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Education: The Key To Development-II

The degree to which services are suffering from the burden of debt and economic stagnation in many African and Latin American countries was a major theme of the World Conference on Education for All, held last March in Jomtien, Thailand, under the sponsorship of UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. Officials of these organizations and over 1,500 delegates from 155 countries, 140 non-governmental and 30 inter-governmental organizations discussed the global learning gap and made commitments to achieve change, including the provision of more resources.

US\$50 Billion Needed

United Nations officials estimated that US\$50 billion would be needed in the next decade to assure that every child has access to primary school by the year 2000—the goal of the Conference.

The four sponsors all announced a doubling of their allocations for basic education for the decade, with a strong emphasis on improving the quality of schooling and on promoting girls enrolment. The World Bank will

lend US\$1.5 billion annually redirecting its priorities to reflect these aims.

The increase in external resources will help the worst-off countries. But much adjustment will have to be made within countries, by redistributing resources into education from elsewhere and among primary, secondary and higher education. Classroom and curriculum reorganization are also needed to bring more learners into school.

The "World Declaration on Education for All", issued at the end of the Jomtien Conference, calls for something extra: "an expanded vision that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery systems." The Declaration emphasizes the power of modern communication networks and technology to bring new knowledge and ideas to the remotest community. This opportunity it says, should be seized "with creativity and a determination for increased effectiveness".

For children in the developing world, the realization of these aims is crucial to their hopes for an education—and a future.

—UNICEF

29% ...we are never sure.

All these statistics in Third World countries never support the argument of development nor we can use them with confidence. Statistics must be correct otherwise they can be a fantasy or a strong mist. The United States has two crores of illiterate people U.K. has more or less the same number, but there illiteracy does not mean the same thing as in another country. Actually "illiteracy" is a term coined by colonial powers for the "natives", "uncivilized", "underdeveloped" "stupid people", "Third World country" and all the above refer to a country like Bangladesh, but they have forgotten that to keep someone illiterate is a crime; and a yet-worse crime is to downplay someone's gift or skill.

In our country when we talk literacy, we often forget to evaluate the inherent gift of the people, their work, their skills. To mark someone as illiterate is inhuman. Illiteracy means that one has walled the road of development because we forget the gift of each citizen in this country. Illiteracy could be a problem of reading or writing, but it never means "uncivilized" as the Western people mean this word to be.

In Bangladesh we never have any statistics on the base of skills of the people, skills of good farmers, fishermen, labourers, weavers, black-

ideas to cook a hotch-potch, a mixture for our poor people to drink forcibly. They want to indicate that the more incomprehensible their ideas are the more wise they are. They often speak things which the poor people never wanted to hear, because, all their work is not friendly, nor linked with the daily life of the people problems.

This the difference between the academic and the practical life. So, specialists ideas need to be changed. Otherwise, their ideas could be a disaster for the people, and they can make the normal situation more confusing. Our road and light must be discerned through our own peoples, life. Yes from 68,000 villages; not from universities for colleges or from big offices.

A few years ago some university professors wrote a book for illiterate people. Before writing the book they analysed the entire Bangladesh situation, characteristics of the poor, the psychology of the village people, the statistics of Bangladesh etc. They visited a few villages. They examined several dozens of adult literacy text books. And then they prepared a book for illiterate, spending several lakhs of taka. It took more than two years to finish this great job. But also, the book which they prepared for illiterate people was like "iron bread" uneatable to neo-process, experiment