

**Regional Conference on Community Learning Centres (CLCs): Lifelong Learning for All
through CLCs from 26-28 September, 2012, Bangkok, Thailand.**

COUNTRY REPORT

BANGLADESH

1. Introduction

The Constitution of People's Republic of Bangladesh recognises education as one of the basic rights of its citizens and envisages that adopting effective measures for the purpose of extending free and compulsory education to all children shall be legal obligation of the state under law. The constitution also makes the state pledge bound to adopt measures to remove illiteracy from the country within such time as may be prescribed by law. In line with the coveted state goal of ensuring education for all children the first Government of Bangladesh nationalised primary education in 1973 after attaining independence in 1971.

Apart from the Constitutional requirement, Bangladesh has been a participant of and signatory to international conferences and declarations on education; has ratified UDHR, CEDAW, UNCRC, ILO Convention 182, etc. and plays an active part in all relevant spheres. Bangladesh also is fully committed to achieving EFA Goals by 2015.

In 1990 Bangladesh enacted the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act, 1990 making primary education compulsory which has been piloted partially in 1992 and implemented fully from 1993. At the same the country has always been relentlessly endeavouring through implementing various programmes specifically targeted to educate the illiterate section of the population that currently accounts for roughly 40% of the population. To consolidate and revitalise these efforts the Government is considering adopting an NFE law as well.

Poverty and illiteracy are interwoven in Bangladesh. Each is the cause and effect of the other. At the inception of Bangladesh in December 1971, the literacy rate was only 16.8 percent. Bangladesh has since made remarkable advances in championing the causes of education and making it a serious public purpose.

The literacy rates of Bangladesh during the period of 1971-2010:

• December 1971	:	16.8 %
• BBS, 1974	:	25.9%
• BBS, 1991	:	35.3%
• BBS, 2001	:	47.9 % (15 and above age)
• BBS, Literacy Assessment Survey 2008	:	48.8% (15 and above age)
• BBS, Report on Bangladesh Literacy Survey 2010	:	59.82% (15 and above age)

2. National Policy Framework for Adult Literacy

In line with the constitutional obligation and the commitments made in international forums to achieve the EFA goals as well as MDG, the government of Bangladesh has already formulated the National Plan of Action-II (2003-15), NFE Policy-2006, and National Education Policy-2010 with a view to reducing illiteracy by at least 50% within 2015.

2.1. The NFE Policy:

Asserting the strategic needs of literacy in reaching the national and global target of Education for All, the Non-Formal Education Policy was adopted by the government of Bangladesh in 2006. The policy stressed on creating a community-based network of learning centres, extending opportunities for effective skill training and continuing education, and creating lifelong learning opportunities to translate the policy into action. The main features of the NFE Policy Framework and institutional arrangements for NFE are as follows:

- (a) Provide quality and relevant NFE programs and skill training which meet the assessed learning needs of the identifiable and potential clientele groups;
- (b) Provide opportunities for individuals and groups of persons with learning and skills needs to develop self-reliant, productive and empowered citizens through engaging in income generating and life skills related activities;
- (c) Establish a working mechanism of government, NGOs and broader civil society including the private sector for policy coordination, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation to reduce illiteracy, poverty and promote human resource development;
- (d) Establish an organization for management and governance of NFE sub-sector;
And
- (e) Institute a decentralized operation system involving local bodies, NGOS, CBOs and communities including learners to ensure community ownership and sustainability of NFE program, structures and facilities for lifelong learning.

The NFE Policy is designed to have specific and concrete action plans for adult learning and education which are integrated with EFA, UNLD, MDG as well as other national plans, and with LIFE activities.

2.2. National Plan of Action (NPA II): 2003-2015

To bring all components within a common framework, Government also initiated an extensive participatory and professional process to review the achievements of the first national plan of Action (NPA I) and prepare a new EFA National Plan of Action or NPA II (2003-2015).

Education, particularly basic education, has emerged as one of the critical agendas to influence poverty outcomes and galvanize a broad-based transformation of society. The opportunities to engage on these unfolding agendas are many and Bangladesh has been particularly pro-active in engaging on these opportunities.

Building on the successes of its earlier version called the NFA-I and to carry forward the campaign the NFA-II set following targets:

Targets of EFA NPA II, 2003-2015

<i>(In Percent)</i> Indicators	Benchmark 2000	Targets for the Selected Years		
		2005	2010	2015
<i>ECCE (both formal & non-formal):</i>				
Formal ECCE (Primary School Attached)	22	(# 1.0 m)	(# 1.0 m)	(# 1.0 m)
Non-Formal ECCE (Family and Community-based)	-	15	20	15
<i>Primary Education</i>				
Gross Enrolment Rate (Total)	96.5	103	108	110
Gross Enrolment Rate (Boys)	96.0	102	107	110
Gross Enrolment Rate (Girls)	97.0	104	107	110
Net Enrolment Rate (Total)	80	83	92	95
Net Enrolment Rate (Boys)	82	87	91	95
Net Enrolment Rate (Girls)	85	89	93	95
Dropout Rate	33	25	14	05
Completion Rate	67	75	86	95
Quality Achievement in Pry. Education	05	30	65	90
<i>Non-Formal Education</i>				
NFBE – Access/Coverage	11	19	48	33
Adult Literacy Rate (15-24 Age Group)	66	73	82	95
Adult Literacy Rate (25-45 Age Group)	56	70	78	90

