

The Truth Behind

Primary Education Scenario in Tala Upazila



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A Research Work on Primary Education Scenario in Tala Upazila



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A Research Work on Primary Education Scenario in Tala Upazila
Which has been funded by Commonwealth Education Fund and
conducted and published by Uttaran

August 2004

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FOREWORD

Foreword

Quality education for all is not a privilege BUT a right of every citizen as stipulated in the Constitution of Bangladesh particularly in 17(a) which guarantees free and compulsory education. However this right has been bypassed given the on-going education scenario, trend and direction of the country. More and more children have been missed out, deprived and neglected of their own fundamental right – the right to education.

In this context, Uttaran undertook a 6-month research work with the generous support from the Commonwealth Education Fund to assess/determine the current scenario of the Primary Education in Tala Upazila in Sathkira District and to come up with workable recommendations to bring about positive change and reform in the current primary education system. The research has unveiled country's education condition wherein a putrid picture of low literacy rate, low enrolment rate, high dropout and repetition rate, poor facilities and physical infrastructures, lack of quality human resource, etc are the prevailing realities.

The TRUTH behind of the Primary Education Scenario in Tala Upazila, is not simply a 'typical' research work but also a documentary accounts of people's perspectives and reflections on the current education system of the country in general and in Tala Upazila in particular. It also showed the big tasks and challenges ahead to all stakeholders and policy makers at ensuring quality education for all.

Through this humble endeavor of Uttaran, we hope that this would increase better understanding, motivation and collective efforts to bring about change and reforms in the primary education of the country.

Education is a RIGHT

Shahidul Islam
Director



How do
we **inspire**
our children
and **change**
the reality into
the
dream?



Introduction

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees free and compulsory education to all its citizens. In particular, Article 17(a) of the constitution proclaims that:

"17. The state shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of -- (a) establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law."

Although it is almost 33 years after the Constitution was put into effect, the above proclamation is yet to be fulfilled which can be attributed to the government's lack of prioritization and neglect to education, corruption and large scale irregularities, lack of political will and commitments including the lack of public arrangements to advance the already ebbing education system of the country.

In an analysis of the situation revealed during that period, the population was increased by 86% whereas the literacy rate was increased by 56.58% which clearly showed that the number of illiterates did not decline rather ballooned by 30%. It was hoped that the country's independence would ensure the right to education for all citizens but at the posterior of truth it was never happened. In fact, the legacy of colonial education system which was rooted to the oppressive dogma of "downward filtration process" has continued to be in effect at almost all levels of the country's education policy, in effect, has furtherance the embittered saga of the marginalized population to gain access and uphold their right to education which becoming an 'institutionalized' vicious cycle of deprivation and alienation.

Since liberation, the following regimes adhered the international declaration on quality education for all which manifestations were chalked out into various programs to ensure education for all but never come into fruition for various reasons.

Above all, the hurdle of globalization has once again put Bangladesh into a distressed situation like any other developing countries. For the country to outlive in this challenge, the government must seriously prioritize its education sector by providing necessary institutional support including higher budgetary allocation to forward quality education for all -- to keep the vehicle of development moving ahead.

Goal, Objectives and Process of the Research work

In order to bring any changes in the existing practice or introduce any alternatives in the advancement of Primary Education Sector in Bangladesh, the need to know the current scenario of education comes at the forefront. With this end view, Uttaran undertook a 6-month research work with funding assistance from the Commonwealth Education Fund to assess/determine the current scenario of the Primary Education in Tala Upazila and to come up with recommendations to bring about positive change and reform in the current primary educational system. The following methodologies were used in the execution of the research work:

1. Questionnaire-based survey in schools and its catchment area as well as household enquiry;
2. Focus group discussion;
3. Workshop;
4. Consultation;
5. Personal interview; and
6. Analysis of secondary information

Environment and Socio-Economic Situation: Satkhira District

Satkhira district lies within the southwest region of Bangladesh which geographical area is largely consisting of tidal wetland. The area possesses unique environmental characteristics and bio-diversity including its brackish water and tidal wetlands. The wetland areas are usually flooded twice a day with the onrush tidal waters from the Bay of Bengal. Before the coastal embankments projects in the 60s (till middle 70s), the tidal water used to leave behind silts on the wetlands, which contributed to increase fertility of the land as well as offset the land subsidence in the area. There are enormous estuarine river networks in the area. The area is used as breeding haven and grazing land for many marine species. Moreover, the largest mangrove forest - the Subdarban - makes the area with a superb ecological feature.

During the 60s coastal embankment projects were undertaken in the guise of development to convert a significant tidal wetland areas to increase agricultural production. A large number of polders and thousand kilometers of embankment were constructed without due consideration on the ecological, bio-diversity and social assessment on the impact of the project. Given this loophole, the project has caused multifarious disastrous situation not only to Satkhira but also to the entire southwest region. Many marine species have been drastically harmed and a number of these species are already on the state of extinction and endangered. Waterlogging has engulfed a huge area at dead ends of coastal estuarine rivers which aftermath to cease the land formation. Estimated 150 thousand hectares of agricultural lands have been dried up, severely damaged, and no longer suitable to till for productive agricultural activity, which ironic to the objectives of OCEP at boasting agricultural productivity. A large portion of the area is now converted into shrimp production, which is highly capital-intensive nature of investment. As a result, thousands of farmers including seasonal labors have become jobless and resorted to migrate to the main lands and neighboring towns in search of living.

Adding this agony is the increasing salinity intrusion in the area, which further worsen the living condition of the people. The sources of safe drinking water are extremely affected and become scarce that utilizes major portion of days working hours to fetch safe and saline-free water from far distance area. Women and children in particular shouldered this burden and responsibility. A number of school-going children have dropped out to help their families in arduous work.

Satkhira is one of the under-developed districts of Bangladesh. According to Population Census of 1991, the literacy rate in the district is only 30.54%. Moreover, 60.33% of the family-households in the district do not own a piece of agricultural land and 57% of these family-households as per household income are absolutely poor, having no capacity to meet the daily calorie requirement of 2,112 per day as one of the major indicators of poverty.

The social life in Satkhira is highly influenced and based on hierarchical structure in its religio-ethnic dimension. It is learnt from a study entitled "Religio-Ethnic minority Groups of Southwest Bangladesh (1995)" conducted by Reza Samsur Rahman, that 28.95% of the population of Satkhira district belonged to the lower caste or untouchable communities. They have subordinated ownership on their own property and have limited access to the power structure. Literacy rate is indeed very low which only 19.28% and most of them live below poverty line.

Evolution in the Primary Education System

There were two types of primary education in the country before the colonial system had overruled and changed the system. One was for the upper class people where Sanskrit, Arabic, Farsi were used as major languages and was mainly sponsored by the kings and zamindars. At that period, Sanskrit was taught in educational institutions named as Chatuspati or Toll while Arabic was taught in Madrasahs. The other type of education was available in Patshala or Matkab. This type of education was mainly financed by the tuition fees collected from the students. Matkabs usually use to get fund from the income of Mosque assets and these were usually attached to mosques. Rev. William Adam produced three reports for the government on the primary education prevailing in Bangla and Bihar during the beginning of 19th century. It was learnt from the report that Bangla and Bihar, there was one primary school that catered 400 students known as Pathshala. Bangla, grammar and arithmetic were taught in these schools. This curriculum is said to be more practical, able to meet the daily needs of the people, and to great extent was secular in nature.

However, the British colonial regime took several steps to uproot the indigenous primary education and introduced a new form of education aimed at sustaining the colonial rule. In 1834, Lord Meckley was appointed as Head of Education Commission. In his period, he proposed a primary education policy with government subsidy for the affluent class people of the society and used English as academic medium to strengthen the colonial rule. The education policy known, Meckley himself termed as "down-ward filtration process", which excluded the poor class of the population from benefiting to the government subsidy. Thereafter, there have been a number of commissions and recommendations, some of which have been implemented but still the poor has little access to education and further marginalized.

Although, the country's existing primary education system was introduced in 1835, there was no primary school in Tala from around 50 years. On 1885, primary education was introduced through the establishment of a Minor School named "B.Dey Institution" in Tala Sadar. Subsequently, primary schools were also established at Muragacha in 1902, at Khalilnagar in 1905, at Par Kumira and Sujan Saha in 1912, the present primary education was introduced. At the beginning, the primary schools were established through patronization of the elite Hindu community so as the Muslim community had also played an important role in promoting primary education through the establishment of Khalilnagar Primary School in 1905.

