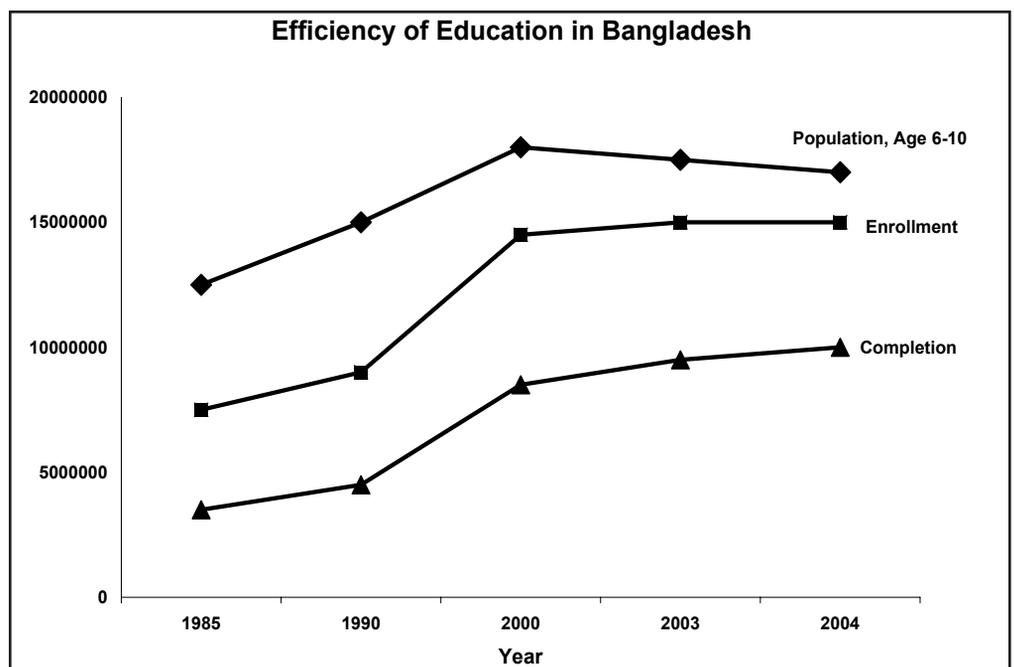


Meeting EFA: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Primary Schools

Introduction

Bangladesh introduced universal primary education in its second five-year development plan, for 1980-1985. The plan allocated approximately 46 percent of the education budget to primary education, while The World Bank and a consortium of donors for primary school construction provided an additional \$140 million. However, Bangladesh had already fallen behind meeting education sector needs by the time these assistance programs were initiated.

In Bangladesh's first decade of independence, the number of primary-school-age children increased by more than 50 percent, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Education Information and Statistics in 2004. By 1985, the number of primary-school-age children was estimated at about 14.8 million. However, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNESCO) in "An Analysis of the Situation of Children in Bangladesh," less than 60 percent ever enrolled in primary school and less than 50 percent of those who enrolled completed all five grades. While enrollment and completion rates have improved in the last decade, rising to 83 percent and 67 percent, respectively, the following graph illustrates the Bangladeshi primary school system's inefficiency.





Of the 4.6 million Bangladeshi six- to 10-year-olds who are out of school, two-thirds belong to the bottom two consumption quintiles, according to Anil B. Deolalikar in *Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh: How Likely and What Will It Take to Reduce Poverty, Child Mortality and Malnutrition, Gender Disparities, and to Increase School Enrollment and Completion?*, and 88 percent live in rural areas. Girls tend to be the greatest population outside the school system and reflect the lowest achievement levels.

While great strides were made to provide education to the underserved, the government, with support from foreign donors, achieved some of these goals in counter-productive ways. Rather than expanding the public primary education system, the government supported the development of private community schools of poor quality, poor funding, and little supervision. In the mid-1990s, the government used food ration and feeding programs to encourage attendance in already overcrowded government schools. While access to education increased, quality slowly declined. It was in this context that the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) began to explore ways to help children from its rural development program gain access to improved education.

BRAC was already one of the largest indigenous development and relief nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Bangladesh by the mid-1980s. By 1984, it had launched 22 experimental, one-room, non-formal primary education (NFPE) centers for children of the rural poor. Aware that girls were even less likely to attend formal schools than boys, the NFPE centers enrolled 70 percent girls, hired and trained a teaching staff more than 70 percent female, and adapted its life-skills-oriented adult literacy materials as more child-centered materials. By 1996, BRAC contributed approximately 10 percent of all primary school enrollments and operated 34,000 primary schools.

Working mainly in rural areas, BRAC focused on improved quality through improved education service delivery, management detail, and finance. While various components changed over time, the NFPE centers remain the core activity for the BRAC Education Program (BEP). In 1999, BEP entered Phase III, in which the 34,000 NFPE centers offering first through third grade were transformed into BRAC Primary Schools (BPSs) offering a complete first through fifth grade education.

