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BANGLADESH: COUNTRY PAPER

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EDUCATION FOR ALL IN BANGLADESH



COUNTRY PAPER



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1. THE CONTEXT

Developmental Context

Bangladesh is one of the most heavily populated nations in the world. More than 110 million people live in an area of 144,000 square kilometers. The population is ethnically and religiously homogeneous, and almost all of citizens speak a common language. The Bangladesh economy is heavily dependent on agriculture. While the Gross Domestic Product increased at a rate of 4.3 percent annually during the 1980's, per capita income is still very low. Millions of people struggle to cope with the most basic of human needs and nearly 50 percent of the people live below the poverty line.

The obstacles that Bangladesh faces in improving its economic growth rate and alleviating poverty are enormous. Although the Government has mounted numerous programmes for socio-economic development, it lacks the financial resources and trained manpower to meet all but a small proportion of the country's massive human needs. Given these limitations, the underlying strategy for any successful development must be to find ways of empowering millions of poor persons to help themselves.

Development of its rich human resources is thus the key to economic and social development in Bangladesh. The prerequisite for such development is major improvement in the country's system of education.

Educational Context

At the present time 3.9 million of the country's 17.6 million primary school-age children never attend school because of poverty, lack of facilities and other factors. Of the 13.7 million who do enroll, 8.2 million or 60 per cent drop out before completing the five year cycle of primary school, mostly during the first three grades. As a result, Bangladesh's adult illiteracy rate of 65.4 (1991) per cent is one of the highest in the world. For women the rate is still much higher (77 per cent).

The country's new democratic government has made a firm commitment to address these matters and to move toward the goal of Education for All. Bangladesh was a party to the World Declaration on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990, and it was a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the World Declaration on Survival, Protection and Development of Children at the World Summit for Children in New York in September 1990. The government has accepted these documents' vision of universal high quality education as fully consistent with the national aspirations of Bangladesh. In keeping with such goals, it has prepared a National Plan of Action for Education for All in Bangladesh.

2. LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS AND NATIONAL POLICY DECISIONS

Constitutional Obligations

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh provides an authoritative basis for national educational development. Provisions in Article 15 of the Constitution attaches the same importance to education as to other basic rights like food, shelter, clothing and health care. Furthermore, the Constitution enshrines the provision for universalization of primary education for children along with removal of illiteracy. If Article 17 may be quoted, "The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of: establishing a uniform mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children of such stage as may be determined by law; relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs; and removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law."

Primary Schools (taking over) Act 1974

The Government took over privately managed primary school in July 1973 and accorded to the teachers the status of the government servant and concomitant benefit to them. This was done through an ordinance promulgated in 1973. The ordinance became an act of the Parliament in 1974.

Compulsory Primary Education Act

An Act pertaining to compulsory primary education (CPE) was passed by Bangladesh parliament on February 13, 1990. The act envisages that primary education can be made compulsory for children aged 6-10 years from any date and for any areas of the country through government notification. The act also provides for creation of compulsory primary education committees with defined responsibilities. Compulsory primary education was introduced, on an experimental basis, in 68 Thanas or sub-districts in 1992. Compulsory primary education was extended to the entire country in 1993.

Free Education for Girls

As part of a commitment to narrow the gender gap in education, free education for girls in rural areas has been extended from Grade 5 to Grade 8. Education upto Grade 5 is free for both boys and girls in all government primary schools. It is being considered to provide a set of school uniform for each girl every year. The existing scholarship programme for both girls and boys will continue.

New Division for Primary Education

The Ministry of Education in the past was responsible for looking after all sub-sectors of education -- primary and mass education, secondary education, technical education, madrasah education and higher education. Obviously, in that set-up, it was not possible for the MOE to cope with the new demands of Education for All. To ensure that the new demands of the Education for All programme receive the appropriate priority, a separate "Primary and Mass Education Division" was created in 1992 under the direct charge of the Prime Minister. The new Division now has the overall responsibility for setting policies and undertaking programmes in the field of primary and mass education. It oversees administration of subordinate offices and organizations and coordinates activities with other government and non-government agencies and liaises with international bodies and organizations.

Important Committees

A high-level National Committee has been established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister to examine the country's educational needs and to advise for adoption of suitable strategies for addressing the needs of EFA. The 59-member committee includes legislators, government officials, educators, journalists and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

The National Committee is backed up by a Steering Committee under the chairmanship of the Secretary in charge of the new Primary and Mass Education Division. In addition, a Task Force of senior officials from the various ministries, departments and non-governmental organizations has been formed to recommend to the Government policy options for strengthening and initiating appropriate and effective programmes in respect of primary and mass education.

Development Activities

The government is implementing a multi-donor umbrella General Education Project with a major focus on primary education. The objectives of the project are to (a) increase access to education, (b) improve the quality of education and (c) improve management of education. The project has been in operation since 1990 and expects to see its completion in 1995. The Government is also reconstructing and rehabilitating the government primary schools which were damaged by flood and cyclone with the assistance of the development partners. In addition to development of government primary schools, a scheme is being implemented for reconstruction and renovation of about 9,000 registered non-government primary schools in the country.

3. THE NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

The National Plan of Action designed to work towards the goals of Education for All has three main components:

- * Universal Primary Education and associated early childhood education
- * Non-Formal Basic Education
- * Mass Education including Continuing Education

Universal Primary Education

Present Situation

Under an Act of the Parliament, all the primary schools in Bangladesh were nationalized in 1973 with a view to improving quality of education. A programme to universalize primary education was launched in 1981. At present the country has fifty thousand primary schools of which about twelve thousand are non-government schools. Current enrolment is 13.7 million which represents about 78 per cent of the age-group (1993). Of the enrolled students 60 percent drop-out before completing Grade 5 with most of the dropouts taking place in the first three grades.

Planned Targets

The plan to universalize primary education for the age group 6-10 years lays special emphasis on increasing attendance of girls and on their completion of the primary education cycle. In terms of access, the goal is to raise gross primary school enrollment, which now (1993) stands at 78 percent, to 82 percent by 1995 and to 95 percent by 2000. The plan aims to increase the rate at which students complete primary school from the current level of 40 percent to 52 percent by 1995 and to 70 percent by 2000.

Positive Developments

While pointing to the obstacles being experienced by the country in implementing programmes for UPE, some of the positive developments in education should not be lost sight of. These include establishment of the policy for free education for rural girls up to grade 8 and an increase in primary gross enrolment from about 58 per cent in 1971 to about 75 per cent in 1990. There is a visible improvement in girls enrolment which constitutes 45 per cent of total enrolment, while it was 40 per cent in 1985. Furthermore, more resources are being invested into the primary education sub-sector. As a matter of policy 60 percent of the vacant posts of primary school teachers are being filled in by female candidates in order to improve the number of female teachers.

Obviously, with the introduction of CPE, a new dimension has been added to the UPE in the country. As mentioned earlier, CPE was introduced throughout the country with effect from January, 1993. The pronouncement of government regarding CPE has succeeded in releasing a surge of creative energy among the people who are imbued with a desire to contribute their mite for the development of the country. A UNICEF study made on a sample basis in the CPE area revealed that in 30 per cent of the schools, the enrolment was 100 per cent while in 70 per cent of the schools the enrolment was 91 per cent. The attendance rate was as high as 70 per cent compared to 60 per cent in the non-CPE areas. The success of the experiment can be largely attributed to the commitment of teachers and enthusiastic support and co-operation extended by the local communities.

Nevertheless, the past gaps have been too wide. Making provisions for effective basic education to the staggering number of people in a short period poses one of the greatest challenges for Bangladesh. Some of the obstacles in the way of achieving UPE remains to be inadequate financial resource, shortage of necessary physical facilities, poverty and illiteracy of parents, weak management and lack of societal demand for education.

Implementation Strategies

Physical Facilities: A comprehensive programme has been launched to augment necessary facilities to ensure access for the additional number of pupils. Available classrooms from the community operated religious educational institutions like Ebtedayee Madrasahs and Maktabas will be pressed into service. Fifty thousand new classrooms are being planned to be added by 1995 to the existing government primary schools. This number will be further increased by another 50,000 classrooms by the year 2000. Actual requirements and location of additional classrooms/schools are to be determined through local level school mapping and planning. Besides, about 25,000 satellite/feeder-schools having 2 classes each is expected to be provided with community support.

The programme already undertaken for repairs and rehabilitation of the existing schools will continue. Low cost primary schools are being established in the unschooled areas. Repairs and rehabilitation of tubewells for safe drinking water and other sanitary facilities will be stepped up.

Improved Curriculum and Textbooks: Measures have been adopted for the revision of the primary school curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs of rural communities in general and to girls in particular. The changes include identification of basic competencies, greater emphasis on health, sanitation, hygiene and other life-skills. New textbooks for classes I and II have been completed and are being introduced into the school system. The new textbooks emphasize simple presentation of content and selection of stories reflecting the real life situation of the children. They are backed up by teachers' editions describing learner-centred, activity-oriented strategies for teaching and assessment. An important part of the programme to improve curricula and textbooks is the orientation of teachers and field supervisors regarding the new materials. School contact time will be increased to bring it in line with other developing countries and provision for additional facilities are being planned for this purpose.

Projects are underway for creation of curricula and packages of teaching materials designed to meet the special needs of out-of-school children, especially those aged the 6-10 and 11-14. Similarly modification of the curricula of Ebtadayee Madrasha in order to make them equivalent to that of the primary school curriculum and to meet the objectives of basic education will be attempted.

The existing practice of providing free textbooks to children will continue. Currently this amounts to distribution of 14 million sets of textbooks a year. Also a programme for supply of free stationeries like paper and pencils is under consideration. Food for education programme for the children of poor families is being implemented from this year on an experimental basis to increase their enrolment in the schools and to reduce drop-out.

Effective Teacher Training: The plan emphasizes on establishing an effective system of in-service teacher training. Both the methods and the content of such training are being revised to embrace new concepts of activity-based, student-centered learning and the new emphasis on participatory training methods. To this objective, a more systematic and vigorous recruitment of teachers coupled with a revamping of programmes to train them has been undertaken. The goal is to improve the teacher-pupil ratio to 1:50. A crash programme is being planned to train teachers using existing Primary Training Institutes more intensively and effectively. Steps have been taken for strengthening the existing school based cluster training for primary school teachers.

A policy that at least 60 percent of new teachers recruited will be females has been accepted. At the present time only one in five primary school teachers is a woman. More female teachers will have a positive effect on the rate at which girls enroll and persist in school. An assessment is to be made on the training needs of large number of female teachers with relaxed educational qualification. There will be substantial increase in the quantity and diversity of teaching materials available to classroom teachers. At the present time many teachers have no resources beyond textbooks, a blackboard and chalk. Steps will be taken to supply teaching aids like wall-charts, globes, models and other audio-visual equipment to schools. Community

teachers will be appointed in the newly established community based schools in the unserved areas.

Efforts are on for social mobilization and communication activities aimed at increasing public support for basic education and motivating teachers, parents and communities to work toward the qualitative and quantitative goals of Education for All. Best teachers are rewarded for their performance. Another measure under consideration is the setting up of resource centres for practicing teachers and ATEOs in primary training institutes and other centres at thana level around the country. These centres will give teachers access to reference books and other teaching materials and offer them assistance in developing additional materials on their own.

Increased Local Management and Participation: To increase community participation and supervision a decentralized system of school-management has been effected. The role and functions of the School Managing Committees has been more clearly established. Parent-Teacher Associations are encouraged to play a greater role to encourage improved performance and accountability of teachers. They together with the guardians will assist in ensuring enrolment of all school-age children and their regular attendance in schools. Responding to the local conditions a school will be allowed to follow a flexible school timing and vacations within the overall framework of national guidelines and regulations.

The district administration will be involved for providing necessary support for implementation of the EFA programme. A system will also be established for rewarding local organizations, institutions and individuals for note-worthy contributions, especially for innovative projects. Local communities and NGOs are encouraged to establish feeder schools with Grades I and II along with pre-school facilities. There is evidence of encouraging response from them.

Strengthening Supportive Organizations: Research and training capacity of the National Academy for Primary Education as the apex institution will be strengthened. NAPE will be encouraged in particular to undertake innovative projects. Resources of other organizations and institutions like National Curriculum and Textbook Board, National Academy of Educational

Management and Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics will be fully exploited for specialized services particularly in curriculum renewal, improved management, documentation and information services.

Early Childhood Education

Present Trends in Early Childhood Education

The importance of entry level of primary education can hardly be over-stressed. A child's initial perception of schooling has a lasting effect throughout his life. Pre-school education or early childhood education establishes essential links between home and community on the one hand and formal schooling on the other. One of the major reasons for high dropout rates in the early primary grades in Bangladesh is the deprived home environment of majority of the children. Hence it is necessary to recognize the need for early childhood education and school preparedness programme. It is expected that establishment of community based pre-school centres will help attract large number of children to beginning classes of primary schools and help retention. Pre-school education is well established tradition in urban areas of Bangladesh, especially among middle and upper middle class families. The challenge is to extend access to early childhood education to the most disadvantaged.

Proposed Actions

Proposed actions include the designing of a special community-based early childhood education programme suitable for disadvantaged children in rural villages, particularly girls. Learning centres to implement the new programme will be established. These centres will be set up and run by Government and non-government organizations. Appropriate mechanism will be established for collection of data and information of the existing pre-school centres. Pilot and experimental projects will be undertaken to assess the impact of these centres on enrolment to higher grades. Relevant teacher-trainers, teachers and supervisors will have special training and orientation.

Non-Formal Basic Education

Objectives and Targets

To achieve the goals of EFA, efforts are under way to develop and expand educational opportunities for the disadvantaged groups through a non-formal system as an essential strategy to complement the formal system. In the context of EFA, non-formal education is meant to provide a quality basic education through low cost alternative channel to those who at the first instance were deprived of opportunities to attend a primary school and to offer a second chance of learning to the school drop-outs with a view to mainstreaming them to formal system of education. They comprise the age-group 6-14 and their total number at present is estimated to be 12m or 42 per cent of the age group.

Implementation Strategies

One major obstacle to the designing and implementation of nonformal education is the absence of institutional framework and lack of required resources as Bangladesh had very little experience in the past. To set up a new programme, the need for coordinated approach between the government on the one hand and the non-government organizations including community based organizations on the other has become all the more important. Such organizations are encouraged to initiate and implement projects on non-formal education of their own and replicate successful models. The focus is on innovative projects aimed at increasing school attractiveness, more effective communication and improved delivery system. They are especially advised to undertake programmes of education for the handicapped and other disadvantaged children in co-operation with the Ministry of Social Welfare and other concerned government departments.

Mass Education

Present Situation

The 1991 population census put the adult literacy rate in Bangladesh at 34.6 per cent, 44 per cent for male and 22.9 per cent for female. The Second Five Year Plan (1980-85) attached high priority to eradication of illiteracy and as a result a countrywide mass education programme was launched in 1980. Even though initial success was attained, the programme was unfortunately abandoned in 1982. Since then only a small project on somewhat adhoc basis has been in operation. Now in the context of country's commitment to EFA, mass education programme is being revived on a large scale. This is an essential component of a 3-year project on integrated non-formal education.

Objectives and Targets

The monumental task of bringing literacy to Bangladesh's adult population requires a two-fold approach. New programs must be mounted to assist non-literate adults to be able to read, write and acquire functional and vocational skills. Perhaps even more important, however, efforts must be redoubled to prevent adult illiteracy in the first place. In this context, the target is to raise the present literacy rate of 35 per cent to 62 per cent by the year 2000.

Implementation Strategies

Successful implementation of the proposed mass literacy programme is closely related to achievement rates in the primary schools. As the first step intensive efforts are to be made to increase the primary school completion and achievement rates of children in order to close the flood gates of new additions to the pool of illiteracy.

Curriculum Revision: Special functional literacy and continuing education programmes for adults, particularly for women are to be established. The existing curricula for adult learners

will undergo revision, and the idea for setting up of a national academy for non-formal education is under consideration to conduct research, develop appropriate learning materials, evaluate existing programs and provide technical assistance and support to organizations involved in adult education. Another pending proposal is the creation of a new directorate of adult education that would be responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring adult and non-formal education programmes.

Village Literacy Centres: Accomplishing these objectives will require the mobilizing of commitment and resources to eradicate illiteracy in the shortest possible time. One way of developing this consensus and to ensure support of the community at large is to create adult education committees at district, thana, union and ward levels with a cross section of people from those areas. The objective would be to establish at least one literacy centre in each village by 1995 and small libraries in selected villages suitable for the neoliterates. These would be operated by local communities and non-governmental organizations where necessary with the assistance of the government. Other means are also being explored, such as encouraging newspapers to reserve space for reading materials suitable for neo-literates in danger of relapsing into illiteracy. Literacy classes for women can be organized in their homes, and local organizations such as businesses and trade unions can be encouraged to undertake literacy programmes for their respective constituencies. There could be mechanism for special recognition of innovations and successful projects. Attempts will be made to incorporate the adult literacy programme in various projects of relevant Ministries or departments so that they can play their due role and can contribute to the successful implementation of the programme.

4. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Concerted Actions

Implementation of the National Plan of Action for Education for All enjoys intense political support at the national level. The programme is coordinated with the ongoing operational and developmental activities of the government through both its Revenue Budget and

the Annual Development Programmes Budget -- all within the framework of the country's Fourth and Fifth Five-Year Plans. Since Education is a multisectoral task, alliances must be built up within the government among ministries and departments dealing with matters such as agriculture, health care, women's development, youth programmes and care of the disabled.

Social Mobilization

In view of the enormity of tasks for attaining the EFA goals within the given time frame, strategies have been adopted ensuring maximum people's participation. Where democracy works in a truthful way, building up alliance between the government and the people should not be too difficult. Such alliances required full participation of the people's representatives, community leaders, professionals, intellectuals and other interested members of the society.

What is needed is a massive process of social and political mobilization to elicit participation of all existing and potential partners. In 1991 a framework for such social mobilization was developed and the following year a programme of action was launched by the Prime Minister. The plan spells out overall goals, objectives, strategies and activities and was developed through a series of initiatives involving government officials, representatives of non-government organizations and other educationists. While some of the strategies are most effective at the national level, the plan is also being implemented at the divisional, district, sub-district and village levels. Such activities range from "mothers' rallies" to students' brigades for regular attendance to sessions designed to inform the local media about the urgency of achieving universal primary education and to elicit their support for pursuing it.

Financial Resource

The National Plan of Action estimates that the cost of pursuing these targets and strategies during the period between 1993 and 2000 will be \$US 4.778 billion. Of this, about 80 per cent will be for formal primary education. The government plans to use its revenue budget to provide \$US 2.157 billion, representing 45 percent of the overall cost of \$US 4.778

billion, towards operational expenses such as teachers salaries and school supplies. Moreover, the government plans to cover an additional 15 percent of the remaining \$US 2.621 billion out of local resources. In the 1991-92 fiscal year, the government dedicated 14 percent of its revenue budget and 8.4 percent of its development budget for education, out of which primary education received respectively 46.8 percent and 73.7 percent. While such figures reflect high government commitment to primary education, they stretch budgetary capabilities nearly to their limits.

To attain the Education for All goals, implementation of the National Plan of Action will require an estimated \$US 2.2 billion of external assistance from the development partner in the form of grants and concessional loans.

5. SELECTED SUCCESS STORIES

The people of Bangladesh have reason to be optimistic about realizing the goals of Education for All in their country because numerous schools and educational projects have already successfully done so. The task now is to build on these indigenous innovations by replicating them on a national scale. These success stories include the following:

A. Successful School

In sharp contrast to the general pattern of frustration and failure, scores of individual schools in Bangladesh have become models of exciting and effective education even in the absence of external encouragement and assistance. In most cases the innovative leadership of an individual, usually a headmaster or teacher, made the difference. Whether dealing with an existing government school that has fallen into neglect or with no governmental school at all, this individual has provided the vision and the inspiration for new ways of serving students. Many of these schools are dedicated to the education of poor children.

The improvement process typically begins with efforts to convince poor rural parents of the importance of education for their children. Once the motivation is established, they come to see the school as "our school." Villagers contribute time and labour for the construction of new facilities or the improvement of existing buildings, and many develop income-producing ventures -- setting up stores, planting mulberry trees and vegetable gardens, raising fish and poultry, etc. -- that provide them with funds to hire additional teachers, purchase supplies for poor students and meet other needs identified by local residents'. In all cases, teachers are recruited from the villages, thus allowing continuous and effective communication regarding the needs of the school and individual students. An emphasis is made on recruiting females. Most of these schools have mounted programmes in the areas of sanitation and personal hygiene, and the curricula include cultural activities such as music, dancing and the playing of games and sports.

