

# The Eradication Of Illiteracy - III

CONTINUING/Non-Formal

Education systems are necessary if levels of literacy gained, whether from Adult Functional Literacy classes or from formal or non-formal Primary Education, are to be maintained and further developed. But as with Non-Formal Primary Education, the even stronger case for the thorough development of NFE for all levels of needs is that the provision of Western-style formal education for all, behind which this sub-continent has been trailing for nearly a century, is way beyond the foreseeable budgetary capacity of Bangladesh and even the likely limits of international aid. A self-respecting country has to aim to provide all education from its Revenue budget.

NFE systems, though non-formal, still have to be organised and promoted. There is a great deal to be learned from Thailand's very extensive NFE Development programmes organised within the Ministry of Education's Adult Education Division. With extensive community participation, NFE has become an official channel of education, with accepted equivalencies with the formal sector.

Publications pivoted on a self-instruction concept will be required in three main categories:

**Academic:** They will need to fulfil the needs of poor students who cannot afford to attend secondary schools or colleges. Open University materials need to be produced. The world of academic study must be opened up for anyone to enter. Standards will be monitored and recognised by the formal sector. When parity is achieved, then mutual development can be planned.

**Economic And Industrial:** Materials will supply existing needs and also promote education in areas required by new technology and programmes for the development of small and cottage industries. BSCIC and other organisations will liaise closely with the NFE publications body.

**Cultural And General:** Besides introduction to national and world literature, appropriately reproduced with commentaries, and other reading-matter for pleasure or widening knowledge, new writing which captures local stories and folk-lore will come in this category, and, given encouragement, one in a hundred new adult literates may be expected to write material which can be considered for publication. Such writing would in turn add impetus to the literacy movement, no doubt with some cultural surprises.

The CoB-LACE and LEMA D...

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rammes include provision for the production of 100 and 275 new NFE publications respectively.

Publications will not be sufficient without systems and study promotion programmes. People's Academies or Gonokendra, utilising existing public buildings when vacant, could become centres of spontaneous cultural expression and the recording of oral traditions. The liberation of the illiterate masses now gaining their long-concealed heritage will mostly however be celebrated in Readers Circles, Writers Clubs, Savings Groups, Skills Cooperatives, and so on, and libraries in every village should become a focus for new economic, social and cultural advancement. Open University and "Open HSC" and career courses can be tutored using Distance Education and links with radio and TV, as in Thailand. The Centres would also prove power-houses for an Education Reform Movement (ERM). A healthy breeze bringing a renaissance of culture, respect for and cooperation in the role of law, and an exciting new era in education may not prove to be too fanciful an expectation.

(e) **Education reform, Movement.** The goal of an ERM is in fact the fulfilment of the stated policies of successive Governments, so it may seem strange that a Movement should be necessary. Ideally the main hope must continue to lie in corrective action through the statutory procedures. But there are constraints which make this difficult:

(i) Once the condition of PE has been allowed to sink so low, the dishonour into which education has fallen, and the attitudes which have now permeated the whole system, make it almost impossible for education to 'pull itself up by its own bootstraps'. The fact is that corruption has been tolerated and so 'Taught'—to society and to children from their earliest years—it is not just something passively accepted. In earlier days, education was given a prestige by teachers. But now there are some teachers who 'normally steal time and show dishonour to their own profession. If corruption is to be removed from society the vital area where reform must begin is education. But it is from here today in Bangladesh that it is spreading. To reform from within will take massive determined effort by charismatic moral leaders.

(ii) Public protest and pressure to

reform will not easily come from the ranks of those who have benefited from the elite system, and without the backing of the powerful it is not to be expected that change will take place through normal procedures. Those who have the power haven't the will; those who have the will haven't the power.

(iii) There is a natural fear of and resistance to the unfamiliar, even though countries like Thailand have proved how non-formal education can be effectively introduced over a short period of time. After about two decades of steady deterioration in PE, even reverting to the standards of 1973 looks like a new idea. Moreover, in the last 30-40 years immense changes have taken place in the world to which education has to adapt. These are new trends, not always understood by administrators.

(iv) For education reform, re-planning for the life-opportunities of 20 million children and 60 million adults stands out as the first and most urgent challenge. But macro-planning is a rare skill in Bangladesh, and where it is found it tends to be snapped up by industries offering higher salaries than Government can afford.

