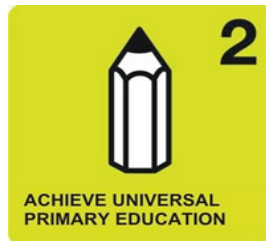


A Situation Analysis Report on Education (MDG 2)

Bangladesh

A Baseline for Needs Assessment and Costing



**General Economics Division, Planning Commission,
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh &
UNDP Bangladesh**



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Conducted by

**General Economics Division, Planning Commission,
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh &
UNDP Bangladesh**

This report is the situational assessment of the MDG 2 on Education and has been prepared by Prof. Dr M Habibur Rahman as Social Development Analyst (Education) for the Project "Support to Monitoring PRS and MDGs in Bangladesh". The inferences from the study were utilized for the MDG Needs Assessment and Costing for Bangladesh through the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Education.

The MDG Needs Assessment and Costing (2009-2015) for Bangladesh contains the detailed situation analysis, the challenges, proposed interventions and costs for implementing the interventions to achieve the MDGs in Bangladesh.

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Disclaimer

The analysis, findings & recommendations of this situation analysis report on Education (MDG 2) do not necessarily reflect the views of General Economics Division, Planning Commission and United Nations Development Programme, Bangladesh, rather with which the duly author is concerned.

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Annex

A B B R E V I A T I O N

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BNFE	Bureau of Non Formal Education
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFA	Dakar Framework of Action
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
IDEAL	Intensive District Education for All
INFEP	Integrated Non Formal Education Programme
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MWTL	Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NFE	Non Formal Education
NFEP	Non Formal Education Project
NGO	Non-government Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action
PEDP	Primary Education Development Program
PLCE	Post Literacy and Continuing Education
ROSC	Reaching Out of Schools Children
TLM	Total Literacy Movement
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All

An Analysis Report On Achieving Universal Primary Education

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Getting access to basic education has been a fundamental human right of every citizen of a country. This fundamental right has been denied to a large section of the population lying particularly below the poverty line in many developing countries of the world including Bangladesh. Acute poverty in their families may be singled out as the major cause behind such situation. Recognizing the critical importance of transforming them into effective human resources and thereby making them worthy citizens the Millennium Summit that held in Dakar back in 2000 declared 'achieving universal primary education' as one of its major agendas. As set out in the Millennium declaration this goal, known as MDG 2, has been the goal for providing access to primary education to all by the year 2015. However, Bangladesh, as a signatory to the Dakar declaration expressed strong commitment towards achieving the goal of universal primary education which has sustainable positive implications for reduction in poverty by significantly large margin.

To fulfill her commitment to the international forum and also meeting the constitutional obligation of ensuring universal and free compulsory primary education to all the children Bangladesh has undertaken several initiatives for the development of primary education and achieving the time bound MDG targets. Although the government initiatives in the area of primary education began in 1981 through a couple of Universal Primary Education projects more focused initiatives were made in the 1990s following the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) that held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. The present study however focuses on the progress made since 1990 towards achieving MDG 2 with regard to the set target 'ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education'. Progress with regard to this MDG target and the future potential for achieving the 2015 target has been assessed by analysing the current status and the trend growth in each of the three selected indicators under this target for education namely net enrolment ratio in primary education, primary school completion rate, and adult literacy rate.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the study is to analyse the development records with regard to achieving the millennium development goal of in the area of Primary Education. However, the specific objectives of the study are:

- to take a stock of the development record of the country with regard to the MDG 2 indicators
- to find out the contributing factors for making progress in some targets and lagging behind in other targets
- to identify the major challenges for the government to meet the attaining of the MDG 2 targets

1.3 Organization of the Report

The report is organised in the following way. After a brief introduction about the study the methodology followed for conducting the analysis has been presented in Section 2. A brief overview of the primary education sector is provided in Section 3. Situation and trend analysis of the MDG 2 indicators are discussed in Section 4. Major programs undertaken for developing the primary education sector have been presented in Section 5. The major challenges on the ways to achieving the MDG targets have been discussed in Section 6. The report ends with the concluding remarks given in Section 7.

2. Methodology

2.1 Estimating the Trend Growth Rates

This study analyses the current status and the future growth potential of the MDG 2 indicators for achieving the target by the year 2015. The trend growth rate of the indicators has been calculated by estimating simple linear regression model. The regression coefficients are then used for forecasting the future growth path at the current growth trend. On the other hand, required growth rate for achieving the targets in the remaining period has been estimated using the formula for calculating the simple average annual growth rate.

2.2 Data Sources

The analysis in the current study has been done based on secondary data. Reports and documents published by the government, national and international agencies, development journals, have been the key sources of data which includes, among others, MOPME, DPE, BBS, National Plan of Action, BANBEIS, UNESCO, MICS, CAMPE.

3. Overview of the Primary and Adult Education

Bangladesh sustains one of the largest primary education systems in the world with as many as 80401 primary institutions of 10 different kinds namely, GPS, RNGPS, NRNGPS, experimental schools, community schools, kindergartens, NGO schools, ebtedaee madrashas, primary sections of high madrashas, primary sections of high schools. According to the School Survey Report 2008, GPS, RNGPS, Experimental and community schools constitute 75% of the total institutions. These four categories of institutions are providing primary education to 81.9% of the total primary school enrolled children of over 16.3 million. The proportions of boys and girls enrolled at the primary level are 49.3% and 50.7% respectively. A total of 364494 teachers are engaged in primary teaching in all the ten categories of institutions comprising 40.4% female and 59.6% male. The proportion of female teachers in GPS, RNGPS, PTI and community schools is 50.2%, 32.2%, 39.0% and 73.6% respectively and the pupil-teacher ratio is 51.4, 44.7, 48.1 and 43.35 respectively. NGOs in the country have been making significant contribution to the education sector. About 500 NGOs are currently running 48,855 learning centers for providing primary education to 10,24,495 females and 6,06,802 males in the country (CAMPE, 2007).

A total of 518 NGOs have been engaged in education programs of which more than 450 have adult literacy programs integrated into NFE. The NGOs are providing adult education to 1,19,277 females and 26,193 males through 6,574 learning centers (CAMPE, 2007). However, some of the major NGOs in the country offering adult education are BRAC, Proshika, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, FIVDB, Action Aid, Swanirvar Bangladesh. BRAC has been the largest NGO in the country operating the largest non-formal education program. It runs 34000 NFPE schools serving 1.02 million un-enrolled and drop out children of the marginal families.