The effectiveness of these schools can be seen in the fact that the collective dropout rate has been less than 5 percent. Clearly, they have motivated students to learn and to pursue vocational objectives that previously would have been unthinkable. One student from the Bishaykhali Government Primary School said, "I want to be a doctor so that no one in my village will suffer from any disease." Another girl from the same school said that she wanted to be a teacher in order to improve the prospects of "the future generation of women." Because of the continuing close relationship between these schools and the communities they serve, they remain healthy, vital and exciting learning environments.

These indigenous models can serve the whole country. The success of following this model is ensured by the fact that the model schools do not depend on external support. They develop -- "bottom up" -- from the communities they serve.

B. Satellite Schools

Geography plays a big role in determining whether children attend school. Parents are reluctant to see young children, especially girls, travel great distances or to cross waterways or highways. In order to encourage children to participate more fully in primary education, the

Ministry of Education decided that instead of waiting for students to come to the schools, they would try taking the schools to the students. Special two-class satellite schools have been set up in 200 villages to offer instruction in the first two grades on their own doorsteps.

The satellite schools, each of which is affiliated with a nearby "mother school" that receives its graduates, constitute an object lesson in community-based educational accountability. Members of the local community donate land and construction materials and exercise a voice in selecting sites, hiring teachers and maintaining the school buildings. The government is considering providing additional support for co-curricular activities as well as providing materials and training for the teachers. Attendance rates in such schools are presently close to 90 per cent. This satellite and feeder school concept will be further explored and extended.

C. Nonformal Primary Education -- the BRAC Experience

The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, a non-governmental organization with two decades of experience in promoting irrigation, income generation and other projects among the rural poor, has established a network of over 12,000 primary schools serving two classifications of students: 8 to 10-year olds who have never attended a government school and 11 to 16 year-olds who have either never enrolled or who have dropped out.

Distinctive elements of the BRAC model of non-formal education include a highly structured curriculum, classes of no more than 30 students, substantial parental involvement and a highly effective system of managerial supervision and continuous assessment of student progress. Seventy percent of the students in any given school must be girls. Although most teachers are local women who have no more than a high school education themselves, BRAC schools have achieved remarkable learning results, including good test scores, a virtually non-existent dropout problem and the satisfaction of seeing the overwhelming majority of graduates move on to government schools. The BRAC experiment has achieved international recognition, and with the support of external donors it plans to expand to set up more schools.

D. The Underprivileged Children Education Programme (UCEP)

Children living in urban slums are perhaps the most neglected and deprived element of the population. Most do not attend any school at all. They spend their days on the streets looking for whatever ill-paying manual labour they can find to help support themselves and any families to which they belong. They have little social life and experience little, if any, cultural stimulation.

The Underprivileged Children Education Programme was set up to serve the special needs of these "street urchins" and "child labourers" aged 10 to 12. The schools, located in areas where there are concentrations of these children, offer three years of basic education followed by one year of preparation for vocational training and another one to three years of training in marketable skills. Each school operates with three daily shifts lasting two to three hours -- thus allowing the students to keep working while pursuing their education. The basic education programs follow the regular national curriculum, and all necessary supplies, including books and materials, are provided free of charge. Teachers in UCEP schools are trained to conduct the "social work" necessary to meet the physical, social and psychological needs of children living under such extreme difficulties. It is a tribute to their dedication and skill that the overall attendance rate surpasses 85 per cent and that the annual dropout rate is less than 5 per cent. The teachers also maintain close relationships with prospective employers in fields ranging from automobile mechanics and electronics to the garment industry.

Early successes have led to sizeable expansion of the UCEP programme in the major cities of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna. The UCEP programme, which in 1993 served more than 12,000 children, plans to expand to 18,000 students by 1996.

E. Assessment of Basic Competencies of Children

Accurate data on student achievement is a crucial tool for monitoring progress towards Education for All. For many years, Bangladesh has compiled basic statistics on matters such as

enrolment and completion rates. As is the case with virtually every other developing nation, it lacked an adequate system for determining what children actually learn. It also lacked a clear definition of the minimum learning skills and life skills that students should acquire in the primary grades.

Drawing upon the fruitful experiences of the Expanded Programme of Immunization coverage surveys, Bangladesh in 1992 initiated a rapid assessment procedure utilizing the 30 cluster sampling methodology. Assessment covered the areas of life skills and knowledge, reading, writing and numeracy. For the first time in the South Asia region, a familiar survey methodology was used to assess the educational competencies acquired by 11-12 year-old children.

The criteria for assessing student performance were spelled out for each of the four areas. For example, students should be able to read a comprehension passage and then answer four questions about it. They should also be able to write a letter communicating a simple message, perform arithmetic problems using the four basic operations and answer seven of ten questions concerning life skills. The ABC methodology is simple, rapid and inexpensive and yield a variety of useful information.

6. PERSISTENT OBSTACLES

Centralized system

Despite these successes, numerous obstacles remain in the struggle for high quality universal primary education in Bangladesh. The existing primary educational system, which embraces nearly 50,000 schools and employs more than 2,000 supervisors, is highly centralized in its operating style. The government has endorsed the principle of transferring more authority to the local level in an effort to make schools more responsive to local need, but much remains to be done in order to turn this new policy into a practical reality.

When primary schools were nationalized in the early 1970's, the government assumed responsibility for management of schools, teacher salaries, curriculum development and most other essential services. As a result, local communities now have little sense of ownership of schools. School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher organizations exist in each school, but relatively few of these are actually functioning. Once they become operative, however, local schools will have the opportunity to establish their own school calendar, school hour and vacations within the overall framework of national guidelines and regulations. They will also play a greater role in ensuring the enrolment and regular attendance of school-age children and to promote improved performance and accountability on the part of teachers.

High Dropouts and Low Attendance

The primary school dropout rate of about 60 per cent by the end of the five-year cycle remains very high and attendance rate is also low. This figure is a sign of a still rather inefficient primary system as well as need for vigorous efforts to stem illiteracy at its source. Lecturing and rote learning continue to dominate the pedagogy of most classrooms. Since many students find such methods uninspiring, especially in the first grades, the dropout rate is needlessly high. Intense efforts must be made to change the teaching and learning environment to one that contributes to enjoyment and better learning.

Weak Teacher Training and Management

Teacher training programmes must be improved not only because such methods are weak but because new teachers need role models for professional behavior. Related to this, management of activities such as recruitment of both teachers and administrators, assessment of student performance and research must become more efficient.

Given the flat topography of Bangladesh, supervisors should have little difficulty looking after the 15 to 20 schools to which they are typically assigned. Supervision of schools, however, is one of the weakest areas and needs to be improved through means such as greater logistical



support. One step already on the drawing board is the organization of short-term training courses for 2000 Assistant Thana Education Officers to improve their skill in providing on-the-job training to primary school teachers.

Limited opportunity for Career Building

Primary teachers in Bangladesh must expect to remain teachers throughout their careers. They have little opportunity to move up through the educational hierarchy. Not only does this policy dampen the motivation of teachers but it means that administrators, who are recruited from college graduates, lack the classroom experience essential to effective school management. Steps must be taken to enhance the career prospects, discipline and accountability of the entire teaching force.

Inadequate Infrastructure to Mass Education

For mass education, a viable infrastructure with adequate number of staffs in the field level is yet to be established. Though there have been sporadic programmes and projects for adult education in the past, an integrated nation-wide programme has not yet been established. The lack of attracting illiterate adults to the proposed literacy centres will remain difficult because of lack of perceived incentives and of opportunity costs. Development of appropriate materials to suit the variety of learning needs of the adult will require persistent attention and efforts.

7. LOOKING AHEAD

From the preceding pages it should be clear that the Government of Bangladesh has not only made a clear commitment to the internationally agreed upon goals of Education for All but that it has already moved vigorously to begin turning these goals into a reality in Bangladesh. It has done so out of a recognition that, in a nation whose greatest potential wealth resides in its human resources, quality education for all citizens is both a moral and social ideal and an

economic imperative. People irrespective of social belonging and political affiliation are eager to see educated and enlightened nation.

The 7-year National Plan of Action recognizes that educational reform must be a cooperative effort of all parties -- the government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The "top down" leadership must be matched by "bottom up" efforts by community groups, employers, service clubs, religious groups and other organizations at the grass roots level. Achieving "Education for All" requires the commitment of "All for Education."

Bangladesh is optimistic about the prospects for achieving the goals of Education for All within its borders by 2000 because progress is already visible. In numerous public addresses, the Prime Minister has made it clear that an expanded and improved education system is a national priority. Recognition is growing about the opportunities to work through a combination of formal, non-formal and religious structures. On the matter of gender equity, for example, the latest data show that attendance, completion and achievement rates for girls in primary school are now approximately the same as they are for boys.

The Government of Bangladesh looks forward to working through the new international mechanism for exchanging ideas and experiences so the country along with others will reach the goals of eradicating illiteracy and achieving universal primary education by 2000.



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शहीद शंकर गुहा नियोगी
पुस्तकालय एवं सांस्कृतिक केंद्र, भोपाल
(कमला सदगोपाल पब्लिक ट्रस्ट का एक कार्यक्रम)

परि. सं. कूट सं.

1. देय तारीख तक किताब न लौटाने पर नियमानुसार विलंब शुल्क देना होगा।
2. यदि किसी और को जरूरत न हो तो किताब दोबारा जारी की जा सकती है।
3. किताब पर कोई भी निशान लगाना या कुछ भी लिखना सख्त मना है। इस पर दंड का प्रावधान है।
4. किताब को गंदा करने, फाड़ने, खोने या देय तारीख के 30 दिन के अंदर न लौटाने पर उसकी जगह वही नई किताब या दुगुनी कीमत देनी होगी।

कृपया किताबों को साफ-सुथरा रखने में मदद करें।

संपर्क

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Draft for Discussion

REPORT ON
BANGLADESH-RAJASTHAN
FIELD OPERATIONAL SEMINAR

DR. POONAM BATRA

in Consultation with Prof. A.K. Jalaluddin



July, 1997

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Field Operational Seminar (FOS) on 'Alternate Modes in Primary Education' was jointly organized by Lok Jumbish, Rajasthan in India and the GSS and BRAC in Bangladesh, between the 25th March 1997 to 4th May 1997. The Seminar's main aim was to share the knowledge and ideas and practices of the primary education programme of each of the participating organizations.

Twenty-two participants of the Lok Jumbish delegation visited Bangladesh between 27th March, to 3rd April 1997, to observe the education programme of BRAC and GSS. Likewise, a delegation of twenty-three participants from Bangladesh, 16 members from GSS and 7 members from BRAC visited Rajasthan between 25th April to 3rd May 1997.

The FOS began with a briefing session in Bangladesh, in which participating organizations discussed at length the vision, goals, objectives and targets of their primary education programmes. This was followed by a focussed discussion on various issues of non-formal education, quality education, child centered education, teacher development and the management of education.

The briefing session closed with a briefing on the field visit of the Lok Jumbish delegation to BRAC and GSS field operations in Bangladesh. Four groups visited Monikganj, Sydpur, Mymensingh and Rangpur areas between 29th March and 1st April, 1997.

The last two days of the seminar in Bangladesh was spent on small group deliberations on specific issues of concern: management; curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; teacher development and community involvement.

The second phase of the FOS was a field visit of the Bangladesh delegation to Rajasthan between the 25th April to 3rd May 1997. After an initial briefing on the Lok Jumbish operations, the delegates from BRAC and GSS were divided into groups for visits to various field locations. Observations of these groups were then presented and discussed in a two-day meeting before the conclusion of the seminar.

The last day of the seminar was spent in discussing the possible future prospects of collaboration between the participating organizations to further their goal of providing quality primary education to the disadvantaged.

BRAC

The Non Formal Primary Education Programme (NFPE) is BRAC's response to the problem of illiteracy in Bangladesh where only one third of the population is literate. Over 70% of BRAC school students are girls and over 95% of the teachers are women.

The FOS report is organised in five chapters: the first describes the seminar process and methodology; the second the institutional context, structure and programmes; the third the organisational strengths and constraints based on field observations; the fourth emerging programme and policy issues and finally follow-up recommendations.

Simple thatched BRAC schools accommodate a maximum of 33 students each. Here, the students receive basic education, enabling them to read, write, do simple mathematics and acquire relevant life skills. Text books, slate, papers and pencils are provided free by the schools. Lessons are learnt through activities. More than 50% of the BRAC school graduates are able to move on to the formal primary schools in classes IV or V. The average cost in a BRAC school is about US \$ 20 per child per year, which makes it one of the lowest cost schooling in the world. The BRAC model of primary education is also being replicated in the eastern and southern African countries.

BRAC schools are not intended to operate as permanent institutions but rather to address a single cohort of students who enroll during the same school year and move together through the three years of schooling. Once that cohort completes the three-year cycle, the school ceases to exist unless there are at least 30 eligible children in the community whose families are interested in enrolling them in an NFPE programme.

The major objectives of the BRAC NFPE programme are to :

- o provide education to the landless or small landholders. The BRAC schools are targeted to bring into the fold of primary education, children from landless families. Hence, it is a specifically targeted education programme.
- o help the Government achieve Education For All by 2000. The NFPE programme aims to provide support for the Government's efforts towards universalization of primary education.

GSS

GSS runs a comprehensive education programme for children of all ages from pre-school to class five primarily from disadvantaged families. Half of these children are girls. Those between the age of 4 and 10 attend structured primary schools while those between 11 and 15, who are mainly drop-outs, attend the non-formal Adolescent Learning Centres, which run a three year course.

GSS is currently engaged in setting up and running primary schools, where for the first time, quality education is given the highest emphasis. GSS schools are different from other NGO schools because unlike others, GSS builds spacious three-room schools, follows government curriculum (supplemented by additional curriculum and materials), uses government primers and runs 5 classes (I to V) for 6-10 age group. They work in two to three shifts depending on the number of non-school going children in the community.

The basic objective is to introduce the concept of Quality Education in Bangladesh and to get it accepted by the mainstream government primary education system.

Lok Jumbish

The Lok Jumbish Project was jointly formulated by the Government of India and the Government of Rajasthan in the wake of adoption by the country's Parliament of the National Policy on Education, 1986.

This people's movement is for providing primary education of satisfactory quality to all boys and girls of the State of Rajasthan, situated in north-west India.

The major objectives of the Lok Jumbish programme are to :

- o achieve Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) for all children up to 14 years of age through the school system as far as possible and part-time non-formal education where necessary.
- o ensure that all enrolled children regularly attend formal school or non-formal education centers and complete primary education.
- o provide quality education by ensuring that all children achieve at least the minimum levels of learning as defined by Lok Jumbish.
- o Effectively involve people in the planning and management of education.

The Lok Jumbish has the following programme components : School improvement programme; non-formal education programme and related programmes of ECCE, EDCD, Women's empowerment, etc.

The specific Lok Jumbish strategies include : decentralization to ensure that all issues come to the head office via Cluster Committees who have decision making powers and schools that are the responsibility of village Committees; review and planning meetings to provide a link between the head and the zonal offices with regard to supervision and assessment; involvement of NGOs' and other State Institutes of Education for technical support and teacher training and conditional enrolment to complete five years of schooling.

TABLE (E.1) SUMMARY OF NON-FORMAL PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OF BRAC, GSS AND LOK JUMBISH			
	BRAC : NFPE	GSS:PEP	LJ:SSP
Children	33 children Age 8-10 or 11-16 60-70 per cent girls	30 children Age pre-school age 1-10 and 11-14	All children of relevant age group of a particular area Age 6-14
Teacher Selection	Village residents, Class 9 and above 95 per cent women	Community residents rural areas:- SSC and urban areas:- undergraduate and post- graduates, largely women	Community residents Class 8 and above, largely men
Teacher Training	15 days basic residential training 2-day training before school opens and 1-day monthly refresher sessions in year one; 4- day refresher at beginning of year 2	15 days basic residential training. On the job training in classrooms; 6- days refresher course every year; 2-day monthly refresher	115 days training in a phased manner over the five years monthly refresher
Teacher Supervision	1 Program Organizer (PO) for 15 schools PO school visits twice a week PO, student and parent follow-up of teacher absentees	Supervisors: post- graduate; 1 supervisor for 3 schools; visits school thrice a week	Pravartak: 10/12 Class. One Pravartak for every ten centres. Pravartak provide assistance to the Anudeshak and co-ordinate with Prerak Dal and Mahila Samooh for ensuring regular attendance.

	BRAC : NFPE	GSS:PEP	LJ:SSP
Communities	Determine school schedule Pledge to send children to school and attend monthly meetings Replace broken slates and worn mats	Attend monthly meetings; ensure attendance of children	Determine school time schedule
Instructional Schedule	2.5 to 3 hours per day (specified times selected by parents) 6 days per week, 270 days per year 3-year instructional cycle	2.5 hours for preschool I & II. 3 hours for III, IV and V, 6 days per week; 265 days per year; 5 year instructional cycle	3 hours per day; 6 days a week; 5-year cycle, three year cycle and 2 year cycle
The School/ Centre	Basic Structure <=240 square feet Rented for 3 hrs/day Basic furnishings & equipment (mats for the children, stool for the teacher and a blackboard)	Permanent school building with three spacious rooms; 2-3 shifts per school, 3 work tables; 5 corners and chairs for children, storage and blackboard	Primary school building/ Community places/Anudeshak's residence
Classroom Environment	Student-Teacher ratio 33:1 largely whole class teaching approach No corporal punishment	Student-teacher ratio 30:1; Group activity based on child centre approaches; no corporal punishment	Not defined or limited; child-centered approaches to instructions; textbook focussed; no corporal punishment
Curriculum	Content similar to that covered in formal school Classes I-III daily co-curricular activities Little homework	Government curriculum; supplementary interactive materials; no or little home work	Government curriculum adopted by Lok Jumbish; MLL based; co-curricular activities; no home work
Instructional Materials	Textbooks developed by BRAC that resemble reading primers and basic arithmetic books Teaching manuals and teaching aids guide use of textbooks	Activity based variety of materials and supplementary readers: teaching aids: textbooks	MLL based textbooks; teaching aids for use by teachers.

Organisational Strength and Constraints

Each of the three participating organizations are distinct in their approach to facilitate the education of disadvantaged children of primary school age in their respective countries.

One of the key factors that make the BRAC NFPE both efficient and productive is its management system. Any decision taken in BRAC regarding the functioning of the schools, a more specifically change in the pedagogic practices is carried out within a short time. This, however, could also be interpreted to mean that the BRAC system is highly centralized.

GSS through its focus on time management in the classroom has provided tremendous insights into the benefits of and strategies for the optimum use of the teachers time. The GSS management system clearly impacts the quality of the teaching-learning process. In GSS, the training of supervisors includes close interactions with teachers in understanding classroom realities.

The Lok Jumbish management system is both elaborate and unique. To bring the Government and NGOs on a common platform for the common pursuit and concern of universalization of

primary education is commendable. Lok Jumbish has in a short time set many processes in motion which will inevitably result in decentralized systems of decision making and management of primary education. Through its unique technique of school mapping and micro-planning, Lok Jumbish has concretised the idea of educating and empowering people through participation in 'assessing' their own realities. A major strength of the Lok Jumbish is its flexibility in providing space to NGOs to experiment with new models of pedagogic practice. By providing additional staff at the block level to supplement state level staff, Lok Jumbish, however, may not be able to sustain these structures.

GSS schools have infrastructure that allows for the practice of quality education in day-to-day activities; spacious classrooms to accommodate language, maths, creative writing and reading activities and activity corners for individual and group learning.

The BRAC classroom is organized to facilitate effective whole-class teaching. The U-shaped seating of children allows a one-to-one interaction of the teacher with children and peer interaction among children when required.

The teacher-child ratio in both BRAC and GSS classrooms enables the optimum use of teacher time as well as facilitates individualized attention. Both organizations have effectively integrated the pre-school component of teaching.

All three organizations select teachers from within the community. A sense of belonging to the community appears to be a key factor in the teacher's commitment to children learning. All organizations follow a rigorous procedure for teacher selection. The teachers of GSS schools are however, the most qualified, followed by BRAC and Lok Jumbish.

The effectiveness of the GSS classroom is largely due to its strong teacher supervision. Supervisors are rigorously trained to play academic support and management roles. A GSS supervisor, in fact, provides on-the-job training and regular academic support.

BRAC supervisors provide close monitoring and support of teachers and the continuous evaluation of children's learning.