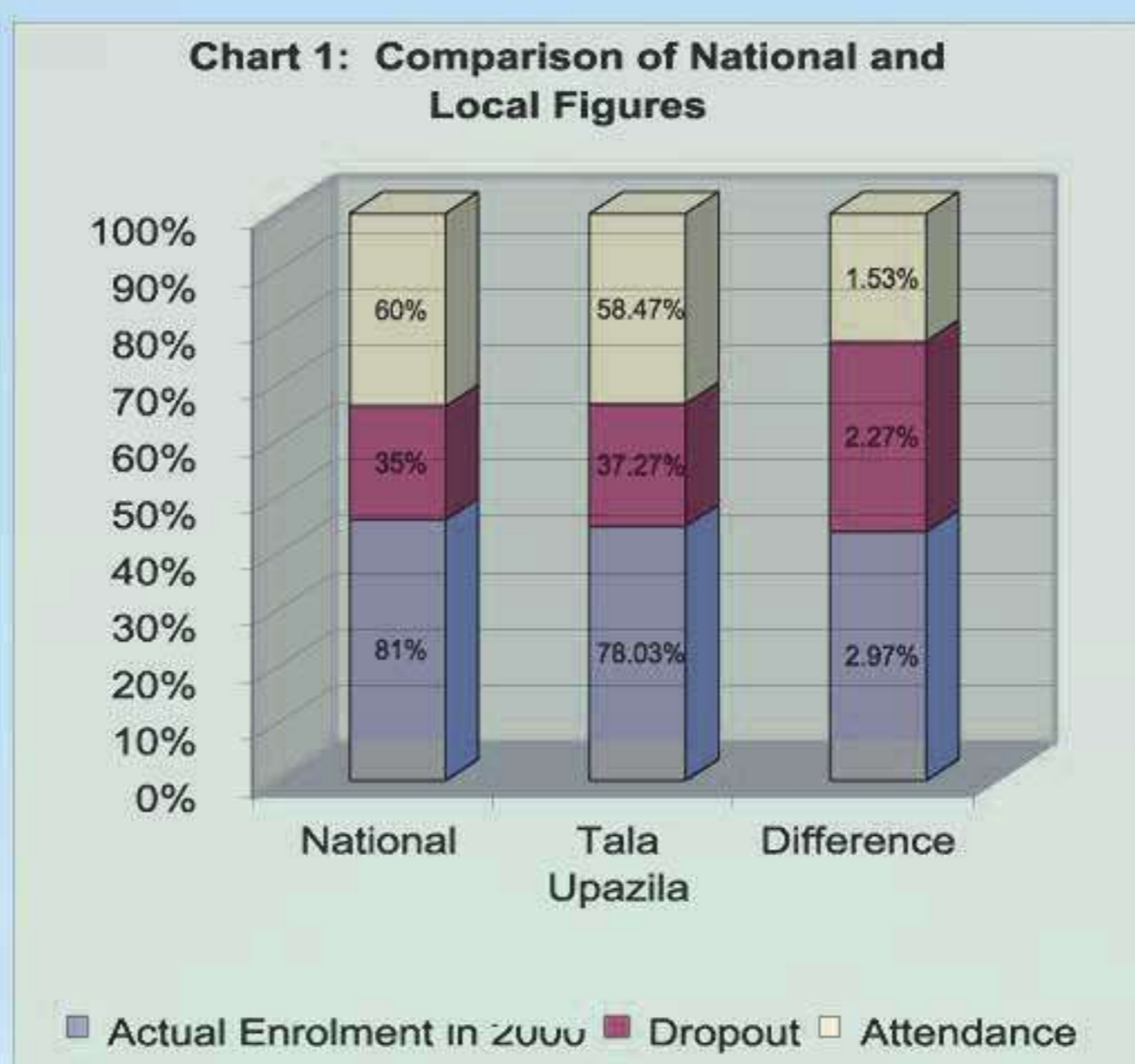
In consideration of the date of establishment in Primary Schools that were surveyed under the research work, it was found out that among 42 Government and Non-Government Primary Schools, 15 were established in the 50s, 4 were established in the 70s, 14 were established in the 90s, and the rest were established in the following years. Increased number of primary school establishments began in the 50s and 70s due to favorable government policies and initiatives. On the other hand, some local philanthropists were inspired by the liberation war in 1971 and thereafter established a number of primary schools in their respective areas. Moreover, it was also learnt that the different education institutions namely Pathshala, Maktab, Madrassah and Toll existed long before the present education system was introduced. Later on some of the Pathshalas were transformed into Primary Schools.

At present, there are 201 Government and Non-Government Primary Schools in Tala Upazila.

Facts and Figures: A Comparison

We came across some interesting information as we analyzed and compared between the local and national data on education. There is a big similarity between the primary education management at the national level and that at the local level. As there are different types of primary education with different curriculum at the national level so as the case in Tala Upazila. There are 10 different types of primary schools currently existing with 4 types of curriculum in Tala Upazila.

There are also some differences. At the national level there is one primary school for 2208 learners whereas Tala there is one primary school that caters for 2306 learners. Comparative statement of differences shown in chart 1:



Data Source: Population Census - 1991 (BBS) and NPA-2

The above chart shows that there are remarkable differences between the national and local figures in terms of actual enrolment, dropout and attendance. It is also clear that the percentage of enrolment and attendance is less than that of the national figure which difference is 1.53% and 2.97% respectively. But the rate of dropout is higher by 2.27%. Moreover, national literacy rate was 32.40% while in Tala Upazila was only 30.50% with a clear difference of 1.90%.

Al-Amin: Determined to be an engineer

Al-Amin struggles with his educational exercised to fulfill his dream to be an engineer someday, land with a lucrative job and live in the city. He is 12 years old. His father is Md. Abdul Khaleque Sheikh who works as agricultural labor. He earns between Tk 50 to Tk 60 per day. Al-Amin's mother is a plain housewife. Both of his parents are illiterate.

Al-amin is the second among the three brothers and one sister. His elder brother studied up to Class VI and now engages in vegetable trading. His sister is the youngest. They live in Vayera village under Sadar Union of Tala Upazila. Al-Amin studied for 3 years in BRAC school and on 2002 he was admitted into Class IV in Shibpur Government Primary School. With his determination, he secured first place and got promoted to Class V. Now, he is preparing for a scholarship examination.

Calm and quiet Al-Amin comes to school every day. In 2003 he was only absent from school for 1 day. He receives government stipend and uses to purchase papers, pens, and as well as pay for his private tutor with whom he studied under private tutorial for 5 months in 2003.

Al-Amin is fond of cricket. However, he does not have the opportunity to play with other kids except school time. Because he has to help his brother in the vegetable shop between 4:30 afternoon to 9:00/10:00 in the evening. Thereafter, he studies for one hour in the evening and another 2 hours in the following morning. Al-Amin opines that regular attendance at school is his key to success.

His favorite food is rice and fish. But his family can seldom afford fish due to their meager income. He feels comfortable to come at school. Al-Amin weeps as he realizes the poverty situation of his family; he is afraid of leaving school as his elder did, all of the sudden bring an end to his dream.



Local Scenario of Primary Education

The research work was undertaken for 6-months during the period of July to December 2003 aimed to know the local scenario of 50 primary schools with 6 different types of education systems in Tala Upazila. Findings of the research work are presented below:

Different Types of Primary Education

Although the constitution of Bangladesh proclaims a free and compulsory education for its citizen through establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system, there exist 10 different types of primary schools using 4 different sets of curricula.

The abovementioned schools are creating class discrimination in the society as well as developing people with different moral values due to non-uniform curriculum. Many schools in the country are currently following a concept of education that promotes subservient attitudes and patronage, diminishing sense of pride of own language and identity etc.

Table 1: Type of Primary Schools

SL No.	Type of Primary Schools	No. of Schools
1	Government Primary School	109
2	Registered Primary School	92
3	Community School	01
4	Satellite School	03
5	Ebtedaye Madrasah	07
6	Dakhil Madrassah attached to Ebtedaye Madrasah	16
7	Kindergarten	05
8	Non-registered Primary School	06
9	NGO Schools	55
10	High School attached Primary School	05

Physical Infrastructure

Open grounds, sufficient classroom spaces, playgrounds, sanitary latrines, provision/arrangement for arsenic-free drinking water supply etc are some of the major pre-requisites of an ideal environment for proper education. The presence of these infrastructures can clearly make a difference among children. The following table shows the physical infrastructure of 50 schools in 6 different types of primary education;

Table 2: Physical Infrastructures

SL No.	Educational institutions									Arsenic-free Water		Sanitary Latrine		Electricity Line
	Type	Number	Land (Acre)		Type of Building		Classified Numbers			Yes	No	Yes	No	
			Total	max.	Pucca	Cl Sheet	2KA	3KA	5KA					
1	Government	21	11.57	1.39	13	8	---	12	9	9	12	21	---	3
2	Registered	21	9.36	1.00	20	1	---	21	---	13	8	20	1	1
3	Ebtedaye Madrasah	4	5.54	3.55	1	3	---	3	1	3	1	4	---	2
4	Community School	1	0.33	0.33	---	1	1	---	---	---	1	1	---	---
5	Non-Registred	1	0.33	0.33	---	1	---	1	---	---	1	1	---	---
6	Kindergarten	2	2.00	1.00	2	---	---	---	2	2	...	2	---	2
Total		50	29.13	---	36	14	1	37	12	27	23	49	1	8

Table 2 shows that among the 42 government and registered primary schools there are 3 classrooms in 33-pucca building and 5 classrooms in 9 CI sheets. Each school has separate office room. Individual government primary school and registered primary school own with a maximum 1.39 acres and 1.00 acres of land respectively. Average land ownership per government primary school and registered primary school is 0.55 and 0.44 acres respectively. Among the 42 primary schools 22 schools have arsenic-free drinking water supply facilities. There are sanitary latrines in all schools except one registered primary school. There is electricity supply in 3 schools out of 21 government primary schools and there is only 1 school with electricity supply out of 21 registered primary schools.

