

Lack of facilities keep girls away from schools

Mohiuddin Alamgir

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As 95 per cent of the schools provide no separate toilets at least 40 per cent of the girl students have to stay away from their class rooms for 36 days a year during their menstruation.

They need the privacy of separate hygienic toilets and

clean running water for the unavoidable management of menstrual hygiene, said educationists.

Absence of separate common rooms and games facilities also act as discouraging factors to attend schools, mostly coeducation institutions having predominance of boys.

Acute shortage of female teachers in most of the

schools also does not help create an atmosphere that could be termed congenial for the education of girls, though they constitute over 50 per cent of the learners.

Only 21.3 per cent of the school teachers are females although the rules framed by the government requires each school to have 30 per cent of female teachers.

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The rules made exceptions only for the schools in the inaccessible areas where female teachers could be difficult to get.

The attitude of the society does not encourage the girls to pursue education, said women leaders.

They said that many parents, male teachers and students also suffer from this social handicap.

They blamed the government for taking hollow credit for increasing girls enrollment in schools, while paying no attention to develop the facilities and environment congenial for girls education.

In 2014, out of 85 lakh secondary school students 53 per cent were girls, show the

documents of the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association executive director Salma Ali identified lack of facilities at schools, child marriage and poverty as the main causes for the failure to develop schools friendly to girls education.

Education ministry joint secretary (Secondary School), Ruhi Rahman admitted the problems and said that the government asked the schools to build and properly maintain at least one latrine exclusively for the girl students.

In a preliminary report of Bangladesh National Hygiene Baseline released in June 2014 identified men-

strual hygiene management as a serious challenge for the school going girls.

Forty per cent of the girls surveyed said that they avoid going to schools three days of menstruation each month.

Less than five per cent of the schools have separate toilets for girls, said the joint study done by International Centre for Diarrheal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (icddr), WaterAid Bangladesh and Policy Support Unit of Local Government Division of government for which 700 schools were surveyed.

Then again this small number of schools have one toilet for every 187 students, when the government rules call for providing one toilet for 50 students.

Unhygienic school toilets

have been blamed for the spread of infectious diseases.

Many of the girl students miss stipends only because they cannot fulfill the requirement of 80 per cent class attendance, said Water Aid Bangladesh country representative Khairul Islam.

Campaigners for women's rights also identified lack of facilities, child marriage and sexual harassment as the main impediments for girls' education.

UNICEF officials said that in Bangladesh, 66 per cent of girls were married off even before they reach 18, the minimum legal age for their marriage.

Mahila Parisahd president, Ayesha Khanam said that sexual harassments also discourage girls' education.