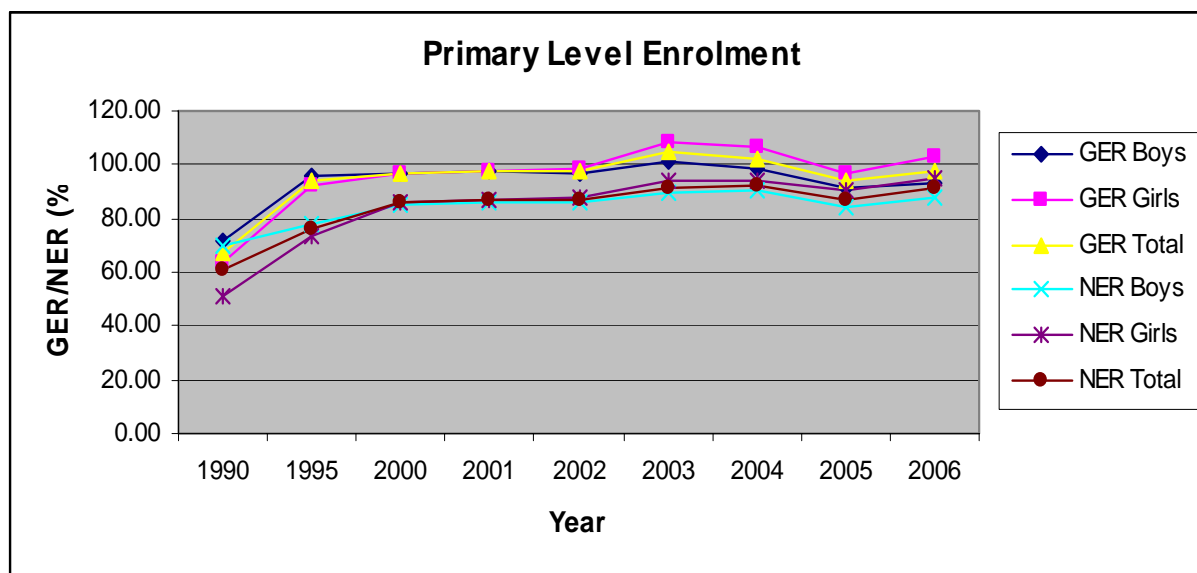
4. Situation and Trend Analysis of the Universal Access to Primary Education Indicators

4.1 Indicator 1: Net Enrolment in Primary Education

Accessibility situation at the primary education is generally assessed using two common indicators - Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) and Net Enrolment Rate (NER).

Gross enrolment calculation considers all children or young people enrolled in a given education level regardless of age while net enrolment takes into account only the primary school age group children (6 – 10 years).

Figure 1: Primary School Enrolment



Source: DPE, 2006.

4.1.1 Net Enrolment Rate (NER)

Net Enrolment Rate refers to the number of pupils in the official school age group in a grade, cycle or level of education in a given school year expressed as percentage of the corresponding population of eligible official age group. Although gross enrolment rate has wider coverage NER gives a concrete picture on the proportion of the specific age group children (e.g., 6-10 age group) actually enrolled at the primary level.

Status and Trend

Achievement in bringing the primary school age children to the schools has so far been quite satisfactory. According to the School Survey Report 2008, net enrolment rate in the year 2007 is 91.1% (with 94.7% for the girls) which was 60.48% in 1990. In 2005 baseline survey NER was 87.2% (with 90.1% for the girls). However, the growth in NER picked up in the early 1990s following the World Conference on Education for All. In the first half of the 1990s average annual growth rate was estimated to be about 5%. An important feature of the improvement in NER growth is faster and relatively consistent growth of girls' enrolment compared to that for the boys. In the year 2006 net enrolment for boys and girls is estimated at 87.60% and 94.50% respectively which was 69.43% for boys and 50.76% for girls in 1990. The recent NER scenario for the boys and girls however demonstrate attainment of gender parity at the primary level. The rate of growth of NER for girls picked up in 1993 and resulted in a situation when the proportion of boys was overtaken by the girls in 1997. The increase in girls' enrolment resulting in reduction in gender gap may be attributed to certain initiatives of the government that include stipend program, media outreach, satellite and village-based schools, and recruitment of female teachers (Kalene, 2005). Increase in the growth momentum in NER in general may be attributed to the focused and substantial initiatives made by the government in the 1990s through a number of programs undertaken for meeting the Dakar Framework of Action commitment. The major three programs undertaken during the period which made significant contribution to the development of primary education in the country have been The General Education Project; Primary Education Development Program; and the Food for Education Program (later replaced by Cash for Education program) (NPA II, 2007). Running multiple shifts in 3 roomed schools and hiring an increased number of teachers contributed largely to the increase in primary enrolment (Latif, 2004). A multivariate analysis carried out under the World Bank study (2005) found a strong and highly significant association between net enrolment rate and Food for Education and VGD programs of the government. Moreover, free distribution of textbooks, scholarships examinations in

primary schools, and stipends for primary school children from poor families have been considered as the major interventions that contributed significantly to the increase in enrolment rate at the primary level.