3 out of 4 Ebdetaye madrasahs have 3 rooms (CI sheet sheds). The other one is a pucca house with 5 rooms. Individual madrasah owns with a maximum of 3.55 acres of land with average land ownership is 1.38 acres. 3 out of 4 have arsenic free drinking water supply and all have sanitary latrine facilities. But 2 out of 4 do not have electricity line. It may be mentioned



here that one of the madrassahs is annexed to an Alim Madrasah.

There is one community school with 2 rooms and one non-registered school with 3 rooms, having 0.33 acres of land with sanitary latrine facilities respectively. None of these schools have arsenic-free water supply facilities and electricity line.

There are two pucca kindergarten schools with 5 classrooms respectively. The schools use these on rental basis. There is sufficient space including playgrounds for children. All have arsenic-free water, sanitary latrine facilities and electrical supply.

It is learnt based on this analysis that government and non-government primary schools have less number of classrooms in comparison to the actual needs.

For that reason, 33 schools out of 42 need to run in 2 shifts. Moreover, the rate of dropout is higher in school that operates in 2 shifts due to the difficulties of poor students to cope with the schedule and it is hard for them to stay in schools from 10:00am to 4:30pm. On the other hand, the kindergarten and madrasahs have sufficient classroom spaces. Out of 6 (4 madrasahs and 2 kindergartens), 5 schools are operating in one shift. Although there is electricity supply in 4 government and non-government schools and 2 madrasahs, such facility is limited to offices and teachers common rooms. Moreover, none of the schools have separate latrines for girls. As a result, the adolescents' girls are shy and feel embarrassed to use the same tube well and latrines used by the boys. Usually, girls go to nearby bushes and neighboring houses for their needs. This creates social nuisance on one hand and on the other, the girls are vulnerable to health problems. None of the 50 schools have suitable latrines for disabled children.



Catchment Area

Every government and registered primary schools belong to a particular catchment area. The catchment area consists of one or more villages of part thereof. Teachers from different schools in neighboring villages sit together to determine the catchment area through mutual discussions and dialogue.

The purpose of determining the catchment area is to provide teachers with full information regarding the children of school-going age so that they can facilitate necessary steps regarding the enrolment of enlisted or non-enlisted, dropout and transferred students. It is learnt from the survey conducted in the catchment area of 5 schools that there were 871 boys and girls of school-going age, out of these, 123 (14.12%) have never been to school and 134 boys and girls are studying in non-formal or Ebtadays madrasahs outside the catchment area of the said schools.

It may be mentioned here that in 1999, the government had surveyed the 5 catchment areas and thereafter no follow up survey has been conducted. For the purpose of research, Uttaran had conducted a survey in 2003 and found out that there are 5,626 populations in 5 catchment areas. The teachers and members of the School Managing Committee (SMC) are supposed to monitor the cases of school non-going children and provide motivation and encouragement to attend school but sadly this was never happened.

Co-curricular Activities

Co-curricular activities are of prime importance in order to flourish the talents of the students, it also helps the formation of their physical and mental development, enhance creativity and develop social responsibilities and values of fraternity, thoughtfulness, fair competition etc. However, these activities are apparent only on papers in those surveyed schools and there are no concrete arrangements and equipment for this purpose. Moreover, there are only 2 hours and 20 minutes per week have been allocated in the first shift for physical exercise including music, crafts and fine arts whereas the second shift has an allocation of 4 hours and 15 minutes for the same purpose. As these works are not done effectively, the allocated working hours are just spoiled.

Human Resource

Services of qualified and skilled teachers are essential to ensure quality education delivery. There is a big difference in the qualification and level of skill of the teachers employed in 6 different types of education covered under the survey.

Table 3: Human Resources

SL.No	Type of School	No	No. of Teachers		Graduates		Trained Teacher		No. of Learners	
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	Government	21	50	31	19	25	29	26	1907	1890
2	Registered	21	62	19	09	07	44	16	1714	1756
3	Madrasah	04	16	--	04	--	01	--	399	314
4	Community	01	01	01	--	--	01	--	62	42
5	Kindergarten	02	06	12	05	08	01	01	153	87
6	N-Registered	01	01	03	01	--	--	--	70	80
TOTAL		50	136	66	38	40	76	43	4305	4169

Note: M=Male, F=Female

Table 3 shows that there are 202 teachers (comprised 136-Male and 66-Female) against 8,474 students that represent a student-teacher ratio of 1:42. On the otherhand, 38.61% of teachers hold a graduation degree while 58.91% of the teachers are trained.

In terms of gender status in these surveyed schools, the number of female teachers is very low as compared to their male counterpart, which only 32.67%. Similarly the number of female students is less than that of male by 1.61%. However, female teachers are better trained than the male teachers by 9.27% and the number of female teacher with graduation degree is higher by 32.66% than their male counterpart. Moreover, the number of female teacher is higher than that of male teachers in registered schools, kindergarten, community school and non-registered primary schools. But in the survey, madrasahs, all teachers are male and there is no female counterpart for religious reason.

Excepting primary schools and madrasahs annexed to the secondary or Dhakhil level have no service staff to look after the school maintenance, cleanliness and other office utility services. Teachers on duty are the one performing these above-mentioned chores/works. In primary schools, there are no specific assigned teachers for a specialized or specific subjects or conducting co-curricular activities. It was found that none of the teachers are trained on co-curricular activities. Moreover, teachers are also required to extend services at important government duties such as during elections, immunization and different government survey works etc.

Shefali: Her distressing experience compelled her to stop

Shefali is a girl belonging to the outcaste community. Her parents are Madhab Das and Golapi Dasi. They live in Laxmanpur village of Tala Upazila under Satkhira district. She is very much loved by her parents. Her family's ancestral occupation is producing bamboo products and leather goods. All members of her family are involved in this occupation. Shefali is the youngest among the three siblings. None of her brothers have been to school. Shafali has reached up to Class III in Madanpur Registered Primary School. But now, she does not go to school anymore. She works with her parents to produce bamboo products. The 11-year-old Shefali is now a skilled craftswoman. When called closer and asked,



she replied "I used to read in class III but I am out of school for the last one year. My cousin and I used to go to school together. She has been married. I do not go to school since then." During the conversation, Shafali recalled that she very much loved going to school. But she was not able to complete her home tasks on a regular basis due to family hardship. Moreover, nobody helps her at home to complete the home tasks. Scolding by teachers for not completing home tasks has distressed her and compelled her to leave the school. Her mother used to make baskets out of bamboo, instead of going to school; she started to help her mother in the basket making. Shefali's mother says, "we are poor people, what benefit can our girl to bring in the family by going to school. Her teacher are not

considerate after all, rather she can help me making bamboo crafts at home and earn a living."

Shefali's father shared that he can no more afford to sustain the family given his present income. Although all members of the family toil and help each other but still the family could hardly manage three meals a day. Shefali's family do not own any land except the homestead. She is fond of music. She dreamt to be a teacher but cannot be fulfilled. She cannot forget the fun memories of the school days.

Student-Teacher Relation, Teaching Method and Ratio

Student-teacher relationship depends on the teaching methods. In our country, the teaching method is basically a teacher centered, lecture-based and banking education approach. The surveyed schools are no exception. Here, the students do not have any opportunity to participate productively and the venue to ask or render questions for details is very limited. Upon arriving at the classroom, the teachers first work is to check whether the students have completed the home tasks given on the previous day and then, the teacher give another home task for the next day and leave the classroom. The student has to complete the home task by him/herself, or with the help of his/her parents or house tutor.

In the same way, the students sits for terminal and annual examinations and answers the questions based on memorization rather than comprehension and analytical skills. The current teaching methods resort to some kind of physical and mental torturing on the part of the students. The methods in most cases, prohibits a friendly relationship between teachers and students or vice versa rather the sense of intimidation is growing up and prevailing which make the students



as mere passive receiver in the process. At the same time, this method also blocks student from effective learning and becoming self-reliant as individuals.

In the 42 surveyed government and registered primary schools, the teacher-student average ratio is 1:45 while in the other schools including madrasahs, kindergarten and non-registered is 1:30 with an average ratio of 1:42. However, the average ratio in 15 schools is more than 1:50 with the highest ratio of 1:99.

