

Country Report

Bangladesh

EFA National Plans of Action
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PART I: Legal Framework

1. Country Profile

Bangladesh, a small coastal country of South Asia, comprising an area of 147,570 sq. km. is the eighth most populous country in the world with an estimated population of about 130 million. Bangladesh has the highest population density in the world, 881 persons per sq. km. The GNP per capita of Bangladesh has increased from US\$ 220 in 1990 to US\$ 386 in 2001, well near to the South Asian average of \$418. GNP per capita in real terms has risen by over 3.2 percent per annum since 1989 but unequal distribution of income deprived many of the country's population to have received little or no benefit. Although the overall poverty situation improved in the 1990's, the proportions of people below poverty line is still substantial. One - third of the population live in absolute poverty. It is estimated that 36 percent of the population live below the national poverty line and that 68 percent of children under 5 years are affected by malnutrition. Official Government planning documents refer to development "*aimed at lifting the country out of its abject poverty*".

A number of social and economic indicators for Bangladesh have been improving in recent years. The rate of population growth has been falling for several years. The national literacy rate has increased significantly and is now estimated to be 65 percent for age's 15 years and above. A number of health and education indicators have been improving, including the fact that life expectancies at birth have lengthened to 60.8 years for males and 59.6 years for females. Access to safe water and sanitation is however relatively good, with 83% of the population having safe water by comparison with the regional average of 36%, and 48% having access to sanitation with the regional average of 33%.

The country has 6 Divisions, 64 Districts, 465 Upazilas (Sub-districts), 4948 Unions and about 86,000 villages. Coupled with the growth of GDP, there is also evidence of economic development, such as growth of small-scale industries, improved financial services and communications, and new roads and bridges under construction and in use. This includes the impressive recently opened *Bangabandhu* bridge, 4.8 kilometres long and one of the longest bridges in the world. The labour force will grow from 55 million to 100 million over the next 20 years and this will place special demands on the education sector in general and the role of continuing education in particular. Agriculture is projected to add only 9 million of required jobs as the national economy continues to shift towards industry which is projected to create a further 16 million. This means that a minimum of over 20 million new jobs needs to be created in the service sector. Given economic improvement at the village level, rural, non-farm opportunities will expand and hence the potential impact of continuing education on job creation could be significant.

2. NFE in Bangladesh

The history of literacy movement in Bangladesh dates back as early as the beginning of the 20th century. The first ever-adult literacy school was launched in 1918 AD through establishing night school. In 1926, some 150 night schools were formed in 12 selected *Thanas*. Gradually, the program gained wider popularity. But the progress halted due to outbreak of the World War II.

Adult literacy was revived in 1954 with assistance from the United States Government, as part of the latter's V-AID program. However, for a number of reasons this initiative disintegrated gradually. Mr. Biver a foreigner introduced the first ever-adult literacy centre in Dhaka in 1956. He wrote as many as 24 books on the subject. As many as 10,000 people were made literate just in four years time. In 1963, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) introduced adult literacy program in the surrounding areas of Comilla. But due to some reasons, the program couldn't achieve the desired success.

After the advent of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign country, the Constitution made it obligatory for the Government to make the benefits of education available to all its citizens. All primary schools were nationalized with a view to ensure education for all children and an education policy was formulated in line with the spirit and letters of the Constitution.

Education for All campaign is not anything new in Bangladesh. It was a continuous effort since independence and given topmost priority in the education sector so that the country could be made as a prosperous nation. However, nationwide mass education program was undertaken in 1980. To steer the movement, the National Literacy Council was formed, with the Vice President as its Chairman. As part of the campaign, it was made mandatory for every candidate of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination to free at least one individual from the curse of illiteracy.

Along with these programs the then government also undertook a countrywide "Mass Education Program- MEP" aiming at making one crore people literate within a year and four crore people under the Second Five-Year Plan, but the program could not reach its desired goal due to change in the Government. There was virtually no further program for literacy campaign by the Government from 1982 to 1987. Only some NGOs continued the literacy programs in sporadically. The Government initiated a fresh project titled Mass Education Through Small Local Organizations (METSLO) involving NGOs in 1988 which was merged with the earlier Mass Education Program (MEP) and continued until 1990.

