

Need for population education

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Population explosion has become a serious problem all over the world particularly in the third world countries. In Bangladesh Population has been identified as a number one problem. All out efforts have been made to solve this problem. Almost all the Ministries and Divisions of the Govt. were given certain responsibilities to contribute to the solution of this problem. Let us now see what has been done in the Family Planning Sector.

The Family Planning Programme in Bangladesh started in 1953 as a private initiative. In 1960, the Govt. undertook a pilot project for 5 years to bring 1.2 million eligible couples into the programme. At the end of the programme it was found that only 15 per cent of the target was achieved.

During 1965-70, the Govt. started national programme to reduce population growth rate from 3 to 2.7. At the end of the programme growth rate remained the same with CPR (Contraceptive Prevalence Rate) only 3% even though the monetary incentive was declared to motivate the people.

During 1970-80, integrated MCH-FP programme was initiated population Growth remained high at 2.8 per cent at the end of 1980. The target was 2.5.

Target for 1980-85 was to achieve NRR (Not Reproductive Rate) =1 by 1990, which could not be achieved. Now the target year for NRR -1 is 2005. 1990 target growth rate of 1.8 per cent could not be achieved currently growth rate is 2.03 per cent and CPR's is about 40 per cent.

During the last 40 years (ie 1953-93) all out efforts were made with both from the Govt and private sectors to make the Population policy a success. At present there are 53 thousand GOB Family Planning personnel and 695 NGO's are working in the family planning sector. At the initiation of the

Programmes, the Population was about 42 million. As per the World Bank and other UN Agencies, Population in Bangladesh in 1991 estimated to be 114 million with a growth rate of 2.2 per cent.

It seems that the massive amount spent on family planning programme and the infrastructure and personnel did not have significant impact on Population growth. For example, CPR has increased from 3 per cent in 1969 to 18% in 1981 and 40 percent by 1990, but the impact has not been reflected in the birth rates, as CBR (Crude Birth Rate) and TFR (Total Fertility Rate) remained stagnant at around 33-34, and 4-5 respectively during the last decade.

BACKGROUND

Specialists are of opinion that Population control, social change and economic development are inseparably connected and influence one another. It was agreed in the world Population conference in Bucharest in 1974 that in the process of development of the developing countries Population control and social advancement are interconnected. This viewpoint was supported by data based on research. Research findings reveal that "Chances of success of Population control and family planning programmes are much greater when co-ordinated with other development efforts than when they are carried out singly or in isolation."

In view of this, Bangladesh has undertaken Multi-Sectoral Programmes with Ministries which are directed towards social and economic development. Some specialists are of opinion that "Education is the best contraception" But in Bangladesh perhaps due importance and emphasis was not given in Education

Sector. Education is the first and foremost instrument to achieve successful Population Policy. Educated people can make informed choices and use MCH FP services at their own initiative. SRI LANKA, for example with high literacy rate has high CPR where per capita FP expenditure is much less than Bangladesh.

Investment in Education will not only reduce Population growth rate but will also alleviate other socio-economic problems that perpetuates high Population growth, e.g poverty, malnutrition, diseases, epidemic, unemployment etc. Educated People have better opportunity to earn a sustainable livelihood, make informed reproductive choices and live a healthier life. The

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Govt. Policy should have been to invest more into Population (in education), then it would become an asset instead of a problem. Through education there is a possibility to overcome the vicious cycle of poverty and unwanted Population growth.

Family Planning should be turned into a social movement and he made more strengthened. Population should be regarded as a part of the total development process. For improving the quality of life integrated approach should be made.

For achieving the success of Population policy multi-sectoral programme efforts were made. The Ministry of Education was given the responsibility of introducing the Population Education in the formal School system of Bangladesh.

PROGRESS IN POPULATION EDUCATION

The Ministry of Education started Population Education activities in 1976 through two development projects namely--Introduction of Population Education in the formal school system of Bangladesh "and" Population Project. The objective of the Projects was to introduce Population Education through some selected school subjects in an integrated way in classes from IV to XIV.

There were two phases of the programme first phase continued from 1976 to 1979 and the Second phase continued from 1980 to 1985. During the first phase two Donor Agencies funded two projects, IDA funded the Population project and the UNFPA funded the Population Education Programme.

Since there were two Donor Agencies, all the activities, for introduction of Population Education were divided between them. Population Education curriculum for classes IV to XII was prepared by the IDA Project. This project also arranged training for primary school teachers in six integrated thanas of the four Political Divisions of the country.

Since the Primary School teachers live and work among the illiterate masses in the rural areas, they were considered opinion leaders and changed Agents for them. Their training was utilized to motivate the common people. With the advanced training on Population Education, the teachers themselves were motivated to adopt the means for the solution of Population problem. This had the multiplier effects on the masses. The common people followed them as their ideals. With

the training on Population Education, the teachers also gained the competence to teach Population Education contents in the class room to the students effectively without jeopardising the value system of the communities. The evaluation report of the project reveals that the project was quite effective for the solution of the Population problem. The class teaching of Population Education helped the students to be acquainted with the Population problem and thereby formation of right type attitudes to take rational decision on Population as and when they will grow up and will be needed to take such decisions.

Other activities of introduction of Population Education such as development of Population Education materials for Text books according to the prepared curriculum, imparting Training to the teachers and other educators, Documentation and publication, Research and evaluation, preparation of Teachers guide etc. etc. were performed by the UNFPA assisted project. At this stage (ie from 1976 to 1980) of the Project, besides the preparatory activities for introduction of Population Education, the project integrated Population Education materials in the Text books on Bengali, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies etc. of classes IV & V of Primary stage of Education and arranged class room teaching of the same.

Since the Population Education Programme of the Ministry of Education was an Educational Programme, it should meet, besides meeting the objectives of Population Policy, the academic needs which is in conformity with the national education policy. To achieve these objectives, technical assistance from

UNESCO, besides national expertise were utilized effectively.

During the Second phase (ie from 1980-1985) of the Programme, there was only one project and one Funding Agency UNFPA.

The activities carried out during the period are detailed below--

All the incomplete works of the first phase of the programme were carried to completion at this time.

At this stage, Population Education contents were developed and integrated in the text books of Bengali, (Mother Tongue), Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Home Economics, Hygiene, Food and nutrition etc. of general Education and arrangements were made to teach the same in classes from VI to XII.

Besides, Population Education was also introduced in other branches of Education such as Madrasa Education (ie Muslim Religious Education), Technical Education Commercial and Trade education etc.

About one Lakh of teachers, teacher educators, Educational administrators and other key personnel were trained in this project during the period.

The project had 20 (Twenty) field level offices at the district head quarters of greater 20 Districts of the country. The field offices would arrange training of teachers of Secondary Schools at the District Head Quarters and Primary School teachers at the Thana Head quarters. The field offices would help in teaching and monitoring of the progress of teaching learning of Population Education contents at the local schools. They would also collect Data for research works at the Head office of Population Education located in Dhaka. They would feed the Head office with information relevant to Population Education.

To be continued

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