2.3 National Education Policy-2010:

The government has adopted a National Education Policy 2010. The National Education Policy 2010 has endorsed the commitment of the present government e.g. to ensure 100% enrollment of primary school age children by 2011 and to reduce illiteracy at least by 50% by 2014. The National Education Policy has incorporated the following aims and objectives of adult and non-formal education, strategies for Literacy/NFE and coordination of initiatives in mass education.

2.3.1 Aims and Objectives Adult and Non-formal Education:

The objective of adult and non-formal education will be to make all the adult citizens of the country literate by the year 2014. Bangladesh is one of the largest illiterate populated countries of the world. The illiteracy rate is rife in the country due to limited scope and rigidity of formal education on the one hand, and population explosion and poverty on the other. For various reasons, a large number of students do not get enrolled in the schools or cannot continue their studies. So, it is a pressing need to implement an effective mass education program through adult and non-formal education formulated on the basis of the age of the learners and their areas of learning.

The aim of adult education is to make people literate, to offer them minimum skills in reading, writing and numeracy, to instill in them some humane values, to make them aware of health and environment and to increase their professional skills. Efforts will persistently continue till the enrollment rate reaches 100% and all the adult people become literate.

2.3.2. Strategies

a. Adult education:

Adult education will include literacy, development of human qualities, social awareness and professional skills development. This education will be provided to all illiterate male and female population of the country. However, those who are between 15 to 45 years of age will enjoy priority.

Special training will be provided to the teachers for the delivery of adult education. Other than those specified for literacy, the course contents will vary depending on the timeline of the courses, pedagogy, qualifications of the teachers, learning methods, the demand of local and non-resident population, the availability of the resources and the nature of professions of the people. The national committee for curricula development of mass education program will appropriately integrate other areas of studies like vocational and technical education, health, nutrition and family welfare, agriculture, forestry and environment, fisheries and livestock and it will design the contents of the courses keeping in mind the opportunities of export of skilled manpower to the foreign countries.

Opportunities of continued education will be created for continuous use of acquired knowledge and skills. Study circles and community learning centers will be established in each village.

Initiatives will be taken for collaborative efforts with all the government and nongovernment organizations, civil societies through the coordinated means of diverse methods, materials, processes supplemented by joint efforts of the target groups to wipe out illiteracy from the country. Pragmatic initiatives will be encouraged and the most effective ones, found out by evaluation, will be pursued and supported. An evaluation committee will be formed consisting of the dignitaries of the society interested in education.

The educated individuals of the locality and students of colleges or universities enjoying their vacations will be asked to engage themselves for short-term adult education programs. In that case, some realistic and practical models, presently in use, can be replicated for speedy implementation.

The distance learning method through radio or television can be used for literacy program.

b. Non-formal education

The age limit for enrolment in the non-formal education will be from 8 to 14 years.

The course materials of non-formal education program will be prepared in the light of the national curriculum of primary education and the materials will reflect the need felt by the nation. The materials will be prepared to ensure the quality of education. A technical committee for the curricula of mass education will evaluate the materials prior to approval.

The non-government voluntary organizations will be encouraged to conduct non-formal education programs following the curriculum of national primary education. Efforts will be made to make it accessible to the children from the backward, remote areas of the country and belonging to the most deprived groups.

Training of teachers for non-formal education is an important issue. The teachers will be trained in the learner-centred pedagogical approach.

The coordination of initiatives in the mass education sector

All necessary measures will be undertaken to coordinate all activities in the mass education sector.

The role of the national media and of different ministries and departments will be coordinated in the expansion of mass education.

The law related to mass education

Appropriate legal structure will be in place to fulfill the Constitutional obligations relating to adult and non-formal education.

National awakening and volunteers

A nation-wide awakening will be created to achieve the goals of literacy. Measures will be taken so that every educated person can contribute to this as per his/her possible ability.

A team of volunteers will be formed to make literacy movement a success.

The students of colleges and universities will be part of this movement.

3. Non-Formal Education (NFE) Sub-System

The government of Bangladesh has been implementing NFE programmes since its independence in 1971 to eradicate illiteracy from the country. NFE sub-system in Bangladesh, as elsewhere, cover four types of non-formal learning by age ranges as shown in tabular form below:

The areas covered by Non-Formal Education in Bangladesh:

ECCE (Age group 3-5 years)	NFBE (6-14 years)	Adult Literacy (15 + years, generally 15-45 years)	CE and lifelong learning opportunities
It can be provided at both Family and Community levels. Introduces children to pre-school education and deals with their health, nutritional and personal, motor and mental development needs	It provides a safety net and a second chance to un-enrolled and dropout children of primary school and adolescents (age-group 6/7-10 and 11-14 years)	Provides NFE covering literacy, numeracy, life skills for Youth and Adults (age-group 15-45), consisting of three levels: I. Basic level II. Middle level III Self-learning level, And special work skills training for 15-24 age group	Types of Continuing Education • Post-Literacy Program • Vocational Education/Livelihood skills Training Program • Equivalency Program • Quality of Life Promotion Program • Individual Interest Promotion Program, • Future-Oriented program

NFE provides an alternative channel, a second chance to dropout and un-enrolled primary school-age children, adolescents to go to mainstream; and adults who missed formal education, to acquire basic literacy and life skills and employable skills to improve their social and economic conditions. Both the government and NGOs organize and manage NFE programs for different age groups.