There are three types of schools generally referred to as BRAC schools in Phase III:

- BPSs, which are four-year programs for eight- to 10-year-olds, covering first through fifth grade;
- BRAC Adolescent Primary Schools (BAPSs, formerly BEOC/KK), which are four-year programs for 11- to 14-year-olds, covering first through fourth grade; and
- Education Support Program (ESP) schools, which are three-year programs for 8- to 10-year-olds, covering first through third grade in underserved areas and implemented by other organizations already working in those areas.

While all of these types of schools contribute to expanding access and quality in Bangladesh, this case study will focus solely on the BPS program.

The BPSs and government primary schools (GPSs) are both founded on the same competency-based curriculum, but key differences exist between the two programs. BPS student intake occurs every four years, compared to annually in GPS. Each BPS consists of one class of 25 to 33 students and one teacher, all of whom live within the same community within easy walking distance of the school. By comparison, the GPS must enroll a minimum of 150 students at an average of 61 per classroom and maintain a minimum of four teachers. To accommodate five grades, most rural GPS schools generally operate a double shift, which reduces the total number of contact hours for students. BPS averages 4,094 contact hours per primary cycle, compared to 4,046 for the GPS.

The following case study explores the BPS program through the lens of:

- Access, completion, and learning;
- Cost and cost-effectiveness;
- Quality, covering inputs, teaching and learning, and management; and
- Policy and the enabling environment.

Access and Completion

The number of government-run and -funded first through fifth grade schools increased by approximately 3 percent from 1980 to 2000 in response to offers of free textbooks and payment of up to 80 percent of teacher salaries. Enrollment in GPSs increased from approximately 8.2 million in the 1980s to more than 18 million in 2003—an increase of almost 45 percent over the 20-year period. The number of private government-supported schools increased more than 438 percent in the same time period. The GPSs successfully increased girls' enrollment from 39.6 percent in the 1980s to over 49 percent in 2003. In rural areas, 63 percent of female students are enrolled in GPSs.

While these schools provided increased access to education for Bangladeshi children, surveys of the rural GPSs reveal severe overcrowding, particularly in the lower grades, which contributed to poor attendance, achievement, and completion rates. The community schools, intended to also increase access and quality, did not fair much better. Located in urban or peri-urban areas, the schools did not reach the majority of underserved rural children. Moreover, teachers were untrained, little supervision existed, and families in the rural areas could not contribute sufficient resources to make community schools a viable option.



Public School Attendance Rates in Bangladesh (1970s-2000s)

	1970s	1980s	1990	1995	2000	2003	2004
Population in millions, 6-10 years old		12.52	14.91		18.11	18.02	17.97
Net enrollment rate: boys				79.0%	79.5%		83.3%
Net enrollment rate: girls				77.0%	79.7%		
Total Schools	29,082	43,946	47,241	62,654	76,809	86,737	
• Public schols	91%	83%	79%	60%	49%	43%	
Enrollment in millions	5.25	8.22	12.05	17.13	17.67	18.43	
• Girls	31.8%	36.6%	44.7%	47.1%	48.7%	49.2%	
• Rural public schools					61.6%		
• Girls in rural public schools					63.0%		
Attendance rate: rural boys					57.8%		
Attendance rate: rural girls					55.1%		

Sources:

Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2002. "Second Primary Education Development Program (PEDP II): 2003-2008." Manila, Philippines: ADB.

Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2005. "Second Primary Education Sector Project (Loan 1521-BAN[SF]) in Bangladesh." Manila, Philippines: ADB.

Chowdhury, A.M.R., S. Nath, R. Choudhury, and M. Ahmed. 2001. "Renewed Hope, Daunting Challenges: State of Primary Education in Bangladesh." Dhaka, Bangladesh: Campaign for Popular Education and University Press Limited.