Adult literacy movement regained its momentum in early 1990s and was further strengthened with global concern and support. A movement to ensure Education for All gained movement at the regional and international level. Bangladesh actively participated in the 'World Conference on Education for All by the Year 2000' held in March 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand and EFA Summit Conference of Nine High Population Countries held in New Delhi, India in 1993, and as a signatory to the declaration thereof.. Successive interventions on Education for All were influenced by Bangladesh's commitment made to the international community. Accordingly, 4 targets were set to be achieved by the year 2000. These were as follows:

- i. Raise enrolment rate at the primary level up to 95 per cent
- ii. Raise female gross enrolment rate at the primary level up to 94 per cent
- iii. Reduce dropout rate at primary level to 30 per cent
- iv. Increase adult literacy rate up to 62 per cent

To achieve the targets, Compulsory Primary Education Act was promulgated and made effective in 68 *Thanas*, in 1992 and countrywide in 1993. With special consideration to female literacy, the Government adopted a policy to recruit more female teachers in primary schools in 1991 to ensure 60 per cent quota for female candidates to be appointed as primary school teachers and the process was initiated to introduce education free of tuition fee and stipend for female students up to class-VIII.

Since independence, mass education program continued with sporadic efforts. It took an organized shape with official launching of the Integrated Non-Formal Education Program (INFEP) in 1991. The main objective of this program was to build an organized nationwide infrastructure. Activities of the program started in 1991 and ended in 1997. Under this program, Lalmonirhat and Chuadanga districts were declared 'Illiteracy Free' and a record number of 2.47 million peoples were provided with literacy services against 1.67 million as targeted in the program. The program succeeded to draw interest among development partners regarding NFE vis-à-vis the huge number of people from different walks of life. In pursuance to the unprecedented success of the project the Government in September 3, 1995 established the Department of Non-Formal Education as a permanent infrastructure of non-formal education. Several non-governmental organizations/individuals evaluated the program. Besides literacy delivery to 2.47 illiterate peoples, some other successes that INFEP managed to achieve were as follows:

- i. Successful implementation of the TLM program has created huge inspiration among mass people in different parts of the country and a spirit of volunteerism among local community has been also been created.
- ii. Necessary skills and experiences have been achieved to undertake and implement NFE at a wider scale;
- iii. Areas have been developed to extend cooperation between Government and Non-Governmental organizations;
- iv. Experience and skills have been achieved in implementing post literacy programs and material development.

In line with the global commitment on Education for All Campaign, the Government adopted the National Plan of Action in 1991. For its implementation, the Integrated Non-Formal Education Program (INFEP) was undertaken in 1991. During mid nineties a total of four projects titled "Non Formal Education Project-1, 2, 3 & 4" were launched to achieve the national target of literacy in 1990s. Success of such undertakings brought wide international acclamation, which found expression when the prestigious "UNESCO Literacy Award 1998" was accorded to Bangladesh.

For expanding primary and mass education programs in a well organized manner, the Government constituted the Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) in 1992 and the same was transformed into a full-fledged ministry titled "Primary and Mass Education (MoPME)" in 2003. With successful implementation of INFEP program the Government established "Directorate of Non Formal Education (DNFE) in 1995 under the then PMED.

PARTII: NFE Components of National Plan of Action and UNLD

The **World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA)** was held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990 with the theme: *Meeting Basic Needs*. The participants represented 160 governmental and non-governmental agencies of 155 countries. The Conference adopted the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) reaffirming the notion that education is a fundamental right and urged the nations to intensify efforts to address the basic learning needs of all. The Conference also approved the Framework for Action, which included in the following goals (a) Universalizing access and promoting equity, (b) Focusing on learning, (c) Broadening the means and scope of basic education, (d) Enhancing the environment for learning and (e) Strengthening partnerships. The Framework set targets and strategies to achieve the goals by 2000. Bangladesh was a participant at the Conference and signatory to the World Declaration.

