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Programme showing glimmers of success

Food for Education to be expanded in 1000 unions

By Abdur Rahman Khan

The Food for Education (FFE) Programme which proved to be highly successful in Bangladesh will now be expanded in 1,000 unions under 460 thanas of the country.

The programme funded entirely by the Government of Bangladesh was launched in July 1993 on a pilot programme basis.

The government has decided to expand the Food for Education (FFE) programme in 1,000 unions taking at least two

unions in each of 460 thanas following encouraging success in earlier programme.

Meanwhile, 331 new unions have been brought under the FFE for the second phase. A total of 540 new unions will be brought under the second phase of FFE programme bringing the total number of unions at 1,000.

According to Primary and Mass Education Division, a total of 4,914 primary educational institutions including 4,787 primary schools and 127 cbtedai madrasas were brought under the Food for Education (FFE) programme at the first phase.

It covered one union in each of the 460 rural thanas bringing benefit to 7,06,519 school children of 5,49,881 poor families.

Each beneficiary household is entitled to receive a maximum of 30 kilograms of free wheat ration per month for

sending its children to a primary school.

If a household has only one primary school-age child and he or she attends school regularly, then the household is entitled to receive 15 kilograms of wheat per month.

To be eligible for 30 kilograms of wheat, a family is required to send all the primary school-age children to school. The children must attend 85 per cent of total classes of the month to be eligible for wheat.

The Food for Education (FFE) programme was designed by the present BNP government to link vulnerable group income supplements to primary school enrolment of their children. It was aimed at increasing primary school attendance of the children from low-income group of rural people in the country.

Other objectives of the programme were to promote school enrolment and prevent drop-

out in order to ensure retention in primary school.

An early assessment made by the International Food Policy Research Institute in collaboration with Primary and Mass Education Division and the Ministry of Food, revealed that the FFE programme had been "highly successful" in fulfilling its three short-run objectives to increase school enrolment, promote school attendance and prevent drop-out rates.

The evaluation of the FFE programme for the first year showed that enrolment in the FFE schools increased by 28.1 per cent from April 1993 to April 1994. Prior to FFE programme, enrolment in the same schools increased by 7.7 per cent from April 1992 to April 1993.

Enrolment of both boys and girls increased significantly after FFE programme was introduced in the school. Moreover, the results demonstrated a higher rate of change in girls' enrolment (31.0 per cent) relative to boys' (26.6 per cent).

The attendance rate in FFE schools also increased from 63 per cent in 1993 to 77.4 in 1994. The attendance rate in FFE schools is now significantly higher to that in non-FFE schools.

Similarly the drop-out rate in FFE schools declined from 18.5 per cent in 1993 to 10.9 per cent in 1994. For boys, the drop-out rate fell in an FFE school from 17.6 to 11.3 per cent while in case of girls it fell from 19.3 to 10.3 per cent.