The Lok Jumbish SSP teachers are essentially accountable to the community. While there is provision for offering support for MLL training, technical support to the individual teacher in the Lok Jumbish programme has potential for strengthening.

Emerging Programme and Policy Issues

In the light of the field observations, discussions and reflections, certain recommendations have been made, emerging out of the field operation seminar. These are: linking research with classroom processes to bridge gap between training and classroom practice; evolving continuous and comprehensive evaluation systems; developing rigorous supervisory staff and teacher training in areas of pedagogy and subject-knowledge and broadening the horizons of teacher training to include inputs for self development and analysis of individual children's learning and thinking strategies.

The key policy issues that emerged from the discussions include the following: understanding the implications of an education programme for universalization of primary education versus a targeted programme; examining the impact of convergence of development programmes on

education programmes; defining the future direction of non-formal education programmes; determining the choices that children would have after non-formal education and evolving a new role model for women in the light of the participating organisations commitment to gender equity.

Recommendations

In the light of the field observations, discussions and reflections, the following recommendations emerged from the Field Operational Seminar:

- o Realizing the need to link research with classroom processes, it would worthwhile to initiate research that is process-based. This would help in bridging the gap between training and classroom practice and in understanding that innovations evolve continuously. BRAC and GSS have already initiated steps in this direction.
- o Making learner evaluation continuous and comprehensive, and a part of the learning process. Evaluation should be process-based in order to serve this purpose. This would help in sustaining quality education. Parameters other than achievement levels in specific skills or subjects can be identified and developed for the purpose of research and evaluation. This will help fulfil the true role of quality education in developing the 'whole' child.
- o Including within curriculum framework, material development and pedagogic training, specific inputs for developing children's creativity, self-confidence, questioning and critical thinking so that these can be built into the teaching-learning processes.
- o Developing staff and teacher training with greater academic inputs of subject knowledge and pedagogic studies for participants to understand the framework of operation. These could be short-termed intensive courses for supervisory and master trainer staff on issues of subject based pedagogies, curriculum transaction, teaching-learning material and evaluation system.
- o Teachers also need to be exposed to training that encourages them to think on their own, reflect on children's thinking and learning processes and innovate in the classroom. There should be a conscious attempt to shift the focus in teacher-training programmes, from 'teaching' (in defined mechanized ways) to 'learning'. Issues of error analysis in children, assessment of readiness level and pedagogic techniques such as scaffolding that prompt children to build on their own learning and knowledge should become the focus of teacher training programmes. Training programmes should also include opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own strengths and limitations and for personal development.
- o Field supervisors and particularly teacher trainers, need longer experiences in classrooms where teacher behaviour and approach encourages children to initiate and create. It may be useful to identify and develop a group of resource teachers who would serve as regular academic support systems for the school teachers. There should be a pro-active attempt to shift focus from 'training' through refresher courses to regular academic and 'on-the-job support'.
- o Evolving subject-based graded curriculum and teaching-learning materials for classes III, IV and V.

FOLLOW UP

This section reports some of the key areas of interest that emerged as possible areas of collaboration amongst the participating organisations.

Areas of interest expressed by BRAC and GSS participants:

- o Understanding how motivation and a sense of commitment in teachers and other personnel is sustained;
- o Understanding the technique of school mapping and micro-planning and its efficacy for community involvement;
- o Understanding how to develop competency levels for different age groups;
- o Evolving developmentally appropriate curriculum materials in mathematics;
- o Evolving training strategies to foster the personal development of teachers;
- o Exploring strategies of sustaining innovations in the formal primary school system;

Areas of interest expressed by Lok Jumbish participants:

- o Understanding systems of planning and implementation at all levels;
- o Examining strategies of teacher selection in large numbers;
- o Identifying strategies that could help improve the quality of classrooms, such as classroom organisation, teacher training inputs, systems of supervision, pedagogic techniques and multi-grade teaching;
- o Understanding language curriculum development and pedagogy;
- o Understanding the relationship between income generation and rural development activities with the education programme.

Mr. Mahmood Hasan emphasized the need to collate experiences of different organizations in the Asian region. Even though these may be culture specific, we could integrate core elements of curriculum development and quality of education in our programmes. It would be useful, for example, to learn how competencies can be developed for different age levels of children; how teachers could be trained on these and relate it effectively to the field.

Mr. Rohit Dhankar stressed on how a continuous dialogue between participating organisations could help define the connections between the concept and practice of quality education. Arriving at a common understanding and vision could help develop a model for primary education in Asia.

Dr. Sharda Jain emphasized the need to refine our understanding of quality education and to evolve from the past. Dr. Jain also highlighted the need for a predictable forum to discuss issues of common concern.

Mr. Lalit Kishore articulated the importance of commissioning studies on institutional planning and developing a continuous and comprehensive evaluation system to assess children's learning.

Mr. Loria focussed on the critical issue of sustainability of education programmes in terms of structure, finances and quality.

Mr. Anil Bordia brought the focus of discussion from subject area to specific modalities. A dialogue between the three participating organisations, he suggested can continue in the form of Field Operational Seminars and workshops. There could also be group visits organised for both countries with the specific aim to focus activities on identified areas of cooperation. The organisations should also be able to share with each other teaching-learning materials and curriculum ideas. The areas of cooperation could be:

- o Education, State and Civil society;
- o School mapping and micro-planning;
- o Systems of learner's evaluation;
- o Language and mathematics curriculum and pedagogy

Dr. Mahmood Hasan suggested the idea of a secretariat that could focus on curriculum development and assessment. Dr. Sharda Jain cautioned against establishing structures before processes are set in motion.

Prof. Jalaluddin mentioned that to begin with there could be a liaison person from each organisation to initiate and focus dialogue on quality education with the aim to achieve children's learning. In his view, it would be dignified to accept that there is the possibility of high rates of failure and that innovations are part of a continuous system of evolution. We, therefore, need to evolve strategies to bridge the gaps between training and classroom practice and diversify our understanding of unfolding children's potential and creativity. Prof. Jalaluddin also emphasized that superstructures must emerge out of the classroom.

The framework evolve in terms of areas of cooperation and modalities is a positive outcome of this Field Operational Seminar. A small group meeting between the participating organisations should now be able to give tangible formulations for future collaboration. Mr. Anil Bordia suggested that the proposed forum could meet once a year, with Prof. Jalaluddin as the fulcrum of this 'secretariat'.

CHAPTER I

FIELD OPERATIONAL SEMINAR

FIELD OPERATIONAL SEMINAR

The Field Operational Seminar (FOS) was popularized by UNESCO during 1960s as a technique of linking field study with an in-house seminar to facilitate medium to large scale experiential learning within the organization. The use of this method of exchange of learning has gradually waned over time. It was nevertheless 'rediscovered' by Mr. Anil Bordia, former Education Secretary, Government of India and founder Chairperson, Lok Jumbish, as an appropriate method for education professionals from various programmes to enrich their skills and capabilities.

During a Conference on UPE in Bangladesh (6-10 August 1996) Mr. Anil Bordia and Prof. A.K. Jalaluddin, International Consultant BRAC and GSS held discussions with Mr. Fazle Hasan Abed, Executive Director, BRAC and Ms. Kaneez Fatima, Director, NFPE, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Dr. Mahmood Hasan, Executive Director, GSS and Ms. Shamse Ara Hasan, Head, Education Programme of Gono Sahajjo Sangstha (GSS) on the potential exchange of ideas and experiences between Lok Jumbish (LJ) and BRAC and GSS. All concerned felt that such an exchange would be useful. The FOS was chosen as the operational method of facilitating this.

Seminar Objectives

The FOS on 'Alternate Modes in Primary Education' was thus jointly organized by Lok Jumbish, Rajasthan in India and the GSS and BRAC in Bangladesh, between the 25th March 1997 to 4th May 1997. The Seminar's main aim was to share the knowledge, ideas and practices of primary education programmes of each of the participating organizations. The specific objectives of the seminar were to:

- o exchange experiences in the provision of alternate modes of primary education;
- o examine issues relating to improved teaching of language and mathematics;
- o improve the understanding of child-centered learning processes;
- o examine feasible measures for engendering self-confidence and self-reliance among learners and teachers;
- o discuss issues in management at the decentralized level; and
- o explore possibilities of continuing cooperation among the participating organizations.

Twenty-two participants of the Lok Jumbish delegation visited Bangladesh between 27th March, to 3rd April 1997, to observe the education programme of BRAC and GSS. Likewise, a delegation of twenty-three participants from Bangladesh, 16 members from GSS and 7 members from BRAC visited Rajasthan between 25th April to 3rd May 1997.

Briefing Session

The FOS began with a briefing session, in which participating organizations discussed at length the vision, goals, objectives and targets of their primary education programmes. This was followed by a focussed discussion on various issues of non-formal education, quality education, child-centered education, teacher development and the management of education.

The opening address was presented by Prof. A.K. Jalaluddin. In his opening address, Prof. Jalaluddin gave a brief report on the development of primary education in Bangladesh and how BRAC and GSS are working in both rural and urban areas in their attempt to educate the deprived children of their country.

Mr. T. Islam, Director, Public Relation of BRAC, presented BRAC's NFPE. Dr. F.R. Mahmood Hasan, Executive Director of GSS, spoke about the programmes of GSS. In his presentation, Dr. Hasan highlighted how GSS works towards building local capacities so that ordinary people are able to participate in local level decision making and the Government is transparent and accountable to the people. Dr. Hasan stressed the fact that the GSS education programme is a quality primary education programme. He explained how receptivity to the concept of quality education has grown of late, within an overall emphasis on universal and compulsory primary education.

Mr. Anil Bordia emphasized how Lok Jumbish is the product of Government thinking in the wake of the New Education Policy (NEP, 1996). Beginning with its major concern of improving the quality of primary education, Lok Jumbish looks upon the question of basic education as a management concern. Its aim is to develop a system that will create people who understand education and not merely 'product delivery'. The strength of Lok Jumbish is its autonomous and NGO character along with the powers delegated to it by the State Government to influence the existing formal system of primary education in the State.

The second session of the seminar focussed on presentations from Mrs. Shamse Ara Hasan, Programme Head on the Education Programme of GSS; Mr. Sandani, Director, Training Division, BRAC on NFPE with brief comments on Alternative Modes of Primary Education by Mrs. Kaneez Fatima, Head, NFPE, BRAC and by Ms. Priyamvada Singh, Director on the Sahaj Shiksha Programme of Lok Jumbish.

General comments on the presentations from different organizations were made by Mr. Manzoor Ahmad, Special Assistant to the Executive Director, UNICEF, New York. He mentioned that although the three organizations are working in different ways, they can help each other in the education process. BRAC, as a very large NGO, has developed systematic methodological approaches. GSS has expanded within a short time and their concept of quality education has important implications for primary education, especially the all-round development of the child and not just literacy. Lok Jumbish offers primary education that can be transferred into a wider context rather than what is occurring at present in GSS and BRAC. Both the Government of India and Rajasthan directly help them, apart from the support they get from other NGOs. This partnership is effective because the Government works together with Lok Jumbish and its supporting partners. The cooperative strength of this partnership is in changing people's perception about education and the education of girls in particular. Prof. Jalaluddin added how the different strengths of each organization can provide learning opportunities.

The content and the discussions that followed these presentations have been integrated within the following sections of this report. Each participating organization has been discussed separately. The text interweaves 'objective' information from various documents that each organization shared with the participants, field observations of the participants and various ideas and views that were exchanged.

Bangladesh Field Visit

The session closed with a briefing on the field visit of the Lok Jumbish delegation to BRAC and GSS field operations in Bangladesh. Four groups visited Monikganj, Saydupur (Rangpur) and Mymensingh areas between 29th March and 1st April, 1997.

On their return from the fields, each group made a presentation of what they observed in the field. The several issues highlighted from group field reports have been integrated into the section on 'pedagogic practices and processes' for each participating organization.

The last two days of the seminar in Bangladesh was spent on small group deliberations on specific issues of concern: management; curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; teacher development and community involvement. Chapter IV of this report highlights these issues along with other concerns that emerged during the Bangladesh visit.

Rajasthan Field Visit

The second phase of the FOS was a field visit of the Bangladesh delegation to Rajasthan between the 25th April to 3rd May 1997. After an initial briefing on the Lok Jumbish operations, the delegates from BRAC and GSS were divided into groups for visits to various field operations. Four groups visited the areas of Udaipur, Bikaner, Kota and Jodhpur. Observations of these groups were then presented and discussed in a two-day meeting before the conclusion of the seminar.

The last day of the seminar was spent in discussing the possible future prospects of collaboration between the participating organizations to further their goal of providing quality primary education to the disadvantaged. This is presented in the last Chapter.

Chapter II presents in some detail the education programmes of each participating organisation. This chapter should be viewed as an outcome of a fact finding approach of the observation teams. The issues discussed subsequently in the group sessions are also reflected.

The observations and presentations recorded in this chapter may be treated as a Candid feedback on the functioning of the three different programmes.

Chapter III outlines the major strengths of each participating organization in relation to their own programme structures and practices, based on the field observations of the respective teams.

Recommendations and Follow-up

A discussion on emerging issues of concern in achieving the goal of quality primary education follows in Chapter IV. In particular, the issue of child-centered vs. child-focussed education has been explored and a tentative framework for discussion and dialogue on this issue has been presented.

There has also been an attempt to articulate the possible recommendations that emerged in the context of deliberations during the field operational seminar. The following section focusses on some of the major policy issues that need to be addressed in the context of the seminar objectives and outcomes. The report concludes with recommendations on future collaboration between the participating organizations.

CHAPTER II
THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT, STRUCTURE
AND PROGRAMME

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT, STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMME

BRAC : BANGLADESH RURAL ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

BRAC was born just a few months later than Bangladesh itself, in February 1972. Begun as a relief agency, it is now a mature development institution employing over 17,000 people, 23% of whom are women. Its programmes are spread over 50,000 out of a total of 86,038 villages in the country.

BRAC's multi-sectoral programmes are designed to achieve the two goals it has set for itself: poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor. Commitment to the two goals has led BRAC to organize to date over 51,000 poor landless groups in rural areas, disbursing to them the sum of Tk. 15 billion (US \$ 375 million) as credit without collateral. Alongside its credit scheme, BRAC imparts skills training to the group members in various income generating activities; addresses their health needs through a number of health care initiatives; and reaches 1.2 million of their children with a non formal education programme.

Believing that it is the poor themselves who are the main initiators of change in their lives, BRAC has adopted the role of a capacity initiator by making the programme participants aware of their own problems; providing them with tools to unite into organized groups, and increasing their capacity to exercise their legal and civic rights.

BRAC PROGRAMMES

The **programmes** currently implemented by **BRAC** are:

1. The Rural Development Programme, RDP (1985)
2. The Rural Credit Project, RCP (1990)
3. The Non-Formal Primary Education Programme, NFPE (1984)
4. Health Interventions (1972)
5. Training Programme (1978)
6. Handicrafts production and marketing through the Ayesha Abed Foundation and the marketing outlet Aarong (1978).

NFPE : Non Formal Primary Education Programme

The Non Formal Primary Education Programme (NFPE) is BRAC's response to the problem of illiteracy in Bangladesh where only one third of the population is literate. Over 70% of BRAC school students are girls and over 95% of the teachers are women.

Simple thatched BRAC schools accommodate a maximum of 33 students each. Here, the students receive basic education, enabling them to read, write, do simple mathematics and acquire relevant life skills. Text books, slate, papers and pencils are provided free by the schools. Lessons are learnt through activities. More than 50% of the BRAC school graduates are able to move on to the formal primary schools in classes IV or V. The average cost in a BRAC school is about US \$ 20 per child per year, which makes it one of the lowest cost schooling in the world. The BRAC model of primary education is also being replicated in the eastern and southern African countries.

BRAC expects that by the year 2000, more than two million children will have completed three years of BRAC's primary education and transition on to the state run schools.

BRAC schools are not intended to operate as permanent institutions but rather to address a single cohort of students who enroll during the same school year and move together through the three years of schooling. Once that cohort completes the three-year cycle, the school ceases to exist unless there are at least 30 eligible children in the community whose families are interested in enrolling them in an NFPE programme.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of the BRAC NFPE programme are to :

- o provide education to the landless or small landholders. The BRAC schools are targeted to bring into the fold of primary education, children from landless families. Hence, it is a specifically targeted education programme.
- o mobilize community participation. The programme begins with interaction with the community through which the demand for primary schooling is established and the role of the community in making space available and maintaining the school is worked out.
- o develop para-professional teachers within the community. The programme selects teachers who are IX class pass and trains them over short periods with regular supervisory inputs and refresher courses.
- o help the Government achieve Education For All by 2000. The NFPE programme aims to provide support for the Government's efforts towards universalization of primary education.

STRATEGIES

The major strategies adopted in the NFPE Programme are the following:

- o The one room school is identified, provided and maintained by the community with support from BRAC. Initial financial assistance may be provided by BRAC for repair, after which BRAC pays rent for maintenance and benefit to the community.
- o 70% of the targeted population is girls. This is part of the BRAC's programme strategy to achieve gender equity.
- o Each of the BRAC schools maintain a teacher-child ratio of 1:33. At no cost does this change, either in terms of community demand for more schools or in terms of high drop-out or failure rates.
- o Married women are selected through a rigorous procedure to be teachers in BRAC schools. 95% of their teachers are women.
- o The BRAC schools do not close down for a long vacation. The schools function for six-days a week, for 270 days a year.
- o Focus on specific subject teaching. These include Bangla, mathematics, social studies, environmental studies and religion.
- o The schools do not have any annual examinations but follow a system of comprehensive continuous evaluation. The evaluation is done by the teachers with support from supervisors.
- o The programme provides individualized attention to all children using a whole class approach along with group activity.
- o The NFPE curriculum is designed to develop basic life-skills in children. The curriculum does not at the moment cater to preparing children for secondary and higher education.
- o The schools provide all learning materials and do not charge a fee.
- o BRAC organizes an intense teacher training programme followed up by teacher support through refresher courses and regular supervision.

PROGRAMME FEATURES

BRAC's NFPE programme consists of the same elements included in most formal school programmes: students, teachers, parents, schedule, instructional site, classroom environment, curriculum and instructional materials. NFPE's treatment of these elements, however, is somewhat unique. The NFPE programme is distinct in terms of the following features:

- o The target group is children of two age levels : 8-10 years and 11-14 years.
- o Each BRAC school for the first age level, functions for a period of three years and a period of two years for the second age level.

- o The BRAC children have either never enrolled in a school or are drop-outs of the school system.
- o Each BRAC school has one teacher to look after 33 children.
- o The same teacher completes the three-year cycle of the school.

CRITERIA FOR LOCATING A SCHOOL

The BRAC criteria for locating a school follows distinct principles :

- o a prospective village is visited to identify the number of eligible students. Availability of qualified teachers in the same area is another important factor. Subsequently, surveys are conducted in different areas to assess the parental demand for schools. Finally, proximity of new schools or the feasibility of forming a cluster of schools comes into consideration.
- o every year BRAC sets goals for the number of new schools to be opened, usually in the rural areas. BRAC will enter an area only if it can establish schools in a cluster of at least 40 villages which are not stretched out too far.
- o educating the community about the NFPE programme is the next step.
- o the list of children identified is checked with other local Government schools to make sure that no student is already enrolled in these schools and to ascertain that these children have dropped out. This ensures that the BRAC schools are complementing the Government's education programme rather than competing with it.
- o the local land owners help to choose a school site and provide the room.

THE BRAC SCHOOL

The BRAC School consists of a single room with the following features: the size of the class room is 24 x 15 x 8 ft. It has a minimum infrastructure of a blackboard, storage space and a book rack. The room has a mat flooring with adequate lighting, one window and one door. The school is easily accessible to all the children attending it. The school functions for two and a half hours per day for 270 days a year. The school is held six days a week. The school hours are decided by the community as per the availability of children and may be changed according to the parents need for their children's labour through the agricultural year. This flexibility, however, is to be consistent over a period of a month. A BRAC school may also be used for two-shifts, depending upon the demand in the community. Some schools have also been used to run Union Libraries for adolescent programmes of BRAC.

The children of BRAC schools are selected from families that are either landless or are small landholders with less than 1.5 bighas of land including its homestead. More than 50% of BRAC children pass out the three year cycle to join formal primary schools. The drop-out rate is as low as 10%. Homework requires less than 20 minutes per day for BRAC students and is designed to be completed without assistance from a literate person. The BRAC school schedule allows for a short vacation, which is determined jointly by parents and teachers.