Following WCEFA Bangladesh prepare its first National Plan of Action (NPA-I) on EFA. In view of financial constraints Bangladesh set its goals slightly lower to those of World Declaration. In 1990, the world had 127 million children who had no access to education and 960 million illiterate adults. Bangladesh had a school-age child population of 17.02 million in 1991 with only 12.87 million (75.6%) enrolled in primary schools; completion rate was only 40% with high dropout rate of 60%

(PMED, 1995). Among the adults 40.29 million were illiterate, with an illiteracy rate of 65%. Bangladesh took prompt action to realize the goals set in the World Declaration. It introduced compulsory primary education in 68 thanas (Upazilas) in 1992 and throughout the country in 1993. The Prime Minister started off a Social Mobilization campaign on Basic Education in 1992 in presence of the representatives of sponsors of WCEFA, including then Executive Director of UNICEF. The government followed it with the FOO for Education program to get the children of marginal families to enrol in schools and a number of other measures to promote enrolment and retention in primary schools. Children received textbooks free of cost. It also launched a well designed Integrated Non Formal Education Program (INFEP) to meet the learning needs of diverse groups. The government formally launched the NPA-I in 1995, though work on many of the programs and projects proposed in it and associated measures for successful implementation of the Plan were already initiated. The allocation for education was enhanced and made the highest in the annual budgets from 1992-93. Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in achieving the EFA goals set in the NPA-I for 2000. The enrolment increased by more than 5 million children and exceeded the GER of 95 per cent. The boy-girl ratio in school is now at par in relation to their number in the population. This is the most significant achievement. However, the attendance rate is yet to go beyond 60% and the quality of primary education has hardly improved. The poor quality has become the weakest point of the entire superstructure of education in the country. Adult literacy has progressed from 35% in 1991 to 65% in 2003. The progress is shown in the following table:

| Parameters and Rates | Benchmark | Projected Targets | | Achievements | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------|------|--------------|------|
| | 1991 | 1995 | 2000 | 1995 | 2000 |
| Gross Enrolment (Total) | 75.6 | 82.0 | 95.0 | 92.0 | 96.6 |
| Boys' Enrolment | 81.0 | 85.0 | 96.0 | 94.5 | 97.0 |
| Girls' Enrolment | 70.0 | 79.0 | 94.0 | 89.6 | 97.0 |
| Dropout | 60.0 | 48.0 | 30.0 | 52.0 | 33.0 |
| Completion | 40.0 | 52.0 | 70.0 | 52.0 | 67.0 |
| Adult Literacy | 34.6 | 40.0 | 62.0 | 47.3 | 64.0 |

The **World Education Forum (WEF)** met in Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000, reviewed the progress made in attaining the EFA goals set at Jomtien a decade earlier. More than 1100 participants from 164 countries gathered at the Forum. EFA 2000 Assessment, carried out at country level of all participating countries revealed that many countries lagged far behind in achieving the Jomtien goals. There were still 113 million children not enrolled in school and more than 880 million illiterate adults. WEF adopted the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments, and set 2015 as the terminal point to reach all the targets that were set at Jomtien. It has six goals and 12 strategies to achieve the targets. It has placed special emphasis on quality of education.

Some 3.6 million school-age children remain un-enrolled and more than 6 million dropout of primary schools (at 33% in 2001). And there are more than 32 million illiterates among adults (15-45 years). The quality of primary education remains poor and emphasis on basic literacy in adult education program also tend to affect its quality, particularly in sustaining and making gainful use of the learning skills acquired. Despite all training programs introduced the teachers' performance in primary schools remain very poor, so are the internal efficiency, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of programs. There are also questions of attending to ensuring transparency and accountability in the operation of the sub-system. The delay that occurs in delivering the books, supplied free of cost to children, also affects their learning achievements. The NPA-II is designed to achieve the goals set in the DFA.

1. NPA-II Targets

The DFA has six goals and twelve strategies with special emphasis on quality of education. With regard to non formal education these are:

- i. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs.

- ii. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- iii. Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcome are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

However the following table gives an estimate of target population of NFE programs by age range and by phases of NPA-II:

| Program Coverage by Age Groups | Benchmark | Clientele Targets by NPA-II Phases (in 000s) | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 2000/2001 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 |
| ECCE: 3-5 (hardcore 40% of tota) | 4132 | 1019 | 1868 | 1245 |
| NFBE: 6/8-10 (50% of dropouts un-enrolled of 2001 base+) | 6120 | 1545 | 2721 | 1854 |
| NFBE: 11-14 (2001 base) | 6031 | 1535 | 2600 | 1896 |
| OSA/Y: 12-19 (pilot project) | 168 | 18 | 30 | 120 |
| Young Adults: 15-24 (50% of the illiterate group) | 5369 | 1431 | 2339 | 1599 |
| Adults: 25-45 (50% of the illiterate group) | 10804 | 2701 | 4862 | 3241 |
| PLCE targets, no addition; 50% of remaining 11.602 m | 5800 | 1450 | 2610 | 1740 |
| Total | 38424 | 9699 | 17030 | 11695 |