Availability of Text Books

Education, teachers and the textbooks are integral parts of the system. For education, there is no any alternative to textbooks. New textbooks are very attracting elements for the minor boys and girls in primary schools. So it is very important to distribute new textbooks to every student at the beginning of the year i.e. January. At present, the government distributes textbooks at free of cost to the students of primary schools. For 2003, the students of class III and I are supposed to entitle a full set of textbooks aside from 3 reusable old books with a total requirement of 6 books. Text distribution information for Tala Upazila shown in table 4:

Table 4: Textbooks Distribution

Class	No.Of Students	Total required Books	Books Distributed by the Government									Total Books Distributed	Excess	Shortage
			B	E	M	SS	Sci	Religion						
								I	H	C	Bd			
One	8,863	26,579	9,000	9,000	9,000	---	---	---	---	---	---	27,000	411	---
Two	8,395	25,185	8,700	9,700	8,700	---	---	---	---	---	---	27,100	1,915	---
Three	8,075	48,450	4,200	3,910	4,100	4,300	4,000	3,300	500	100	33	24,443	--	24,007
Four	7,313	43,878	4,110	4,400	4,400	4,300	4,450	4,000	450	100	33	26,243	---	17,635
Five	5,629	33,774	4,450	4,000	4,000	4,327	4,000	3,700	550	100	33	25,160	---	8,614

Note : B=Bangla, E=English, M=Mathematics, SS=Social Study, Sci= Science, I=Islam, H=Hinduim, C=Christianity, Bd=Budhism

The above table shows that all students belonged to Class One (1.54%) and Class Two (7.60%) had availed new textbooks respectively in excess of the actual requirements. On the other hand, Class Three, Four and Five got a share of 50.45%, 59.81% and 74.50% books respectively. Each class has an excess of 0.45%, 9.81% and 24.50% respectively as per government rules. On 2003, Tala Upazila had distributed 96.72% of books in the month of January and 3.28% for Class Five (Bangla and Social Studies) in the month April. It is observed that despite the students of Class Three, Four and Five received 50% new books and 50% old books. However, students who got old books have been dissatisfied due to unreadable condition of the books. As well as guardians and school authorities expressed the same over the government policy on the distribution of the old books.

The Ward Committee, School Managing Committee and the P.T.A meetings are required which planned to be held during the month of November and December purposely to make the use of old books easier and acceptable, but authorities in the surveyed 50 schools stated that no such meetings actually taken place.

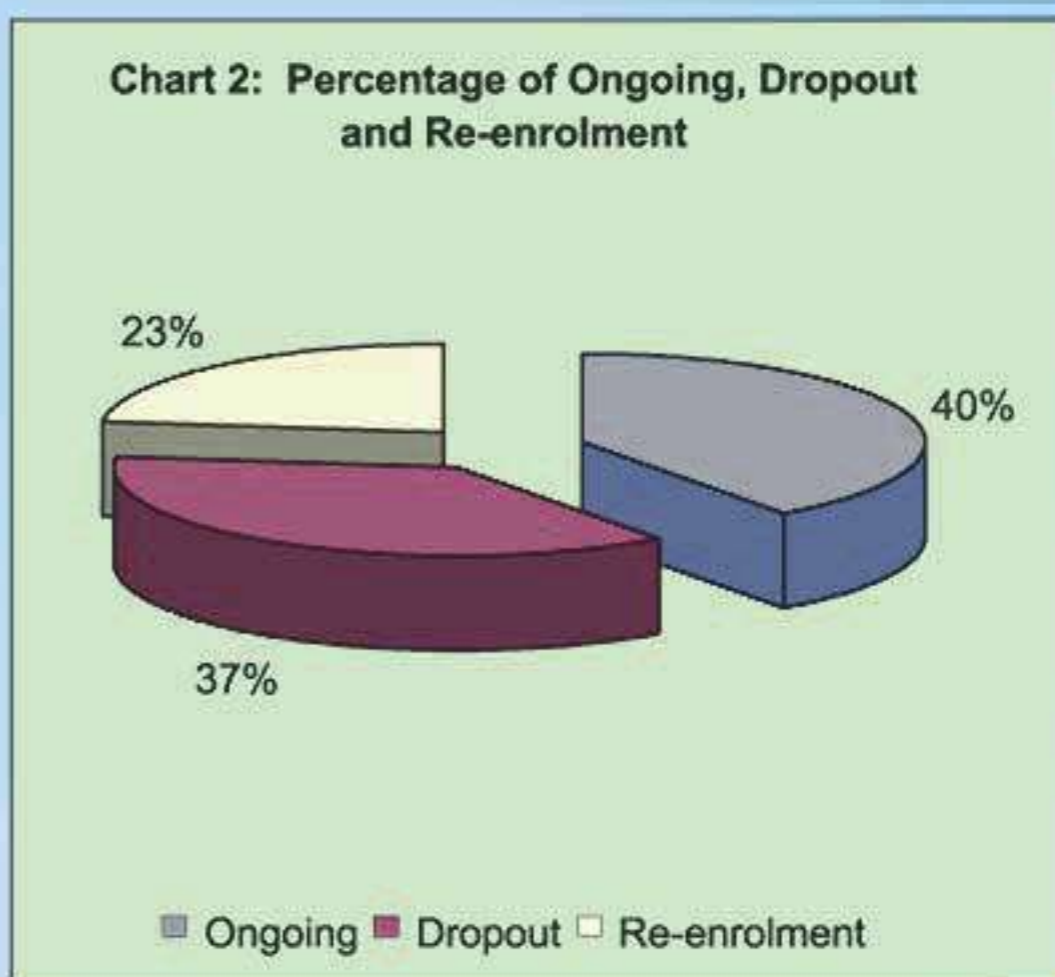
Enrolment, Attendance, Dropout and Re-enrolment

In an analysis of the primary education scenario of Tala Upazila, it is seen that low rate of enrolment, irregular attendance, high rate of dropout and re-enrolment are the major problems for the students (boys and girls) of over 5-years of age. The problems are categorically enumerated below.

Enrolment

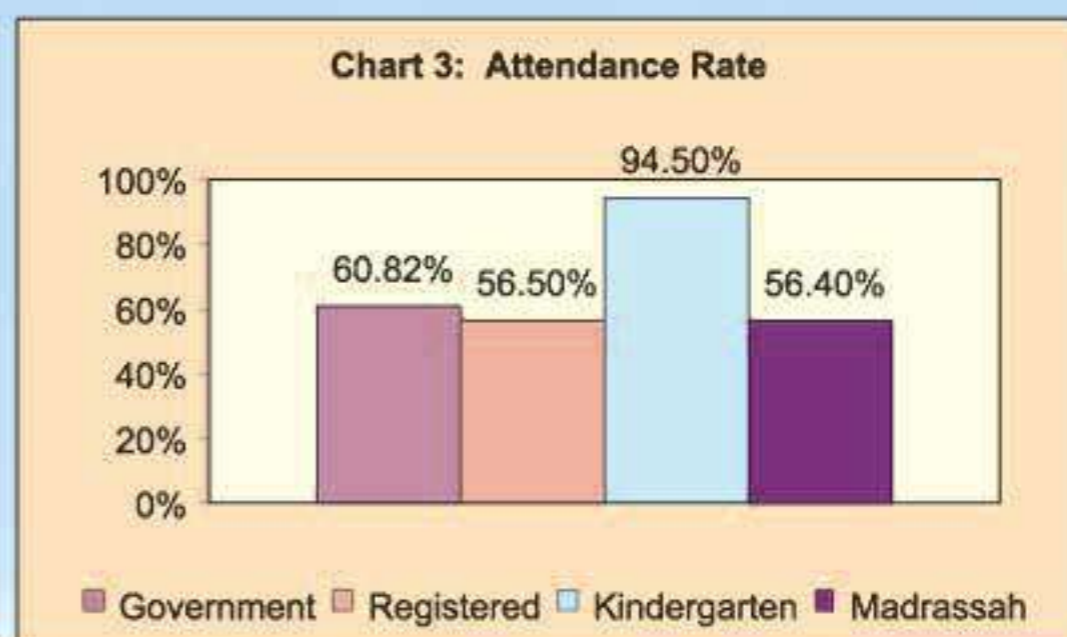
The survey found that the rate enrolment in the primary schools is 86%. Thus, 14% of children were not able to enroll. Poverty is the first cause and justification for non-enrolment.

Secondly, a large part of these family-households belonged to the lower caste community that are more economically deprived and have no capacity to send their children at school but instead help the family to earn a living. Moreover, there are some families with mentally and physically disabled children among them. Chart 2 shows the percentage of ongoing, dropout and re-enrolment.



Attendance

In several cases, there are notable differences in the rate of attendance in government and registered primary schools, kindergarten, madrasah and non-registered primary schools. Also, the rate of attendance had declined to some extent in rainy season and harvest periods except kindergarten schools. The rate of attendance in 4 types of primary schools is shown in chart 3.



Dropout

Students who were enrolled on the year 1999 are supposed to be in Class IV in 2003. Through the survey on the students of Class V in the 23 schools, it was found that the rate of dropout is at staggering rate of 37.27% while the rate of on-going students is 40.09%.

