

An Overview of Primary Education in Bangladesh

A Case of Chittagong City

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Introduction

Bangladesh, a South Asian nation with over 140 million people within an area of 147,570 sq km is only three decades old sovereign and independent republic. Though the world has been changing in recent years faster and faster rates in a multitude of ways, Bangladesh like most of the developing countries is still in a jactitation of ills of underdevelopment and challenged with many hazards for its overall socio-economic development. Its rate of poverty reduction has remained miserably low. Poverty refers to all forms of economic, social and psychological deprivation occurring among people lacking sufficient resources for minimum required level of living. Data on human deprivation reveals that about 50 percent of the people are income-poor while 77 percent lack basic or minimally essential human capabilities – capacity to be well nourished and healthy and capacity for education. 26 percent of children are not attending primary school. 64 percent total labor

forces are engaged in agriculture and 30 percent of total Children (age 10-14) of the country are child labor. The per capita GDP is US\$361 (2001-2002). Adult male and female literacy (can read and write) rates are 49 and 26 percent respectively. The Urban In-Migration rate is 43 percent (2002). Against this backdrop, this paper aims at exploring the trends of the development of primary education in Bangladesh, especially in Chittagong, the largest port city of the country with particular emphasis on existing situation and future challenges.

Primary Education in Bangladesh

Throughout its history, the successive governments of what is now Bangladesh has tragically neglected investing in primary education. Bangladesh ranks 115th among 131 countries in the literacy league table. Between 1974 and 1995, the literacy rate rose from 26% to 38 %. (Chowdhury, A. M. R. : 1999) In the past, conventional strategies and traditional

methods in universalizing primary education were tried, but without desired results. Under Colonial Period (1850-1947): the aim of the colonial administration was to train up the upper class male and their downward filtration policy prevented the spread of education due to limited economic development, semi-feudal agricultural and hierarchical society. The multiple contradictions among the British rulers, Bengalee Bhadrak (gentlemen) and laboring classes revolved around class issues between 'English and Bengali' and the 'quality and mass' education. (Singha, A. K. : 1999) Under internal colonialism (1947-71), due to the state policy of mostly military ruled Pakistan, the educational system continued to benefit the upper and middle classes. The pro-urban and elitist curricula sharpened the class differentiation and made only marginal contribution to the lower middle class and the poor. It became the instrument more appropriately for not to educate them.

After its independence in 1971, the Constitution of Bangladesh (Article 17) in 1972 directed the establishment of a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education to extend free and compulsory education for all children in the country. But the unfortunate fact is those 35 years later, approximately one fourth of population completed 5 years of compulsory education. The impact of World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien (1990), the World Summit on Children in New York (1990) and the Education For All (EFA) Summit of Nine

High Population Countries in Delhi (1993) promoted in the country an expanded vision of basic education with the aim of meeting the basics learning needs of all children, youths and adults. As an expression of the firm determination of Bangladesh to improve the literacy situation of the country, a National Plan of Action has been prepared under the guidance of a National Committee, setting objectives to raise the gross enrollment rate to 95%, the completion rate to 70%, and the adult literacy rate to 62% by the year 2000.

Current Educational Priorities and Concerns

To meet the target of education for all, the Compulsory Primary Education (CPE) Act was promulgated in 1990; it was implemented in 1992 on a limited scale and has been extended throughout the country since 1993. The Primary and Mass Education Division, with the status of Ministry, was established in August 1992. It is responsible for policy formulation, planning, evaluation and execution of plans and initiating legislative measures relating to free and compulsory primary for all as well as non-formal education. In January 2003, the Primary and Mass Education Division was elevated to the status of Ministry and the Prime Minister is entrusted with the responsibility of this ministry. Along with the introduction of CPE, a strong social mobilization process has been initiated to create awareness and elicit participation of all. Such activities include the formation of village-

level committees, priority of girls' education and free education for girls up to class VIII, organizing mother rallies, student brigades, provide appropriate facilities for non-formal education and use of mass and electronic media. As a result, the people have become more conscious of the need for education, which translates into increasing school enrollments and improving completion rates.