Students sit on woven mats on a packed mud floor in a "U" shape, with a blackboard and teaching aids in the front of the classroom. Neither the teacher nor the students have desks, and students do not usually wear uniforms, but are expected to be clean. All books and stationery are supplied by BRAC.

Typically, the teacher follows a whole-class approach interspersed with small group activities. Every activity is initiated, directed and controlled by the teacher in a systematic and regulated manner. The classroom has a display of children's work and other art and craft activities done by them. Also on display are the wall magazine outputs of children. A storage trunk is effectively used by the teacher to preserve children's work for the wall magazine and their regular evaluation records.

The Learning Environment

The 33 students that comprise a BRAC school move through three years of course work as a single group. One teacher leads the group.

Although BRAC materials stress a child-focussed philosophy of learning, the classrooms observed were relatively traditional. For each lesson, the teacher would give brief instruction on the board, asked if everyone understood, and then assigned problems or work. The teacher then evaluated each student individually. Instruction in the core subjects was broken up with co-curricular activities, sometimes for as little as five minutes between subjects.

Children's attendance is taken every day and a record of late comers is kept. It is one of the specific goals of the NFPE programme is to involve the community in maintaining regular attendance of children. Children are also instructed and encouraged to be systematic, clean and neatly dressed. The community support is sought in this. Each child in a classroom is seen with a set of books, slate, bundle of sticks and a bottle of water to wipe slates. All this they carry by hand. BRAC does not provide them with school bags.

The teacher has a personal relationship with the children. Teachers follow a daily lesson plan to teach. They do not physically punish children or reprimand them for making errors. They encourage children to correct each other and learn from each other. Story books as supplementary materials are provided for classes I, II and III. For the first year, children are given language and mathematics materials to work with such as flash cards and sticks.

The BRAC Teachers

Teachers are selected by BRAC field staff from men and women who live in the school catchment area and have a minimum of nine years of schooling. Consistent with BRAC's organization-wide emphasis on increasing women's employment opportunities, preference is given to women. The staff look for individuals who are articulate, committed and married. This last characteristic is particularly important because in the Bangladesh context, the women with the level of education required by BRAC will not remain unmarried long. BRAC follows a rigorous procedure to select its teachers through a written test and interview. Each BRAC teacher undergoes training of 15 days to become a para-teacher. Teachers also have to go through a three-day orientation before starting a school and a six-day refresher training in the second and third year. One-day monthly refresher courses are organized for all teachers. BRAC pays its teachers an honorarium of 500 Tk per month. A significant strategy is to have a BRAC teacher see a school through a full cycle of three years.

The BRAC Community

Substantial parent involvement is a major feature of BRAC schools. At least two meetings are held with the parents of prospective students before the BRAC schools open. During these meetings, the parents assist in selecting the teacher and setting the school schedule. In addition, parents may help BRAC locate, renovate, and lease an appropriate school room.

The most frequently discussed topic in the BRAC parent-teacher meetings is the parents' responsibility to send their children to school regularly neatly dressed.

Each school has a school management committee made up of three parents, a community leader and a teacher who together are responsible for the smooth running of the school. The school committee and the other parents help, maintain and protect the school, sets school time and vacation and ensure children's regular attendance.

Teacher Training

Teacher training in the NFPE programme involves several components. Basic teacher training includes a residential course of 15 days at one of BRAC's regional training centres, where new teachers receive practical training in student-centered learning. Teachers also go through a three day orientation before starting a school and a six-day refresher training in the second and third year. NFPE programme teachers attend a one-day refresher training each month at the BRAC office nearest to their community. This refresher training provides a place for the teachers to discuss their current problems, role play and give and receive feedback from BRAC staff and other teachers working in the same area. BRAC supervisory staff visit the teachers at their schools at least twice a month to provide additional on-the-job teacher support.

A teacher training manual is the guiding document for the 15-day residential course. This manual emphasizes active student participation in the classroom and student-centred learning. The rest of the manual uses child psychology as the foundation for child-focussed, less authoritarian classroom practices. For example, the first section of the manual describes children's needs for affection, their limited attention spans, and their different learning speeds. This manual exhorts teachers to apply this understanding in the classroom.

The second section of the teacher training manual describes both child-focussed and teacher-centered approaches. For each category, several methods are suggested and teachers are cautioned about the importance of using the correct method. Suggested child-focussed approaches include the activity method, the kindergarten method, and the question-answer method. Teacher-centered approaches include the lecture method, the demonstration method, the recitation method, and the discussion method. Each method and approach is discussed briefly, but without sufficient detail to enable teachers to actually implement the method.

In the final section of the manual, teachers are taught to prepare lesson plans, and the details are very precise. Several sample lessons are provided as models.

Teacher Supervision

BRAC supplements its relatively brief basic teacher training course with close supervision at the field level. Teachers are required to prepare daily lesson plans. BRAC supervisory staff visit each school at least once per week to review plans, observe the classroom instruction, and monitor

student attendance. BRAC has one programme officer (PO) for every 15 schools. The community along with the PO ensure that the teacher attends school regularly. Building and maintaining a close relationship with parents is thus a core component of the BRAC teacher training programme.

The BRAC Curriculum

The curriculum originally covered three subjects : Bangla, math and social studies. By 1987, it was clear that many of the NFPE programme graduates planned to continue in the Government schools, and the BRAC curriculum was modified to incorporate English, a required subject in the Government schools.

The current BRAC curriculum spans Classes I through III and includes Bangla, mathematics, social studies and English with an emphasis on the practical health and social issues that are likely to be encountered by a typical BRAC student. Class time is allocated in the following segments: Bangla (25 minutes reading and 25 minutes writing); mathematics (35 minutes); social studies (25 minutes) and two 20-minute co-curricular activities, which include physical exercise, field trips, singing and dancing. English is added to the schedule in Class III.

The materials in the BRAC NFPE program can best be described as traditional. They resemble the reading primers and basic arithmetic books that have been used for decades throughout much of the world. For example, they begin with simple words for recognition and move to increasingly complex language; they begin with pictures of objects, have students count the objects and then move to increasingly complex and abstract mathematical operations.

The materials are carefully sequenced, segmented into short, discrete lessons and attractively printed in small, non-threatening booklets (as opposed to larger books that can overwhelm young learners). There is one reading primer for the eight-week preparatory phase (this phase is only two weeks for older student), one reading booklet and one math booklet for each of the three primary grades, and one social studies booklet for each of grades two and three. Concrete examples from everyday life are used throughout the booklets, especially in the social studies materials, where students are exposed to the critical development topics cited above.

These materials support traditional, didactic teaching - control, direction, predictability - and they rely on, and in some ways even encourage rote learning through repetition, recognition, recall and recitation.

BRAC's instructional materials do not support activity-based or child-focussed approach to learning articulated in teacher training materials. It is also questionable whether the materials would further the BRAC goal of empowering students.

The approach used in the BRAC language primer is a time proven way to teach students "sight words". Students develop a sight-word vocabulary but this method does not directly help students construct meaning or gain mastery over language, an important foundation for supporting lifelong literacy. This is because the method of dealing with the written material is essentially the same rote-recall approach.

The same methodology is present in the mathematics and social studies booklets, where learning is deductive, the examples are given and not elicited, the exercises are routine, and the answers are fixed and lie outside the world of the learner in either the text or the teacher's head.

Essentially, the curriculum materials lend themselves to learning through repetition, recognition, recall and rote.

The BRAC Pedagogic Practices and Processes

The pedagogic approach followed in a BRAC school is essentially built on the BRAC curriculum and instructional materials. It is believed that the BRAC method is field tested, and hence does not require modifications when practiced in the classroom. In case a teacher introduces a new technique of teaching a specific concept, say in maths and this is approved by the programme organizers and Area Managers, it may be disseminated for use in all BRAC schools through a process of centralized management. The key feature of all BRAC schools is its emphasis on uniform pedagogic practices.

Following a whole-class approach, all children are expected to learn at the same pace. While the curriculum content for each year is clearly defined for all schools, variation in each school over the year is both expected and permitted as a strategy to achieve required targets of children's learning. All pedagogic practice is geared towards achieving targets of children's learning.

Assessment

BRAC follows a system of continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Each child is evaluated on each subject for five times over one year. For each evaluation, the curriculum content is predefined. For example, for the first evaluation, children are tested on Chapters 1-5 in a given subject. Questions may be repeated in the next evaluation if they require special focus. Teachers conduct all evaluation. This is supplemented by an external evaluation conducted by the supervisor. A systematic record of each evaluation is kept by the teacher.

BRAC has also institutionalized the system of grading schools on the basis of the attendance record of children and their academic performance. Schools with lower grades are given extra supervisory support along with flexibility in transacting the year's curriculum.

The Non-Negotiables

Each child is provided with the necessary materials : textbooks, exercise books, pencils, slates, water bottles, a bundle of sticks and flash cards, etc. Children are expected to take care of these materials and bring them to school each day. The teacher-child ratio does not deviate significantly from the 1:33 targeted ratio. Children's attendance is meticulously monitored by the teacher and community and like wise the teacher's presence in school is ensured. The system of supervision by Programme Organizers, Programme assistants and Area Managers enables accountability of teachers and retention and learning in the classroom. A systematic documentation from the inception of a school to the completion of its two or three year life-cycle is well maintained.

A Typical BRAC School Day

The two and a half hours of the school day is spent constructively and in a planned manner. The BRAC teacher enters the classroom with a preworked lesson plan for the entire day, including lessons in language, mathematics and social studies. The daily lesson plan comprises of the stated objectives, the materials required, the lessons to focus on and defined demonstration techniques. Supplementary materials such as story books are used in the II and III year and flash cards etc. are used in the I year.

The daily instructional schedule follows meticulously planned practices as well. These include the drawing of margins by the children, drawing horizontal lines for writing activities and writing the date, their name etc. in defined spaces. Children are trained to be conscious of detail, each day.

Most subject-based and curricular activity in the classroom is conducted with the whole class. Occasionally, children are divided into small groups to work on the wall magazine. Group activity is more visible during the preparatory (2 months) period of year I.

Language Teaching in BRAC Schools

Language teaching in BRAC schools follow traditional practices of demonstration of lessons, reading aloud, writing from textbooks and answering specific questions on given lessons. In addition, children are also provided space and time to do creative writing in groups. Each child is asked to draw what they feel like and write a few sentences about her drawing. While I year children are encouraged to only draw, II year children do both, III year children are expected to only write their thoughts. Each group work called the wall magazine - is put on display for the week. Started as a creative idea, the wall magazine also seems to have degenerated into a routinized ritual that must be done.

Beginning in the I year in the preparatory phase of two months, language teaching is done using a given set of 32 words of the BRAC curriculum. Using the sight-word method, children are encouraged to recognize words with the help of pictures. Ten sets of cards are distributed amongst five groups of children. Children match pictures with words. This group activity is conducted only after the teacher has demonstrated this exercise of matching on the blackboard or with the cards, for the whole class.

The sight-word method was originally designed by educationists to build upon children's natural tendencies to construct meaning and to recognize patterns. It is interesting to observe how a method designed to elicit appropriate learning strategies amongst children is reduced to an instructional technique. Children may develop a sight-word vocabulary but the method as it is practised, may not directly help children to construct meaning or gain mastery over language. Given the focus on basic skills, it is nevertheless appropriate. Language teaching also focusses on word sound, its form, pronunciation and lastly its meaning. Children are encouraged to make words using letters and make sentences using words. Following traditional practice, the teacher focusses on difficult and new words in a lesson (as indicated in the textbook). One child is asked to read while others follow or read along with the teacher. Children were seen putting a finger on each word as they read along.

In accordance with their lesson plans, teachers target each child's capacity to read a specific chapter in the textbook. The teacher is trained to focus on the page number that a child can read in a given text, as a diagnostic/evaluative measure. Individual children are also given due

attention while reading. The practice essentially focusses on decoding rather than reading for meaning. Therefore, some of the common problems that teachers discussed during the refresher course were : how to make children comprehend meaning? How to do questions and answers? How to make several sentences using one word?

Reading was thus observed to be treated as a mechanical decoding activity rather than an organic activity of constructing meaning. The method of dealing with written material is essentially the same rote-recall approach.

This pedagogic practice inevitably leads to poor writing skills as well. Teachers also expressed their concern about children not being able to write grammatically correct sentences. Activities such as the wall magazine or where children write their favourite words become ends in themselves. Due to the whole class, traditional approach of focussing on 'teaching' rather than 'learning', the full potential of such activities is not actualized.

The questions that follow the text or stories ask children to either recall facts, repeat phrases, chose the right answer, make sentences from given words or fill in the blanks. None of the readers pose questions that are open-ended and allow children to make personal discoveries. All answers are predetermined.

The BRAC teachers do teaching using an organized and systematized method in which they are trained. Thus, they often fail to understand why children cannot write correctly, when they can read (in effect 'decode') correctly or why children make errors while placing individual letters to make a word or misplace words while constructing sentences. Monthly refresher sessions are often used to develop skills of 'how to make questions' or 'how to make different sentences using one word'. Thus teachers learn through demonstration and not necessarily through their own reflection or creation. The basic BRAC principle of systematic demonstrative teaching is thereby transferred from teacher training institutes to the classrooms. The principle rests on the assumption that the learning and achievement of children is a matter of teaching technique and not a matter of construction of meaning by the child.

Although the BRAC teacher is easy with the children, there is little scope for any teacher-child interaction that has real pedagogic value. Within the traditional pedagogic framework, however, the BRAC teachers are extremely effective. Children's achievement levels show tremendous gains. The real question, however, is how creative are these children? How self-reliant do they grow to be? Is the learning sustainable or is it likely to atrophy due to disuse?

Mathematics Teaching in BRAC Schools

The pedagogic approach in mathematics is likewise predetermined and dictated by the formal adult-centered method.

Children are encouraged to write and read numerals up to hundred. An emphasis on counting objects is there but each activity of counting sticks and adding or subtracting using sticks becomes as an end in itself, a preparation for achieving formal mathematics. The focus is on using algorithms to perform basic arithmetical operations. For example, even in teaching 'place value', the focus is on the correct recall of positions such as tens, units or hundreds and following the algorithm in dealing with these. Mathematics curriculum emphasizes only number and number operations. Learning is deductive, the examples are given and not elicited. The exercises are routine and the answers are fixed and lie outside the world of the learner.

Children learn multiplication tables by rote and are given practice in all the formal methods of number operations such as sequencing, adding and subtracting with 2, 3 and even 6 digit numbers. Homework usually repeats what children do in class. BRAC supervisors and teachers are actually aware of the problems children face in learning mathematical operations. Compared to language and social studies, children's achievement levels in mathematics are relatively low. Ten evaluations of children's performance in mathematics are undertaken by teachers, over the year. Teachers often feel at a loss while explaining abstract concepts such as place value to children. While BRAC management places these problems within the perspective of the teachers' lack of subject-knowledge, the BRAC curriculum and instructional materials also merit scrutiny in this regard.

GSS : GONOSHAHAJJO SANGSTHA

Gonoshahajjo Sangstha (GSS) was founded in 1983 by a group of radical activists unhappy with the state of helplessness of the rural poor, particularly women. It devoted itself to institution - building for the poor so they could claim their rights from the State and market system with effective gender and class representation in local decision-making. The first five years of its operation, reinforced the GSS belief that the cause of the rural poor could best be served through institution-building. It was this conviction that led GSS first to use the vehicle of Adult Literacy Schools as the stimuli for group formation among the rural poor.

From its inception, GSS unlike most NGOs, worked mainly on the demand side - pushing ahead poor people's capacity to make effective demands from the State and the market rather than spoon-feeding them.

To GSS, empowerment is one's capacity to make and enforce decisions which allows one to decide his or her present and future circumstances. In Bangladesh, the state, government and the market appropriate most decision making processes. As poverty, dependence and deprivation often result from decisions beyond an individual's control, their resolution lies in her or his participation in institutional decision making.

The purpose of the programmes of GSS is the reallocation of local level resources and power through effective gender and class representation. The programmes and their activities are designed to complement and supplement each other and finally to 'mainstream' its purpose and to contribute to the overall GSS goal.

GSS PROGRAMMES

In order to achieve its goal of empowerment, GSS programme operations have been grouped under four divisions for management purposes. Each has several components as shown below:

- I. Social Mobilization and Development Programme (SMDP): Social mobilization; legal aid and legal education; popular theatre and education; primary health education; forestry and fishery projects and credit programme.
- ii. Education Programme (PEP): Primary education; adolescent education; adult education; continued education and education advocacy.
- iii. Advocacy Programme (AP): Information, research and documentation; advocacy education and capacity building; democratic institution building; public interest advocacy;

legal and cultural advocacy; advocacy through media and policy dialogue and policy alternatives.

- iv. Support Services : Training Division (TD); Research, monitoring and evaluation unit (RMEU); Material development unit (MDU); Construction and engineering unit (C&U); The Advocacy Trust and Central administration.

Programme Coverage

Currently, GSS operates from six widely dispersed regional centres based in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Syedpur, Punchogar, Kushtia, Bagerhat and Khulna. These centres coordinate its programmes with its social mobilization, developmental work, quality primary education and advocacy campaigns targeted at ensuring accountability of local level municipalities to broader civil society. The areas of GSS operations were selected on the basis of poverty, low literacy and deprivation. SMDP programmes are now spread over in some 150 Unions in 11 districts, the Education Programme in 19 districts, Advocacy in 17 districts and Legal Aid over 40 districts.

GSS PEP : PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME

GSS runs a comprehensive education programme for children of all ages from pre-school to class five primarily from disadvantaged families. Half of these children are girls. Those between the age of 4 and 10 attend structured primary schools while those between 11 and 15, who are mainly drop-outs, attend the non-formal Adolescent Learning Centres, which run a three year course.

GSS is currently engaged in setting up and running primary schools, where for the first time, quality education is given the highest emphasis. GSS schools are different from other NGO schools because unlike others, GSS builds spacious three-room schools, follows government curriculum (supplemented by additional curriculum and materials), uses government primers and runs 5 classes (I to V) for 6-10 age group. They work in two to three shifts depending on the number of non-school going children in the community. In addition, GSS meticulously follows government guidelines on distance between schools while constructing schools.

Most Rural Primary Schools are set up in low literacy zones of the existing SMDP operated areas. By doing so, GSS is not only creating an infrastructure for sustainable literacy but also complements the Government and other NGOs working in the field of Primary Education.

The long term sustainability of GSS schools is envisaged in the Government eventually taking over their operational cost in local communities. GSS builds spacious schools with three classrooms made with bricks and mortar on where GSS social mobilization activities often cause an attitudinal change. All these schools are constructed on land donated by the local people.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of the GSS education programme are:

- o to introduce the concept of Quality Education in Bangladesh and to get it accepted by the mainstream government primary education system. A breakthrough in primary education can be best achieved through the development of a proven model in child-centred active-learning pedagogy practiced by GSS and by taking it to scale. Thus, GSS aims to create an alternative school system.
- o GSS also aims at increasing the sustainable literacy rate by 30% among the poor people in its own working area. The purpose of this initiative is to provide beneficiaries increased access to educational resources along with increased educational standards. Thus, the GSS objective creates a distinction between literacy and education, with quality focus on the latter.
- o GSS education programme also aims to ensure the optimum use of resources, time and children's creative energy. It aims at achieving sustainability of learning skills and competencies.

STRATEGIES

The major strategies adopted by the GSS education programme are the following:

- o to develop broad fields of indicators of quality education. These include the learner, the teacher, classroom organization, curriculum and instructional materials and organizational climate. These are discussed in detail in the following sections.
- o Basic qualification of the GSS teacher is SSC for rural teachers and graduation for urban teachers. This distinction is important in the context of the need for subject based knowledge for effective teaching in classes III, IV and V.
- o GSS assessment parameters of children include a comprehensive and continuous evaluation system. The programme has a well planned and constructive supervisory system to ensure accountability of teachers and effective teaching.
- o Apart from running its own schools, the GSS also works within the Government school system. It runs selected government schools using its own pedagogic and teacher training puts.
- o GSS education programme covers all five years of primary schooling, and also includes pre-school children. The GSS child focussed perspective regards the pre-school age as a critical period for later development.

GSS QUALITY EDUCATION : CRUCIAL INDICATORS

The GSS quality education concept means the creation of a problem solving, independent thinking and learning environment, designed to help children raise questions and be creative. It means active learning, maximum individual student-teacher learning time, developmentally appropriate learning materials and relevant skill based curriculum. It also means clean, well-lit schools, a 30 student class size and clearly time tabled lesson plans for each child. The broad fields identified as indicators of quality education by GSS are:

The Learner : Within the GSS perspective of quality education, each learner must become an independent reader and creative writer. Such a child would form a habit for reading, develop mathematical thinking and reasoning, acquire scientific and social skills and a positive attitude towards learning.