Re-enrolment/Repetition

Based on the survey, the rate of re-enrolment/repetition in 23 schools is 22.64%. The rate of admission among the students of low-income households is higher. However, the survey found that there are three major reasons for repetition: 1. Ignorance of parents; 2. engaging children in work instead of sending them to school; and 3. lack of conducive environment for education at home.

Kakoli: **Acute destitution curtailed her dream**

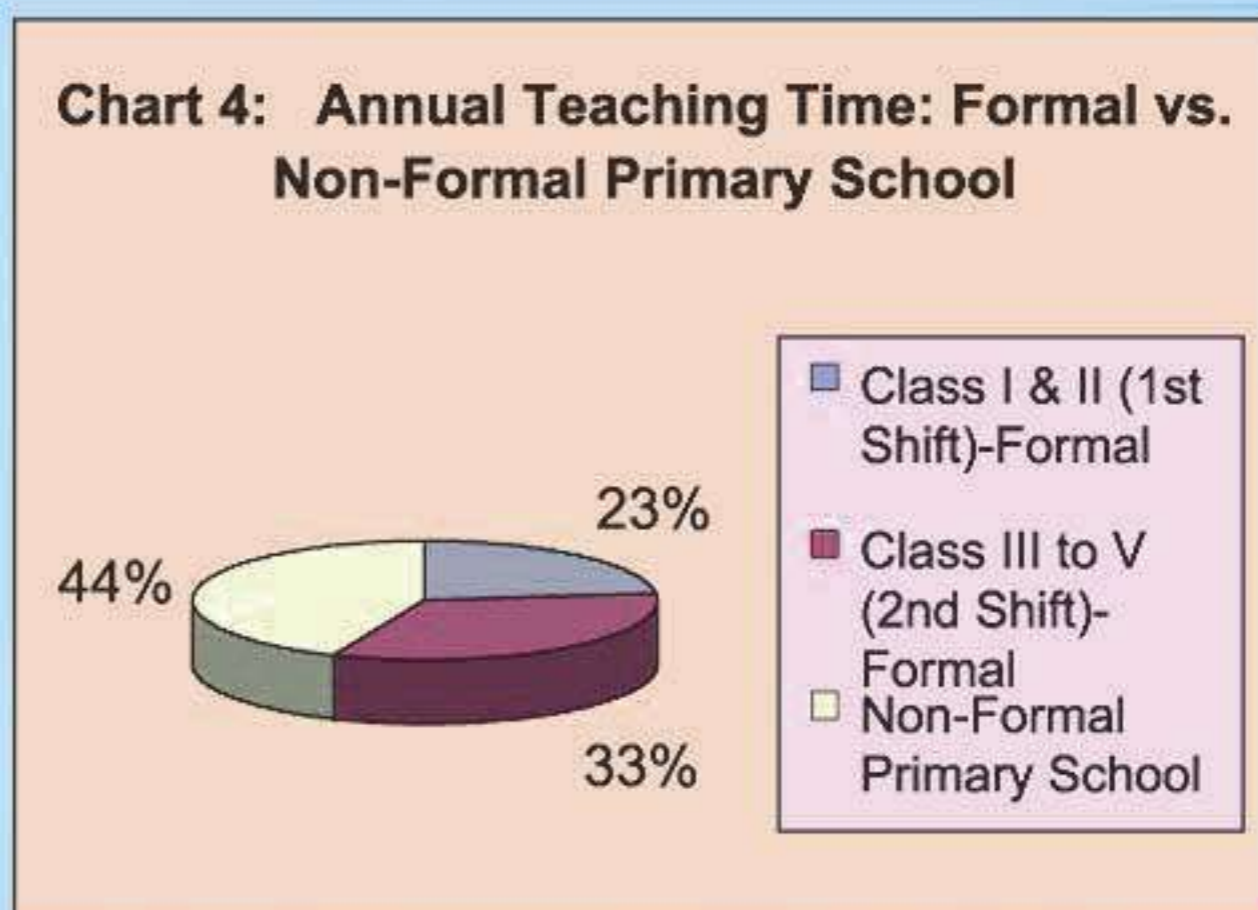
Kakoli is the second among five brothers and sisters. Her father is Aser Ali and mother Nasima Khatun. They live in Madanpur village in Tala Upazila. Her father's ancestral occupation is rearing palanquin. They belong to the lower caste in a Muslim dominated community. In the course of time, the demand for palanquin has declined to a great extent, which brought a change in the occupation of her father. He has to maintain the family with the money he earns as a seasonal day laborer. As it is not possible for her father to manage the family with his meager income, Kakoli's mother also sells labor to supplement the family expenses and needs. Even Kakoli has been forced to work as housemaid in neighbor's house aside from daily household chores. She has to take care of her younger sister and do the household chores at the same time as her mother goes out for work. Under the circumstances, she was not able to make time to go to school. Kakoli wished to go to schools. But she could not do so because of the poverty of her family. Kakoli, at a very tender age, is capable of cooking to sowing seeds in the agriculture field.

Kakoli loves very much to watch TV. She goes to a neighboring house every Friday to watch her favorite soap opera. She plays with her same -age girls, as there is an opportunity. Kakoli has a dream of going to school and hoping someday to become a medical doctor. But that dream is never to be fulfilled.

Annual Teaching Time

Annual teaching time is one of the important factors for quality education. It is identified in the research that in 2003 there were a total of 238 working days. However, it was only possible to teach the students for 185 days. The rest 53 days were utilized for: 3 days optional holidays, 6 days for sub-cluster training, cluster meeting, late delivery of textbooks and holding examinations.

During the 185 days, 425.5 working hours (23%) teaching time were used for Class I and II (1st shift) and 610.5 working hours (33%) teaching time was used for Class III to V (2nd shift). This teaching time is indeed not sufficient to advance children's learning growth. Comparatively, it is far less than that the teaching time in non-formal primary schools, which is 800 hours (44%). Moreover, it is observed that the school time, especially the second shift, is none at all suitable for students belonging to the poor households due to their involvement in household related activities or works. In many cases as observed in the research, inappropriate school time lead to high dropout rate.



Finance and Resources Management

On financial and resources management of the primary schools, it was found that most the government primary schools have bank accounts except one primary school. The bank account is solely operated in custody of the Headmaster. Generally, this account is used to keep record of the contingency cost provided by the government. However, local income derived from examination fees, sale proceeds of fruits and trees owned by the school including other income generated from other sources are allegedly kept by the Headmasters. Thus the money is not deposited to the account and is expensed without proper accounting and liquidation. Bookkeeping is not properly and regularly maintained. Despite, they maintain a stock register for different school assets such as chair, table, bench, almira, etc.

Generally the schools do not collect donations locally. Although these schools have initiated to generate local donations. Madrassahs are in far better position at mobilizing local donations. They also tapped other government resources for test relief and food for work and as well as donations from District Councils and ADP. They also have taken some initiatives to tap local donations, which include skins of sacrificial animals, and other religious donations. Financial and other resource management system of madrasahs as practiced is similar to the above-mentioned schools.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of primary schools are done by the Upazila Education Administration. Moreover, the School Managing Committee is also supposed to be helping on the monitoring and evaluation of the schools. But as they do not have any authority in this respect, they are rather reluctant and passive to get involved. A number of Assistant Upazila Education Officers under the Upazila Education Officer, are usually looking after the 25-30 different schools (government, registered, community and satellite) and the usually visit 10 schools every month. On school visit, the Assistant Upazila Education Officer are tasked to look after on the following issues:

- ▲ Cleanliness of the school premises, classrooms, dress of students and teachers and clear notification of schools operation hours and class routines on notice board.
- ▲ Transparency with respect of students' information card, admission, dropout, attendance, books, stipends, meetings of School Managing Committees, holiday and examination result registers, information regarding teachers' home visits and master roll for distribution of stipend.
- ▲ Submission of quarterly performance report and information regarding annual work plan.
- ▲ Information regarding tube-well, toilets and up-to-date map of the catchment area.
- ▲ Preparation of lesson notes and other materials by the teachers and their use in teaching.
- ▲ Check the status of uniforms of students, playground, flower garden, plantation, flag, etc.

During the visit, it was observed that student's information card and home visit records were not found. Despite the notification of school operating hours, the status of uniform of students and dress of teachers and the school compound were not up to a satisfactory level. Though there is availability of quarterly report, annual work plan, admission register, attendance register, textbooks distribution register and register regarding meetings of the SMCs and examination results despite there is dissatisfaction among guardians of the students regarding the transparency of stipend money distribution. The schools do not have up-to-date information of the catchment area. None of the schools were found to have flower garden, use of lesson notes and material except one. The actual rate of dropouts is far higher than that of the rate provided by the school authority.