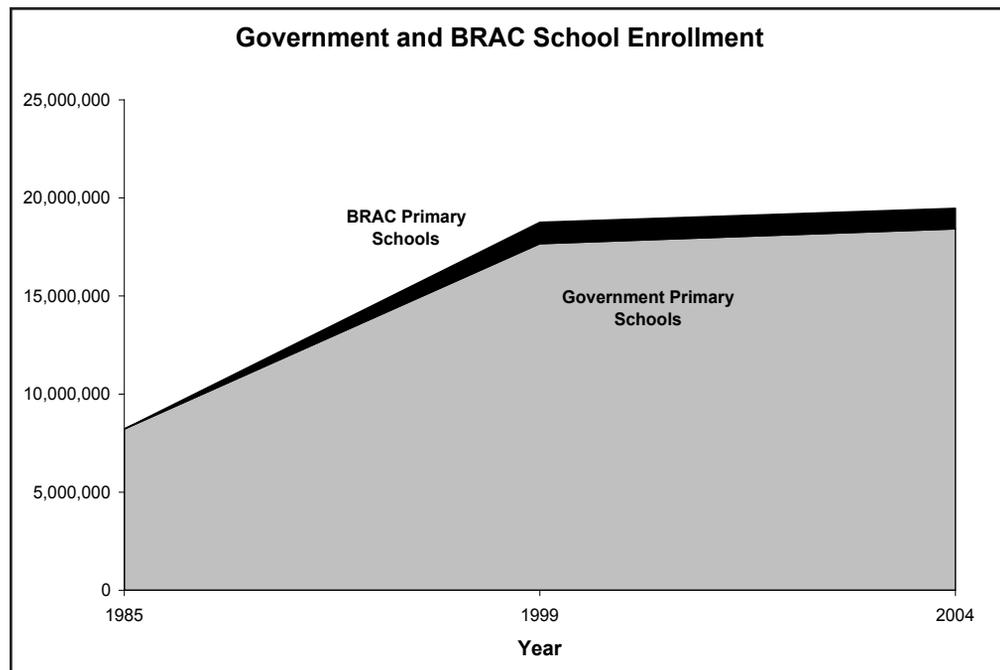
BRAC began working in education in 1985 with 22 experimental one-room schools and 726 students. and grew to some 34,000 schools by 1999. From 1999 to 2004, the number of BRAC schools increased from 34,000 to 35,500 as enrollment stabilized at just over 1 million students, making BRAC easily one of the largest complementary education models in the world, according to EQUIP2 findings. The following graph demonstrates the BPS contribution to improved access from 1985 to 2004. Beginning with less than 0.1 percent of enrollment in 1985, BPS now accounts for approximately 8 percent of Bangladesh's total primary enrollment.

BRAC primary school attendance and completion rates tend to be higher than those in government schools, according to EQUIP2 research. For example, in 2001, BPS attendance was approximately 96 percent, compared to 61 percent in GPSs. Furthermore, BPSs are required to maintain an enrollment rate of at least 70 percent girls.

Enrollment in the government schools in 2000 was approximately 18 million. Of the 18 million, 62 percent were enrolled in rural government schools, 63 percent of whom were girls. While statistics for 2001-2004 were not available, it is likely that trends have remained relatively stable. Attendance rates for the rural GPSs range from 55 percent for girls to 57 percent for boys.

BRAC schools have much higher rates of completion than government schools, according to EQUIP2 research. From 1999 to 2004, BPS completion rates increased slightly from 93 to 94 percent. Government schools averaged a completion rate of 67

percent in 2004, up from 64 percent in 2001. Rural GPSs had a completion rate of 75 percent in 2000.

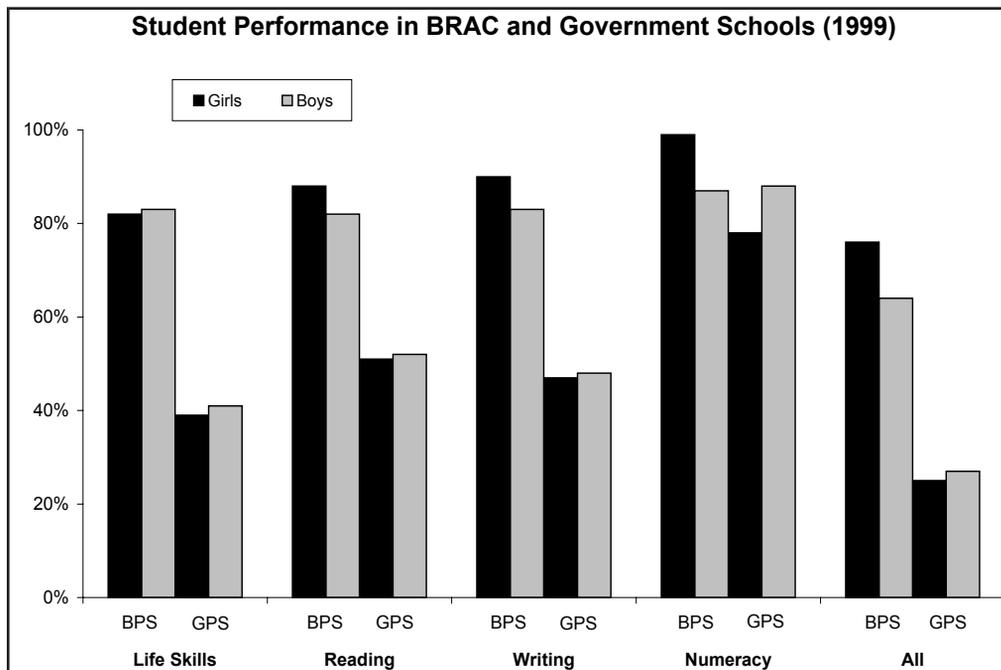


Learning

Since various factors that affect learning in Bangladesh—socioeconomic status, teachers’ education level, infrastructure—are usually better in GPSs than in BPSs, GPSs might be expected to perform better academically than BPSs. This was indeed the case in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, recent studies indicate that BPS student learning has improved.