3.1 The Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE)

The government has established **Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE)** as a revenue setup in 2005. This resulted in the expansion of literacy in the country in an organized manner. BNFE is established for management and governance of NFE sub- sector at the national level. The organization has been working for developing mechanism to build partnership and collaboration among government agencies, NGOs and other service providers.

BNFE, the national level agency for NFE is expected to provide the professional leadership to NFE Policy implementation and priorities in non-formal education as a part of overall national development and national human resource development strategy.

4. Current initiatives in Literacy/NFE in Bangladesh

Currently Bangladesh has been implementing various literacy and NFE basic education projects. These are:

(a) Basic Education for Hard-To-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) Project (2nd Phase)

It's an ongoing project located in the six divisional cities of the country. The project was started in 2004 and will continue up to December 2012. The main objectives of the project are: (i) to provide quality non-formal, life-skills-based basic education to 1,66,150 urban working children and adolescents of 10 to 14 years age group of which at least 60% are girls, and (ii) to provided 12630 learners of 13+ age group with livelihood skills training. The project is supported by UNICEF.

(b) Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Program-2” (PLCEHD-2)

BNFE has been implementing the “Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Program-2” (PLCEHD-2 since 2002. The Govt. of Bangladesh has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and grant from the Department for International Development (DFID) and Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) towards the cost of the project.

- **Project period:** July 2002 – June 2013
- **Location of the Project:** Divisions: 6, Districts: 29, Upazillas: 210
- **Target group:** 1.2 million neo-literates of 11-45 age groups.
- **Main objectives of the Project:**
 - To include the neo-literate in post literacy programs to consolidate, maintain and upgrade the literacy skills they have acquired previously;
 - To develop their life pattern by increasing their incomes through providing technical skills training;
 - To eliminate gender disparity and establish social equitability expediting women empowerment.

(c) Reaching the Out of School Children (ROSC)

A non-formal Primary Education Project to Reaching the Out of School Children (ROSC) was launched by the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in 2005 (Conceived in 2003) to provide quality primary education to never-enrolled and early dropout disadvantaged children, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. It provides formal primary education (the same curriculum and materials as used in the Government Primary Schools) but is implemented with the cooperation of communities through non-formal approach. Reaching Out-of-School Children Project (ROSC) is specially designed to reach the unreached out-of-school children aged 7-14 years. Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) is implementing the program in 90 less advantaged Upazillas (sub-districts. The project has enrolled about 0.5 million disadvantaged and vulnerable children who attend learning centres or Ananda (delight or joy) schools.

(d) NFE Programs of Islamic Foundation Bangladesh

Islamic Foundation Bangladesh has been providing Mosque based Child and Mass Literacy Program since 1992. The program is being implemented through utilizing 2,00,000 mosques of the country. It is providing literacy including religious education to 16,20,000 children and 57,600 adults around the country.

(e) NFE Programmes of NGOs

In 2007-08, NFE Mapping found a total of 198,035 adolescents attended NGO-run education centres. CAMPE NGO Directory survey 2009 found 161 NGOs were running 45,862 learning centres with 954,573 learners, females 860,366 and males 94,207 (GPI 9.1). (Source: *NFE Mapping Report-2009*)

3.7. Challenges in adult Literacy/NFE Sector in Bangladesh:

- 1) About 40% people (15 and above years age) are illiterates in the country.
- 2) Reducing at least 50% illiteracy in the country by 2014 remains a major challenge, and will require adequate resources and effective implementation strategy for quality outcome.
- 3) Establishment of an equivalent framework for non-formal and formal education programmes to promote NFE as an educational system to grade the learners' achievements.
- 4) Establishment of Public Private Partnership towards implementation of Literacy/NFE programmes.
- 5) Organising and establishing linkages with other relevant programmes (skill training, micro finance, employment outfits etc) and organizations to assist NFE programme participants to put their new-found learning, job skills and knowledge to work towards poverty reduction.
- 6) Support of Development Partners in adult literacy programmes is declining.
- 7) Absence of permanent physical infrastructure of Community Learning Centres at village/union/sub-district levels.
- 8) Absence of long-term and sustainable planning in NFE programmes
- 9) Absence of NFE Training Institute/Academy at national or district level
- 10) Lack of permanent NFE officials/staffs at local (sub-district) levels.
- 11) Lack of decentralised management and planning in NFE sub-sector.