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Population Edn lacks systematic approach

By Abdur Rahman Khan

A UNESCO team has recently portrayed a dismal picture of population education programme in Bangladesh, a country with one of the highest population growth rate.

The technical team on population and family education programme found that, population education activities in Bangladesh lacked a systematic, coordinated and continuous approach.

The UNESCO team that visited Bangladesh last month to study the activities relating to population education also found absence of specific programme for women and girls; lack of appropriate teaching-learning materials and ineffective transaction of curricula and materials.

Organized by the UNESCO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, Bangkok, the visit included study of the activities of local implementation units to assess the ongoing activities, previous achievements and future plan of population education in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh with a high rate of population growth at 2.17 per cent is inhabited by an estimated population of 110.8 million.

On account of faster growth of population to that of literacy, the absolute number of illiterates in-

creased from 40 to 70 million in recent years.

The country has identified population growth as the number one problem and population education as an effective tool to manoeuvre the situation.

In spite of various steps undertaken by the authorities in Bangladesh, the visiting UNESCO team identified lack of effective monitoring and supervision as one of the major hindrances in the field of population education.

The team also observed that

Contd. on page 8 col. 1

03

Population Education

Contd from page 1

there was no appropriate mechanism to ensure study of population education components in the in-school programmes.

The UNESCO team recommended undertaking the population education in the non-formal system to cover the vast illiterates with high fertility potential.

The regional population education programme was earlier conceived and based at the UNESCO regional office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, back in 1972-73 with support from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

The UNESCO has recognised population education as one intervention strategy for development in the regional countries.

A consultative seminar held in UNESCO regional office, Bangkok, last year also reviewed the development and trends of country programme on population education.

The regional seminar recommended appropriate steps in member countries to reflect population related issues in national education

policy and to institutionalize population education in such a manner that would enable the country, in due course, to support from its own resources in case of stoppage or reduction of external assistance.

The UNESCO consultative seminar attended by representatives from 23 member countries also stressed the need for "redefining population education with focus on demography, human ecology, human sexuality and implications on the improvement of the quality of life."

The seminar also suggested development of population education curricula for both formal and non-formal education system.

Referring to Bangladesh, the UNESCO seminar mentioned there had been a satisfactory level of awareness in Bangladesh about the impact of rapid population growth.