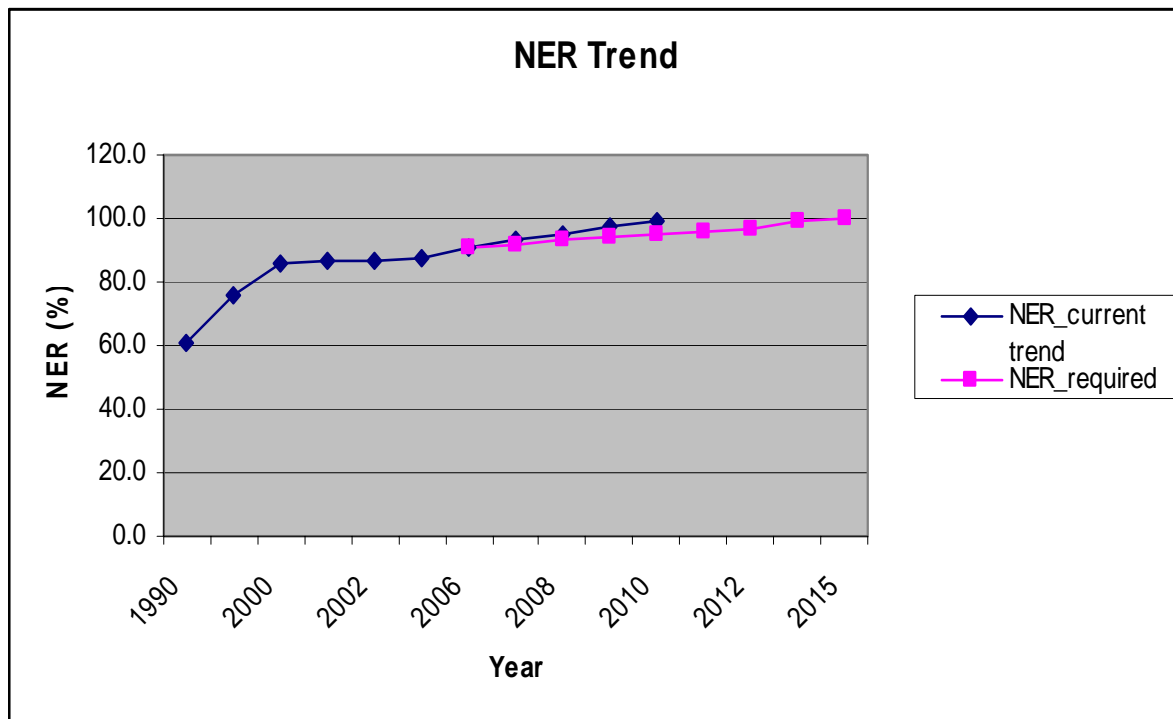
Detailed information on different aspects of primary education in the country and in particular the enrolment situation has been provided for the first time by the baseline survey conducted in 2005 by the MIS cell under the Directorate of Primary Education. Recently, two school survey reports (2006 and 2007) by the same directorate have been completed and are in process of publication. According to the 2007 survey report the NER for boys has increased in 36 districts and decreased in 26 districts over the baseline figures collected in 2005. was higher in 15 districts while the rest 49 districts had higher NER for the girls. Among all the 64 districts Chandpur recorded the highest NER of 99.8% for the boys while Chuadanga had the highest NER for the girls with 99.9%. On the other hand, NER for the boys and the girls was the lowest in Gazipur (65.4%) and Sherpur (70.2%) districts respectively.

Household Income and Expenditure survey conducted by the BBS in 2005 also provides data on children (6-10 years) school enrolment with division and rural urban dis-aggregation (Annex Table 4). But the enrolment figure provided in this report (80.42) is much lower than that provided by the BANBEIS (87.20). Nevertheless, one noticeable feature of the enrolment rate distribution is a large urban – rural difference in the two very low performing divisions namely Chittagong and Sylhet – the two regions with a considerable proportion of ethnic population and of different topography. In other divisions also, except Khulna, urban enrolment is higher than rural enrolment.

Target achievement

Achievement of Bangladesh in enrolling the primary school age children has so far been quite satisfactory. The trend growth rate of net enrolment since 1991 has been estimated at 2.088. The rate of growth got momentum in the first half of the 1990s when the major programs for development of the primary education sector had been initiated. However, at the current rate of growth 100% net enrolment target will be achieved by the year 2011. To achieve the target by the year 2015 a sustained 1.011% average annual growth rate of enrolment in the remaining years will be required. For this to happen, appropriate supportive measures that are currently in place need to be continued in the future years.

Figure 2: Trend in Net Enrolment Rate



4.1.2 Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)

Gross Enrolment Rate is defined as the total enrolment of students in a grade or level of education, regardless of age, expressed as percentage of the corresponding eligible official age-group population in a given school year.

Status and Trend

According to the latest available (DPE, MIS) database overall GER is calculated to be 97.7% with 92.9% for the boys and 102.9% for the girls. Gross enrolment rate attained high growth in the first half of the 1990s – the period immediately after the WCEFA declaration. Theoretically, faster growth can be achieved in the initial years of intervention which continues up to a certain high level. After that the growth rate slows down. The growth in GER got to the peak of 12.79% in 1995. But in the second half of the same decade, the growth rate slowed down and fell to less than 1% a year over the next few years. It also recorded negative growth rates in some of the years. Fluctuations in the GER is also observed – reached 104.77% in 2003 and then dropped down to 93.71% in 2005. Although the GER seems to have dropped down in 2005, this data is in fact more representative of the actual situation compared to the earlier ones as it is collected directly from the schools through a much more carefully conducted baseline survey by the EMIS cell of the M & E division under DPE. On the other hand, in the previous years data were collected by the Monitoring and Evaluation department from the Thana level education offices. Faster growth in girls' enrolment than the boys' is due to the special incentives provided by the government.

According to the baseline survey 2005 GER was higher for girls in 41 districts while it was higher for boys in 23 districts.

The highest GER for boys was found in Jhalokathi (115.1%) followed by Satkhira (114.1%), Panchagarh (113.8%) and Lalmonirhat (109.3%). For the girls highest GER is recorded also in Jhalokathi (113.7%) followed by Panchagarh (111.9%) and Satkhira (107.1%). On the other hand, Netrokona (70.8%) recorded the lowest GER followed by Cox's Bazar (74.1%) and Gazipur (80.0%). For the girls Netrokona (74.8%) is at the bottom followed by Gazipur (82.9%) and Sirajgonj (85.0%).

Target achievement

Although there was no target set for GER under MDG 2, the National Plan of Action II suggested targets for 2005, 2010 and 2015 as 103, 108 and 110 respectively. Comparing these targets with the current GER growth trend it may be concluded that little acceleration in the current growth rate can put the country pretty close to the EFA target of 110 by the year 2015. It also needs to be mentioned here that when NER increases and reaches at universal level the GER is expected to go down and the gap between GER and NER becomes narrower.

Indicator 2: Proportion of Pupils Starting Grade I who reaches Grade V (Primary Cycle Completion Rate)

Primary school completion rate, measured as the number of pupils starting grade I and completing grade V, has been one of the three indicators for attaining the target set for achieving universal primary education i.e., MDG 02. Like the target for net enrolment ratio, the target set for this indicator is also 100% by the year 2015.