The Teacher : A good teacher would mean the one who has a positive attitude towards children and education, belongs to the community, is effective on the job, has subject-based knowledge, is a woman of reasonably young age and is given a reasonably good salary.

Classroom Organization : The GSS classroom comprises of no more than 30 children with one teacher. It is a caring and active learning environment and promotes positive teacher-child interaction. Classroom organization also means the efficient use of lesson time through group and individual teaching. It offers a wide variety of need-based support materials which are enjoyable, relevant, familiar and have a graded vocabulary. Management of the classroom is an essential part of classroom organization. This includes the organization of three learning groups: language, mathematics and creative writing and five purposeful activity corners; maths, games, language materials, reading and home corner.

Curriculum and Instructional Materials: Both curriculum and instructional materials are learner-centred and interactive in nature, thus offering possibilities of experiential learning. The materials are socially and environmentally relevant, need based and integrate an inter-disciplinary approach. This also means an integration of co-curricular activities. Instructional materials are age and level appropriate, graded, diversified, durable, cost-effective and offer a variety of usage.

Organizational Climate: Within the GSS perspective, organizational climate is perceived as an important indicator of quality education in terms of :

- a. **Institutional management :** This includes policy and programme support for innovation in physical infrastructure, instructional materials, teacher and school supervisory development and assessment.
- b. **Technical support system :** This includes the core group of research and development, strengthening of on-the-job training, in-house research for enrichment of the national curriculum, professional team for production and dissemination for learners and teachers, staff development for improved communication in English, strengthening of quality management, action research and professional research support for assessing learner performance and impact of the programme.
- c. **Organizational and Programme Management :** This includes the enhanced academic role of the supervisory system (one supervisor to nine teachers), linking academic supervision with on-the-job training, strengthening of instructional support materials and distribution and wider community participation.

The practice of quality education includes the pedagogy adopted in a GSS school. The indicators are: child centred teaching, an active learning environment, group teaching, the use of a large number of meaningful and relevant support materials, graded vocabulary, efficient and optimum use of lesson time, continuous and comprehensive evaluation of children's learning, creative writing practice and an environment for self-expression.

GSS PEP PROGRAMME FEATURES

The GSS Education (PEP) programme has the following chief characteristics:

- o The target group includes children from pre-school age to 10 years who are to complete a five year cycle of primary schooling. The children belong to low literacy zones of the existing SMDP operated areas of the GSS.
- o GSS employs five teachers to attend to five primary classes. Thus, the teacher-child ratio is maintained at 1:30.
- o GSS builds three-room spacious schools on land often donated by communities and work in two or three shifts, depending on the number of non-school going children in the community.
- o GSS follows the government curriculum, supplemented by additional curriculum and materials developed by the organization.

The GSS School

There are two kinds of schools operated by the GSS: schools constructed and run by the organization itself and those adopted from the Government school system.

GSS schools run in two to three shifts. Classes I and II typically are organized in the morning shift and classes III, IV and V in the evening shift. Each school runs for 225 days a year, for two and a half hours for classes I and II and three hours for classes III, IV and V. The pre-school section also runs for two and a half hours usually along with classes I & II.

The GSS Children

Since the selection of a school is based on its location within a low literacy zone, the GSS children may not necessarily be from very low socio-economic strata. They do, however, largely belong to deprived communities, and the school takes upon itself the task of compensating for deficiencies in their development.

GSS offers five years of primary schooling to children of pre-school age to 10 years. Following an activity based and group teaching approach, all GSS classrooms (I-V) have children of mixed ability. Children are given the opportunity to learn at their own pace under the able guidance and facilitation of the teacher.

The average attendance rate at primary levels, both rural and urban schools is over 80%, while that of adolescents is slightly below 80%. Low drop-out rates in GSS schools can be attributed to their permanent infrastructure, attractive educational material, interesting recreational

programme, inter-active child-focussed teaching methods, and a sense of belonging of the people living in the community.

The GSS Teachers

The GSS teacher is a carefully selected person with basic qualification of either SSC or graduation. It is believed that this qualification determines the ability of the teacher to internalize the GSS philosophy and approach of education through training. The teacher may or may not belong to the community for which the school is started.

Each teacher undergoes 18 days of residential training, including five hours of teaching practice and two hours of discussion. This means that teachers are brought in contact with classroom realities during training. Regular supervision provides on-the-job training support. In addition, the GSS teacher attends monthly refreshers and a three-day annual workshops.

The GSS Classroom

The GSS classroom is organized to conduct group activity and promote self-learning. It has three work tables and five corners. The three tables are for language, maths and creative writing. The five corners offer purposeful activity in maths, games, reading, language and home role play.

Classroom organization and management is designed to make the child-centred process of learning possible. Each moment of the two and a half hours to three hours school day, is time-tabled for the child and the teacher. Following the initial thirty minute of whole group activity (story-time), the child rotates through different group tables (Bangla comprehension, creative writing and mathematics tables) and activity corners/spaces (Home/Play, Maths, and Language corners, reading space and Play area out in the verandah) working through the developmentally appropriate tasks and exercises. The teacher spends most of her time in small groups or in one-to one exchanges interacting with groups, assessing an individual child's work or directing activity. The teacher's assessment role is a key part of the learning environment. It helps gauge the child's progress through each stage of the core curriculum.

The GSS Curriculum

In the GSS PEP, the curriculum content and design are seen as an integral part of management and classroom organization.

The programme follows the government curriculum, but this is complemented by an additional curriculum and a large number of supplementary reading materials to facilitate children's early comprehension and creativity.

Curriculum development is an on-going process within GSS schools. This covers a comprehensive range of activities aimed at the acquisition of skills and competencies at various levels. The process of curriculum development involves fixing levels of competencies and skills to be acquired for each age-group in different subjects; development of core and support materials and activities for both learners and teachers to help acquisition of stated competencies and skills; setting quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure competencies and skills, determination of assessment criteria and parameters of children's achievement.

GSS schools lay emphasis on learning achievement. Individual learning achievement is monitored daily and fortnightly by teachers and quarterly by supervisors. Large number of support materials are developed by GSS to enable the children to reach the target competency level at each stage. These and the teaching methodology are designed to constantly improve the quality of education that leads to improvement in attendance, drop-out, repetition, retention and acquisition of skills. Although the GSS education programme has expanded rapidly over the past two years, quality measured in terms of acquisition of children's learning skills has improved. The biggest challenge to GSS is whether GSS would be able to take the programme to scale without compromising quality.

The GSS Learning Environment

GSS children typically work individually or in groups. They move from table to table or to a corner of their interest. The teacher has a personal relationship with each child. She moves around, keeps track of individual children on tasks of reading, writing, project work, mathematics and creative writing. Each activity is time bound and children are expected to move to another activity after completing it. Children are spread over the classroom, some in groups of 4 and 5, some at their own level.

Some children in groups and other individually read from where they left off the day before; others write answers to comprehension questions provided on sets of cards, still others draw pictures and write about them; two or three may be building sentences with given materials while few others may be solving mathematical problems, given on cards. The teacher is often buried in a group of children, listening to individuals read in order to record their progress in the reading record book. They are encouraged to learn from each other. There is no need to copy because they are not at the same place in their learning and they are not competing with each other for a common right answer.

GSS TEACHER TRAINING

Teachers training is designed in two packages. First, introduction to concepts and theories of learning, classroom organization, group and individual learning, reading as a purposeful activity, creative writing, mathematics as an applied subject, life skills and science projects and the use of learning and instructional materials through a series of tasks and activities. Second, when the teacher has acquired the essential skills and is naturally being creative, to strengthen subject-based knowledge of the teachers especially for teaching of classes III, IV and V. At this stage, focus is also on improving the art of teaching subject content by introducing a wide range of learning materials.

Every new recruit in the Education Programme must go through a Basic Teachers Training course. A series of follow up training sessions and workshops are arranged on a regular basis at the cluster (Thana) level for teachers and supervisors. Foreign training and training in institutions outside GSS are also arranged for them. Staff recruitment and training is planned well ahead of the construction and furnishing of schools.

The Teachers Training Programme focusses on the school curriculum in each subject. Teachers are familiarized with school books and the concept and planning of work by a teacher in school. Teachers usually observe school functioning and share classroom observations. Thereafter, they are exposed to different techniques of teaching through demonstrations and role play.



Separate sessions on classroom organization and teaching practice in small groups equip them with the necessary skills to manage activity-based teaching-learning. Each of the major inputs during a typical school day is focussed upon. This includes the concept and skill of story telling, reading, creative writing, mathematics project work and co-curricular activity.

Teachers are also familiarized with procedures of assessing children's learning and detailed lesson plan preparation. In addition, there are discussions on the school environment, teaching environment, teacher-parent relationship, teacher-student relationship, teacher-teacher relationship and relationship with the community.

However, it is the on-the-job training in the training schools which allows the trainee (teacher/supervisor) to see for herself/himself what it means to be in a classroom and follow the series of tasks and activities in a real situation. This helps the teacher reproduce the classroom in her own village school. Every new teacher is supported on-the-job, by a supervisor who works with her in the classroom for a period of six months, at which time she has acquired the essential skills of creative teaching.

Teacher Supervision

GSS school supervisors follow an intensive training programme of one month. All aspects dealt with in the teacher training programme are also covered in the supervisors training. There is, however, a stronger focus on subject knowledge at each of the levels such as mathematics and science activities. Supervisors are expected to develop all the skills and understanding that is required of an effective school teacher. Thus, a GSS supervisor plays an extremely constructive academic role and provides an on-line teacher support and development.

Pedagogic Practices and Processes

With little emphasis on the whole class teaching approach, the GSS classroom pedagogy is geared towards individual children. By virtue of the fact that small groups of children are busy with individual work in language or mathematics or creative writing, the pedagogic practice that unfolds allows children to work at their own pace. Children of different ability levels have the freedom to develop at their own pace without the pressure of conforming to a class average.

Thus, in the teachers observation and evaluative records, all children may not be at the same page of reading in a textbook. They also have the freedom to move back and forth some elementary language activities that may enable them to read independently.

The curriculum and instructional materials provided in the form of books, language and maths cards also create the necessary prerequisites for a child-centered pedagogy : one which allows children to focus on learning materials appropriate to their level of development and one which allows children to become independent learners.

Vocabulary used in the reading books is well-graded, the materials are relevant and attractive, also diversified to give enough repetitive but interesting experiences of learning.

Children also have the opportunity to express themselves through creative writing activity and project work. Individual uniqueness and styles of learning are also given importance and respected.

GSS Language Teaching

Language learning in GSS schools is encouraged through a diverse set of activities. These include story telling, alphabet games, creative writing, building words and sentences, reading books and project work.

Children attempt to read on their own, through facilitation by the teacher and peers. During creative writing, those who can write, draw pictures and write about them; others ask their teacher to write their thoughts for them and copy the teachers writing. Comprehensive questions based on stories that are read are given on cards, allowing individual children to write answers at their own pace, while reinforcing the habit of silent reading.

Language activities are thus interwoven to given children a surer feel of what they are trying to construct and discover on their own. Those children who feel like taking a break from formal learning, sit quietly in a corner, to play with blocks or interact with other children while playing a game. The use of multiple readers rather than a single class reader, comprehension cards and language games, creative writing programme and its link to reading, are all directed towards the individual child. Thus, GSS children learn to become independent learners, take decisions, make choices and feel responsible towards the materials they interact with.

However, the teacher tends to focus all her energies on mechanically recording children's progress, e.g., in reading. It seems that the activity of reading is perceived and used by the teacher more as a diagnostic exercise than an important learning experience for children. Teaching appears to be a mechanical activity where the teacher 'performs' what she is trained for. She is a technician in the classroom following the blue prints of her training. She is not a professional decision maker lead by an educated, reflective, internalized sense of where children are in their learning and where they can proceed.

The whole class period of 35 minutes is used mechanically by the teacher. The first 10 minutes she tells the children a story followed by six minutes of maths, four minutes for writing and one and a half minute for reading.

In reality there may even be little room for individual pace of learning. This is because even if the child has time for creative thinking, the teacher is too busy managing time, recording and is therefore essentially non-reflective. Topic work, for example, is at present operating only as an extension of the language programme. This could be expanded to include studies in science and environmental studies for class III, IV and V. Even the creative writing activity appears to have been reduced to a routinized ritual with little long-term purpose.

GSS Mathematics Teaching

The basic active learning, individual approach is visible in mathematics activities that children are usually busy with. However, the sequencing of mathematical concepts and skills are not well articulated especially for levels III, IV and V. The understanding of the mathematics programme does not go beyond number and number operations. The system of effective learning activities for children and intervention strategies for teachers and a system of recording individual progress is yet to be developed.

Although number cards are good materials, there is not much thought given to their use. At present, children use them in very limited ways. Sets of activities which extend horizontally in

terms of a single concept and vertically in terms of progression would be a great improvement. The merit of a whole class period is neither fully understood nor practiced.

Teachers and supervisors act on their deep seated belief that children cannot do things they have not been taught. Thus, teachers and supervisors cannot conceive of a child being able to 'discover' a number pattern. All teaching is focussed for the child to achieve minimum levels of learning. The individual child is significant so far as s/he gets into the record books of the teacher as an achiever. Which strategies the child uses to learn an abstract concept such as 'place value' or the errors that she may make while using the formal algorithmic method is of little pedagogic value for the teacher. While the GSS classroom offers tremendous scope for self-learning and discovery, more often than not, the teacher is too busy following 'the rules of the game', she has been taught. She is neither available to herself for reflection on her work, nor is she available to the children for an extensive dialogue on something the child has discovered. The extremely meticulously planned and delivered system fails to promote true child-centered learning through a process of personal enquiry.

LOK JUMBISH : People's Movement for Universalisation of Primary Education

Lok is a Hindi word that means 'the people', *Jumbish* an Urdu word that means 'movement'. Together they denote the idea of people's movement, as well as movement for the people. This people's movement is for providing primary education of satisfactory quality to all boys and girls of the State of Rajasthan, situated in north-west India.

The Lok Jumbish Project was jointly formulated by the Government of India and the Government of Rajasthan in the wake of adoption by the country's Parliament of the National Policy on Education, 1986. Preparation of the Lok Jumbish Project also demonstrated an awareness that unless exceptional measures were taken, the constitutional directive to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to 14 years of age would continue to remain a distant dream.

The population of Rajasthan is about 47 million and is the second largest Indian state in terms of area. Although there has been considerable expansion of education in Rajasthan, with 38% literacy: 55% for male and 20% for female, educationally speaking, Rajasthan is the country's most backward state. School enrolment and retention also compare unfavorably with the national picture. Educational backwardness is both a symptom and cause of Rajasthan's backwardness.

Keeping this in view, sustained efforts were made to introduce numerous programmes in Rajasthan under the Lok Jumbish project to move towards the goal of 'Education for All'.

Programme Coverage

As against a coverage of 25 blocks in Phase I, Phase II envisaged a coverage of 50 blocks, bringing the total to 75. Selection of blocks is made by the State Government.

With the coverage of 75 blocks, 1/3rd of the blocks of the State would have been covered, accounting for a population of about 11 million as against the total of 44 million population in Rajasthan according to 1991 census (10 million in urban and 34 million in rural areas). Special attention has been paid to educationally backward districts of Jaisalmer, Barmer, Jalore and Jhalawar. Priority in coverage has also been given to areas which are inhabited by educationally backward tribal communities.

Programme Implementation

The essential feature of the Lok Jumbish (LJ) project is people's mobilization and participation. An independent and autonomous body, the Lok Jumbish Parishad was set up in 1992 for the management of this programme. The programme is designed to be implemented in two phases. The first phase includes the following components:

- o Establishment of a management system
- o Establishment of training and technical resource support
- o Examination of the feasibility of the Lok Jumbish approach regarding people's participation
- o Introduction of some programmes for the improvement of the quality of primary education*

*In Lok Jumbish, Primary Education is taken to include Classes I to VIII.

A decision was taken to launch Phase I mainly to establish a management system, to build training and technical resource support arrangements, to examine the feasibility of the Lok Jumbish approach regarding people's participation, and to make a start with some programmes for improvement of the quality of primary education. Phase I was of two years duration. It began only in September 1992. Phase I covers 25 development blocks, with a total population of about 4.6 million. The programme is funded by SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), the Government of India and the Government of Rajasthan in the ratio of 3:2:1.

The basic objective of Phase II is to consolidate the limited objectives of Phase I and the long term objectives of Phase II. The aim of Phase II (started in July 1995 for a period of three years) is to transform the mainstream education system from the outside.

LJ EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of the Lok Jumbish programme are to :

- o achieve Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) for all children up to 14 years of age through the school system as far as possible and part-time non-formal education where necessary.
- o ensure that all enrolled children regularly attend formal school or non-formal education centers and complete primary education.
- o provide quality education by ensuring that all children achieve at least the minimum levels of learning as defined by Lok Jumbish.
- o bring girls to the same educational level as boys and make education an instrument of women's equality.
- o pursue the goal of gender equity in education, between socially and educationally disadvantaged communities and the rest of society.
- o modify content and process of education to better relate it to the environment, people's culture and their living and working conditions
- o effectively involve people in the planning and management of education - Lok Jumbish believes that people themselves must take responsibility for education at the grassroots level.

LJ STRATEGIES

The strategies adopted by Lok Jumbish include:

- o a focus on school mapping and micro planning. School mapping, the basic strength of LJ is a process of surveying, collecting, analyzing and using local information. It works as an instrument to ensure people's participation, strengthen their decision making and make them responsible to meet the educational needs of their village. While school mapping is the technique for people's involvement, making an analysis of the educational situation of a village and planning for access to primary education for all children, micro-planning is the strategy for family-wise and child-wise monitoring to ensure universal enrolment and retention of all children till they complete primary education.

- o establishment of a school improvement programme. Lok Jumbish focusses on socially and environmentally relevant design of school buildings; developing a standard list of school equipment, and teaching-learning aids; developing curriculum materials and text books on basic subjects such as maths, language and environmental studies; teacher training and supervision and student evaluation
- o establishment of a non-formal education programme. The Sahaj Shiksha Programme (SSP) targets children of six to nine years of age who cannot go to school are girl children who work or reside in small habitations. It emphasizes an equivalence between formal and non-formal education curriculum; flexibility of instructional time and entry into the centres; organised selection and training of instructors.

The duration of the non-formal education course is five years for younger children (6+ years) and three years for older children (9+ years). The management of SSP is handled by mobilizing agencies at the cluster* level. Supervisors are selected and trained to monitor SSP centres. In addition, a management information system (MIS) enables the generation of information flows from village and SSP centres to the cluster level and the Parishad.

The specific Lok Jumbish strategies include : **decentralization** to ensure that all issues come to the head office via Cluster Committees who have decision making powers and schools that are the responsibility of village Committees; **review and planning** meetings to provide a link between the head and the zonal offices with regard to supervision and assessment; **involvement of NGOs'** and other State Institutes of Education for technical support and teacher training and **conditional enrolment** to complete five years of schooling.

For the purpose of this report, a focus has been provided on the Sahaj Shiksha Programme of Lok Jumbish.

Sahaj Shiksha Programme (SSP) or the Non-Formal Education Programme

SSP was considered as a complementary programme to attain the goal of UPE. Against the background of the prevailing socio-economic conditions: the survival problems common to the desert areas, involvement of children in household and economic activities, migratory nature of the population, the feudal system and existing social attitude towards girls, the NFE programme in Lok Jumbish was launched as an experimental measure.

Drawing upon the experience of the state run NFE programme and the Shiksha Karmi Project (1985), the need to fill the following gaps in the NFE programme were identified : increase in instructors' remuneration; better selection and training of instructor; satisfactory provision of lighting arrangement; ample supply of text materials and instructional aids; preparation of good quality and relevant teaching-learning material; establishment of equivalence with the corresponding level in the formal system and grant of certificates.

 * cluster in LJ means a group of villages within a development block. While a block is the unit of management of Government development programmes, a cluster is a unit evolved by LJ.

Community Participation is sought in identifying and nominating *anudeshaks* (instructors). Final selection of an *anudeshaks* only after the completion of the training. No SSK starts unless the instructor has received the required training. The village community also provides suitable space to run the SSK.