To improve learning assessment under BEP, the head of BRAC’s Research and Evaluation Division developed the Assessment of Basic Competencies (ABC) tool in 1992 to rapidly assess basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills. The ABC measures general knowledge competencies, but not necessarily those in the official primary school curriculum. The results show that rural BPS students performed slightly better than government school students in writing and arithmetic and significantly better in life skills. Overall, BPS students scored an average 53 percent, compared to only 39 percent by their GPS counterparts. When this test was repeated in 1999, BPS students performed at a higher level than seven years prior, at an average of 69 percent, while GPS students scores decreased to an average of 27 percent. The following graph shows the subject-by-subject comparisons for boys and girls in BRAC and government primary schools.

In 2003, BEP negotiated an agreement with the government that allows BPS students to take the secondary school scholarship exam given in fifth grade. According to the report on “BEP Phase III: 1999-2004,” an average 10 percent of GPS students who take the exam pass while 13 percent of BPS students who took the exam in 2004 passed.



The BRAC Research and Evaluation Division’s annual competency-based assessments of BPS have not found a pattern of improvement or decline in 2003 and 2004. However, because BPS only expanded to fourth and fifth grade in 2002, it may be too soon to measure the results of the additional investment in pedagogical instruction.

Costs and Cost-Effectiveness

BPS costs should be viewed from various perspectives. What does it cost to develop such a program? What does it cost to operate the program? What makes up those costs?

BPS Program Costs per School

	Price in U.S. Dollars	Percentage of Total
Teacher costs	\$738	32%
Student books and supplies	\$626	27%
Office furniture and rent	\$0	0%
Field operations	\$772	33%
Research and evaluation	\$19	1%
Home office management and logistics	\$150	7%
TOTAL	\$2,305	100%

The total recurrent costs for the BPS program are \$20,456,104 per year, or about \$2,305 per school. The recurrent expenditures include teacher salaries and training, travel and transportation, materials and supplies, research, home office support, and operational costs. The following table presents an overview of the main cost components and the percentage of the budget allocated to each activity.

It is important to examine and compare cost-effectiveness in terms of cost per completer and unit cost per student enrolled. As the following table indicates, the annual recurrent cost per student enrolled in BPS is \$20, compared to \$29 in the GPS.

Estimated Per-Pupil Unit Costs in Community and Public Schools

	Recurrent Annual Budget	Recurrent Cost per Student	Completion Rate	Cost per Completer
BPS	\$20,456,100	\$20	94%	\$84
GPS	\$18,000,000	\$29	67%	\$246

The cost-effectiveness of the BPS program can be evaluated in terms of its average cost to produce a primary school completer. According to EQUIP2 research, the completion rate for the BPS-equivalent of first through fifth grade was approximately 94 percent in 2003, compared to GPS’s 67 percent in 2001. Based on the unit costs in the previous table, the cost per BPS completer was \$84 per student in 2003, compared to \$246 per student in the GPS program in 2001. The difference partially stems from lower BPS per student costs and the fact that students can complete the program in four years, compared to five years in the traditional system. BPS’s higher completion rate also contributes to the lower cost per completer. Lower teacher salaries, higher teacher quality, proximity to the community, better teacher and student attendance rates, and low-cost materials also contribute to BPS’s cost-effectiveness. It should also be noted that GPS students pay an additional \$11 per year for uniforms, fees, transport, and tutors, which was not included in the previous calculations and would increase the cost per student accordingly.

According to the Assessment of Basic Competencies tool administered to a sample of BPS and GPS students in 1992 and 1999, BPS students performed better in both years. In 1999, BPS students averaged a 70 percent pass rate, reflecting a cost of \$122 per student achieving a required level of learning. GPS students averaged only a 27 percent pass rate, reflecting a \$929 cost per student.

When a sample of 327 BPS students and 412 GPS students participated in an achievement test intended to measure acquisition of the 27 government of Bangladesh competencies, 8.4 percent of BPS students demonstrated knowledge of all 27 competencies, compared to 1.2 percent of GPS students. The cost per student for this level of achievement was \$996 per BPS student and more than \$20,000 for a GPS student.

Critical Features of BPS

To improve the quality of education for its students, BPS begins with low quality inputs (e.g., students, teachers, buildings), places them in a higher quality teaching and learning environment, ensures the inputs and environment come together by investing in pedagogic management, enlists a reliable, if modest, level of parent participation in governance.



Teachers

One of the important criteria for selecting a new BPS site is the presence of at least one adult, preferably a woman, who:

- Lives within the community;
- Has completed at least 10 years of education;
- Is willing and able to teach on a part-time basis;
- Accepts wages much lower than those paid to GPS teachers; and
- Agrees to thoroughly follow the BPS system.