Status and Trend

In comparison with progress in other fronts of primary education such as net and gross enrolment rate achievement in the area of primary cycle completion has been quite disappointing. Data on completion and drop out rate is available only for a few years with no gender level dis-aggregation. However, in the first half of the 1990s the growth in completion rate was 7.5% per annum which slowed down to 5.8% in

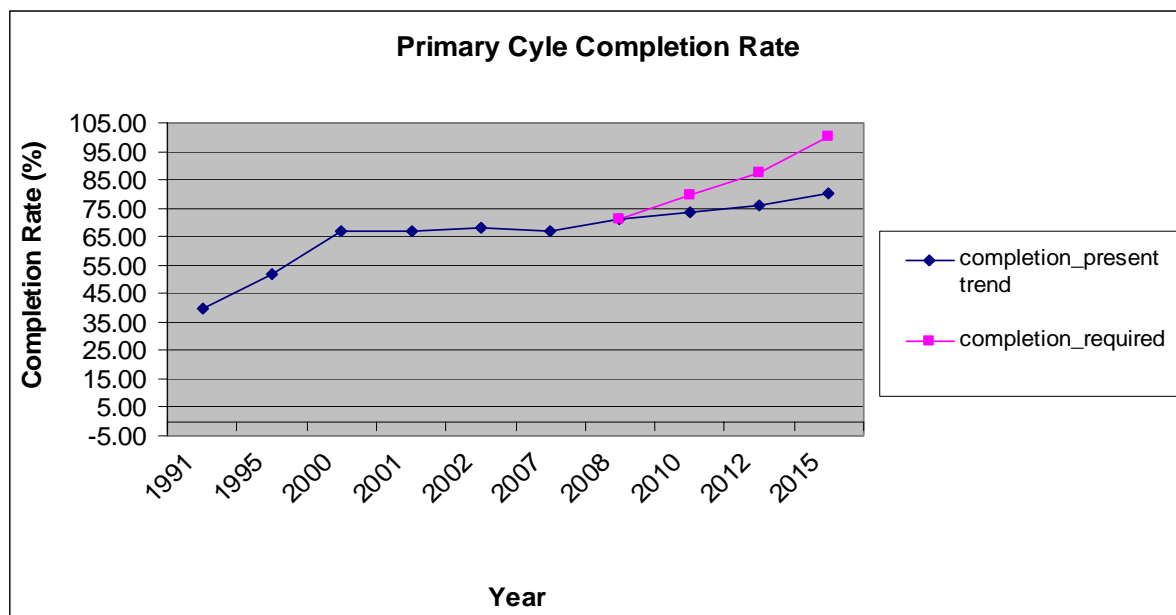
the second half of the decade. Compared to other indicators the baseline completion rate figure was very low – only 40% in the year 1991. Surprisingly, since 2000 the rate became virtually stagnant at 67%. Moreover, in 2005, the survival rate to grade 5 is to be, 52.9% and the drop out rate is reported to be 47.2%. Both are significantly higher than the earlier figures. In the two school surveys conducted in 2006 and 2007 survival rate is found to have fluctuated a bit – 50.2% in 2006 and 51.9% in 2007.

The potential low primary cycle completion rate and a very high drop out rate is manifested in the all the three survey findings. Survival rate of the primary level students to grade V as 4 years of primary schooling is also important for a sustainable level of education. Before 2005, drop out rate was calculated based on the sample survey conducted in Dhaka using reconstructed cohort method. In 2005, 47.2% drop out rate has been calculated based on the data collected only from GPSs and RNGPSs. The pupils who left these two categories of schools and joined other schools are not taken into account. As a result, transfer of pupils were treated as dropouts and thus the real dropout rate was overstated.

Several reasons behind the low primary completion rate or high drop out rate at the primary level have been identified. Among these, poverty in the family has been identified by several studies as the major one. This, however, leads to student absenteeism in general in the schools due to high opportunity cost and other hidden costs. The 2005 baseline survey data estimated 22% rate of absenteeism in the three major categories of schools – GPS, RNGPS, and community schools. Overcrowded classrooms and lack of facilities at the schools are generally considered to be responsible for low school attendance rate (Chowdhury, 2002).

The World Bank study (2005) on the MDG progress of Bangladesh revealed a positive correlation between enrolment rate and household living standards. The underlying logic may be the same in the case of high drop out rate as the poor face a high opportunity cost of sending their children to school. The study also found positive association between consumption expenditure per capita and primary completion rate. This finding is consistent with the general perception that poverty in the family causes drop out in general.

Figure 3: Primary School Completion Rate – Current and required trend



Target Achievement

The current trend growth rate of primary school completion has been estimated at 1.3%. If this growth trend is sustained till the end of the scheduled time Bangladesh would be able to achieve 80% completion rate – way below the 100% target set for the year 2015. As shown in the above graph the gap between the required and actual completion rate widening further as time progresses. However, to achieve the target by the year 2015, the required growth rate to be attained is little over 6%. Such high level of growth in completion rate had been achieved during the first half of the 1990s when several initiatives were made by the government to develop the primary education sector of the country.

Indicator 3: Literacy Rate of 15+ years (Adult Literacy Rate)

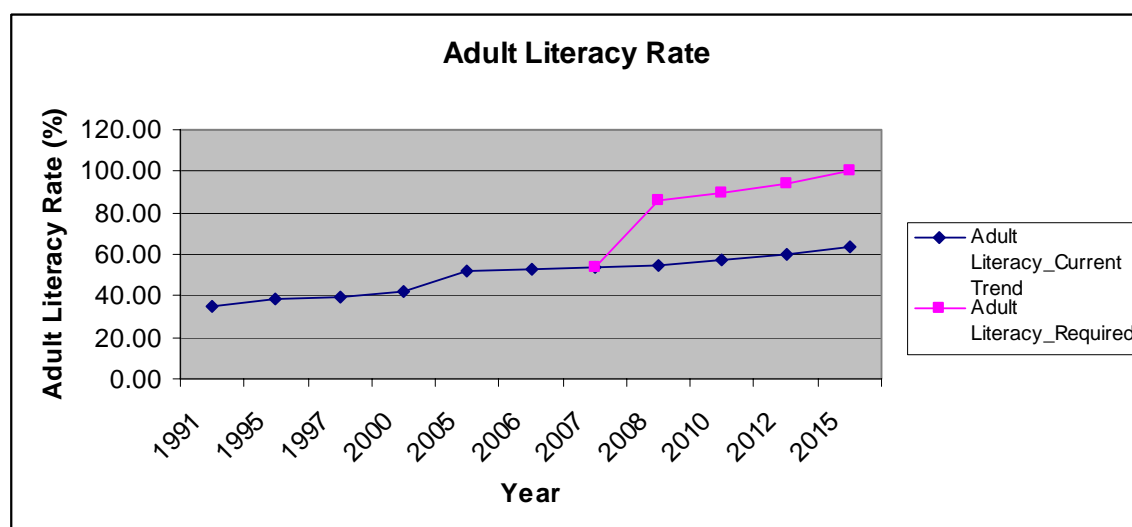
Adult Literacy and Non Formal Education programs offer not only instruction in reading, writing, and calculation but also provide information and skills to assist participants in obtaining employment, improving their productivity and reaching a better quality of life. These skills help participants to adapt to new workplace environments. Survey results of different countries suggest that a basic education cause adults to reconsider and improve their use of land, water, crops and financial resources. Learners gain the skills needed to work in groups, to communicate effectively, and learn leadership, management and accounting skills.

