

The EFA 2000 Assessment: Country Reports

Bangladesh

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## 8.0 PROGRESS TOWARDS GOALS AND TARGETS

### *Introduction*

During 1990-1998 notable efforts have been made in both government and NGO sectors toward achieving EFA targets. However, database in Bangladesh is poor, more so in maintenance of data in a systematic way. For example, majority of urban non-poor children (and specifically in Dhaka City) goes for ECCE/pre-primary education, and specially those who seek learning through English medium. No study has yet been undertaken to collect figures about these children going to privately run improvised English medium schools. There are also schools of similar type that impart education in Bangla, following western/foreign education systems. No systematic statistics are available about these students.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) maintains data on population by age groups in a manner that does not correspond to school-enrollment data requirements for EFA assessment. For example, statistics are maintained in age-groups of 0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years etc., as against PMED/ EFA requirements of <=3-5 years, 6-10 years, etc.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT**

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) of children covers a three-year cycle programme corresponding to 3-5 years age-group. Under the programme, the Government of Bangladesh is committed to improving child health care, nutrition, living environment, primary education, etc. Most of these activities in this regard are carried out under the supervision of the government agencies through various ministries; non-government and community service organizations are also involved in delivering services, especially in early childhood care and education.

### ***ECCD at Family Level***

In respect of education, early childhood care starts at the family level, as parents particularly the literates seek to have young children of 3-5 years to be familiar with alphabets along with pictures. Young children of such age accompany elder children, if any, to any one of primary level educational institutions, such as nursery/kindergarten/primary school (Bangla or English medium) Forqania/Ebtedayee/Dakhil Madrasah (Bangla/Arabic medium) or even day care centres. Normally, schooling environment starts in urban areas at age-group 3-5 years and a little later, 6-8 or more years in rural areas, or it could be any age group, to the extent that the legal provisions for birth registration is not rigidly followed in Bangladesh.

It is to be admitted, however, that as far as EFA Goals are concerned, adequate efforts have not been made. To be more precise, there has not been a single project toward a well defined target. The existence of 'baby class' as a pre-primary education is the weakest part of education system. Performance of this part of education is not in any records. At its best, it is an activity for familiarizing children with schooling; but its weakness is that it is not carefully, managed. Moreover, in its nature it is not oriented toward 'child development' in true sense of the item. Therefore, the Government will take decisions about designing and implementing an ECCD programme reflecting both quantity and quality. For all practical purpose early childhood education (ECE) will be a part of a more comprehensive approach to ECCD.

### **GROSS ENROLLMENT IN ECCD: FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM**

#### **(Core EFA Indicator- 1)**

The ECCD during 1991-98 could not be termed as a significant one. The NPA recognized that the focus should be on childhood development which includes health and nutrition and development of both physical and mental abilities of the child in a pleasant, painless and harmonious way as a preparatory step to formal schooling. The government intended to support the non-government and community initiatives by participating in advocacy, dissemination of information and knowledge. By way of formalizing baby classes attached to primary schools for the age group 4-5, the Government wished to cover 30 percent of the schools by 1995 and 50 percent by 2000, and support feeder school programmes at community level in terms of class room construction, teachers, implements, studies and research, etc.

Whether gross enrollment has been in the agenda or not, some children go to some type of educational institution beginning approximately at the age of 3 years and ending at the age of 5 years (or even later). Available Survey Data \* in this regard show that the national gross enrollment rate in early childhood development is 22.4 with a gender parity index of 1.1. The estimated population of 3-5 years age group is 11.52 million, of which pre-school gross enrollment is 2.6 million. The total number of males in the age group is 5.88 million and that of females 5.64 million, gross enrollment being 1.25 million and 1.33 million for males and females respectively. Thus the GER for males is 21.3 and for females 23.6. The rural urban GER is duly proportionate to population ratio, the overall urban GER being 20.9.