The BPS system incorporates teacher responsibilities often missing in GPS:

- Participating in 12 to 15 days of training prior to the start of the school;
- Preparing a daily lesson plan and integrating special learning materials into the curriculum;
- Opening and closing school on time and taking responsibility for student attendance;
- Never using physical punishment or shaming;
- Attempting to engage students in more active learning approaches;
- Continuously assessing learner progress;
- Devoting more, not less, attention to slow learners;
- Participating in monthly School Management Committee meetings; and
- Participating in monthly refresher courses.

The same BPS teacher is responsible for a single cohort of students in the full three- and four-year cycles. Classes meet for three to four hours each day and six days a week on a schedule determined by teachers and parents. Students in first through third grades meet 207 days a year and third through fifth grades meet 230 days a year. BPS attributes high attendance and completion rates to the close relationship between the teacher and the students and to their close proximity to the school. Students who are not punctual or who are frequently absent may be replaced during the first three months of the first school year. The teacher or classmates check up on students who are absent, and students may search off school grounds for the teacher if she is late.

Administrative supervision is provided by program officers who visit each school at least twice per week, which effectively discourages teacher tardiness and absenteeism. According to editors Chowdhury, Choudhury, and Nath in *Hope Not Complacency: The State of Primary Education in Bangladesh*, the 1999 Education Watch survey found teachers absent in only 4.5 percent of non-formal, non-government schools.

Curriculum and Materials

BRAC curriculum is the same competency-based curriculum that is used in the GPS. The Bangladesh National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) defined the desired outcome of primary education in terms of 53 terminal competencies covering specific subjects—Bangla, mathematics, social studies—and domains—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

In 1999, BPS revised its teacher guides, student workbooks, and textbooks to fully reflect the 53 competencies around which the GPS curriculum was structured and to cover life skills not fully covered by the GPS curriculum. After reviewing the materials and textbooks associated with the curriculum, BPS determined that the NCTB materials were too urban-oriented and developed its own independent curriculum and materials development units. A complete set of textbooks and teacher guides for BPS grades one through three were developed, while NCTB textbooks were used for grades four and five. BPS also developed student workbooks for each subject and grade, story books for the lower grades, and other teaching and learning materials. The stated aim of all these materials was to create a child-centered, activity-based approach to learning and teaching.

BPS also ensures that students received slates, stationery, and a complete set of textbooks prior to the beginning of each new grade. By comparison, sufficient textbooks in good condition did not arrive in most rural GPS schools. As BEP began working with more indigenous children, BRAC curriculum and materials developers produced first through third grade textbooks in two or three indigenous languages and collected storybooks in these languages from other sources. It should be noted, though, that GPS textbooks are only available in Bangla.

BPS also limits homework, since illiterate parents can rarely assist their children, promotes the use of continuous assessment to help teachers diagnose and assist struggling children, conducts no formal evaluation of students, and does not allow children to repeat grades, which essentially removes issues of repetition.

While both GPS and BPS primarily use rote memorization techniques, outside evaluators who have had the opportunity to observe both BPS and GPS classrooms note significant differences:

- BPS has no more than 33 students, while GPS often has many more.
- BPS requires no help from family or tutors outside the classroom, which is more appropriate for poor families.
- BPS teachers are affectionate towards students while corporal punishment and neglect are common GPS tactics.
- BPS classrooms utilize child-centered approaches.

As a result of these differences, one Bangladeshi observer declared that BPS was similar to Montessori schools in the United States.

Governance and Management

BRAC and BPS's ability to scale up and maintain a standard of quality is different from many complementary models. Both of these aspects point to BEP's unique management model.



Education in Bangladesh is complex. The Ministry of Education's reach includes:

- Religious schools and primary schools attached to secondary schools, involving the Ministry of Religion and the Directorate of Secondary Education;
- A large capital construction and rehabilitation activity, involving the Ministry of Local Government and Construction;
- The development, production, and distribution of textbooks and materials; and
- The training of teacher educators, teacher education, and all associated training materials.

There are five levels of control between the Directorate of Primary Education in Dhaka and teachers, including the Deputy Director of the Divisional Primary Education Office, District Primary Education Officer, Upazila/Thana Education Officer, Assistant Upazila/Thana Education Officer, and the school's head teacher.

