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THE ROLE OF INTEGRATED NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN COMBATING ILLITERACY

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According to the 1991 population census of Bangladesh the literacy rate of the age group 7+ and above is 32.4%. The rate of literacy for male is 38.9% as against 25.5% for females. With the above statistics it is therefore imperative that in order to reach the goal in development a massive literacy drive has to be launched.

For this reason NFE activities/programmes are being developed to complement and strengthen the efforts in the education system. Thus a nation wide programme of mass literacy-cum-adult education for the 11-45 group was launched in February 1980. The programme continued upto March 1982 and despite its social and developmental needs it was suddenly abandoned. In 1987, a three year mass education programme (MEP) was introduced at 202 thanas. The object was to raise the

literacy rate of the 11-45 age group from 30% to 60% by the year 2000.

In the world conference for EFA held in Jomtien, Thailand March 1990 Bangladesh was a signatory and stands committed for ensuring education for all by the year 2000. But in order to achieve the objectives of UPE/EFA by 2000 non-formal education activities will have to be introduced to go hand in hand if education is to reach the doorstep of every citizen. With this end in view the Govt. of Bangladesh in 1992, launched CPE and from 1991 a 3 year pilot project for Expansion of Integrated Non-formal Education Programme. This is a first step towards achieving the long term objective of making NFE a complementary process in the strategy of human resource development in Bangladesh. The INFEP will provide school preparedness education,

NFBE for 6-10 and 11-14 years olds, functional literacy for adults continuing education for neo-literates etc.

Appropriate curriculum and institutional materials by experts from GO/NGO of NFE have been developed or being developed for all the components under INFEP. The materials which have been developed so far are primers, teachers guide, teachers training manual, supervisors manual etc. All relevant personnel, including teachers, supervisors and all those who are involved in imparting literacy are given participatory training.

At present literacy programmes under INFEP are being implemented in selected 69 thanas for the pre-primary, primary, adolescent and adult literacy

components. Each centre has 30 learners and one facilitator. For every 15 centres there is a supervisor. The district co-ordinator is responsible for overall supervision and evaluation of the literacy programmes at the grass-root level. For every component at least 50% of the centres are for girls/females. Also at least 50% of the facilitators are women.

Both the campaign and programme approaches to develop and implement NFE will be tried out in 64 pilot centres situated within 10 specially selected model thanas - 2 in each administrative division.

INFEP is considered an experimental and bridging project which depending on its achievements by 1995 is likely to lead to a larger project from 1996.

The present target of literacy programme of INFEP is:

Component	No. of literates	No. of centres
1. Pre-primary	75,000	2500
2. Basic	1,50,000	5000
3. Adolescents	3,00,000	1000
4. Adult		
a) Govt. programme	2,00,000	7240
b) Private or NGO programme	5,00,000	1000
5. Continuing Education (for newly literate person)		690

(establishment of libraries at 69 thanas)

Preliminary work/activities have been completed for the

above programmes. Considering the high

number of illiterates of the country this figure may seem very small indeed, never the less it is a begining and its success is very important to a bigger thrust.

The life time/duration of INFEP is upto 1995 and the literacy programmes may not bring about any major improvements in the rate of

literacy in Bangladesh. But world Bank and Asian Development Bank have expressed their offer of financial assistance in the NFE sectors. Meanwhile it is expected that INFEP will play a significant role in the development of future literacy programmes.