2. NFE Implementation and Coordination Strategies

The following strategies, if implemented, should facilitate efficacious operation of NFE program:

- i. DNFE takes the responsibility, as the principal government agency for NFE, of guiding, monitoring, coordinating and synthesizing the outcome of programs of all NFE activities, both government and non-government entities, against the set national targets; plays a proactive role in its work procedures and dealings with all;
- ii. DNFE MIS maintains a database on all potential and actual NFE clientele and all government, NGO and other programs in the country; Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) separately maintains a database on NGO programs in its MIS, both undated regularly, providing interface and accessibility to all interested parties to ensure transparency and availability of latest status information; and MIS unit in the MoPME would be fed from both the formal and non-formal sub-sectors to facilitate supervision, monitoring, and speedy policy and strategy decision;
- iii. DNFE further develops the present GO-NGO partnership into a participatory partnership in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of NFE programs; ensures avoidance of overlapping and duplication while promoting close cooperation and coordination at the centre/ community level;
- iv. DNFE encourages local organization, CBOs, CSOs and NGOs with local branches to undertake, sponsor or implement needed projects/activities to meet assessed learning and /or skills training needs of NFE target beneficiaries in the area and cooperate in building the management capacity of such agencies;
- v. DNFE initiates programs/ projects in areas, which are not adequately served or requires quick expansion to meet the existing and expanding needs; or encourages and enters into partnership with NGOs to implement needed projects while DNFE provides technical assistance, professional supervision and ensures effective coordination to meet the needs and achieve the set national goals; it also coordinates with programs under other ministries;
- vi. MoPME coordinates and monitors all NFE activities in the government, NGO and private sectors through the forum of the National Primary and Mass Education Council by establishing a joint and smaller arm of the Council to carry out the work on a quarterly or

half-yearly basis to ensure achievement of NFE EFA goals set in this plan; and resolve all inter-agency problems;

- vii. Strengthen the professional capacity of DNFE, ensure appropriate qualification at recruitment and provide adequate training to give them professional proficiency and a career path; and devolve functional and financial authority to divisional and district levels; and
- viii. Ensure CMCs represent the community and give them training to function effectively.

3. Support from External Agencies in Preparing NPA-II

The government bears the revenue part of the expenditure and also of the development budget. In the implementation of PEDP-I the government has borne the major share of (72.22%) the cost of developing primary education in the last five years as it did in the early 1990s under the General Education Project (GEP). It has done the same in NFE. However, the development partners have participated and supported developments in the critical areas of both FPE and NFE. They have made commitment at Dakar, in adopting the Millennium Development Goals and Monterrey Consensus to support national programs of primary and basic education. While the government will make every effort to meet the financial requirement of the Plan from and by mobilizing its own resources, as is evident from the highest allocation it makes for education in the annual budgets, cooperation of both bi-lateral and multi-lateral development partners in critical areas will certainly be needed and appreciated. The need is much higher than in the decade of 1990s and enhanced cooperation of development partners (DPs) will be critical importance in expanding the programs and the quality of both formal and non-formal education.

4. Major Literacy/ NFE Programs of NPA:

Setting up a goal to provide literacy to all illiterate people, the DNFE undertook four projects during mid nineties. Targets and estimated cost of the projects are as follows:

NFE Projects Implementation at A Glance

| Name of the Project | Age Group | Target (in Million) | Course Duration (Months) | Total Estimated Cost (Million Taka) | | | Per Learner Cost (Taka) |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------------------------------------------|
| | | | | GOB | PA | Total | |
| NFE-1 | 15-24 | 2.96 | CBA - 10 TLM - 9 PDA- | 422.81 | 1786.09 | 2208.90 | CBA – 599.65 TLM – 202.50 PDA – 64.00 |
| NFE-2 | 11-45 | 8.19 | CBA - 10 TLM - 9 PDA- | 1600.00 | 1200.00 | 2800.00 | CBA – 594.00 TLM – 202.50 PDA – 64.00 |
| NFE-3 | 08-14 | 0.351 | CBA - 24 | 26.92 | 778.59 | 805.51 | 2251.52 |
| NFE-4 | 11-45 | 22.89 | TLM - 9 | 6829.96 | 00 | 6829.96 | 231.76 (Cine-1) 313.10 (Cine-2) |
| PLCEHDP-1 | 11-45 | 1.656 | PLC- 3 CEC-6 Total-9 | 547.74 | 3103.86 | 3651.60 | 1537.23 |
| PLCEHDP-2 | 11-45 | 1.704 | PLCEC-9 | 1282.5 | 4389.00 | 5671.60 | 1988.86 |