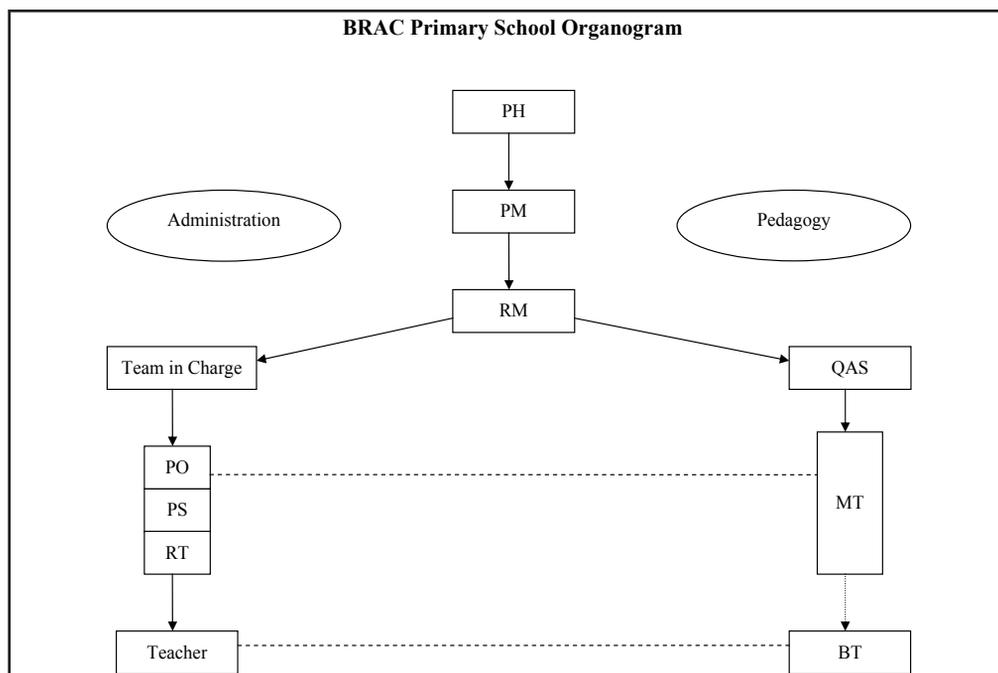
The simpler BEP system allows for three or four levels of control between the BRAC Primary School Program Manager in Dhaka and the teacher. These include regional managers, team-in-charge or area officers, program officers, and resource teachers. Similar levels of control are a sign that both the BEP and government systems are strongly hierarchical. However, at least two features distinguish them: flexibility and implementation capacity.

To become a more flexible organization, BEP created a new line of staff for pedagogical supervision. This effort is indicative of BRAC's efforts as an organization to learn and improve. It should also be noted that a significant percentage of posts in the government hierarchy remain empty, particularly at the Upazila level. In the case of BEP, all but a few administrative posts were filled and active.

The BPS management structure can be quickly established. In the early 1990s, when BPS was expanding rapidly into new areas, the full process required only about six months, including identifying out-of-school children, hiring program officers and staff, establishing a field office, selecting and training teachers, and enrolling students. Rooms were often rented from an elite family in the village, and the teacher was selected from the same or another elite family. Following the initial four-year cycle, the school and teacher can serve a second BPS cycle if a significant number of out-of-school children remain and community interest still exists. Otherwise, the school and staff move on to open another BPS in another area in need.

Program officers are at the core of BEP's management structure. They receive entry-level training both throughout their tenure, including 18 days on operational management and 24 days on pedagogical management. Officer retention is a challenge—about 50 percent will drop out during the first months of training and field experience. For those who remain, periodic training at one of BRAC's training centers exposes staff to a wider network of colleagues and helps build team solidarity, as well as provide technical and professional skills. Several of the more experienced program officers serve as master

teachers, while the best teachers help conduct monthly refresher meetings as batch trainers. Resource teachers also mentor less experienced teachers and provide hands-on coaching in the classroom.



Administrative supervision is one of the BPS model's keys to success. Officers visit each school twice per week to check attendance, review teachers' lesson plans, and observe classes. Each team consolidates officer reports for an area manager. Monthly meetings include area and regional managers and head office staff to ensure that reports are substantive, comply with BEP procedures, and reach headquarters. A separate group of senior staff monitors visits a random selection of schools each month to ensure that the reports filed by field staff are accurate. They also grade schools to ensure extra attention is given to weaker schools while a team of senior quality assurance supervisors focus on improving instruction and learning.

During Phase III, BEP also offered a stipend to BPS teachers to study for the tenth grade examination, and some have gone on to complete their twelfth grade examination, which makes them eligible to apply for GPS teacher positions, according to Yusuf Kassam, Janet Raynor, Anne Ryan, and Aders Wirak in "Appraisal of BEP, 2004-2009: Towards Deepening Partnership with the Government of Bangladesh."

Each BPS has a school management committee (SMC) made up of three parents, a community leader, and the teacher. The SMC and the other parents help maintain the school and ensure the children's regular attendance. Parents' meetings are held once a month in each school to encourage guardians to take an interest in their children's education. The children's progress, attendance, cleanliness and hygiene, the



responsibility of parents toward their children, and any school problems requiring parental attention are discussed at SMC meetings facilitated by a program officer. While the system addresses fewer issues than most education projects attempt to address, it provides far more services to communities than the GPS committees achieve.