(v) Whoever are required to do or approve the re-planning, their own experience will have been only of institutional education, and it is difficult to imagine non-institutional forms which would be equally acceptable. So not only planning capacity but also leaps of imagination and faith are required to implement a reformed formal system and a parallel alternative.

It is not just a leap by planners and administrators, but a national leap that has to be taken. Only a popular movement could move sufficient numbers of people. Nations take leaps forward from time to time, cutting their links with the past either by Acts of Parliament, or Constitutional Amendments, or else by revolutionary demands enforced by the people. But educational patterns tend to be the last to be changed, as they form a strong bridge between past and present. For that reason, only the most radical reformers have set out to change them. Consequently, would-be reformers of education are viewed with suspicion and have a specially hard task.

The education system of Bangladesh, with those of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Burma, is the linear

descendant of that of the colonial system which had the ulterior motive of facilitating external administrative control. It deliberately operated selectively, ignoring rayots and labourers, and reinforced classism. Largely through the impact of this inherited system modern Bangladesh has discrimination and classism where theologically and democratically there should be none. The chances of effective, peaceful reform depend mainly on linking together the majority—those men and women who want a non-discriminatory and creative style of modern education—in a determined movement to bring about the changes that will allow education not just to teach the equality of people but also to demonstrate it. Otherwise, hypocrisy rules, supported by condoned corruption and endemic illiteracy and poverty.

The democratic, cultural and spiritual health of Bangladesh may well depend on whether or not we are prepared to break with the past educationally as we have done politically, and to introduce the kind of education that the whole of Bangladesh—not just its poorest citizens—desperately needs.

The given charts below show, for the years 2001 and 2004, the likely numbers of population in different age-groups, the goals for maximum literacy, the expected literacy product from formal education, and the estimated numbers of people for whom functional literacy will have to be sought outside the formal sector. The population figures are derived from those published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

It is assumed that there will be improvement in the output of Primary Education and that UPE (with the help of NFPE) will be achieved by 2001.

Between 1993 and 2004, some 2.6 millions of the age-group 11-19 will be expected to die, of whom about 0.5 million will have had formal schooling. About one-third of the remainder, or 0.7 million, will have been incorporated in the literacy programmes, so this figure needs to be added to the final column to show the total number of those to be covered non-formally i.e. approx. 61.6 million. LEMA Programme is planned to make 50.5 millions of these literate (27.6 million females and 22.9 million males), 3.7 million should be provided for under CoB-LACE programme, and the remainder (7.4 million) under various other government and NGO programmes. (Concluded)

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Age Group	Numbers of people (in millions)	Literacy rate goals (in millions, with percentages)	Output of functional literates from formal education	Remainder of population to be covered by non-formal education programmes
AS AT THE YEAR 2001:				
11-14	11.765	(98%) 11.530	(50%) 5.883	(48%) 5.647
15-19	13.851	(98%) 13.574	(35%) 4.848	(63%) 8.726
20-24	13.865	(98%) 13.588	(30%) 4.160	(68%) 9.428
25-39	33.209	(97%) 32.213	(28%) 9.298	(69%) 22.915
40-49	12.556	(91%) 11.426	(26%) 3.265	(65%) 8.161
50-59	8.290	(70%) 5.803	(24%) 1.990	(46%) 3.813
60 +	8.007	(40%) 3.203	(20%) 1.601	(20%) 1.602
11 +	101.543	(90%) 91.337	(31%) 31.045	(59%) 60.292
AS AT THE YEAR 2004:				
11-14	12.297	(98%) 12.051	(60%) 7.378	(38%) 4.673
15-19	14.362	(98%) 14.075	(49%) 7.037	(49%) 7.038
20-24	13.452	(98%) 13.183	(32%) 4.305	(66%) 8.878
25-39	36.854	(97%) 35.748	(28%) 10.319	(69%) 25.429
40-49	13.586	(91%) 12.363	(26%) 3.532	(65%) 8.831
50-59	9.366	(70%) 6.556	(24%) 2.248	(46%) 4.308
60 +	8.830	(40%) 3.552	(20%) 1.776	(20%) 1.776
11 +	108.797	(90%) 97.528	(34%) 36.595	(56%) 60.933