\* These data reflect 1999 situation. The methodology for data collection is multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) of a sample of 60,000 household across the country intended to represent the national situation. Gender and location (urban, rural, slum and non-slum) desegregate the result of the survey with estimates made for national and sub-national (divisional) levels. The survey is a collaborative effort of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), which is a government agency, and UNICEF, Bangladesh. Survey findings are published regularly each year under the title "Progotir Pathay" (Path to Progress).

The national figures have been derived from the rates available in MICS data, that is, data based on 60,000 household.

The male enrollment rate in urban areas tends to be higher (21.5) than the female enrollment rate (20.3); but in rural areas female enrollment rate is higher than the male enrollment rate. Male enrollment does not vary between rural and urban areas, but female enrollment in rural and urban areas varies by 4 percent, higher in rural areas, which is a notable development in

favour of females. This is also reflected in the overall country situation with a higher enrollment rate for females. For details, please see spreadsheet in Table-3.

Variation between Divisions (geographic regions/administrative divisions) ranges between 19.0 per cent and 24.0 percent, which is not much to warrant any special comment, except that the two Divisions of Sylhet and Rajshahi being at the lowest end would deserve special attention in future programming. Female enrollment rate is consistently higher than male enrollment rate in five divisions, while in Dhaka the rates are almost equal.

It is to be noted that 51 per cent of children in the age group of 3-5 years are males and 49 per cent females, which tallies with national ratio of males and females. But enrollment of males to ECCD is lower at 48 per cent, as compared to 52 per cent of females.

Considering what has been stated as proposed coverage through ECCED, as in the NPA (page 60), gross enrollment of 2.5 million in ECCED is little above 2.34 million which was in a way target for 1995, but quite below the target (59.5%) of 4.2 million which was targeted for 2000. This is explained by lack of proper emphasis on programming in the area of ECCED.

### ***NEW ENTRANTS TO PRIMARY GRADE - I FROM ECCD PROGRAMME***

#### ***(Core EFA Indicator - 2)***

An estimated number of 4.2 million children presumably of the age group 5-8 have entered primary grade -1 in 1998, of these pupils 2.3 million are males and 1.9 million females. New entrants to grade-1 in public schools number 2.5 million and in private schools 1.7 million. Urban grade-1 students number 846,000 and the students of rural areas are about 3.4 million. The proportion of females is lower in both rural and urban areas and also in public and private schools (Table-4).

The national estimates on new entrants with ECCD experience have been derived from the sample household survey, that is multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) conducted by BBS and UNICEF and published in Progotir Pathay, as referred to in table - 3. New entrants to grade I columns 3 -5 in table 4 are as per actual figures available from the office records of DPE.

Among the new entrants to primary grade-1 those who have had ECCD experience are 2.2 million which is 52 per cent of the new entrants. Out of these 2.2 million new entrants 1.3 million study in public schools and 906,000 study in private schools. Gender distribution of the new entrants with ECCD experience is 55 percent male and 45 percent females.

Regarding urban-rural distribution of the new entrants to primary grade-1 with ECCD experience, urban students number 478,000 with a gender distribution of 261,000 males and 217,000 females. In rural areas new entrants with ECCD number 1.7 million of which 957,000 are male and 774,000 are female.

Nationally, the percentage of the new entrants with ECCD does not vary between public and private schools. However, among the new entrants with ECCD experience males number higher in **Table -3 et Table -4**

public schools, and females number higher in private schools (53.7%). In the urban areas,

male entrants with ECCD experience are somewhat higher in percentage (57.5%), as compared to females (55.4%) . A similar pattern holds good for rural areas (male 52.6% and female 49.4%). Also, in the urban areas more males (with ECCD experience) are in public schools, but in rural areas more females (with ECCD experience) are in private schools.

Regionally, the percentage of new entrants with ECCD experience vary from 40 per cent to 75.9 per cent, the lowest being in Barisal and the highest in Sylhet, Rajshahi being vary close to the lowest. For details, please see spreadsheet in Table-4.