The Sahaj Shiksha Kendra

Typically, Sahaj Shiksha Kendras are located within villagers houses, community places and primary school premises. The task of identification of the location for the Centre is left to the village level bodies: the *Prerak Dal* and the *Mahila Samooh* and the functionaries: *anudeshak* and *pravartaks*.

Centrality of location, seating, availability of electricity and water are factors considered while selecting an appropriate location for a SSK. Lack of adequate space to house all the enrolled children, poor lighting and high teacher-child ratios are some of the problems that the SSKs are currently grappling with.

The timings of the Centre are kept flexible as per the convenience of the children. However, there is an attempt to run the SSKs, during the day or in the evenings with satisfactory lighting arrangements. In keeping with its objective of providing all children with basic primary education, Lok Jumbish does not set a limit to the number of children enrolled in a SSP. However, it selects one instructor for every 25-30 children.

The Centre is meant to function for two and a half hours per day for 250 days in a year. The duration of the course varies with different age groups. The current duration for children in the age group 5-8 years is up to 5 years, for the age group 9-14 years, 3 years duration while for the age group of 13-14 years - a condensed course of one and a half to two years has been developed.

A typical SSK, as observed during the field visits, disallows free physical movement of children and hence limits the possibilities of a child-centred education espoused in the Lok Jumbish approach. The Kendra normally has teaching aids like display charts, but their use is often limited due to lack of space.

LJ Children

Children of the Lok Jumbish programme are either children of the State Government Primary schools or from the Sahaj Shiksha Kendras. Two-thirds of the SSK children are over 9 years old, who do not attend schools or are drop-outs of the formal primary school system.

LJ Teachers

Sahaj Shiksha Kendra *anudeshaks* have passed the VI-class examination and are selected through a test after initial training. Before appointment, they are trained for a month whereas women teachers are given an additional one month pre-service training. Thereafter, teachers attend two-day monthly meetings.

Anudeshaks are trained to understand the teaching-learning process with focus on planning classroom activities. They are oriented to use of local materials and the appropriate use of children's own language (local dialect) during teaching. Children's errors are focussed upon, with the idea of developing skills to deal with individual children.

Since participating children are engaged in household and economic activities with little time for school activities, the pressure on the *anudeshaks* is immense. They are expected to develop meaningful interaction in the classroom, design activities for children, ensure that children actively participate in the classroom and ensure achievement levels comparable to formal schools.

LJ Learning Environment

Typically in a SSK children are seated on the floor on mats. The SSK classroom consists of more children than can be accommodated in the space provided. Poor lighting and little space for children fail to create conditions conducive to implement the Lok Jumbish teacher-training objectives and philosophy. Classes are often held in verandahs or small detached buildings as the demand for education increases.

The only materials children have are textbooks. Charts are on display on the classroom but there is little visible material based learning in the Kendras.

The teaching approach follows the whole-class method with little scope for self-learning. Periodic comprehensive evaluation is meant to be followed. There is a great deal of emphasis on the mastery of competencies as presented in the MLL document. Lok Jumbish has also proposed to start a system of certification at the end of five year cycle at the SSK.

LJ Curriculum

The SSP curriculum is equivalent to the Government primary school curriculum. Thus, Lok Jumbish ensures that the text books designed for classes I to V and in use in the Government school system are also used in the SSK. However, the curriculum may vary in selected SSKs based on NGO involvement. The textbooks designed by Lok Jumbish under the guidance and technical support of Sandhan (an NGO working in collaboration with Lok Jumbish) are based on the minimum levels of learning (MLL). Teachers are trained to use textbooks in the context of MLL, which also enables them to evaluate children and the basic competencies enumerated in the MLL document. In Lok Jumbish, the programme of minimum level of learning is viewed as a vehicle to couple quality with equity. Therefore, improving children's achievement level is a major thrust area and is an indicator of the project success.

Teacher Training

The major thrust of in-service training of Government school teachers provided by Lok Jumbish is teachers sensitization, sharpening pedagogical skills, developing their insight into competency-based learning (MLL) and evaluation, and gender equity. These training programmes are residential and participative in nature. The follow up of training is done through monthly teacher workshops, Cluster and Block Resource Teams and school visits by the minimum levels of learning (MLL) Incharge

The **main objectives** of the training of the *anudeshaks* are to develop an understanding of the objectives and principles of SSP; develop a commitment towards the promotion of primary education (in their villages) and develop concern and sympathy towards children of deprived backgrounds. An additional aim is to develop the personality of the *anudeshak* and to enable them to understand the content and methods of primary education.

The **salient features** of the training programme include : activity based sessions followed by open discussion; developing teaching aids; analyzing curriculum materials; practicing techniques of multi-grade teaching; preparing daily activity schedules and evaluation formats for testing children. The training sessions are not oriented to be purely academic but follow an informal method of participative group work. Short write-ups on specific methods of teaching maths, language and environmental studies are disseminated to provide sustained support to the anudeshaks.

The LJ philosophy of the teaching-learning process

Training programmes for the anudeshaks emphasize the fact that a child comes to school with a tremendous knowledge-base. Hence the teaching-learning process must build upon this.

It is believed that child-centered education allows children to initiate and participate in their own learning. Training emphasizes the use of children's own resources, such a home language dialect to make the teaching-learning process meaningful for the child.

Besides two major training programmes: motivational training and MLL-based training, some new initiatives have also been taken to rekindle the teachers' inner growth and development

It is believed that a teacher can be truly effective in imparting child-centered education only when she is given the opportunity to become self-confident and self-reliant.

Related Lok Jumbish programmes

Lok Jumbish has initiated a number of programmes to widen access to primary education, e.g., non-formal education targeted specifically to minority children; programmes of incentives to promote gender and social equity; provision of hostel facilities for girls and children of migratory communities; education and development for children with disabilities (EDCD) and establishing an early childhood and care education programme (ECCE) .

LOK JUMBISH MANAGEMENT

The Lok Jumbish project is administered by an autonomous and independent body jointly established by the GoI and the GoR. Lok Jumbish Parishad (LJP) is a society registered under Rajasthan's Societies Registration Act, 1958. LJP has its own rules, regulations and byelaws which provide it with the functional management framework. It operates at five levels: village, cluster, block, district and state as outlined below:

State Level

At the helm of the management system is a General Body, headed by the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, with responsibility to undertake an annual review of progress, lay down policy guidelines, approve the annual budget and consider the audit report. All executive authority of LJP is vested with the Executive Committee headed by Shri Anil Bordia. Membership of the Executive Committee includes senior officials of the GoI and the GoR, representatives of teachers' unions and voluntary agencies, persons concerned with women's development and educationists. The Committee meets regularly and makes all decision by consensus.

There is a State Coordination Committee under the chairmanship of State Education Secretary to facilitate involvement and the cooperation of all state government departments and agencies. In addition, there are subject committees with authority to take decisions in concerned areas. For example, there is a State Resource Team on the implementation of the MLL scheme and a committee each on Environment and Culture, Women's Development, Non-formal Education, Buildings Development and Media and Communication.

The management system at the headquarters is headed by the Director, an officer of the Indian Administrative Service appointed by the GoR. The Director is assisted by a team of 13 professionals drawn on deputation from the State government, Universities or Voluntary Agencies. Each of them has a subject responsibility as well as a role of overseeing the programme in a couple of blocks.

LJP has developed a strong partnership with a number of NGOs, the foremost among them is Sandhan - the Training and Academic Programmes Wing which takes much of the responsibility for training of teachers and SSK anudeshaks and for the preparation of text books. The Research Wing of Sandhan provides research and evaluation support. In addition, Vihan (another NGO) undertakes most of the ECCE responsibility on behalf of LJP. Other NGOS such as Digantar, Rajasthan Voluntary Health Association, Alarippu, Social Work and Research Center, and three State level District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) adopted by LJ provide technical and academic support.

District Level

Zila Parishad has a District Coordinator. The DIET: District Institute of Education and Training is the central focus at this level.

Block Level

Block Education Management Committee has full powers to sanction new facilities. A Project Officer and Block Steering Group (BSG) are a part of this unit as are a number of selected NGOs. The BSG is responsible for mobilization and support for quality.

Cluster Level

A cluster of 25-30 villages is a unit defined by Lok Jumbish for the purpose of providing decentralized management. A mobilizing agency, selected NGOs and Lok Jumbish team, operate at cluster level. It also has a Field Center with field workers supporting women's development activities and the training of village level workers.

Village Level

The Village Education Committee takes the responsibility for school mapping, micro-planning and monitoring the functioning of school. There is a Building construction Committee to oversee construction work and maintenance. Organised women's groups are responsible for girl's education and the head teacher who assists the village committees.

PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

The Lok Jumbish management system is fairly elaborate, and has a direct bearing on the school teachers, retention of children and the pedagogical improvement of classrooms. Although the Lok Jumbish effort of giving each child a 'face' through the process of school mapping is commendable, it does not necessarily result in a learning environment that is child-centered. The school mapping process has, however, been powerful and significant in helping people to understand their own reality and in creating an ownership of the task of educating their children. In one sense, Lok Jumbish has already achieved the objective of enabling the community to feel responsible for creating educational opportunities.

The qualification and training of teachers/instructors and supervisors is perhaps one of the key factors in determining success of a basic education programme. Consequently, LJ instructors are highly motivated and committed but the programme starts from a weak base.

The Lok Jumbish management is particularly aware that their teacher training approach and philosophy is not adequately reflected in the classroom. In fact, the concept of joyful learning seems elusive. Classrooms are equipped with teaching-learning materials for use by the teacher. But their presence itself does not necessarily ensure their use. The time of the teacher/instructor is perhaps not used effectively enough to facilitate learning. It may even be wrongly assumed that the use of competency based textbooks will lead to appropriate pedagogy in the classroom.

In reality, the pedagogic approaches used by the teachers are not integrated with the concept and philosophy of joyful learning. Thus, the Lok Jumbish philosophy and perspective of children's education often fails to be visible. Such gaps between teacher training and classroom practice is a genuine concern especially in the context of large scale primary education programmes.

The strength of Lok Jumbish lies in its commitment to allow space and freedom to NGOs to evolve their own specific models of primary education.

The thrust of the Lok Jumbish approach is to develop competency levels (MLL) and train teachers to evolve an activity based classroom using the MLL framework. The benevolent idea behind this is to allow teachers to perceive the classroom as an organic and dynamic entity to acquire skills in assessing children levels of development and in identifying pedagogic techniques to enhance learning.

Such an approach, necessarily requires high levels of training inputs in subject-knowledge and information processing skills. A competency based textbook may in fact ritualise the important process of innovation initiated by Lok Jumbish.

If effective management means measuring progress, then the classroom also needs such input. Lok Jumbish has not yet arrived at the stage where classroom practices can be structured for meaningful learning. An insufficient number of teachers often affects quality of education. LJ teachers often have to attend to 2-3 classes in one room. Thus, teachers play the role of 'child-minders' rather than facilitators of learning. Due to lack of physical space, classes are held in verandahs or small detached buildings. Although the participation of community seems heartening, it has not been able to counteract the endemic drop-out rate. It appears that a large number of children, low qualification of teachers and the absence of adequate infrastructure facilities converge to create conditions that are less conducive to meaningful and sustained learning than desire.

Nevertheless, Lok Jumbish has been successful in the implementation of other programmes such as Balika Kendras. It would be worth examining the strategies and practices that have led to the success of such endeavors - where the lessons learnt can be used for further replication.

TABLE (2.1) SUMMARY OF NON-FORMAL PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OF BRAC, GSS AND LOK JUMBISH			
	BRAC : NFPE	GSS:PEP	LJ:SSP
Children	33 children Age 8-10 or 11-16 60-70 per cent girls	30 children Age pre-school age 1-10 and 11-14	All children of relevant age group of a particular area Age 6-14
Teacher Selection	Village residents, Class 9 and above 95 per cent women	Community residents rural areas:- SSC and urban areas:- undergraduate and post- graduates, largely women	Community residents Class 8 and above, largely men
Teacher Training	15 days basic residential training 2-day training before school opens and 1-day monthly refresher sessions in year one; 4- day refresher at beginning of year 2	15 days basic residential training. On the job training in classrooms; 6- days refresher course every year; 2-day monthly refresher	115 days training in a phased manner over the five years monthly refresher
Teacher Supervision	1 Program Organizer (PO) for 15 schools PO school visits twice a week PO, student and parent follow-up of teacher absentees	Supervisors: post- graduate; 1 supervisor for 3 schools; visits school thrice a week	Pravartak: 10/12 Class. One Pravartak for every ten centres. Pravartak provide assistance to the Anudeshak and co-ordinate with Prerak Dal and Mahila Samooh for ensuring regular attendance.
Communities	Determine school schedule Pledge to send children to school and attend monthly meetings Replace broken slates and worn mats	Attend monthly meetings; ensure attendance of children	Determine school time schedule
Instructional Schedule	2.5 to 3 hours per day (specified times selected by parents) 6 days per week, 270 days per year 3-year instructional cycle	2.5 hours for preschool I & II. 3 hours for III, IV and V, 6 days per week; 265 days per year; 5 year instructional cycle	3 hours per day; 6 days a week; 5-year cycle, three year cycle and 2 year cycle
The School/ Centre	Basic Structure <=240 square feet Rented for 3 hrs/day Basic furnishings & equipment (mats for the children, stool for the teacher and a blackboard)	Permanent school building with three spacious rooms; 2-3 shifts per school, 3 work tables; 5 corners and chairs for children, storage and blackboard	Primary school building/ Community places/Anudeshak's residence
Classroom Environment	Student-Teacher ratio 33:1 largely whole class teaching approach No corporal punishment	Student-teacher ratio 30:1; Group activity based on child centre approaches; no corporal punishment	Not defined or limited; child- centered approaches to instructions; textbook focussed; no corporal punishment

	BRAC : NFPE	GSS:PEP	LJ:SSP
Curriculum	Content similar to that covered in formal school Classes I-III daily co-curricular activities Little homework	Government curriculum; supplementary interactive materials; no or little home work	Government curriculum adopted by Lok Jumbish; MLL based; co-curricular activities; no home work
Instructional Materials	Textbooks developed by BRAC that resemble reading primers and basic arithmetic books Teaching manuals and teaching aids guide use of textbooks	Activity based variety of materials and supplementary readers: teaching aids: textbooks	MLL based textbooks; teaching aids for use by teachers.

CHAPTER III

**STRENGTHS AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE
PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS**

STRENGTHS AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Each of the three participating organizations are distinct in their approach to facilitate the education of disadvantaged children of primary school age in their respective countries. Each programme can only be understood within the institutional context in which it developed and effectively addressed the challenges it was faced with. A true picture, of each however, will not emerge without an understanding of the strengths and constraints within which LJ, BRAC and GSS function. A broad outline is presented below based on the limited observation period that was possible during the seminar.

Management

One of the key factors that make the BRAC NFPE both efficient and productive is its management system. Any decision taken in BRAC regarding the functioning of the schools, more specifically a change in the pedagogic practices is carried out within short time. This, however, could also be interpreted to mean that the BRAC system is highly centralized.

GSS through its focus on time management in the classroom has provided tremendous insights into the benefits of and strategies for the optimum use of the teachers time. The GSS management system clearly impacts the quality of the teaching-learning process. In GSS, the training of supervisors includes close interactions with teachers in understanding classroom realities.

The Lok Jumbish management system is both elaborate and unique. To bring the Government and NGOs on a common platform for the common pursuit and concern of universalization of primary education is commendable. Lok Jumbish has in a short time set many processes in motion which will inevitably result in decentralized systems of decision making and management of primary education. Through its unique technique of school mapping and micro-planning, Lok Jumbish has concretised the idea of educating and empowering people through participation in 'assessing' their own realities. A major strength of the Lok Jumbish is its flexibility in providing space to NGOs to experiment with new models of pedagogic practice. By providing additional staff at the block level to supplement state level staff, Lok Jumbish, however, may not be able to sustain these structures.

Infrastructure

Both BRAC and GSS have succeeded in making available school space that is adequate to educate groups of 30-33 children in a meaningful way. Teaching-learning materials and other resources are made available to children. BRAC through its parallel development programmes contributes towards the primary education of disadvantaged children in more than one way. It also helps parents save economically.

GSS schools have infrastructure that allows for the practice of quality education in day-to-day activities; spacious classrooms to accommodate language, maths, creative writing and reading activities and activity corners for individual and group learning.

The Sahaj Shiksha Kendras of Lok Jumbish face the problem of accommodating a large number of children who demand education in response to the effective strategies adopted by Lok Jumbish. Inadequate classroom space compels teachers to hold classes in verandahs or small detached buildings.

The Learning Environment

The BRAC classroom is organized to facilitate effective whole-class teaching. The U-shaped seating of children allows a one-to-one interaction of the teacher with children and peer interaction among children when required. The BRAC curriculum is graded to suit the developmental levels of children and include a preparatory phase of two months that exposes children to the basic literacy and numeracy skills. The teacher, however, follows traditional practice using the whole-class approach. She initiates, directs and controls all activities, even the wall magazine. BRAC teacher is trained to perform defined tasks and is closely facilitated, supervised and monitored for sustained effective teaching.

Classroom organization is the key factor of the GSS classroom that permits the practice of child-centered, activity based learning. The organization of space and seating, facilitates the working of small groups and independent learning. The GSS child can choose to play a language game or do mathematic tasks. She switches easily from group activity to whole class activity, and can spontaneously seek the facilitation of a teacher to write about her drawing or in solving a mathematical problem. Children work at their own pace and are not bothered about competing with each other. The pedagogic process of language in the GSS school is well worked out for classes I and II. A diverse set of activities built into the daily time table offer creative opportunities for independent reading and writing.

The teacher-child ratio in both BRAC and GSS classrooms enables the optimum use of teacher time as well as facilitates individualized attention. Both organizations have effectively integrated the pre-school component of teaching.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) component of the Lok Jumbish programme is not yet integrated into the formal primary education programme or the non-formal (SSP) programme.

Teachers

All three organizations select teachers from within the community. A sense of belonging to the community appears to be a key factor in the teacher's commitment to children learning. All organizations follow a rigorous procedure for teacher selection. The teachers of GSS schools are however, the most qualified, followed by BRAC and Lok Jumbish.

The initial basic training of BRAC, GSS and Lok Jumbish is rigorous and addresses pertinent issues of child psychology and teaching techniques. The strength of the BRAC basic training course, is its emphasis on distinguishing between teacher-centered and child-focussed method of teaching. The strength of the GSS training is in the opportunity it provides to participate in classrooms while undergoing training. The Lok Jumbish training is unique in its emphasis on a participatory approach and in focussing on developing positive attitudes towards children and education. Teachers get the opportunity to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses while developing skills of teaching within the Lok Jumbish programme.

All organizations stress the recruitment of women teachers, as a matter of policy. BRAC, for example, has 95% women teachers. In this lies, the possibility of evolving a new role-model for women in poor and disadvantaged communities. This may be one of the most far-reaching long-term impacts of the three programmes.

Teacher Supervision

The effectiveness of the GSS classroom is largely due to its strong teacher supervision. Supervisors are rigorously trained to play academic support and management roles. A GSS supervisor, in fact, provides on-the-job training and regular academic support.

BRAC supervisors provide close monitoring and support of teachers and the continuous evaluation of children's learning.

The Lok Jumbish SSP teachers are essentially accountable to the community. While there is provision for offering support for MLL training, technical support to the individual teacher in the Lok Jumbish programme has potential for strengthening.

Community Participation

The strength of the BRAC programme lies in reaching out to the most vulnerable sections of the community. Substantial parent involvement is a major feature of BRAC schools. Parents assist in selecting the teacher and setting the school schedule. Both BRAC and GSS involve the community in ensuring children's regular attendance in schools.

The strength of Lok Jumbish is in its use of school mapping and micro-planning as an instrument to ensure community participation and to strengthen their ability to take decisions. The Lok Jumbish mobilization and environmental building strategies also enable the village community to take responsibility for running the schools. The community in Lok Jumbish plays a significant role in the selection of teachers for SSK, in preparing yearly education plans and proposals for additional facilities.

CHAPTER IV
EMERGING PROGRAMME
AND POLICY ISSUES

EMERGING PROGRAMME AND POLICY ISSUES

A small group discussion on specific areas of concern followed a discussion on the Lok Jumbish delegation field reports in Bangladesh. A brief summary of the key emerging issues is presented in the following section.

Management

The need to evolve an efficient, sensitive and appropriate management system for an educational programme with steady escalation of scale was stressed. Four major issues of concern were: community participation; supervisor - worker relationship; school management and evaluation.