Status and Trend

As envisaged in the historical data for Bangladesh provided by the UNESCO adult literacy rate in the year 2007 is 53.5% with 58.7% for the male and 48% for the female. In the first half of the 1990s adult literacy rate grew at an average rate of about 2% per annum which continued until the end of the decade. During 2000-05 the growth rate increased considerably (4.5%) which slowed down again in the last couple of years. During 1991 to 2007, the growth rate for female (5.4%) has been much faster than that for the male (2.0%). The NGOs have historically demonstrated their interest in this particular area. In the 1990s, the support of DNFE enhanced NGO involvement towards achieving the millennium target. But with the abolition of DNFE, for reasons of administrative convenience, in 2003 public sector investment on basic literacy programs particularly for the adults has been abandoned. In the absence of government involvement NGO activity in adult literacy and adult education drastically declined. The major adult literacy programs in Bangladesh such as Total Literacy Movement (TLM) generated very little impact on improving the literacy status of the population (CAMPE, 2003). The NGOs, who are the key players in providing services in this area, pointed out a number of difficulties in implementing their programs which include, among others, lack of community ownership of the programs, lack of sufficient motivation and guidance among the concerned staff, problems in timely deployment of project personnel, lack of interest among learners due to absence of immediate results, lack of perceived utility and lack of community acceptance (World Bank, 2007). All these factors contributed to a very sluggish growth progress in increasing the adult literacy rate in Bangladesh and therefore making the MDG target extremely difficult to achieve within the specified time frame. Despite such overall slow growth performance, there is some room for complacency particularly in the area of gender parity. As demonstrated by the Gender parity index data¹ adult women literacy rate recorded significant improvement over the years. As compared to 0.58 in 1991, the index reached to 0.80 in 2005 and 0.82 in 2007.

¹ Gender Parity Index (GPI) value of 1 indicates parity between the two sexes

Figure 4: Current and Required Trend Growth in Adult Literacy Rate



Target Achievement

Currently, the estimated trend growth rate of adult literacy is only 1.3%. If this rate continues the adult literacy rate at the end of the MDG target year will be about 63.8% meaning a huge shortfall of 56.6% from the targeted 100% rate. To achieve the target by the year 2015 the required average annual growth rate over the remaining years is estimated to be as high as 10.7%. Given the existing pace of growth resulting from the initiatives undertaken so far it sounds quite optimistic to achieve the target within the remaining about 7 years time. Nevertheless, more effective initiatives have to be designed and implemented based on the experience gathered so far from the earlier ones which would lead the country to get closer to target rate though not achieve it fully within the stipulated time frame.

5. Early Childhood Care and Education

For pre-school aged children, preschool or early childhood education can contribute to human capital development especially among poor children (Danzinger and Waldfogel, 2000). In line with EFA goals, NPA I proposed an Early Childhood Education Development Programme, covering the 4-5 years old children. NPA II also envisages that by 2015 all pre-school children, 3-5 years of age, are attending ECCE programs of some kind and have access to programmes of health, nutrition, social, physical and intellectual development, and being initiated into formal education. In Bangladesh although Early Childhood Care and Development is a relatively new concept several initiatives have already been undertaken by the government, NGOs, and development partners. BRAC, DAM, Save the Children USA, Plan International, UNICEF may be named as some of such organisations working in this area with a number of innovative programs which are mostly at their pilot stage and are running on a relatively small scale. These initiatives include, 'baby classes' within and outside primary schools, need-based school preparedness skills programmes, pre-school programmes for the disadvantaged, 'baby classes' in satellite schools, pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-numeracy skills programmes, introduction of play groups and kindergarten classes in English medium schools, pre-primary religious education in maktabs, and literacy skills training in day care centres (UNESCO-IBE, 2006). The target groups for these programmes are mothers, facilitators, community monitors.

The Integrated Non Formal Education Program began ECCE in 1993 in 69 thanas implemented by NGOs with support of the government and UNICEF. The major objective of this program was to prepare children in poor, rural households for primary schooling. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs started an ECD

project in 2001 (up to 2004) which was implemented by Bangladesh Shishu Academy. Advocacy, caregivers' education, school readiness, and networking and capacity building had been the major activities of this project.

Ministry of Religious Affairs has been undertaking programs (2006-08) for providing pre-primary education to 16,20,000 children through 18000 education centers (mosques) at an estimated cost of Tk 21600 lakh. They also have future targets of covering 36,00,000 children through 24,000 centers during 2009-13. Another program that is currently underway (2006-08) of this ministry is to provide pre-primary education to 80,610 children through 2687 temples at an estimated cost of Tk 757 lakh. Further extension of this project (2009-10) will cover 161220 children through the same number of temples.

BRAC initiated its own program of one year pre-primary class. Until 2005, 16025 pre-primary centers are in operation with 400,625 children (25 in each class).

6. Secondary Education

At the secondary level three categories of schools are in operation in the country – Junior secondary, public secondary and private secondary schools. According to BANBEIS data of 2005, total number of secondary schools in the country is 18500 comprising 4322 Junior secondary schools, 317 Public Secondary schools and 13861 Private Secondary schools. About 20% of these schools are exclusively for the female students. Approximately 86% of these schools are located in the rural areas. The total number of teachers working in these schools is 238158 with 20.28% female. The average teacher – student ratio is 1:33. The proportion of trained teachers is much high in the public schools (73.08%) than in the private schools (53.53%). On the average, female enrolment (52.28%) is higher than that for the male. But the issue that needs special attention is the consistently low rate of completion at the secondary level. In 2005, the completion rate is estimated at a mere 19.98% - 23.46% male and 16.71% female.