School Managing Committee (SMC)

There is a School Managing Committee in each school to ensure participation of the local people towards the development of quality education. A booklet is available with the assistance from IDA that outlines the formation of the committee, duties and responsibilities of the committee members, tenure of the committee as well as other rules and regulations regarding the committee. Each committee consists of 11 members, which includes one chairperson, one member-secretary, one female member and 8 local representatives. The headmaster of the schools works as ex-officio member-secretary of the committee. The term of the committee lasts for two years and the Upazila Education Officer facilitates the formation of the new committee before the end of the current committee. Moreover, the committee is responsible for:

- ▲ Hold at least one meeting every month with all of the committee members to review the performance of the school and make decisions, scrutinizing the educational activities of the school, school management, attendance of teachers and students, dutifulness of the teachers, preparation of the quarterly reports on teaching, formulation of annual work plan and submission to the Upazila Education Office.
- ▲ Environmental development work, admission of children, ensuring attendance to reduce the dropout rate.
- ▲ Ensure signature upon the completion of report on maintenance and renovation work of the school.
- ▲ Assist procurement, preservation and distribution of textbooks, other education materials and stipend fund.
- ▲ Assist co-curricular activities and sub-cluster training courses.



Among the 50 schools surveyed under the research work, 2 schools do not hold any meetings but the remaining 48 schools compiled/write proceeding of the meeting, but also found that there were no formal meetings held in most cases. Majority members do not attend the meeting on time and/or the meetings have not taken place at all. Instead, a "traditional" proceeding is written/produced and then the signature is taken from the members by visiting their respective homes just for the sake of fulfilling the regulatory requirement. However, there are exceptions in some schools. It is learnt that the members are not properly accomplishing their duties and responsibilities as entrusted upon them. Moreover, the local MP who is supposed to work as

adviser to the SMC as per regulatory requirement but it never happens. Besides the selection of the SMC members is often done under the influence of politicians or by political affinity that prevents the inclusion or participation of more credible individuals in the SMC.

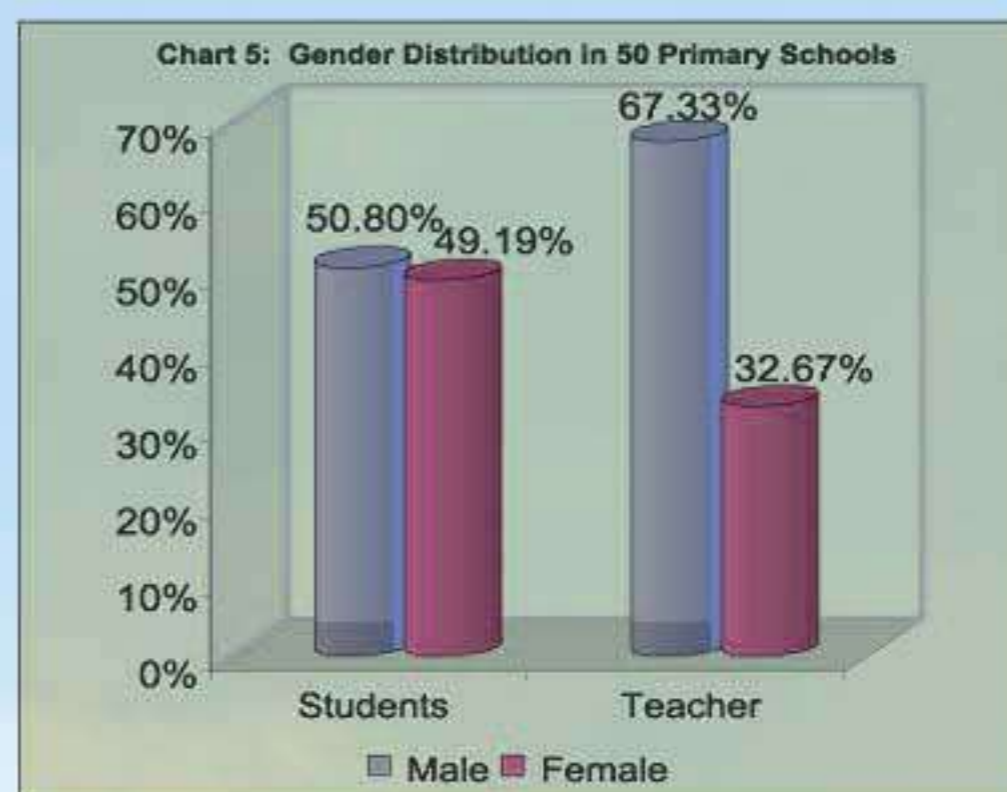
Parents Teachers Association (PTA)

There are two separate booklets regarding the duties and responsibilities of the SMC. One was published by IDA through its Universal Primary Education Project on October 1985 and the other one was published by Directorate of Primary Education on 1st Chaitra 1393 Bangla year. These booklets contain specific regulations and guidelines concerning the formation of Parents Teachers Association including thereto are the duties and responsibilities. However, there is no functioning PTA in schools as specified in the above booklets. It is learnt that parents are invited to be involved in school on the day of publishing the result of the annual examination and during annual sports in 42 schools. The remaining 8 schools do not do so at all.

Gender Equality

There have been some noticeable positive changes vis-a-vis the promotion and establishment of gender equality through the intervention of the government and different non-government organization in the past years. However, it should be sustained and imperatively to be continued.

In 50 schools surveyed, there were 8474 students, which comprised 4169 (49.19%) female and 4305 (50.80%) male with a difference rate of 1.61%. The same thing with among the teachers, female teachers is only 66 (32.67%) as compared to their 136 male counterpart (67.33%). This shows a difference



rate of 34.66%. Moreover, the gaps is more acute in the case of the SMCs wherein there is only one female member in each SMCs in 36 schools, 2 in 5 schools and 3 in one school. This could be attributed to the government policy viz SMC which mandates atleast 1 female member in the SMCs. It is however a general opinion that the number of female members in the SMCs should be at least 50% and there should be an increased number of female teachers in view of gender balance and at advancing women's participation at fostering of a more healthy environment and quality education.

Primary Education and Local Government

Union Parishad is viewed as the basic unit and most popular local government institution in the country. According to Union Parishad Manual, "Union Parishads will form a standing committee every year in its first or subsequent meetings to look after the general and mass education affairs". It is learnt that in pursuant to the regulatory requirements the standing committees are formed just on papers. They do not actually function or hold any meetings due to the absence of

clear rules and regulations specifying the duties and responsibilities of the committee. There is provision for 11-member education committee at the Upazila level. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer acts as the head of the committee while the Upazila Education Officer acts as member-secretary. The committee tasks on decision making regarding the transfer of teachers including other decision making for primary education. The important issue to look into is that, the committee has no contact or relation with the standing committee for primary and mass education formed at the union level. On the other hand, the standing committee has no relation with the School Managing Committee.

Moreover, the involvement in education is neither included nor stipulated in the 10 mandatory task of the Union Parishads rather treated as one of the 38 optional tasks. The unusual fact going on is that local elected bodies especially the Union Parishads do not play an active role in education neither prioritized education at all.

Economic condition and family expenditure for education

Economic solvency has indeed appertained to schooling. Insolvency increases the rate of dropout as well as, one of the major causes for lower rate of enrolment. In order to probe the relation of the household economic condition to education, 64 households were surveyed in 12 government and 12 registered primary schools under Tala Upazila. Information shown in table 5.

Table 5: Household Economic Condition based on Monthly Income

FH/Hs Category	No. of FH/Hs	Family Population			Monthly Income (Taka)	No. of School Goers	No. of Drop-out	Rate of Drop-out
		M	F	T				
Assetless	12	40	37	77	0-1000	10	8	80%
Lower Income Class Middle	23	47	46	93	1001-2000	28	13	46.42%
Income Class Higher	17	41	38	79	2001-7000	25	2	8%
Income Class	12	21	23	44	7000-above	17	--	0%
TOTAL	64	149	144	293		80	23	

Note: FH/Hs = Family Households, M = Male, F= Female, T = total

Table 5 shows that a family households with a maximum monthly income of Tk1000 - reveals with the highest rate of dropout, with staggering 80%, while FH/Hs which income is within Tk1001-Tk2000 shows unsatisfactory rate of dropout which is 46.42%. FH/Hs having with a monthly income of Tk2001-Tk7000 show an 8% drop out while those FH/Hs having with a monthly income above Tk7000 shows no dropout. It clearly shows that the monthly income of the family households has a great bearing to the education.

Expenditure or investment in education is an important issue. Family households of different category have different allocation for education. Table 6 shows that family households expenditure on education in terms of monetary and non-monetary value.

For the purpose of analysis of information family households with a monthly income as stated in table 6 are categorized as assetless, lower income class, middle-income class and higher income class respectively.

Table 6: Family Households Allocation in education vs. monetary and non-monetary value

FH/Hs Category	No of FH/Hs	FH/Hs Non-Monetary Expenditure		Average Annual Monetary Expenses per Learner								Total Non-monetary and Monetary Value
		Time/day	Annual Cost(Tk)	EF	B(N)	PP	HT	T	L	D	T	
Assetless	12	0 hour	N/A	17	--	73	--	--	44	123	357	357
Lower Income Class	23	1 hour	8x365 2920	22	20	80	120	--	274	272	788	3708
Middle Income Class	17	1.5 hours	18x365 6570	25	60	215	500	500	392	675	2367	8937
Higher Income Class	12	2 hours	40x365 14600	27	60	280	1000	1000	433	970	3770	18370

Note: EF = Examination Fees, B(N) = Books (Note), PP = Papers and Pen, HT = House Tutor, T = Tiffin, L = Light, D = Dress, T = Total

In the above context, reveals that the assetless family households have little or insignificant monetary expenditures for education which is only one-tenth in comparison to that of the higher income class. On the other hand, the expenditure of higher income class family households is 37% higher in comparison to that of middle-income class. Although the monetary expenditure of lower-income class is double than that of assetless class. People spent for different items for education such as examination fees, books, papers, pens, house tutor, tiffin, light, dress etc, but the assetless class does not have any expenditures in particular to house tutor, notebooks and tiffin. Thus the lower-income class family households spent for all items except tiffin.

It is also apparent from the above table that significant number of the family household members sacrificed a remarkable amount of non-monetary i.e. time to care-taking related to punctual eating, washing cloth, house chores and taking children to and from schools. However, the assetless family households do not have any expenditure neither allocation for this purpose.

On the other hand, the lower-middle-higher income family households spent 1 hour, 1.5 hours and 2 hours daily, if converted into monetary value, each spent Tk. 8, Tk. 12, and Tk.20 respectively. It is indeed very clear that in non-monetary expenditure the assetless family households do not have any contribution while the middle and higher family households spent Tk6570 and Tk14, 600 respectively. Although the lower income class lives below the poverty level, they spent an equivalent of Tk. 2,920 in non-monetary items.

Households Condition of Education

Education has a close relationship to the economic condition of the family households. Due to weaker economic base, the assetless and the low-income households are deprived with less access to education and their household expenditures for education is acutely less. However, given the stronger economic base of the middle and higher income class, the capacity to invest more in education and privilege to enjoy is prevalent. For this reason the rate of education

among the assetless and the lower income households is extremely low as compared to the middle and higher income group. Table 7 shows the condition of education of 64 households in Tala Upazila.

Table 7: Household Condition of Education

FH/Hs Category	H/Hs Populations	No. of Children 0-5 years old	No. of Illiterate Adult	Condition of Education							
				Class I-V		Class VI-X	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Graduate and Post Graduate	Total Literate	Education Rate
				Enrol	Drop out						
Assetless	77	12	46	9	6	5	--	--	--	20	25.97%
Lower Income Class	93	18	47	10	6	8	4	1	--	29	31.18%
Middle Income Class	79	11	16	18	3	16	8	3	2	50	63.29%
Higher Income Class	44	6	3	7	--	14	6	5	3	35	79.45%
TOTAL	293	47	112	44	15	43	18	9	5	134	

The table showed that the total population of 64 family households is comprised of 293 individuals, out of this number, 47 are children, 112 illiterate adult, and 134 are literate. The education rate according to category shows that assetless (25.97%), lower income class (31.18%), middle-income class (63.29%), and higher income rate (79.54%) respectively. On the other hand, the dropout rate among the assetless family households has garnered the highest rate of 66.66% as compared to the higher income class. Moreover, among the lower income and middle-income class, the rate is 63.29% and 16.66% respectively. None of the assetless class reached in secondary level while the lower-middle-higher class is 4.30%, 10.13% and 13.64% respectively. There is only one in lower income class, 3 in middle-income class and 5 in higher income class. Among the assetless and lower income class no one holds a graduation degree but among the middle income class and higher income class showed that 2 and 3 including post-graduation.

Social Audit: Stipend

Through its amended circular dated 28.12.02, the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has mandated to provide stipend to 40% of the enrolled students at Tk100 per month/student in primary schools of all Unions in the country. The objectives are to increase the rate of enrolment and attendance, prevent dropout, increasing the rate of completion of education circle, prevention of child labor and poverty alleviation. It has been clearly mentioned in the said circular that the children belong to the destitute, widow, day labor, landless, insolvent households are entitled for the stipend. One of the major conditions for the stipend is that the student should have 85% attendance and should obtain at least 40% marks in annual examination.

Moreover, Tala Upazila received a large chunk of stipend amounting to Tk1,06,69,753 (Taka one crore six lakh sixty nine thousand and seven hundred fifty-three) from the government stipend project, which was distributed in 3-installment basis. In the surveyed schools, it has been observed that it is not always possible to fulfill all the conditions for the stipend. Major weak points of the project are mentioned below.

- 40% of the students are given stipend. As a result, the remaining 60% students and their parents are having some sort of misunderstanding about the teachers.
- Students are not directly benefited in the stipend rather their family is benefiting. There are number of cases wherein the family head used the funds for family purposes other than education.
- Teachers are influenced by the local influential persons and political pressure in the selection of 40% students.
- The guardians of the students are not aware of the objectives and distribution mechanism of the stipend.
- It is not possible on the part of the poor students to have 85% attendance given their socio-economic status and family background wherein they required for household chores/activities on many occasions.

In order to solve the above-mentioned problems, recommendations were gathered locally:

- Stipend should be paid to all students.
- Amendment is needed in the policy especially on the issue of 85% attendance.
- Stipend should be paid in kind not in cash. Such as exercise book, pen, dress and tiffin. This will be directly benefited the students.
- Until the time of payment of stipend to all the students, efforts should be made to select the 40% eligible students through involvement of the guardians, SMCs, local elite persons, UP chairperson and Upazila Education Officer.

Social Audit: Ideal Project

The project started in 1996 under the supervision of Education Directorate, which covered 201 primary schools (109 government and 92 non-government). The program was introduced in Tala Upazila of Satkhira district in 1999.

- * Ideal project aimed at increasing enrolment rate to 95% under age group of 6-10 years and to secure/maintain the 5-year education completion rate at 70%.
- * Acquire basic learning competency through quality primary education.
- * Removed discrimination in the primary education level.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the following steps were undertaken:



Child-Centered Teaching Facilities

It was observed that children-centered and project-centered teaching method could not be implemented. Teaching materials provided by the project were not properly utilized. Although the emphasis was given on academic supervision however was not materialized. Only classroom decoration/beautification was done properly. But in this coastal zone this would not last long due to salinity.

School-based Work Plan

It was observed that survey of the area was conducted in 1999. No following survey since then or updating efforts were made to update the information. As a result, the actual number of enrolled, irregular and non-enrolled students could not ascertained. Also, the school-based work plan is not systematically prepared and there are other important details, which needs to be incorporated or considered that are being set aside. Among the 50 surveyed schools, it was found that one school has no bank account, thus transactions were not properly kept and maintained in most schools despite the presence of bank accounts.

School Environment

It was observed during the survey that the classrooms, playgrounds and the school premises are not properly cleaned and maintained. Among the 50 surveyed schools, only one school has no latrine facility. The remaining 49 schools have toilets but not properly cleaned and maintained.

There are no separate latrines for girls. Moreover, there is no arrangement for the supply of arsenic-free drinking water in 24 schools but tube wells are available in all schools.

It is learnt that the distribution of leaflets, posters, billboards, stickers etc by the Ideal project has played an important role in social mobilization. The project aimed at raising the enrolment rate to 95% and raising the 5-year education completion rate to 70%. In the surveyed 50 schools, it was found out that the rate of 5-year education completion rate has been raised to 40.09% in Tala Upazila. According to the booklet on the introduction of Ideal project, published by the Primary Education Department in 2001, "at present, the net enrolment rate is 82% and the rate of completion of primary education is 65%". Thus these figures of achievements are encouraging but not full satisfactory. In this regard, people's view were gathered concerning the performance of the project, presented below:

- ❖ Assess the public opinion before the project plans so that people's participation is ensured.
- ❖ Brief description of the project must be in plain language and should be distributed to the teachers and managing committee of primary schools so that they can take a pro-active role in achieving the project objectives.
- ❖ Set evaluation of the project at an interval of 2 years and implement the recommendations of the evaluation.
- ❖ Properly justify the utilization of any fund loaned from international financial institutions so that fund are not misused and wasted.
- ❖ Take appropriate actions to further ensure the achievements the project.

Local People's Perspective on Primary Education

Local people expressed their views on the primary education during the conduct of consultation meeting, FGD, workshops etc facilitated during the survey. They identified that low income and poverty are the main factors behind high rate of dropout, low rate of enrolment, repetition and attendance. So they put more emphasis on special arrangements for the students belonging to the extremely low income and poverty stricken households. Teachers are sometimes responsible for dropout and repetition. They also opined that in some schools, the number of students is very high and it is almost impossible for one teacher to accommodate and teach 70-80 students and give proper attention to all of them. Regarding the push to improve the quality of education, they shared that the distribution of educational materials, especially books should be done on time preferably in the month of January. Added, that the local elected bodies should have specific role in primary education. They also commended that the present system is very much unilaterally controlled and centralized.

Moreover, the provision of accountability of the teachers is not sufficient because the school managing committee is just a mere ornamental and the auditing of the education department is just mainly limited to paperwork. Above all, they emphasized that it is necessary to raise the awareness of the people and the guardians of the students to increase the rate of enrolment to 100%.

Local people, the guardians of the students and the members of the School Managing Committee expressed sentiment of dissatisfaction over the existing infrastructure of the primary schools. They suggested that there should be 5 classrooms and a separate office room. It is also necessary to have separate sanitary latrines for the girls and provision of arsenic-free water should be in place. They also put emphasis on the orderliness and cleanliness of the school premises; playground and availability of playing materials should be religiously managed.

Also, they suggested to include Bangla and English grammar into the syllabus and as well as introduce job-oriented education. They informed that the annual sports, cultural functions, and morning procession do not actually take place in many schools. They opined that different curricula at different types of primary education are creating different impact with the people mentally and socially which aftermath social division. Also, they categorically mentioned that the need to have skilled, experienced and competent teachers is imperative. It may be mentioned that in almost all FGDs and consultation meetings, they stressed to reduce the discrimination and neglect among the salaries for the government and non-government teachers.

The local people feel that the teachers should be more careful and should provide special consideration with the disabled or differently-abled children. Peers in schools tease them in various ways. Teacher plays an important role towards educating students to bring an end to this kind of discrimination and unfair treatment. They also added that the school should have special provision or arrangements for the physically disabled or "special" children.

Children's Perspective

Students at different levels in 10 primary schools have expressed their views regarding what issues they like best in school or their schools should have, what should be done to make the situation better, whether the classes take place properly etc. They shared that the female teachers are more caring and considerate than the male teachers. Female teachers do not beat them and attend classes regularly. However, male teachers are more inclined to physical punishment i.e. beating with cane stick or pulling ear upwards if a student cannot perform better in his lessons. Assembly does not happen regularly including cultural, physical exercise, crafts and arts classes. Teachers are viewed to be discriminating by giving more favor to students who are performing well in their lessons.

Moreover, it is also necessary to have provision for football, cricket, carom, ludu, harmonium, tabla and drum set for the students to develop their skills on sports and music. It is necessary to have arrangements for tiffin in every school. All the students should be supplied with new books and should not be deprived on their due rights.

Future Scope of Works

The bottlenecks in the primary education in Bangladesh are nothing new but a longstanding issues that seeking for action. These however posed a challenge to coming up with concrete strategies and appropriate measures to forward the already putrid education system in the country. Below are the recommendation transpired from the people.

- **Increase the role of School Managing Committee and ensure that the PTA meetings are held regularly.** In addition to the existing duties and responsibilities, SMCs should be given additional scope of responsibilities / authority so that they can take action for any

negligence on the part of any teacher or can recommend courses of action to higher authority. There should be a provision for at least 50% female members in the SMCs. Moreover, it should be mandatory to hold PTA meeting at least once a month.

- **Decentralization of education administration and ensure the role of local elective bodies.** At present, the education administration is unilateral and centralized. Decisions are taken at the center, which hinder the participation of the local people. Decentralization of the education administration is necessary to increase people's participation and accountability as stakeholders. Moreover, members of the locally elected bodies must be involved in all activities of primary education especially on its effective operationalization and management, and they should be given specific duties and responsibilities not on optional basis.
- **Improve teaching methods and eliminate all forms of discrimination.** Teaching method should be made as learner-centered. Teachers should be given necessary training to increase their skills, effectiveness and efficiency. Intensive classroom supervision should be ensured to promote learner-centered teaching method. Necessary steps should be taken to eliminate all forms of discrimination including discrimination on the salary of the government and non-government teachers.
- **Fix teaching time locally.** Timing for schools should be fixed and reflected upon the local context and should be done in consultation with the local people to increase the rate of attendance. Moreover, teaching time should be monitored and annual working hours should be increased.
- **Provision or development of physical infrastructure.** The number of classrooms needs to be increased. In order to teach the students in one shift there should be at least 5 classrooms and a separate office room. There should be separate sanitary latrines for the teachers, boys and girls students. Supply of arsenic-free water should be ensured. Moreover, effective measures should be taken to maintain sanitation, orderliness and cleanliness in the school premises, playgrounds to ensure healthy learning environment. Essential arrangements should be ensured for the "special" or differently-abled children.
- **Recruitment of new teachers for co-curricular activities or enhance skill of the existing teachers.** Required teachers for co-curricular activities should be recruited or the skill of the existing teachers should be enhanced. And at the same time, provision of supply on essential items should be ensured. Moreover, the delivery of book by the government should be ensured by the end of the 1st month of the education year. In case of distribution of old books, unusable books should not be distributed.
- **Reduce the rate of non-enrolment, dropout and repetition.** Special measure should be taken into consideration to reduce the rate of non-enrolment and dropout such as poverty alleviation and/or initiating programs for the children belonging to the marginalized households. Government allocation for that purpose should be ensured.
- **Strengthening of the financial and resource management of the primary schools, and ensure transparency.** The system for the financial and other resource management of the primary schools should be strengthened and relative to that matter is to ensure transparency. Moreover, the capacity of the schools should be improved so that they can mobilize more resources locally aside from government allocations.

- **Uniform system of education.** Uniform system of education should be introduced as mandated by the Constitution specifically in Article 17(a) to develop uniform moral values. It will pave the way to resolve or minimize all forms of discrimination and will establish social harmony among people.
- **The Government of Bangladesh should ensure quality education for all.** GoB should commit at ensuring quality education for all by dedicating sufficient allocation for education; providing extra assistance to children who face the greatest difficulties or the very poorest; end the worst form of child labor; taking education beyond school walls and find flexible ways to provide learning opportunities to hard-to-reach groups such as working children; and set concrete targets for improving quality and learning achievement.
- **Increase/strengthen the role and participation of the civil society.** In Bangladesh, civil society played an important role at all levels of development including education. The civil society in general could help/assist the government at ensuring quality education for all through partnership, monitoring, capacity building, resource and knowledge sharing, etc. Thus, civil society could facilitate pressure politics and raise the 'voice' of the people to ensure necessary supports and prioritization to education as representative of the grassroots majority.
- **Increase/strengthen international solidarity with likeminded organizations.** Since education for all has becoming a global concern, the need to increase/strengthen international solidarity would help ventilate the education context of the country in the international community level. This would help educating donors and multilateral institutions like World Bank/International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank etc to reflect upon their development priorities and initiatives at ensuring quality education for all with their partner-countries like Bangladesh to get all children into school. Thus, working together through coordinative efforts and cut aid red tape so that education ministers can focus on running schools, not raising money.

Conclusion

The review of the current scenario of primary education in Tala Upazila reveals a putrid picture of education in the country as a whole wherein low enrolment rate, high dropout rate and repetition, poor facilities etc are the prevailing backgrounds. These can be attributed to lack of political will and insufficient investment in education sector, and an education policy, which is not reflected with the needs and context of the majority marginalized population. Therefore, it is not possible to provide quality education under the prevailing education policy as practiced by neglect of the national government. Quality education can only be ensured through government's sincere commitment and dedication by providing necessary supports and allocating sufficient budget for education, supplemented by policy compatible with the marginalized population and for that purpose, firm political will is required.

It must be accepted that the discrimination existing in the education system is an obstacle to the overall development. Now, it is necessary to speak out to the open to inform and educate all people and stakeholders especially the government to reflect on what the Constitution bestowed upon them and make an appropriate actions to improve the present primary education in the country to achieve sustainable development.

From the Innocent Viewpoint

Children of Bangladesh

By Zahid Amin Islam

In Bangladesh, there are 68,000 villages but there only 36,000 villages have government primary schools and there are 22,000 non-government schools. It means that there are still 10,000 villages without any schools at present. The children of these villages have to take a long walk to go to schools and because of far distance; most children are not going to school. The government should build a school in these villages so all children can study. The parents of these villages are very poor so they cannot give tiffin for their children. The government should take initiative by providing free tiffin so that children can eat during break time and they will get energy to participate in the class. Because they are poor, they do not have opportunity to play and cannot buy a single sport instrument like bat and ball for play time. When they finished their classes, they go home immediately to help their parents and do some works to earn a living too.

Children are deprived of good teacher and learning is very much affected. In most government and non-government schools, teachers come very late in their classes and they say nothing to their students. Some teachers come late and give their student many works and when the students do not finish their work on time they will get punishment like cane beating and the students get so much hurt. Students are normally not crying in front of the teacher because of fear and they are crying as they reach their home and their parents do not understand what happened and what their teachers did.

The teachers do not understand their students. Some teachers are trying to understand their students and give well advises too. Teachers should come to the class on time and when their students would not be able to finish their work, the teacher must be considerate.

The students always clean their school campus and do gardening. If they maintain proper cleaning of the school, it is helpful too for good learning and have fresh mind but should be done on right time.

My dream for the children of my country is that children could play during play time, could properly read during reading time, could properly sleep during sleeping time, could eat good food and most especially the government will help them to have good education and future.

(The writer of this article is now reading in Class IV in English Medium School in Dhaka and just 9 years old)

Funded by :
Commonwealth Education Fund

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