To achieve the targeted literacy rate of 62%, the following initiatives have been identified: 1) literacy centers will be established in each village utilizing the premises of existing educational institutions; 2) the total Literacy Movement program will continue with greater participation of local people; Primers for illiterates and continuing education materials will be developed, printed and distributed on a continuous basis; 3) training programs for the teachers, supervisors and other personnel will continue; 4) the Management Information System Unit of the Directorate of Non-formal Education will be strengthened; 5) the Social Mobilization program will be strengthened for organizing intensive non-formal and adult literacy programs and for encouraging communities' involvement in the planning and implementation of EFA programs.

To serve the needs of an increased number of students in primary schools, various programs are being implemented such as: building new schools in unschooled areas, reconstructing and rehabilitating existing government and non-government primary schools, and creating additional classrooms.

Another innovative program is the Food for Education Program, which is aimed at increasing enrollment and attendance and reducing dropout in primary schools, particularly for the children of very poor and distressed families. The program was introduced in July, 1993 in an economically and educationally disadvantaged "union" in each of the 460 Thanas (small administrative unit, one step lower than the district). In 1994, 1,000 unions were brought within the boundaries of the Food for Education Program. Under this program, the poor parents of primary school children are entitled to receive 15 kg of wheat or rice of equivalent price for sending one child, and 20 kg for sending two children to school, if the child maintains 85% attendance every month. As a result, poor parents were keen to send their children to school instead of employing them for income-earning activities. This program has a salutary impact on preventing child labor.

An early assessment made by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) revealed that over a one-year period in the project area enrollment increased by 20.4%, attendance increased by 14.7%, and the dropout rate decreased by 7.6%. One-fourth of the country is covered and about 2 million children of poor families (40%) currently benefit from the program. School attractiveness programs have also been introduced to increase school attendance. These experimental programs are under implantation in ten Thanas of five districts of

the country. All these efforts have had a positive impact on enrollment. Primary education enrollment has steadily raised from 12 million in 1990 to 16.8 million in 1995. The gross enrollment rate reached 92% in 1995. (National Report on Education: International Conference on Education, 45th session, Geneva, 1996, Internet Version)

However, problems and obstacles still persist. Amongst the impediments to creating a proper learning environment as well as ensuring quality primary education is poor management and administration, lack of adequate supervision, want of accountability and inadequate contact time. Another major impediment is the illiteracy and poverty of the parents, who are unable to contribute to the instructional needs of the children at home. Also, it is not possible for many parents to fund the indirect cost of primary education. Furthermore, there is a shortage of teachers and those who are in-service lack motivation and professional skills. In addition, there is an insufficient supply of teaching and learning materials in primary schools. Collectively, these factors contribute to non-attendance, dropout, and low achievement of children.

Administrative and Management of the Primary Education system

On the basis of evaluating the historical process of the existing macro-structural administrative situation with regard to primary education in Bangladesh, it is opined that "Bangladesh school education system is left

with an extremely centralized, non-participatory, non-transparent and bureaucratic educational administration, management and planning system. The system appears to be quite inadequate for the challenge of achieving the goal of education for all in Bangladesh." (Hossain: 1997) The principal management institutions in the education sector are the Primary and Mass Education Division under the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Primary Education, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, the National Academy for Primary Education, the National Academy for Educational Management, the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics and the Facilities Department. At the central level, the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), headed by a Director-General, executes the policy decisions and controls, co-ordinates and regulates the field administration of primary education. Under the DPE there are five divisional offices headed by deputy directors, 64 District Offices headed by district primary education officers and 481 Thana Education Offices headed by Thana education officers. The Directorate of Non-formal Education, headed by a Director-General, executes the programs of non-formal Education.

The Financing of Education

As a share of GDP, government expenditure on education averaged 1.2% during the First year Plan (FYP, 1973-78), 1.3% during the Second (1980-85), 1.8% during the Third

(1985-90), and 2.2% during the Fourth FYP (1990-95). In the year 1994-95, the share of GDP rose to nearly 3%. Despite this steady pattern of growth in allocations, Bangladesh's public investment in education, as a share of GDP, is among the lowest in South Asia. Education expenditure, as a share of total government expenditure, averaged 9.4% during the First FYP (1973-78). It rose to 13.6% during the Fourth FYP (1990-95), a level of allocation that compares favorably with that of most South Asian countries.