During the last about one decade the government has undertaken a number of programs for improving access to and the quality of secondary education, reducing drop out rate and increasing female enrolment and survival rate at the secondary level. Developing and expanding physical infrastructure, construction of new buildings, supplying computer and other office equipments, providing financial support to the female students through the stipend program, imparting training to the teachers and the head teachers for improving their efficiency have been the major activities under these initiatives. These projects are supported the government and the respective development partners . The programs include the following.

- Improvement of Selected Madrashas (government and non-government) Project (1997-2004) at an estimated cost of Tk 19975 lakh funded by the government;
- Improvement of Selected Secondary Schools (government and non-government) Project (1997-2007) at an estimated cost of Tk 52000 lakh and funded by the GoB.
- Extension of the existing buildings of the Selected Education Institutions Project (1999-2006) with an estimated cost of Tk 48307 lakh funded by the GoB
- Construction and re-construction of the Education Institution Buildings Project (1998-2006) with an estimated cost of Tk 50000 lakh funded by GoB
- Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (1999-2006) funded by GoB and ADB at an estimated cost of Tk 49020 lakh
- Female Secondary Stipend Project – Phase II (2005-08) at a cost of Tk 50298.60 lakh from GoB sources
- Female Secondary School Assistance Project – Phase II (2001-07) at a cost of Tk 76626.80 lakh funded by IDA
- Female Secondary Education Stipend Project – Phase III (2004-06) at an estimated cost of Tk 2099.58 lakh funded by NORAD
- Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (2005-11) at an estimated cost of Tk 63019 lakh funded by GoB, CIDA, and ADB

7. The Programs undertaken for achieving the MDG targets

Following the World Conference on Education for All in 1990, several initiatives have been made for achieving primary education goals. A number of NGOs also extended their support to the government in this regard. However, the major initiatives of the government towards development of primary education and adult education in the country include the following.

7.1 Primary Education

The **General Education Project** was undertaken for a period of six years from 1990 to 1996 with an estimated cost of US\$310.2 million. The major activities of the project include, among others, construction and reconstruction of classrooms and Satellite Schools Pilot Program with training of teachers towards increasing the access to education; training of teachers, upgrading facilities at the PTIs, curriculum and textbook development etc towards improving the quality of education.

School Attractiveness Program was initiated in 10 Upazilas of 5 Divisions in the country under the General Education Project. The program aimed at motivating the students to go to school regularly and making the schools student friendly. An important feature of this program was to provide educational materials, school uniforms, sports equipment and occasionally nutritive food to poor students, particularly the girls. About 400,000 children benefited from this project. The rate of enrolment and attendance in these schools increased. The rate of dropouts decreased remarkably in the project areas.

Satellite schools have been established to bring the schools nearer to the door steps of the children who cannot travel to the main school. A total of 194 schools were established experimentally under the General Education Project. Then another 5000 schools were set up by 2001. Students after completing grade II from these schools are admitted to the mother primary schools. Rate of attendance of the students in such schools is almost 100%.

Under the General Education Project, the government established less expensive community schools in the areas with no school. School buildings were constructed on the land donated by the local people and necessary facilities were provided by the government.

Establishment of the **Ministry of Primary and Mass Education** in 1992. The major objective of establishing a separate ministry was to universalise primary education as well as the elimination of the gender and poverty gaps.

Passing of the **Compulsory Primary Education Act** in the parliament 1993. A National Plan of Action for Education for All was prepared with the major objective of increasing access to primary education and reducing poverty. This act provided the 5 year primary education free for all in the government run schools and free upto grade 8 for the girls in the rural areas. In addition, textbooks at the primary level are free for students in all government and registered non-government schools.

Government financed **Food for Education Program** was introduced in 1993 to compensate opportunity cost of poor parents for sending their children to school. It provided food rations to 20 percent of poor primary school age children in specifically targeted rural areas. This helped increase enrolment and school attendance and prevented child labour. About 2.2 million disadvantaged students were taken under the "Food for Education Program". In July 2002 Cash for Education Grant replaced the Food for Education Program which provides stipend to the poor children targeting an estimated beneficiary of 5.5 million.

Primary Education Development Program (PEDP I) was designed and implemented by the government between 1998 and 2003 with an estimated total cost of US\$2.7 billion. The project had the particular focus on improving the quality and efficiency of the school system, while continuing to improve equitable access to quality primary schools in the underserved areas. PEDP I had 10 major components/sub-components (out of the total 26) intended to enhance access and improve quality of primary education. Nine of the projects were dedicated to improving the quality.

Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL) project, created by the UNICEF and devoted to the development of primary education in Bangladesh, has been implemented by the DPE under the PEDP I. It was started in 1996 and continued up to 2004. This project had 4 major components to achieve its goal namely (a) local level planning, management and monitoring; (b) school quality; (c) social mobilization and communication; and (d) monitoring of learning achievement. An innovative teaching method was developed based on Multiple Intelligence theory called “Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning (MWTL)” under the project to make the teaching-learning method more child-centered, participatory and joyful for the children. Because of its very attractive nature this program has been able to create considerable amount of interest among the teachers and the children (DPE, 2003). An important feature of this program was taking up micro level planning through the coordinated efforts of the management committees, teachers, students and guardians. However, by the year 2003, the project covered 36 districts and over 9.8 million primary school students. Evidence suggests that the initiatives undertaken under the IDEAL project made significant contribution to improving quality of education in the IDEAL schools in comparison to the non-IDEAL schools (IER, 2002)

PEDP II was initiated in 2003 at an estimated cost of US\$1815 million. The key objectives of the program are increasing schools access, participation and completion in accordance with the government’s EFA, MDGs and PRS commitments. It covers 83% of the primary level students through mainly 4 types of schools namely GPS, RNgPS, community schools, and experimental schools attached with PTIs. Infrastructure support is provided to the GPSs only while free text books are supplied to all the 4 types.

Out of the 4 components of PEDP II component 2 and 4 are attributable directly to improving the quality and access to primary education in particular. Component 2 focuses especially on the quality improvement in schools and classrooms. Over 45,000 new and existing teachers have received one year C-in-Ed training with another 19,000 undergoing this training out of a target of 90,000 resulting in better trained teachers placed in schools. Component 4 focuses on equitable access to quality education for those who have never attended formal school or who have dropped out before completing class 5. Under this component under the GOB stipend project, approximately 4.3 million children comprising around 40% of the poorest children from all eligible schools in rural areas have received stipend support.

5.2 Adult Literacy

Integrated Non Formal Education Program (INFEP) was launched in 1991 for the period until 1997 had the target population of 300,000 of the 15-45 years age group. The major objective of this program was to institutionalize a comprehensive non-formal education system in the country. This program provided support to 2.47 million people against the targeted 1.67 million. The Directorate of Non Formal Education was established in 1995 as a permanent infrastructure for primary and mass. The project was aimed at introducing pre-primary education for the 4-5 year age group, basic non-formal education for the 6-10 year age group, basis non-formal education for the adolescents of 11-14 year age group, adult education with special emphasis on the 15-35 year age group, and life-long continuing education for all these groups. Up to June 1995 this project made 23.36 literates. **Total Literacy Movement (TLM)** had been initiated in Lalmonirhat and Chuadanga districts. A total of 192 NGOs were involved in the implementation of the non-formal education that includes adult literacy programs. Some of the important achievements of this program were creation of huge inspiration among people in different parts of the country and a spirit of volunteerism among local community; necessary skills and experience in undertaking and implementing NFE at a wider scale; developing areas to extend cooperation between the government and NGOs; experience and skills in implementing post literacy programs and material development (Rashid, Harun. 2003).

Based on the experiences of the INFEP some of the non-formal education projects were undertaken namely, NFEP I, II, III, IV. **NFEP I** was formulated with the major objectives of reducing poverty and improving the status of women. This program, to be implemented during 1996-2001 included only the illiterate young adults of 15-24 years estimated to be approximately 2.95 million people. The program started in 32 of the 64 districts selected based on below 45% literacy rate criteria. The estimated total cost of the project was Tk2208.90 million composed of GoB, World Bank, ADB and SDC funding.

NFEP II was implemented during 1995-2002 with a target population of 8.12 million falling in the age group of 11-45 years. Special feature of the program was large scale mobilization and motivation of the non-literates and the adults educated with a view to developing sense of belonging among them. The program was implemented through the three modes of delivery - TLM, CBA, and NFE through books. Terminal evaluation of the program undertaken in Lalmonirhat indicated a 94% success rate and a drop out rate of only 3% (Haque, 1997).

NFEP III was targeted to the Hard to Reach urban children of the age group of 8-14 years living in the 6 metropolitan cities of the country. The project was implemented during 1996 to 2004 following Centre Based Approach covering 35 thousand slum, street, floating and working children. The course duration was 2 years. The estimated total cost of the project was Tk805.5 million with financial assistance from the GoB, SIDA, UNICEF and DFID.

NFEP IV was undertaken for those falling in the age group of 11-45 years and who could not be covered under other non formal education projects. This project was implemented in 448 Upazilas of 62 districts with an estimated cost of Tk6829.96 million during 1997 and 2003. The major objectives of providing literacy to 22.89 million people and to create employment opportunities for the educated and unemployed young male and female following TLM approach.

PLCEHD-1, a 5 – year project, has been implemented by DNFE in 2002 supported by the World Bank and Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation with the fundamental objective of consolidation of literacy followed by application of literacy skills in skill training for income generation. The coverage of this program is 13.626 lac neo neo-literates in 230 upazilas of 32 districts. The target achievement of the project is about 72% i.e., only 9.73 lac people have been provided post literacy and continuing education.

PLCEHD-II, similar to the earlier one, supported by ADB and DFID that came into operation at the field level in May 2008 and due to be completed in 2011 has a coverage of 1.60 million neo-literates of age group 11-45 years in 210 upazilas of 29 districts.

PLCEHD-III, a pilot project, was designed with support from the IDB to cover 6300 neo-literates who have dropped out of schools and / graduated from TLM in 2 Upazilas in the age group of 11-45 years.

Reaching Out of Schools Children (ROSC) project is currently under implementation (2004-2009) with an estimated cost of about US\$63 million. The major objective of this project is promoting primary education through a non-formal community managed approach targeting a total of 500,000 children during the project period. This project is being implemented in 60 Upazilas. ROSC develops interventions to encourage out of school children to attain the school and retain these children by improving the quality of education in these schools.

The Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Children Project (BEHTRUC) was implemented during 1997-2003 with the major objective of providing non-formal education that included basic education up to grade three as well as life skills to the poor and under-privileged working children in the age group of 8-14 years, often engaged in hazardous jobs. The total budget for the project, as of March 2004, was Tk 805.799 million comprising Tk 778.592 million donor and Tk 27.207 million GoB contribution. The project was designed to provide education to 351,000 working children 2 years of schooling (2 hours a day) in 6 divisional head quarters. UNICEF provided technical support while funds were drawn from DFID, SIDA, UNICEF and the Government of Bangladesh. The project offered a 24 month course on literacy and numeracy and skill development. The terminal evaluation report prepared in 2004 revealed that the project benefited 346,000 children across the 6 divisional cities and successfully attained gender equity in terms of numbers.

Basic Education for Hard to Reach Working Children (BEHTRUWC) Project Second Phase is designed for an implementation period of 5 years that began in October 2004. A total of 8000 centers are to be set up under this project for serving about 200,000 working children in the age group of 10-14 years comprising 60% girls in 6 divisional cities of the country. The learners are to be selected from the children

engaged in hazardous and exploitative occupations and not having access to education. Of the target 200,000 children, 20,000 are to be selected for livelihood skills training (of the age 13 years and above) and 5,000 of them would be provided with livelihood skills training by the project.

8. The Challenges ahead

Although there have been satisfactory progress in certain areas in achieving the goal of universal access to education, there are still many challenges that must be met in realizing fully the MDG 2 targets. Some of the major challenges facing in particular the basic education are mentioned below.

Although the MDG target for net enrolment rate has been set 100% by the year 2015, in reality it is extremely difficult to achieve for several reasons. One of the reasons is slow down of the rate of growth as it approaches the 100% target. Indeed, it has been empirically demonstrated that, once countries attain a NER of say 90 to 95%, it usually becomes very challenging and costly to reach the last 5-10% of children who, for various reasons, are difficult to cover (nomadic, marginal populations, populations living in remote and land-locked areas, the poorest, and sick or disabled children, ethnic minorities having difficulties in understanding Bangla, etc.) (UNESCO, 2005).

Bangladesh is currently running one of the largest primary education sectors in the world. But the organizational capacity to run such a huge primary education system has indeed been a big challenge for any such country in the world. Insufficient instructional time, inadequate number of classrooms and teaching staff, low teacher effectiveness, lack of sufficient teaching – learning materials, and lack of adequately trained manpower to manage such a large education system may be identified as some of the major constraints facing the country's primary education system (DPE, 2006).

Government expenditure on education in Bangladesh is still low compared to any other countries in South Asia. Although about 39.51% of the annual budget is dedicated for primary education it accounts for only 2.28% of the country's GDP. The proportion needs to be enhanced to 4-5% for effecting the efforts towards achieving the millennium targets.

Despite satisfactory achievement in providing access to primary education, a large part of the population especially the physically and /mentally challenged, geographically, socially or economically hard to reach children remain out of the facility. A large part of the indigenous populations living mainly in the Chittagong and Sylhet and remote parts of the north of the country have not yet been adequately reached by primary school expansion of the government (ADB, 2005)

Eradicating high incidence of poverty has been one of the biggest challenges on the way of achieving the MDG 2 targets. Low incentives for attending schools vis a vis acute poverty in the families keep the children away from the schools as they have to engage in earning for their living. This contributes to low attendance rate and high drop out rate.

Linkages between infrastructure and education have already been established. Improved roads and transportation have major implications for enrolment ratios – especially for girls' (particularly living in the rural areas) enrolment and attendance rate. Many of the government schools are too far away or too crowded discouraging the parents sending their children to school. It is especially true in the case of girl students and in the rural areas.

9. Conclusion

In achieving the targets set against the three indicators under MDG 2 - achieving universal primary education - Bangladesh made several initiatives during the period following the World Conference on Primary Education in 1990 and the Millennium summit in 2000. These initiatives, however, generated progress in all the three areas in different degrees. Achievement in the area of gender parity has been quite phenomenal. Current progress in enrolment rate indicates achievement of the target that is practically reachable before the stipulated MDG time frame. Growth performance in the other two areas -

completion rate and adult literacy rate - has indeed been lagging way behind the warranted rate of growth for achieving the MDG targets indicating clearly the likelihood of shortfall.

Despite improvement in certain aspects of basic education in quantitative terms, quality of education remains to be a great cause of concern for the government, policy makers, donors and others concerned. A number of initiatives are already put in place with a view to addressing this critical issue. Nevertheless, the challenges like eradicating acute poverty, improving capacity to implement big projects, improving efficiency in managing the primary education system, providing quality education through well trained and well motivated teachers, providing appropriate classroom, toilet and safe drinking water facilities, designing need based curriculum, spontaneous community participation in managing the education programs remain on the way to especially developing the primary education sector and achieving the millennium development goal within the stipulated timeframe. This however warrants designing appropriate strategies keeping in view the actual demand of the target population to face the challenges and making an effective primary education sector. This will create a strong foundation for producing quality human resources with adequate ability to make significant contribution to the eradication of poverty – at present the biggest challenge ahead of the country.

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ANNEX

Table 1: Gross and Net Enrolment Rate

Year	GER			NER		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1990	71.43	63.26	67.51	69.43	50.76	60.48
1991	75.07	67.48	71.43	66.31	54.15	60.48
1992	78.11	69.51	73.96	69.54	57.08	63.53
1993	80.70	75.27	78.08	67.23	63.58	65.47
1994	85.74	81.09	83.49	70.50	67.42	69.01
1995	96.23	92.00	94.17	77.53	73.86	75.75
1996	96.98	92.91	95.00	78.65	78.32	78.49
1997	96.83	94.31	95.60	80.41	81.33	80.86
1998	98.12	94.25	96.23	80.00	82.95	81.44
1999	93.65	94.94	94.29	83.20	84.27	83.73
2000	96.60	96.53	96.57	85.22	85.83	85.52
2001	97.33	97.65	97.49	86.19	86.96	86.57
2002	96.58	98.14	97.35	86.01	87.38	86.68
2003	101.48	108.39	104.77	89.56	93.87	91.61
2004	98.61	106.24	102.25	90.04	94.14	92.00
2005	91.23	96.31	93.71	84.44	90.10	87.20
2006	92.90	102.90	97.70	87.60	94.50	90.90

Source: BANBEIS, (2006)
(2006 values exclude the BANBEIS 2006 Publication)

Table 2: Five Year Cycle Completion and Drop Out Rate

Year	Completion Rate (%)	Drop Out Rate (%)
1991	40	59.3
1995	52	48
2000	67	33
2001	67	33
2002	68	32
2005	52	48
2007	67	33

Source: DPE, MoPME, National Plan of Action II, 2007, MDG Mid Term Progress Report, 2007

Table 3: Adult Literacy Rates

	1991	1995	2005	2006	2007
Male	44.3	-	57.2	57.9	58.7
Female	25.8	-	45.5	46.8	48.0
Total	35.3	38.10	51.5	52.5	53.5

Source: UNESCO, 2008

Table 4: Adult Literacy Rate by Locality and Sex

Sex	Rural	Urban	All Areas
Both Sexes	52.40	82.18	54.80
Male	57.95	86.33	60.31
Female	46.50	77.41	48.90

Source: MOPME (CELS 2002), 2003

Table-5: Adult Literacy Rates (both sexes) in the 6 Divisions

Division	CELS-02			CELS-99
	Rural	Urban	Total	Total
Barisal	71.30	83.26	71.34	63.63
Chittagong	57.28	78.13	59.82	57.01
Dhaka	48.03	84.77	54.52	54.93
Khulna	51.10	81.12	52.83	60.74
Rajshahi	48.92	74.68	49.42	61.85
Sylhet	50.02	71.56 •	50.33	53.13
Bangladesh	52.40	82.18	54.80	58.20

Source: MOPME (CELS 2002), 2003

Table 4: Primary school net enrolment at different Divisions, 2005

Division	Children aged 6-10 years		
	Total	Rural	Urban
Barisal	83.16	82.37	87.50
Chittagong	72.29	69.73	82.45
Dhaka	81.70	81.08	83.05
Khulna	87.15	87.23	86.65
Rajshahi	83.48	83.22	85.21
Sylhet	76.40	75.08	87.10
National	80.42	79.47	83.98

Source: BBS