It was felt that despite the programme scale, a good management must ensure that the (relevant) community plays a vital role in decision making, implementation and evaluation, as well as in sharing the benefits. Participation could either be direct or one step removed, through participants having access to the logic of decisions and possibility of questioning them.

The challenge of good management is to ensure that hierarchies facilitate better work, do not stifle creativity and performance and supervisory roles provide space and academic support that directly impacts the classroom.

The three existing models for large scale management structure generally visible in society are the army; the corporation and the traditional school.

The first two were thought to be unacceptable for educational management. The third model, in its classical form has the basic unit as the school, with the Head Teacher in a leadership role along with other teachers. This Head Teacher is theoretically expected to ensure quality in teaching; predictable presence, discipline; problem solving and the possibility of upward mobility.

However, in the three programmes under discussion, the operative model is the 'developmental model' in which there is a basic hiatus between the 'worker' who is local and temporary and the 'manager' who are outsiders with greater job security and power of decision making. While most organizations are now attempting free upward mobility through all ladders of management, the gap between the local teacher who is temporary and the programme officer continues. Recently, BRAC and GSS have consciously created institutional space to bridge this gap.

The upward mobility of local workers essentially rests on their 'capacity' to respond to more complex demands of management. Those require investments in education and physical mobility with significant implications for gender-equity in society. If a programme can facilitate a continuous and tighter link between the worker and supervisor by possible shifts in roles, a new role-model for girls will emerge thereby opening up the possibility of more equitable social relations.

School management to enable maximisation of children's potential was a major concern for all participating organisations. It was felt that 'speed' of programme expansion is possible through sacrificing diversity and a 'homogenous' treatment of children with a 'homogenous' training for teachers. This is inevitably at the cost of quality. It was evident that providing for individual children pace and style of learning improves quality. The real question identified was whether it is possible to create a classroom situation in which the individual teacher's style and pace can also be maintained without compromising the end result.

Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment

Several issues of concern relating to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment were deliberated upon. These included the NFE curriculum which should be developed following the objectives of the national curriculum while developing material; the need for horizontal and vertical linkages with the national curriculum; curriculum development as per the learner's needs and the life orientation and integration of curriculum.

Several ideas on the issue whether a detailed curriculum or only a curriculum schema is necessary were debated. Curriculum schema would broadly mean a framework of directions, general principles and objectives for the teacher along with a structure of skills, abilities and values that we wish children to learn. These skills and abilities though defined clearly are not broken down into atomic skills. The specific content for example, methods or teaching materials could be left to the teacher. Such a broad framework is likely to allow the teacher to be more reflective and creative in the classroom, leading to more spontaneous child-centred teaching-learning processes.

A curriculum schema could also be perceived as a structure of competencies, more or less broadly defined and the rest left to the teacher to evolve methods and content of learning.

It is generally felt that the need for a detailed curriculum emanates out of a lack of 'able' teachers and constraint of resources and time. A curriculum that is worked out to its last detail is desirable in order to ensure 'minimum quality' input in the classroom. The risk of mechanizing the teaching-learning process, that may be antithetical to the concept of child-centred education was identified. A breaking down of competencies and detailing of steps in the curriculum and teaching methodology can obscure issues of larger concern such as developing positive values, general abilities of thinking and decision making, self-confidence and self-reliance in children. In order that education be truly child-centered, allowing children's creativity to develop at their own pace, is necessary to nurture spontaneity in the classroom. A predetermined framework of the teaching-learning process as is visible in heavily time-managed classroom structures, is an inadequate response to the spontaneity of children and the dynamics of a classroom full of 'natural' learners.

It was felt that primary education needs to set for itself the task of educating children to be self-reliant, initiators, creative, confident and sensitive social beings. This goes beyond the process of educating children to become merely literate.

Systems that rely heavily on classroom effective management, succeed in minimizing the variables that teachers need to grapple with in the classroom. Classroom organization, management, activities and materials are structured with defined targets. While the obvious focus is the child, such a system inevitably gears to be more teacher-centered than child-centered.

Elaborating our understanding of child-centred pedagogies, teachers and classrooms may be useful to carry this dialogue forward. In accordance with the recent research and observation of school practices, **child-centered pedagogy** implies the following:

- o Developing and building upon the child's world - children's knowledge-base, resource of language, thinking and intuitive skills. For example, a teacher would consciously encourage children to speak in their home language and will choose children's vocabulary to design activities of reading and writing around that.

- o Designing a variety of activities to help children grasp a new concept thus following the basic principle of learning through repetition and practice. Such a teaching technique also allows individual children to follow their own intuitive strategies of learning.
- o Giving children the space to construct and discover meaning for themselves, such as in discovering that different words are made up of letters or that 'counting on' is a more efficient strategy while adding two numbers than 'counting all'.
- o Allowing children to make errors. Not reprimanding children for making errors, for example, in spelling or in applying an algorithm wrongly. Instead, looking upon errors as indicators of children's level of conceptual grasp and building upon them to logically extend the route of individual child's learning.
- o Allowing children choices and encouraging them to initiate and decide. Presenting new concepts and knowledge in a manner that appeals to children's sensibilities and playful nature.
- o Presenting knowledge in a manner that enables children to construct meaning from it. This implies that curriculum materials are designed to suit different developmental levels of children.
- o Allowing children to learn at their own pace, thus making possible multi-grade teaching and multiple entry into schools.

A Child-centred Teacher

A typical teacher trained in child-centered education is a facilitator in the process of children's learning, is non-judgmental and non-authoritarian. She allows a positive relationship to develop with children and regards each child as a unique learner with individual styles of learning, doing and creating. She is reflective about the lessons she plans, transacts, if need be adapts and evaluates. She is reflective about how children think and learn and adapts to new learning needs and demands of individual children.

A Child-centered Classroom

A typical child-centered classroom is one in which the physical space allows children to work in groups and to interact with the teacher and with each other freely; is designed to allow a face-to-face seating arrangement rather than back-to-back, as in a conventional classroom. In a child-centred classroom, the classroom organization allows activity-based learning in groups and individually so that children have easy access to learning materials so they can initiate and choose activities. In such a classroom, an optimal teacher-child ratio is maintained to allow individualized learning and teaching. There is space and the means to display children's creations, work and materials for teaching-learning and there is storage space for teaching-learning materials that are easily retrievable both by the teacher and the child.

While curriculum materials used in an educational programme may be child-centered, if the pedagogy follows traditional practice where the teacher initiates, directs and controls all activities, the classroom soon ceases to be child-centred. In such a classroom, there is very little use of children's own knowledge or intuitive thinking. For example, a language curriculum that focusses only on given words/text tends to become teacher-centred despite the use of child-centred

pedagogy such as the sight-word approach. Likewise, a curriculum that focusses on mathematics only as number and number-operations using the formal method of algorithms, is adult-centred. In such a classroom, children discover that which the teacher desires them to discover. The expectation is to learn at a single defined pace: the one defined by the curriculum and teacher and in defined ways.

Even though the BRAC curriculum is graded to suit children's developmental levels and the BRAC learning approaches are child-centred, the BRAC classroom essentially follows traditional whole-class practices.

By virtue of emphasis and insistence on classroom organization, the GSS schools set the tone of a child-centered classroom right at the beginning. Children sit in groups of 5 and 6, work in groups and individually on given tasks. They interact with each other more freely to learn, to know and feel free to interact with the teacher as well. The GSS child can choose to play a language game in a corner, a mathematics game in another corner or simply play with blocks or role play in the home corner. They know their limits of time and are also aware of the tasks they have to do in a day in creative writing, reading, mathematics and project work. They switch easily from group activity to a whole-class activity when asked to. Children's errors are neither reprimanded nor corrected. They spontaneously seek the facilitation of their teacher to write about their drawing or to solve a mathematical problem.

Learning materials are freely accessible and used by individual children. They work at their own pace and are not bothered about competing with each other. Children have the time, the freedom and the space to initiate their own learning. However, they find it difficult to sustain a dialogue with their teacher on a new insight or discovery. The teacher has no time for such dialogue and reflection. She is too busy recording each child's reading level after ensuring that the child reads for a maximum of one and a half minutes from where she left off on the previous day. She is too busy transacting her 'prepared lesson plans' or recording children's achievement levels. The GSS teacher is a performer and technician trained for the purpose. She rarely reflects, rarely stops to appreciate the world of a child and is rarely fascinated by children's logic or errors.

Table (4.1) presents a tentative framework that attempts to distinguish between child-focussed and child-centred classroom. This may be useful to the participating organization to carry the dialogue on child-centred education further, within the constraints of their own objectives and programmes.

TABLE (4.1) : A TENTATIVE FRAMEWORK OF TEACHER-CENTRED, CHILD-CENTRED AND CHILD-FOCUSSED EDUCATION

ATTRIBUTE	TEACHER-CENTERED	CHILD-FOCUSSED	CHILD-CENTERED
CHILD			
	Acquire information; achievement in subjects	Information and understanding; cognitive development; problem solving skills; creativity	Cognitive development; problem solving skills; critical thinking; creativity; self-reliance; self-confidence; decision making abilities
TEACHER			
Student-Teacher Ratio	High	Low	Low
Attendance	Dependent on motivation of teacher Typically low	Extrinsically motivated; high	Intrinsically motivated; high
Training to transact curriculum	Textbook focussed; methods of teaching subjects	Programme skills and pedagogic techniques of teaching	Subject knowledge; skills of relating and communicating with children; pedagogic techniques
Classroom activity	Lesson plan Whole class approach	Whole class approach with individualized attention; some group activity	Group learning; self-learning; activity based learning; freedom of pace; choice of activity
Discipline	Authoritarian physical punishment	Positive interaction	Involving children in setting 'rules' of discipline
COMMUNITY			
Ensuring attendance	No involvement	Ensure attendance of children and teachers	Community participates in children's learning.
Resource contribution	None	Space and cost for education	More time for children for learning at home
Freeing children from work	None	Freeing children from school hours	Freeing children from economic work
ACCESS			
Physical	Short distance	Short distance; Within community	Short distance; within community
Social	Teacher outside the community	Teacher from within community	Teacher from within community
Economic	Subsidies / Scholarship to selected children	Within means of family; free education	Within means of family; Accommodative of working and disadvantaged children
Gender	Material incentives	Preferential enrollment of girl children	Preferential enrollment of girl children; Address 'hidden' curriculum; gender sensitive curriculum

ATTRIBUTE	TEACHER-CENTERED	CHILD-FOCUSSED	CHILD-CENTERED
SPACE			
Area per child	Limited availability	Adequate space	Activity oriented
Scale	Adult scale	Child scale	Special areas only at child scale
Classroom organization	Back to back seating; prevent movement; one teacher to many children	One teacher to many children; individualized attention; allows movement	Seating conducive to peer interaction and group work; allows free movement
MATERIAL			
Availability	Free textbooks to a select few	Teacher developed materials	Organically developed materials
Quality	Inappropriate to children developmental levels, therefore unlearnable; uninteresting; not in child's language	Graded; text oriented; simple language	Graded; interactive; no textbooks; using child's language
Curriculum and Pedagogy	Adult centred; subject based; hierarchial	Graded; subject based; adult centred; repetitive	Building upon children's knowledge-base, resource of language and intuitive skills; use of children's errors; promoting construction of meaning by child; freedom of pace of learning; facilitative
Evaluation Framework	Product based one time comparative evaluation	Achievement levels continuous and comprehensive evaluation	Process-based; evaluating children against their own development parameters; evaluation feeds into curriculum
MANAGEMENT			
Supervision	Token inspection	Effective continuous and comprehensive evaluation and monitoring	Effective continuous and comprehensive evaluation; children's feedback in evaluation
Logistics	Centralised; limited accountability	Centralised; effective delivery of space and materials	Decentralized; effective delivery of space and materials
COSTS			
Per Unit Cost	Salaries	Salaries; materials and management	Salaries; instructional materials; teacher support; supplementary materials; management

Teacher Development

The importance of training teachers in order to impart quality education was underlined. The following were considered to be significant components of a good quality teacher training programme:

Curriculum, Transaction and Pedagogy

- o Understanding of competencies to be developed in children of different levels and understanding the methodology of developing these competencies;
- o Developing skills to design teaching-learning materials for children;
- o Developing skills to integrate subject based pedagogies with core pedagogies of teaching children;
- o Developing skills in facilitating small group work and designing innovative activities;
- o Developing skills to promote self-learning and independent reading and writing;
- o Developing skills of classroom and time management;
- o Developing the ability to innovate and think of alternative methods of teaching in response to 'real' classroom situations;
- o Fostering academic discussions on 'subject knowledge' areas.

Children

- o Internalizing children's ways of thinking and learning in order to respond appropriately to their errors and readiness levels for cognising formal learning;
- o Learning to facilitate and build upon children's natural ways of constructing meaning and learning;
- o Developing skills to communicate with and value children;

Evaluation

- o Constructing parameters and measures of continuous and comprehensive assessment of each child;
- o Developing skills for self-evaluation.

Training Process

The training of teachers should essentially include : basic initial training; monthly refresher interactions, on the job supervision and teacher support, frequent interactions that focus on academic discussions on childhood, pedagogy and subjects.

The strategies of teacher education, development and support should include intense and continuous training and supervision; frequent demonstrations and discussions; counselling; sharing and discussions on reading materials; exchange of programmes with other institutions; workshops/seminars, radio/video programmes for exposure to new ideas and the use of video for self-critique, analysis and development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the field observations, discussions and reflections, the following recommendations emerged from the Field Operational Seminar:

- o Realizing the need to link research with classroom processes, it would worthwhile to initiate research that is processed-based. This would help in bridging the gap between training and classroom practice and in understanding that innovations evolve continuously. BRAC and GSS have already initiated steps in this direction.
- o Making learner evaluation continuous and comprehensive, and a part of the learning process. Evaluation should be process-based in order to serve this purpose. This would help in sustaining quality education. Parameters other than achievement levels in specific skills or subjects can be identified and developed for the purpose of research and evaluation. This will help fulfil the true role of quality education in developing the 'whole' child.
- o Including within curriculum framework, material development and pedagogic training, specific inputs for developing children's creativity, self-confidence, questioning and critical thinking so that these can be built into the teaching-learning processes.
- o Developing staff and teacher training with greater academic inputs of subject knowledge and pedagogic studies for participants to understand the framework of operation. These could be short-termed intensive courses for supervisory and master trainer staff on issues of subject based pedagogies, curriculum transaction, teaching-learning material and evaluation system.
- o Teachers also need to be exposed to training that encourages them to think on their own, reflect on children's thinking and learning processes and innovate in the classroom. There should be a conscious attempt to shift the focus in teacher-training programmes, from 'teaching' (in defined mechanized ways) to 'learning'. Issues of error analysis in children, assessment of readiness level and pedagogic techniques such as scaffolding that prompt children to build on their own learning and knowledge should become the focus of teacher training programmes. Training programmes should also include opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own strengths and limitations and for personal development.
- o Field supervisors and particularly teacher trainers, need longer experiences in classrooms where teacher behaviour and approach encourages children to initiate and create. It may be useful to identify and develop a group of resource teachers who would serve as regular academic support systems for the school teachers. There should be a pro-active attempt to shift focus from 'training' through refresher courses to regular academic and 'on-the-job support'.
- o Evolving subject-based graded curriculum and teaching-learning materials for classes III, IV and V.

POLICY ISSUES

The key policy issues that emerged from the discussions between the participating organizations are presented in the following section:

Universalization Vs. Targeted Programme

The key strategies that distinguish BRAC from other NGOs is its specific focus on reaching primary education to the most vulnerable sections of the society. BRAC selects learners who come from relatively disadvantaged families who are landless and own only their homesteads. GSS essentially focusses on quality education with the objective of covering specific remote areas of Bangladesh. Lok Jumbish's basic objective on the other hand is to achieve universalization of primary education. The LJ technique of school mapping attempts to bring every child into the fold of formal or non-formal primary education. The target block/district is chosen by Lok Jumbish on the basis of a high population of out-of-school children, poor access to Government schools, poor literacy rate and in particular a large number of girls out of the school system. As a consequence, much of the focus of Lok Jumbish activities lies in providing access to the school.

The targeted approach helps to ensure that education programmes benefit the relatively poor. In the UPE campaign, however, the target group is not just the relatively more disadvantaged poor, but all children of a certain age.

In its present form, the BRAC NFPE is concerned with geographical coverage and child population. Hence, to achieve universalization, the effort could be to provide comprehensive geographic coverage for all income groups. The reach of non-formal education to the not-so-poor will also have to be defined. Such an effort may raise other critical issues of student composition and patterns of coverage as well as patterns of community participation.

A programme that is committed to universalization necessarily needs to address issues of retention, learning needs, achievement levels and completion rates in the larger perspective of quality education.

A strategy that focusses on universalization is likely to reach a stage where a 'critical mass' of demand for primary education is created. It would then be necessary to meet that demand by way of providing access and retention. Once children are brought into learning centres/schools, it is the quality of education provided that will determine the holding capacity of the school/centres and thereafter achievement levels and completion rates. If timely strategies in this regard are not developed, the process of creating a demand and a reciprocal response from the community is likely to peter away, with limited tangible gains.

Convergence with other Development Programmes

The strength of BRAC and GSS is that their contact with the community starts before the education intervention. This is achieved through their parallel development programmes. Hence, social mobilization takes place and awareness is created amongst the communities for education.

BRAC also has had a history of systematic work in micro-credit loan system to reach out to the most needy. The impact of convergence of such parallel programmes have on the success and impact of education programmes is still unclear. NGOs who have started work in education

without such a tradition may need to address a crucial set of issues related to community acceptance and participation if convergence emerges as an important factor. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the success of the school mapping technique of Lok Jumbish, coupled with other decentralized strategies of mobilization and 'environment building' activities.

Future Direction of Non-Formal Education Programmes

The other crucial question is the strategic direction during scale-up. There would realistically be three to four options : (a) to increase the coverage area in terms of villages; (b) to increase the length of schooling to five years so as to establish equivalence with the formal system; © to evolve the programme with a focus on consolidation and quality; and (d) to intervene in the government school system.

Articulating qualitative as well as quantitative goals is particularly critical during a period of rapid expansion. During such periods, there is a tendency for concrete quantitative goals to take precedence over more difficult to measure qualitative goals. BRAC and Lok Jumbish, may both have to consider this seriously. Lok Jumbish in particular is in the process of developing a clear articulation of specific classroom and pedagogic issues that impact quality.

Children Options after non-formal Education

Determining the choices that children have after non-formal education is another crucial policy matter. In the case of BRAC, more than 50% of the children who qualify the NFPE enter into the formal school system. It would be important to explore the possible interlinkages with the main stream public education system in terms of options such as vocational education to understand the future options of other children.

Lok Jumbish has already initiated the process of establishing equivalence between its non-formal education programme and the formal system. Certification is one such process.

Evolving a New Role Model for Women

The three participating organizations are committed to the cause of gender equity and women's empowerment. It is the policy of BRAC to recruit only women as teachers in the NFPE. In Lok Jumbish the concept of gender equity is perceived to have many dimensions: gender equity in the access, content and process of education including training teachers for gender sensitive classroom transaction and to recruit women in positions of decision making.

CHAPTER V

FOLLOW UP

FOLLOW UP

This section reports some of the key areas of interest that emerged as possible areas of collaboration amongst the participating organisations.

Areas of interest expressed by BRAC and GSS participants:

- o Understanding how motivation and a sense of commitment in teachers and other personnel is sustained;
- o Understanding the technique of school mapping and micro-planning and its efficacy for community involvement;
- o Understanding how to develop competency levels for different age groups;
- o Evolving developmentally appropriate curriculum materials in mathematics;
- o Evolving training strategies to foster the personal development of teachers;
- o Exploring strategies of sustaining innovations in the formal primary school system;

Areas of interest expressed by Lok Jumbish participants:

- o Understanding systems of planning and implementation at all levels;
- o Examining strategies of teacher selection in large numbers;
- o Identifying strategies that could help improve the quality of classrooms, such as classroom organisation, teacher training inputs, systems of supervision, pedagogic techniques and multi-grade teaching;
- o Understanding language curriculum development and pedagogy;
- o Understanding the relationship between income generation and rural development activities with the education programme.

Dr. Mahmood Hasan emphasized the need to collate experiences of different organizations in the Asian region. Even though these may be culture specific, we could integrate core elements of curriculum development and quality of education in our programmes. It would be useful, for example, to learn how competencies can be developed for different age levels of children; how teachers could be trained on these and relate it effectively to the field.