### ***APPARENT (GROSS) AND NET INTAKE RATIO: NEW ENTRANTS IN PRIMARY GRADE-1 (Core EFA Indicator 3 & 4 )***

Calculation of rates with reference to official entrance age (6 years) poses a serious problem, as most of the parents in rural areas do not maintain birth records, and as such recording of age at entrance is not correct. Many of the children enrolled in different grades of primary education are either over aged or under aged although students getting enrolled in primary Grade-1 is shown to be of age 6.

Figures of new entrants of all ages as in Table - 5 are derived from the records of the Directorate of Primary Education. New entrants of all ages in primary education, based on such records, are 4.54 million of which 2.45 million are males and 2.09 million are females. These students study in both public schools (2.70 million) and private schools (1.85 million). Students getting enrolled from non-formal NGO schools are also included here.

School entrance age population is estimated at 3.6 million (BBS). The new entrants of primary school entrance age are found to be 2.34 million (51.5 per cent of new entrants of all ages) of which 1.19 million are males and 1.15 million females. Public schools have 1.39 million and private schools 0.95 million students, both male and female.

Gross intake or apparent Intake rate (AIR) is derived by considering the new entrants of all ages divided by the school entrance age population. In this situation the numerator is higher than the denominator. The result is, therefore, likely to exceed one hundred percent. Data for the new entrants of all ages are available from the DPE records. Thus, AIR based on DPE records stands to be 125.7 percent. But NIR is based on data available from a survey especially conducted by DPE in 1999. According to this survey, NIR is found to be 64.8 percent. The gender parity index for AIR is 0.9 and that for NIR is 1.0.

For AIR there is no variation between rural and urban locations; but the NIR tends to be higher in the rural locations (65 rural and 63 urban). For males NIR is higher in urban areas, but for females NIR is higher in rural areas. For details, please see spreadsheet in Table-5.

## **PRIMARY EDUCATION**

General steps taken by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) in the area of formal primary education include:

- Introduction of compulsory primary education;
- Optimum use of available physical infrastructure and other facilities;
- In-service training of teachers;
- Increased incentives for enrollment of female students (such as making tuition fee free

- up to grade-X);
- Development of primary school curricula; and
- Increased allocation of resources.

### **In addition, the following special steps have been taken to increase enrollment**

- Establishment of satellite schools (feeder schools).
- Establishment of community schools in unschooled village.
- Recognition of baby class in primary schools as a part of ECCD.
- Food for Education for programme for the disadvantage families.
- Schools attractiveness programme.
- Compulsory Primary Education Committees for social mobilization and campaign for primary education at the grassroots levels.
- Establishing primary schools in unschooled and under-served village with GOB grant by NGOs.
- Operation of community schools (constructed by GOB) by NGOs.
- Establishing primary schools under children's trust for the hard-to-reach urban working children.
- Reconstituting school management committee.
- Intensive inspection of primary education.
- Quarterly school performance reporting system.
- Introducing student profile card.
- Use of mass media (printed, materials and Electronic media) for mass awareness about the important of primary education.
- Observing primary education week and fortnights.

According to data available from the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), there have been 63,534 primary schools which include 37,710 government 19,683 registered non-government primary schools; 3263 community schools. In addition, there are 3177 unregistered schools. Besides, there are 1292 Secondary High Schools (with primary sections) 8231 Ebte dayee (primary) Madrasahs, 2850 high Madrasahs with primary school section, 1545 Kindergarten schools, 1,042 Satellite schools, and 53 experimental schools, and about 700 NGO run primary schools.

Pursuant to enactment of compulsory primary education, and introduction of such programmes as Food for Education, social mobilization, increase of physical facilities in education, enhancement of school attractiveness programmes and measures for enhancement of quality of education, there has been a remarkable increase in the rate of enrollment.

### **Education for Working Children**

At present 'Shishu Kallayan' (Child Welfare) Primary School for working children are in operation throughout the country. In these schools there is provision for studying from class I to class V. Of these schools, 6 are in Dhaka and Narayanganj and the rest 40 are in different districts of the country. These schools are being administered by Shishu Kallayan Trust. Trust-schools, particularly those in Dhaka and Narayanganj will be turned into specialized schools in phases. In the first phase, about 500 students will be selected under this programme. It is expected that the implementation of this programme will start from next January 2000.

