-Teacher Association with a clear mandate to work with

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- the groups and individual family heads for universal enrolment of children in school;
- iii) Formation of a special community fund to assist poor children to attend school, that is, to make schooling of children, particularly girls acceptable to the poor parents;
 - iv) Provision for a regular monthly/quarterly review of teachers' activities through the village Education Council and forwarding the review reports to the higher authority responsible for supervising primary school education;
 - v) Arrangement for civic education and consciousness raising efforts for the community on the role of women, the significance of girls' education, dysfunctional aspects of traditional beliefs and practices which discourage girls' education and encourage early marriage;
 - vi) Arrangement for education of mothers on MCH, nutrition, family planning and child rearing, and preparing village volunteer women to teach mothers stressing the importance of girls' education for better appreciation of the requirements of an improved quality of life;
 - vii) Involvement of the mass media, particularly radio and television, for continuous information dissemination and campaigning on the positive involvement of the community in promoting girls' education.
 - viii) Training and motivating religious leaders to popularize school education of girls;
 - ix) Entrusting the village community with the responsibility for maintaining and developing physical facilities at school with support from local government bodies; and
 - x) Taking necessary legal and administrative steps to enforce compliance with the minimum age for the marriage of girls.

- e) Measures for the improvement of teachers' quality and teaching shall be concerned with training and retraining of teachers, training of trainers, developing and making use of appropriate teaching materials, placement of teachers outside their own locality and increasing the number of trained female teachers.
- f) Overcrowding of students in Class I should be prevented by introducing a special class (pre-primary feeder schools) and allowing smooth transition for them to Class I or II.
- g) The non-formal education system should be linked with the formal system, the former complementing and supplementing the latter. Ideally every child should be brought within the formal primary education system. But in the short run this ideal cannot be achieved in Bangladesh. Therefore, the recommendations are:
 - i) Local voluntary agencies of all categories be required to maintain feeder school programmes (as a non-formal educational provision);
 - ii) Traditional religious schools (i.e. Maktabas) should be required to impart some regular education (along with religious education), especially to girls;
 - iii) Drop outs of primary school be covered by non-formal education with a flexible schedule of school hours, vacations and holidays, and also with shorter class hours or part time attendance of the students; and
 - iv) Voluntary agencies be particularly encouraged to work in areas where communities are relatively backward.
- h) Financial, administrative and supervisory measures should be addressed to ensure adequate coverage of school age population, equality between sexes through special provisions for girls' education, proper implementation of policy and programmes and improvement of the quality of teachers' conduct. Specific recommendations are that:
 - i) Primary education shall have a higher per cent of the national development plan allocation than at present;

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- ii) The Upazila Parishad be made fully responsible for implementing the UPE programme in co-operation with the Union Council (the lowest local government unit) and the Village Education Council (a body of parents, teachers and representatives of various village population groups);
 - iii) The local bodies be made responsible for planning, resource utilization and local resource mobilization, their accountability being ensured through a system of evaluation, and proper reporting of accounts and performances;
 - iv) Supervision and monitoring systems be improved by increasing the number of supervisors of teachers at the Upazila level and by training in improved instructional activities, school administration, community relations, accounting and performance reporting;
 - v) Career development opportunities for the teachers be expanded through provisions of advanced training, higher education and promotion to higher posts; and
 - vi) The head teacher be provided with more authority to supervise the activities of other teachers and to make them accountable to him, with school management and relationships with the community be further strengthened with the addition of an assistant head teacher.
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- i) Experiences, policies and programmes for promotion of girls' education in the neighbouring countries should be utilized in Bangladesh as far as practicable.
 - j) Appropriate political, economic, social and educational reforms should be initiated to remove inequalities in the society particularly the inequalities of which the women are victims.
 - k) In view of the absence of any in-depth studies on improvement of girls' education in Bangladesh, studies (macro and micro) be undertaken for the promotion of girls' education in the country.

Annex

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- Multiple class teaching and education of disadvantaged groups; national studies: India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Republic of Korea. 1982*
- Learning needs and problems in primary education; report. 1983 (2 vols.)*
- Training of educational personnel for integrated curriculum; report. 1984*
- Towards universalization of primary education in Asia and the Pacific; country studies (of 12 countries) and a regional overview. 1984*
- Mutual co-operation for schools development; some experiences from Asia and the Pacific; report. 1985*
- Grass roots networking for primary education; case studies: Thailand, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Japan. 1985*
- Towards equality of educational opportunity; inter-country exchange of experiences; report of the visits of the Panel on the Education of Girls. 1985*
- Formal and non-formal education: co-ordination and complementarity; report. 1986*
- Education of girls in Asia and the Pacific; report. 1986*
- Raising the achievement level of children in primary education; report. 1986*
- In-service training and tomorrow's primary education; report. 1987*
- Coping with drop-out; a handbook. 1987*
- Education in difficult contexts; report. 1987*

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