Mr. Rohit Dhankar stressed on how a continuous dialogue between participating organisations could help define the connections between the concept and practice of quality education. Arriving at a common understanding and vision could help develop a model for primary education in Asia.

Dr. Sharda Jain emphasized the need to refine our understanding of quality education and to evolve from the past. Dr. Jain also highlighted the need for a predictable forum to discuss issues of common concern.

Mr. Lalit Kishore articulated the importance of commissioning studies on institutional planning and developing a continuous and comprehensive evaluation system to assess children's learning.

Mr. Loria focussed on the critical issue of sustainability of education programmes in terms of structure, finances and quality.

Mr. Anil Bordia brought the focus of discussion from subject area to specific modalities. A dialogue between the three participating organisations, he suggested can continue in the form of Field Operational Seminars and workshops. There could also be group visits organised for both countries with the specific aim to focus activities on identified areas of cooperation. The organisations should also be able to share with each other teaching-learning materials and curriculum ideas. The areas of cooperation could be:

- o Education, State and Civil society;
- o School mapping and micro-planning;
- o Systems of learner's evaluation;
- o Language and mathematics curriculum and pedagogy

Mr. Mahmood Hasan suggested the idea of a secretariat that could focus on curriculum development and assessment. Dr. Sharda Jain cautioned against establishing structures before processes are set in motion.

Prof. Jalaluddin mentioned that to begin with there could be a liaison person from each organisation to initiate and focus dialogue on quality education with the aim to achieve children's learning. In his view, it would be dignified to accept that there is the possibility of high rates of failure and that innovations are part of a continuous system of evolution. We, therefore, need to evolve strategies to bridge the gaps between training and classroom practice and diversify our understanding of unfolding children's potential and creativity. Prof. Jalaluddin also emphasized that superstructures must emerge out of the classroom.

The framework evolve in terms of areas of cooperation and modalities is a positive outcome of this Field Operational Seminar. A small group meeting between the participating organisations should now be able to give tangible formulations for future collaboration. Mr. Anil Bordia suggested that the proposed forum could meet once a year, with Prof. Jalaluddin as the fulcrum of this 'secretariat'.

APPENDIX A
FIELD OPERATIONAL SEMINAR

Field Operational Seminar on Alternate Modes in Primary Education, LJ-Rajasthan and BRAC and GSS - Bangladesh, March-April 1997

The Background

At the time of visit to Bangladesh for participation in the Conference on UPE in Bangladesh (6-10 August 1996) Anil Bordia and A.K. Jalaluddin held discussion with Mr. Fazle Hasan Abed and Ms. Kaneez Fatima of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Mr. Mahmood Hasan and Ms. Shamse Ara of Gono Sahajjo Sangstha (GSS) about exchange of ideas and experiences between Lok Jumbish (LJ) on the one hand and BRAC and GSS on the other. All concerned felt that such an exchange would be useful.

Field Operational Seminar was popularized by UNESCO during 1960s as a technique of linking field study with in-house seminar, these activities often taking place at more than one location. Much use was made of this technique in training of literacy and population education personnel. This seems to be an appropriate design for the proposed activity through which personnel from the two countries would hold meetings and study the programmes in the field to enrich their skills and capabilities.

Cooperating Agencies

1. **Lok Jumbish (LJ)** : LJ is managed by an autonomous body established by Government of Rajasthan in consultation with Government of India. The project is funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Government of India and Government of Rajasthan in the ratio of 3:2:1 respectively. It began in 1992 and by now has gained over four years of experience in widening the access to, and improving the quality of, primary education in Rajasthan. It extends to 58 blocks (out of 237) in Rajasthan.
2. **BRAC** : BRAC is an NGO with headquarters at Dhaka. Started in 1972, after Bangladesh's war of independence, as a relief agency, its celebrated Non Formal Primary Education programme began in 1985. Starting with mere 22 schools, it has now expanded to over 35,000 schools providing education to over 1.5 million children, over 70 per cent of them girls. Most of the schools provide 3 years of education, whereafter children join the nearest government school. In recent years BRAC has started basic primary education courses for adolescent girls along with Kishori Libraries (there are about 2,000 of them).
3. **GSS** : This is also an NGO, established in 1983. It started its programme of quality education in 1987. At present, GSS is running about 450 schools, each run in two shifts, spread over different parts of Bangladesh. It has a well-structured management and school supervision system and a well-tested system of staff training. GSS concentrates on child-centred pedagogy with special emphasis on language learning. Practically, all teachers are women and they are encouraged to explore their own ways to enliven the classroom environment.

Field Operational Seminar

The field operational seminar on alternative modes of primary education will be organised from the last week of March to the beginning of May 1997. The LJ team will visit Dhaka - Bangladesh between 27/3 and 3/4 and the BRAC/GSS team will visit Rajasthan during 24/4 and 1/5. The participants of the seminar will be persons connected with implementation of Lok Jumbish and those connected with BRAC and GSS. In addition, persons interested in the theme would be invited from appropriate agencies in Bangladesh and from Ministry of HRD (GoI), Government of Rajasthan and Rajasthan based Shiksha Karmi Project. It is expected that about 20 participants each would go from India to the Dhaka session and an equal number would go from Bangladesh to Rajasthan.

The objectives of the Seminar would be :

- a. To exchange experiences in provision of alternate modes of primary education;
- b. To examine issues relating to improved teaching language and mathematics;
- c. To improve understanding of child-centred learning processes;
- d. To examine feasible measures for engendering self-confidence and self-reliance among learners and teachers;
- e. To discuss issues in management at the decentralized level; and
- f. To explore possibilities of continuing cooperation among cooperating agencies.

Programme in Bangladesh and Rajasthan

On the day of arrival an evening reception will be organised. There would be a briefing meeting on the following day, sight-seeing and departure to destinations. Visit to schools/learning centres, training institutes, etc for the following 3 days. Upon return, there would be 2 days' debriefing at Dhaka for LJ team in which the experiences will be recapitulated, issues discussed and points to be followed up during Rajasthan visit formulated. At the end of BRAC/GSS team's visit in Rajasthan, there would be a 2-day concluding session at Ajmer, during which issues would be discussed and possibilities of future cooperation explored.

Arrangements

Arrangements in Bangladesh would be made through a joint BRAC-GSS group. Lok Jumbish will be responsible for arrangements in Rajasthan. These groups will attempt to so arrange the two phases of the field operational seminar, including field visits, that limitations of language do not hinder communication.

Persons visiting from Bangladesh will make their own arrangement of travel to Jaipur and likewise those visiting Bangladesh will arrange to reach Dhaka on their own. Internal travel and arrangements of boarding and lodging will be the responsibility of BRAC-GSS in respect of persons visiting Dhaka and likewise LJ will be responsible in respect of persons visiting Rajasthan. Money for out-of-pocket and other expenses will be arranged by LJ in respect of Indian teams and by BRAC/GSS in respect of Bangladesh team.

Professor A.K. Jalaluddin has been requested to liaise with the cooperating agencies and also to steer the inhouse meetings at Jaipur and Dhaka.

Documentation and Seminar Outcomes

LJ will appoint a consultant (Dr. Poonam Batra) for the documentation of the two phases of Field Operational Seminar. She will prepare a report at the end of the seminar. This report will, inter alia, be used for further cooperation among the parties concerned.

By way of outcomes of the seminar, it is hoped that the objectives stated above would be substantially achieved. In addition, cordial relations would have been established among the agencies and individuals concerned. A brief review of the Field Operational Seminar would be included in the programme of the concluding session at Ajmer.

APPENDIX B
GROUP REPORTS

GROUP REPORTS

GROUP I : MANAGEMENT

Group Members : Ariful Hossain , Kaniz Fatima, Hasina Habib, Ansar Ali, Priyamvada Singh, Rachana Pareek, Prince Salim and Sharada Jain.

The central issue for the group was to deliberate on an efficient, sensitive and appropriate management system for an educational programme with steady escalation of scale. The process of exploration was through a broad mapping of the logical geography of the concern. Four major categories emerged as areas for deliberation:

- i. Community Participation
- ii. Supervisor - Worker Relationship
- iii. School management
- iv. Evaluation

Community Participation

While the concept is generally recognized as a 'necessary' and 'non-negotiable' component in development management, there is a need to open up the layers contained in the concept. The consensus arrived at in the group on this issue was:

- a. Participation is possible or meaningful only when there is an involvement in the process of decision making
- b. Not all decisions can accommodate a large number of uninformed participants. However, it is possible to ensure an acceptability of the decision by maintaining a transparency in the logic of decision making relating to policy, finances and personnel
- c. Community is a notion which needs to be understood in its different layers, e.g., village community; teacher community; parent community; women; political representatives, etc.
- d. Also it is important to take cognizance of the fact that 'community' could refer to a whole lot of heterogeneity - rich/poor; men/women, old/young, etc. We have to be clear whose participation is important for us.
- e. Issues would indicate the appropriateness of the range of participation that is needed.

As a final verdict, the group felt that despite the scale in the programme, a good management must ensure that the (relevant) community plays a vital role in decision making, implementation and evaluation as well as in sharing the benefits. Participation could either be direct or one step removed by having access to the logic of decisions and possibility of questioning them.

Worker Relationship

The broad framework for this discussion was that the larger the scale of activities, greater the need for coordination, role definition and therefore the need for hierarchies. However, at all levels, hierarchies are not synonymous with domination. The challenge for good management is

how to ensure that hierarchies facilitate better work and do not stifle and supportive roles leave space for creativity at a lower level

The three existing models for scaled management generally visible in society are the army model; the corporate model; and the traditional school model.

The first two were thought to be unacceptable for educational management. The third model, in its classical form had a basic unit as the school, with the Head Teacher in a leadership role along with other teachers. This Head Teacher theoretically is expected to ensure quality in teaching; predictable presence and discipline; problem solving and the possibility of upward mobility.

However, in the three programmes under discussion, the operative model is the Developmental Model in which there is a basic hiatus between the 'worker' who is local and temporary and the 'manager' who are outsiders with greater job security and power of decision making. While most organizations are now attempting at a free upward mobility through all ladders of management, the gap between the local teacher who is temporary and the programme officer continues. Recently, BRAC and GSS have consciously created space for bridging this gap.

The upward mobility of local workers essentially rests on their 'capacity' to respond to more complex demands of management. Those require investments in education and her physical mobility. This entire issue has implicit repercussions for gender-equity in society.

If a programme can facilitate a continuous and tighter link between the worker and supervisor by possible shifts in roles, a new role-model for girls will emerge thereby opening up the possibility of more equitable social relations.

School management that children's potential is optimized, is a major concern for all three organizations participating in the discussion. However, it was articulated that maximum speed is possible in expansion of a programme by sacrificing diversity through a 'homogenous' treatment of children with a 'homogenous' training for teachers. This is inevitably at the cost of quality. It is evident that disaggregation of children's pace and style of learning improves quality. The real question is whether it is possible to create a situation in which teacher's style and pace can also be desegregated without compromising the end result,

Discussion on Evaluation could not take place. However, a general feeling was that if supportive roles are to be evaluated, it should be the "beneficiary" who should be the evaluator.

GROUP II : CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

Group Members : Neetu Sharma, Rohit Dhankar, Lalit Kishore, Mal Chandra Sharma, Osman Gani, Monowar Saxena, Dr. Sudhir Sarkar, Dr. Zohora Shameem, Badrun Serina and Jane Crossley.

Central issues of concern to the group members were:

- o The NFE curriculum should be developed following the objectives of the national curriculum;
- o While developing materials, there should be horizontal and vertical linkages with the national curriculum.
- o Curriculum should be developed as per the learner's needs.
- o Curriculum should be life oriented
- o Curriculum should be integrated
- o Do we need a detailed curriculum or only a curriculum schema?

Curriculum should be developed as per the learners' needs

First we should know for whom we are developing the curriculum and on the basis of the needs of that identified group of learners we should develop curriculum.

If in a programme majority of learners are girl children, then the curriculum should be specifically geared to them.

While developing the curriculum, we should also keep in mind the abilities of available teachers and should keep our curriculum simple enough so that the teachers can handle it.

On the issue of whether we need a detailed curriculum or only a curriculum schema, several ideas were debated.

Curriculum schema would broadly mean a framework of directions, general principles and objectives for the teacher on the one hand and a structure of skills, abilities and values that we wish our children to learn, on the other hand. These skills and abilities though defined clearly are not broken down into atomic skills. The specific content, for example, methods or teaching materials could be left to the teacher. Such a broad framework is likely to allow the teacher to be more reflective and creative in the classroom, leading to an organic teaching-learning process.

A curriculum schema could be also perceived as a structure of competencies, more or less broadly defined and the rest is left for the teacher to evolve methods and content of learning.

It is generally felt that due to the lack of able teachers, constraint of resources and time, there is need for a very detailed curriculum. A curriculum that is perhaps worked out to its last detail so as to ensure minimum quality input in the classroom.

However, breaking down of competencies and the detailing of steps in the curriculum and teaching methodology is sure to obscure issues of larger concern such as developing positive values, general abilities of thinking decision making, self-confidence and self-reliance in children. In order that education be truly child-centered, allowing children to develop to be creative at their

own pace, it is necessary to nurture spontaneity in the classroom. A predetermined framework of the teaching-learning process as is visible in heavily time-managed classroom structures, is an inadequate response to the spontaneity of children and the dynamics of a classroom full of 'natural' learners.

GROUP III : TEACHERS DEVELOPMENT

Group members: Neena Afreen, Aruna Dixit, H.M. Gupta, C.P. Mantri, Shamse Ara Hasan, Vivekanand Howladar, Abu Hashem Sada, Hanuman Sahay and D.D. Gupta.

All the participants felt the importance of training in order to impart quality education and for teacher to acquire self-confidence. The following were considered to be significant components of a good quality teacher training programme:

The understanding of competencies to be developed at different level and understanding the methodology of developing these competencies; developing skills to design teaching-learning materials for children.

Ability to innovate and think for alternative methods of teaching in response to 'real' classroom situation. Developing skills of classroom and time management.

Learning to be facilitative in the process of children natural ways of constructing meaning.

Internalizing children's ways of thinking and learning so that to respond appropriately to their errors and readiness levels for cognising formal learning.

Constructing parameters and measures of continuous and comprehensive assessment of each child.

Developing an interest in reading and self-learning.

Developing skills for self-evaluation.

Communicate with and value children.

Training of teachers should essentially include : basic initial training; monthly refresher interactions, on the job supervision and teacher support, frequent interactions that focus on academic discussions on children, pedagogy, education, etc.

The strategies of teachers education development and support should include intense and continuous training, supervision, frequent; demonstrations and discussions; counselling, sharing and discussions on reading materials, exchange of programme with other institutions, workshops/seminars, radio/video programmes for exposure to new ideas and the use of video for self-critique, analysis and development.

GROUP IV - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Group members : Anil Bordia, Musuka Chowdhury, Shaheduel Hasan, Kiran Dogra, Yasub Khan, Seema Sharma, Harun-ur-Rashid and Jazeen.

Responsibilities of the Community

- o Repair of existing building, additional renovations
- o Raise money (donations)
- o Free distribution of textbooks
- o Reception of new students
- o Monitoring participation of every child
- o Providing hostel facilities
- o Finding location for schools
- o Basically facilitate access of education for community children

Common Problems

Why is education not reaching the people? Why the crisis?

One inherent problem in both countries is that the system does not want empowerment of the community. How is each organization dealing with this to create a better learning environment?

LJ is working inside the system. It has been commonly observed that LJ starts its programme in a school, there is an efficiency level of 30%. Soon, by improving attendance level, providing regular supply of books and ensuring timely schedules of schools, LJ succeeds in improving the efficiency level up to 50%.

LJ chooses to work in areas that allow processes of cooperation and mobilization.

GSS and BRAC on the other hand have programmes other than education which promote the learning environment. In both cases, they have rural development programmes, income generating activities, women's groups and other such interventions which help to create a demand for education via village groups. However, success of the education programme has led to its demand even in areas where there are no rural developmental programmes.

The difference between the two organizations is that BRAC acts as a bridge to the formal system. More than 50% children join the formal school system after the completion of the 3-year cycle. The school house is not a permanent structure.

In GSS, all 5 years of primary education is provided, and the school house is permanent. The school is not seen as a transitional one and GSS hopes that it will be registered with the Government and be taken over by the government. They have already initiated this process while negotiating with the Government on the issue of supplying books to all children of GSS schools.

The differences of the systems bring our focus on the strengths and needs of each organization.

The strength of BRAC and GSS is that their contact with the community starts before the education intervention itself. This is achieved through their rural development programmes. Hence social mobilization takes place and creates awareness amongst the communities for education.

This very success of both the organization has created a need for planning for a wider reach of primary education through collaboration and cooperation.

This has been well exemplified by LJ, which has succeeded in bringing various NOGs on a common platform together with the government in making Universal Primary Education (UPE) a common pursuit and concern.

APPENDIX C
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANTS OF THE FIELD OPERATIONAL SEMINAR IN BANGLADESH AND RAJASTHAN - MARCH TO MAY 1997

Participants from Lok Jumbish Parishad:

1. Mr. Anil Bordia, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Lok Jumbish Parishad.
2. Dr. Lalit Kishore Lohonir, Emeritus and Honorary Consultant, Sandhank.
3. Mr. Prince Salim, Project Officer, Pisangan.
4. Mr. Ram Prashad Sharma, Assistant Project Officer, Pokaran
5. Mr. Hanuman Sahay, Senior Lecturer of DIET, Ajmer
6. Mr. Mal Chandra Sharma, Assistant Director of Lok Jumbish
7. Ms. Kiran Dogra, Project Officer, Shahbad
8. Mr. Yosub Khan, Assistant Programme Officer
9. Ms. Aruna Dixit, Lecturar in DIET, Dungarpur
10. Dr. Priyamvada Singh, Assistant Director of Lok Jumbish Parishad
11. Dr. Dau Dayal Gupta, Director of DIET, Bikaner
12. Mr. Pavanesh Kumar Kaushik, Deputy Director, Shiksha Karmi Board
13. Ms. Seema Sharma, Assistant Director, Samyukta, Ladpura
14. Ms. Neetu Sharma, Senior Specialist, NFE
15. Dr. Sharada Jain, Coordinator, Research Wing, Sandhan
16. Mr. Osman Gani, Assistant Director of Non-formal Education, Rajasthan
17. Ms. Rachna Pareek, Samyukta, Dausa
18. Mr. Rohit Dhankar, Director, Digantar

Participants from GSS:

1. Shamse Ara Hasan, Programme Head, Education
2. Rekha Kibria, Coordinator, Education
3. Arijit Roy, Coordinator, Education
4. Dr. Zohora Shameem, Senior Researcher, Education
5. Badiuddin Nazir, Secretary, IQER
6. Abu Hashem Sada, Chief, Training Division
7. Dr. Gufur, Chief, RMDU
8. Mr. Ansar Ali, Regional Coordinator
9. Mannan Haider, Regional Coordinator
10. Harun-ur-Rashid, Field Supervisor
11. Samsul Islam, Trainer
12. Badrun Setina, Trainer
13. Hasina Habib, Regional Coordinator, Dhaka Urban
14. Jane Crossley, Curriculum Advisor
15. Khawaja Sabrina Tofeal, Assistant Librarian

BRAC Participants:

1. Kaniz Fatima
2. Khandakar Monowar Hossain
3. Masuka Chowdhury
4. Tazin
5. Neena Afreen
6. Ariful Hossain
7. Shahedul Hasan
8. Sarena Samad
9. Sukumar Mallik
10. AbdulKaiym
11. Mizanur Rahman
12. Vivekanand Hawladar

Consultants

1. Prof. A.K. Jalaluddin
2. Dr. Poonam Batra



शहीद शंकर गुहा नियोगी
पुस्तकालय एवं सांस्कृतिक केंद्र, भोपाल
(कमला सदगोपाल पब्लिक ट्रस्ट का एक कार्यक्रम)

परि. सं. कूट सं.

1. देय तारीख तक किताब न लौटाने पर नियमानुसार विलंब शुल्क देना होगा।
2. यदि किसी और को जरूरत न हो तो किताब दोबारा जारी की जा सकती है।
3. किताब पर कोई भी निशान लगाना या कुछ भी लिखना सख्त मना है। इस पर दंड का प्रावधान है।
4. किताब को गंदा करने, फाड़ने, खोने या देय तारीख के 30 दिन के अंदर न लौटाने पर उसकी जगह वही नई किताब या दुगुनी कीमत देनी होगी।

कृपया किताबों को साफ-सुथरा रखने में मदद करें।

संपर्क

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