Moreover, under the Non-formal Education Project-3 of DNFE arrangement has been made to

organize two-year basic literacy course for the urban working children through nearly 5 thousand centres in 6 Divisional Headquarters including Dhaka. The Directorate of Non-formal Education (DNFE) has designed special course for this purpose. The learning period is short and the course duration is 2 years only in this project. The working children feel comfortable to study in these centres because the "learning hour" is more flexible and curriculum is condensed. Experience of non-formal education project-3 of DNFE has suggested that it is not much meaningful to operate general type of primary schools for the working children. For providing simple literacy skill, the NFE centre based approach is more appropriate. Recently arrangements have been made to turn the children as regular students through financial support by withdrawing them from the labour market. Centre based non-formal education is suitable to those students who are not very meritorious and are not eager to pursue higher education. Financial support to the tune of Taka 400 per month for primary level and Taka 600 for secondary level will be extended to selected meritorious, competent and willing students to allow them to pursue higher education. Additional fund will be given to them for the fees of SSC examination. After passing the SSC examination, they may further continue with higher education through their own efforts.

### ***TOTAL GROSS ENROLLMENT RATIO AND NET ENROLLMENT RATIO IN PRIMARY EDUCATION (Core EFA Indicators – 5 & 6)***

Official school age population in the age group 6-10 years in 1998 has been estimated at 19.02 million of which 9.73 million are males and 9.29 million are females. As against this official school age population of 19.02 million, total enrollment (all ages) stood at 18.36 million (9.58 million males and 8.78 million females), as per DPE records. Thus, the gross enrollment rate is 96.5 per cent ( Spreadsheet Table - 6).

Enrollment of official primary school age pupils has turned out to be 15.5 million, as against official school age population of 19.02 million. This means that net enrollment rate is 81.4 per cent. Of the total enrolled 15.5 million, 7.8 million are males and 7.7 million are females.

Total enrollment (all ages) in urban areas stands at 3.7 million (20 per cent), as against 14.7 million in rural areas (80 per cent). Both urban and rural areas has the same gross enrollment rate of 96.5. But the net enrollment rate in urban areas is higher at 82.9 than the rate of 81.1 in rural areas. **Table -6**

### **IDEAL Project**

The Government of Bangladesh has taken up a number of steps to address the issue of quality of education at the primary level. IDEAL - Intensive District Approach to Education for All is one of the projects of the Directorate of Primary Education to improve the quality of education in Bangladesh. The main objectives of IDEAL are to: establish and strengthen local level planning and management of primary education, practice improved classroom teaching and learning methods, reduce gender disparity, and promote active community participation. IDEAL activities are broadly grouped into: Local level Planning, School quality and Social Mobilization and Communication.

IDEAL was started in Jhenaidah district in 1996. So far, IDEAL has been expanded to about 1700 primary schools in 17 Districts with the technical and financial support of UNICEF. The main thrust of IDEAL is to improve the quality of primary education with the active participation of all the stakeholders, evolve decentralization in school planning, management and

monitoring in order to make the schools more responsive to the local conditions and needs and to strengthen the school-community link. An innovative teaching approach known as Multiple Ways of Teaching Learning (MWTL) based on the Multiple Intelligence theory of Prof. Howard Gardner of Harvard University has been effectively adopted and applied to make teaching more child-centred, participatory and joyful to the children.

Lessons learned so far indicate the IDEAL helps significantly to increase the learning achievement of the children. School Management committees are now more active in improving the school condition. Government is willing to cover all the 64 districts with IDEAL project. Development partners like Aus-Aid, Asian Development Bank, CIDA and SIDA are taking interest to support IDEAL.

For the males gross enrollment rates in both urban and rural areas are the same at 98.4. For the females also the gross enrollment rates are the same, but at a lower rate of 94.5, compared to that for males.

The net enrollment