BEP's management model is effective, but it faces several challenges. BEP is not a model for helping a community develop a self-sustaining school, nor is the sustainability of the BPSs a long-term goal of the BRAC program. Rather, it provides education to underserved populations until more permanent schools are established in the catchment area. BRAC's goal is to ensure education is provided to all children. Developing the cohesiveness, trust, and discipline to run a community school effectively is the task of years, not months. Sustainability is thus taken on by permanent schools that come into the catchment area at a later time. In *The BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Program in Bangladesh*, Catherine Lovell and Kaniz Fatema challenge the idea that very poor, illiterate people anywhere have ever managed to organize and run their own high quality schools, let alone pay for them. In the case of BRAC, families cannot afford to pay school fees or teacher salaries and the program must be sustained through other means.

The current BEP model depends on having a critical mass of schools within a very short distance of the team office. It is not cost-effective for BEP to establish individual schools in isolated communities because a program officer's salary becomes cost-effective only after covering a minimum number of schools to which supplies can be delivered from a central office at which officers and teachers also have access to monthly refresher courses. The BEP monitoring and evaluation group is currently undertaking a study to confirm the cost-effectiveness of the approach.

Policy and Institutional Context

Despite the size of Bangladesh's indigenous NGO sector and the worldwide reputation of several organizations such as BRAC and Grameen Bank, the relationship between the government and the NGO community is frequently characterized by competition among NGOs and between NGOs and the government, according to Bishwapriya Sanyal in *Antagonistic Cooperation: A Case Study of Nongovernmental Organizations, Government and Donors Relationships in Income-Generating Projects in Bangladesh*. Bangladesh's public administration system, with its limited implementation capacity at the grassroots level and continuing reputation as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, has motivated some foreign donors to work directly with NGOs. However, Bangladesh's NGO regulation system is part of the Sedition Act, which makes accepting funds from overseas without government permission a crime. The NGO Bureau, which must approve all movement of foreign donor funds to NGOs, is at times quite obstructive. Many, if not most, government bureaucrats and senior military officers maintain that most NGOs are small, amateur organizations at best and political fronts or financial scams at worst and that unsuspecting foreign donors should be protected from them.

At the donors' insistence, General Education Project (GEP), a large multi-donor primary education project developed in the early 1990s, included a provision for supporting NGO initiatives under very circumscribed conditions. Two years before the end of GEP, the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) was created. It focused mainly on NGO adult literacy efforts and tended to treat all NGOs as equal, regardless of their track record, scale, and transparency. As a result of corruption in the adult literacy component, DNFE lasted just five years before it was dismantled. In the meantime, the second massive Primary Education Development Program (PEDP II) was negotiated for 2004-2009 without an NGO component. Instead, the government's new Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) program has been the latest proposed avenue for governmental-nongovernmental partnership.

The government indicates that it would like to coordinate all sub-sector activities, but it appears to be:

- Less experienced in and less capable of service delivery in many rural areas. The government's efforts to establish quality community schools produced a type of school in rural areas that is inferior to both BPS and GPS;
- Less transparent than some large NGOs such as BRAC in accounting for foreign donor funding. According to editors Chowdhury, Choudhury, and Nath in *Hope Not Complacency: The State of Primary Education in Bangladesh*, Transparency International reported in 2001 that corruption in education had risen to new levels and that the Bangladesh Ministry of Education is among the most corrupt ministries in a country that ranks very high on international indexes of corruption;
- Reluctant to implement its own decentralization policies; and
- Unwilling to increase the allocation of recurrent funds to the sub-sector, such that it might fill all vacant teacher and Assistant Upazila Education Officer posts in rural areas and provide the support they need.

Both local and international education NGOs in Bangladesh have become better coordinated over time. In 1996, the NGOs organized a Conference on Universal Primary Education. One of the outcomes was that the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), a coalition of more than 400 NGOs involved in primary and non-formal education, launched the Education Watch Project, according to editors Abul Khair Jalaluddin and A. Mustaque R. Chowdhury in *Getting Started: Universalizing Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*. However, the donors, NGOs, and government are still struggling to find a collaborative approach to ensuring education for all children in Bangladesh and, while students from BPS are accepted into the GPS for continued education beyond grade five, complementary programs in Bangladesh remain outside the ministry system.

Conclusions

The biggest challenge for the primary education system in Bangladesh is to improve quality and continue to reach the underserved population. BPS has grown from a 22-school pilot to encompass more than 35,500 schools and 1 million students. Twenty



years of commendable efforts to deliver a quality basic education with a learn-by-doing approach to instruction has improved rural communities' learning levels but has not yet achieved the quality to which BEP aspires. A large percentage of BPS students and an even larger percentage of rural GPS students are leaving grades three through five, and a large number of those who complete fifth grade do not have sustainable literacy and numeracy skills.

Current enrollment rates exaggerate the amount of primary education being delivered, particularly in terms of learning. BPS performance on the 27 competencies assessment is indicative of the low quality of learning. While BEP undertook substantial reforms during Phase III with the two-pronged intention of providing better teaching and learning, there is still a long way to go. In Phase IV, BEP is piloting new approaches to improve education for the entire system, including the new BRAC Pre-Primary Schools (BPPSs), which are attached to GPSs. The hope is that by making GPS teachers audience to more child-friendly, interactive learning, they will begin to incorporate the teaching methods into their own pedagogy.