● Non-Formal Education Project-1 (NFE-1)

NFE-1 was undertaken with a view to build a permanent NFE infrastructure in the country and to provide literacy services to 2.95 million people aged 15 – 24 years. The project was implemented covering 32 districts of Bangladesh. It began in January 1996 and completed in June 2001. Of the

estimated cost of Tk. 2208.90 million of GOB contribution was Tk. 422.81 million and project aid Tk. 1786.09 million. World Bank, ADB and SDC were the development partners of this project..

- **Non Formal Education Project-2 (NFE-2)**

Non-Formal Education Project – 2 was undertaken aiming at providing literacy services to 8.18 million illiterate people aged between 11 and 45 years. It also intended to formulate a Post-Literacy Education Model for NFE. The project covered 190 Upazilas from 31 districts. The estimated cost of the project was Tk. 2800.00 million. It was implemented through the financial assistance from GOB, PL-480, Sida and NORAD. It started in July 1995 and was completed in June 2002.

- **Non Formal Education Project-3 (NFE-3)**

This project was undertaken to provide literacy services to 0.35 million working children aged between 8 and 14 in six divisional cities of the country. Duration of the project is January 1996 to June 2004. The estimated cost of the project is Tk. 805.51 million with financial assistance from GOB, UNICEF, Sida and DFID. Course duration is two years. The project was implemented following CBA mode.

- **Non Formal Education Project-4 (NFE-4)**

Non Formal Education Project-4 was undertaken with the GOB's own fund to cover the illiterate peoples who could not be covered through other NFE projects. The main objectives of the project were to provide literacy to 22.89 million peoples and to create employment opportunity temporarily for educated and unemployed young male and female. The project areas were 448 Upazilas from 62 districts. Its estimated cost was Tk. 6829.96 million. This project has been implemented through TLM mode.

- **PLCE for Human Development-1 (PLCE-1)**

The main objectives of this project are (i) To include 1.656 million neo literate in post literacy programs to consolidate, maintain and upgrade the literacy skills they have acquired previously; (ii) To include an equal number of learners, who have completed the post literacy course, in continuing education program for increasing their incomes through skills training in order to foster a better life style and to develop them as enlightened and productive citizens; (iii) To involve the target population in a life long educational process; (iv) To strengthen the national framework of non-formal education and develop functional definitions of literacy, post literacy and continuing education in Bangladesh; and (v) To strengthen the capacity of DNFE and other agencies involved in non-formal education in order to strengthen literacy and continuing education programs and to make it more effective. The total estimated cost of the project is Tk. 3651.60 million of which Bangladesh Government will finance Tk. 547.74 million, while IDA will provide Tk. 2738.70 million as loan and SDC Tk. 365.16 million as grant. The project has been launched in January 2001 and is expected to be accomplished by December 2005.

- **PLCE for Human Resources Development-2 (PLCE-2)**

The main objectives of this project are (i) To include about 1.7 million neo literate in post literacy programs to consolidate, maintain and upgrade the literacy skills they have acquired previously; (ii) To help develop their life pattern by increasing their incomes through providing technical skills training; (iii) To eliminate gender disparity and establish social equitability expediting women empowerment; (iv) To involve the target population in a life long educational process and to develop them as enlightened and productive citizens; (v) To prepare a long term planning for human resource development; and (vi) To strengthen the capacity of DNFE and other agencies involved in non-formal education in order to strengthen literacy and continuing education programs and to make it more effective. The estimated cost of the project stands at Tk. 5671.50 million, of which Tk. 1128.60 million will be provided by Bangladesh Government, Tk. 3705.00 million by ADB loans, Tk. 684.00 million by DFID grant and Tk. 153.90 million by community contribution. The project, initiated in July 2002, is expected to be accomplished by June 2007.

5. Specific Programs/ Activities Planned for the Promotion of United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) which link to NPA

The government undertook special programs as part of the observance of International Literacy Day and Adult Literacy Week 2003 in order to increase awareness of the literacy campaign. However, the Government is currently planning to undertake different programs linking the NPA-II in order to promoting the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD).