

03

Food For Education Programme

In Bangladesh poverty is considered as one of the major obstacles in the way of primary education. The Government has introduced Food for education programme from 1993-94 year for enabling the poor parents to send their children to schools. The programme is exclusively targetted to rural poor families for the purpose of primary education.

Food for education Programme has the following objectives:

- a) Increase enrolment of children in the primary schools.
- b) Enhance the rate of attendance of the children in the school and
- c) Reduce the drop-out rate of the enrolled children.

The food for Education programme is designed for the following target groups.

- a) Distressed widows.
- b) Day labourers.
- c) Small insolvent professionals, (such as fishermen, blacksmiths, potters, weavers, cobblers etc.)

d) Landless people having not more than 50 decimal of land.

A 11 government registered non-government primary schools and one ebtadaye madrasa (having not less than 150 students and 4 teachers) of the selected union are covered under the food for education programme. The full responsibility of selecting the beneficiary families has been given to namely school managing committee and ward committee for compulsory primary Education.

In 1993-94 financial year the programme was introduced experimentally for one year in 460 rural thanas of the countries. As a result of the introduction of the programme 5,89,881 poor families of 7,06,519 children were benefitted. A total of 4,914 schools were brought under the programme. During 1994-95 financial year programme has been expanded from 460 unions to 1,000 unions in

the country. As a result of expansion about 11,36,699 families of 17,61,874 school-going children are being benefitted. One child family will get 15 kg wheat per month provided the attendance of the child in school is 85 percent or more. A family having more than one primary school going child will be entitled to 20 kg wheat provided all the children attend school. No body will get wheat unless the attendance is 85 percent or more.

The first year programme has been evaluated by the Dhaka office of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

The evaluation reveals that the programme has been very successful in fulfilling its objective. The report says the food for Education (FFE) programme has so far been highly successful in fulfilling its three short-run objectives: (a) Increasing school enrolment, (b) Promoting school attendance and (c) preventing drop-out rates.

The programme quite effectively targets the low-income households. FFE marks the lowest leakage of all targeted food intervention programmes in Bangladesh. The key feature of the FFE programme that contributes to this empowerment is the practice of convening the beneficiaries altogether on a set day each month to collect their wheat ration. Successful implementation of current programme will help expand the food for education programme in future.