BPS aspires to improve relations and partnerships with the Bangladeshi government. Part of the future vision is to create a more integrated education system that allows for improved quality of education. Opportunities for collaboration include:

- Strategically expanded access by focusing on underserved areas through improved data and Education Management Information System (EMIS) information. The government can develop its capacity to collect more geographically disaggregated education data and open more permanent, official schools in underserved areas;
- Contributions by BPS and other NGO schools to the success of permanent primary schools by sharing second language textbooks and other materials;
- Development of separate measures of cost-effectiveness for hard-to-reach populations. The EQUIP2 Case Study, *Meeting EFA: Mali Community Schools*, accurately illustrates the cost of reaching hard-to-reach populations;
- Reformed teacher training institutions conveying methods more responsive to the full range of children who enroll in rural GPSs. In the short term, BRAC's regional training centers could more rapidly develop and deliver emergency training for new teachers recruited to official schools; and
- First and second grade education handled by BPSs while public primary schools with their professional teachers focus on grades three through five. This approach might be particularly appropriate in indigenous areas where NGOs have already developed curriculum and teacher education materials in indigenous languages.

BRAC has improved access and quality education for a significant number of children in Bangladesh. The challenge that the program will face in the coming years is ensuring that it continues to assist the public school system in reaching hard-to-reach populations, while reducing dropouts, improving training for facilitators, and ensuring continued efforts are integrated into the GPS system in some collaborative and cost-effective manner.

References

Bangladesh Bureau of Education Information and Statistics. 2004. "Table 1: Number of Primary Schools by Management and Teachers and Students by Sex." Downloaded from <http://www.bangeis.gov.bd> on 11 October 2005.

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Education Program (BEP). 2004. *BEP Phase III: 1999-2004*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: BRAC.

Chowdhury, Choudhury, and Nath, eds. 1999. *Hope Not Complacency: The State of Primary Education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and University Press.

Deolalikar, Anil B. 2005. *Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh: How Likely and What Will it Take to Reduce Poverty, Child Mortality and Malnutrition, Gender Disparities, and to Increase School Enrollment and Completion?* Washington, D.C.: Human Development Unit, South Asia Region, The World Bank.

DeStefano, Joseph. 2006. *Meeting EFA: Mali Community Schools* (EQUIP2 Case Study). Washington, D.C.: Education Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2), Academy for Educational Development (AED).

Kassam, Yusuf, Janet Raynor, Anne Ryan, and Anders Wirak. 2003. "Appraisal of BEP, 2004-2009: Towards Deepening Partnership with the Government of Bangladesh." Dhaka, Bangladesh: Donor Liaison Office, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).

Jalaluddin, Abul Khair, and A. Mustaque R. Chowdhury, eds. 1997. *Getting Started: Universalizing Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: The University Press Limited.

Lovell, Catherine H., and Kaniz Fatema. 1989. *The BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Program in Bangladesh*. New York, N.Y.: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Sanyal, Bishwapriya. "Antagonistic Cooperation: A Case Study of Nongovernmental Organizations, Government and Donors Relationships in Income-Generating Projects in Bangladesh." *World Development* 19, 10 (1991): 1367-1379.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 1985. "An Analysis of the Situation of Children in Bangladesh." *Bangladesh Education in Statistics*. New York, N.Y.: UNICEF.



Acknowledgements

This paper was written for EQUIP2 by Collette Chaboux and edited by Audrey-marie Schuh Moore (Academy for Educational Development), 2006. An EQUIP2 synthesis paper collecting findings from nine case studies in complementary education is also available.

EQUIP2: Educational Policy, Systems Development, and Management is one of three USAID-funded Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreements under the umbrella heading Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP). As a Leader with Associates mechanism, EQUIP2 accommodates buy-in awards from USAID bureaus and missions to support the goal of building education quality at the national, sub-national, and cross-community levels.

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) is the lead organization for the global EQUIP2 partnership of education and development organizations, universities, and research institutions. The partnership includes fifteen major organizations and an expanding network of regional and national associates throughout the world: Aga Khan Foundation, American Institutes for Research, CARE, Center for Collaboration and the Future of Schooling, East-West Center, Education Development Center, International Rescue Committee, Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, Michigan State University, Mississippi Consortium for International Development, ORC Macro, Research Triangle Institute, University of Minnesota, University of Pittsburgh Institute of International Studies in Education, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

For more information about EQUIP2, please contact:

USAID

Patrick Collins

CTO EGAT/ED
USAID Washington
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20532
Tel: 202-712-4151
Email: pcollins@usaid.gov

AED

John Gillies

EQUIP2 Project Director
1825 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: 202-884-8256
Email: equip2@aed.org
Web: www.equip123.net

This paper was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Cooperative Agreement No. GDG-A-00-03-00008-00. The contents are the responsibility of the Academy for Educational Development (AED) through the Educational Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.