The government's recognition of the importance and mass education is reflected in the share of development expenditure allocated to this education sub-sector, which was 58% of the education sector budget in 1996. The government has made a commitment to develop and improve the quality of primary education. Subsequently increases in allocation to the sub-sector will ensure that gains already made are sustained, the quality of schooling improved, and basic and mass education are provided nationwide.

The proportion allocated to the primary and mass education sub-sectors from the combine revenue and development budgets remained more or less constant; an average of about 51% during the period from 1990/91 to 1995/96. External resources (loans and grants) supported about 16% of the total education expenditure during the 1990-95 periods. Over 75% of these resources were spent on primary and non-formal education reflecting both the government and its development partners'

priorities in the sub-sector. Recently the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) –II has been taken with its stake of US\$100 million in credits from Asian Development Bank. The total cost of the project is estimated at US\$1.815 billion for improvement of primary education. The project was initiated in the mid-90s that completed its 1st phase in June 2004 and its 2nd phase will continue until June 2009. The government will provide USD1.161 billion or 64% of the total cost of PEDP-II from its own sources, while US\$ 250 million is coming from ADB and the World Bank (\$150 million through IDA) as loans. The rest \$404 million is expected as grants from a consortium of development partners.

The total public expenditure on education has tended to more than double every five years. Perhaps sustaining this trend will be a difficult task. However, to achieve Universal Primary Education by the year 2000, increase the literacy rate and enhance the quality of education at all levels, additional resources must be created. Based on the present socio-economic scenario, rough estimates of public expenditures on education are on the order of Tk 34,523 million by the year 2000-01 and Tk. 89,542 million (at present 1 US\$ = TK.64) by the year 2010-11. (Internet version on Primary education in Bangladesh)

The Educational Process

There are six major types of delivery

mechanisms through which primary education is being delivered to the clientele. These are state-owned primary schools, registered non-state primary schools, non-registered non-state primary schools, community schools, satellite schools, and primary attached to secondary schools. Others are NGO's non-formal primary schools and Ebtedayee Madrassas.

Pre-primary education

The Government has adopted the policy of supporting the pre-primary class for children aged 4-5 in primary schools. A formal curriculum has not yet been developed for the pre-primary class. However, education in the form of games, story-telling, do-it-yourself and similar other activities are being organized.

Primary education

Primary schools are run in two shifts: the first for the large enrollment of grades 1 and 2 for two hours; the second shift of three and a half to four hours, for grades 3 to 5. The medium of instruction at the different grades of the primary level is Bangla (mother tongue). Textbooks are supplied to the students free of cost.

The primary school curriculum has been revised in recent years to make it need-based and life-oriented. By 1995, textbooks had been reviewed, revised, tested and introduced up to grade 4. Revised textbooks for grade 5 were introduced in 1996. The textbooks for grades 1-2 include Bangla (mother tongue), Mathematics and English. Textbooks for grades 3-5 include

Bangla, Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies and Religious Education (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity). There are no prescribed textbooks for Environment Studies in grades 1 and 2 or for Music, Art and Crafts, and Physical education for grades 1-5. All these subjects are compulsory. The average amount of weekly teaching hours in each grade is three hours for Bangla; three hours for Mathematics; 30 minutes for Music, Art and Crafts and Physical education; and two and a half hours for all the other subjects.

The newly introduced curriculum is competency-based. To facilitate teaching and learning, 53 learning competencies have been identified for primary education and teaching materials such as teachers' manuals and the annual lesson plan have been developed on the basis of the new learning objectives. Teaching aids and instructional materials has also been prepared. Because the effective use of these materials depends on the teacher's understanding and competencies, a nationwide curriculum dissemination program has been implemented. Government and non-government primary school teachers receive an orientation that provides adequate exposure to the materials, thereby permitting them to translate curriculum objectives into reality.

In the present curriculum, the summative assessment (in the form of an annual examination in each grade) has been abandoned. Instead, a system of continuous pupil assessment has been introduced. The system requires teacher to assess students regularly

for every competency acquired in a particular lesson (though observation, Oral/written assessment) and to record achievement on monthly basis using three scales (namely grades A, B and C). For grades 1-2, all the students get promoted to the next classes and for grades 3-5 promotions are given on the basis of student's achievement. No certificate is awarded after completion of the five-year primary schooling, but a scholarship examination is held annually for 20% of the students of grade 5 on the basis of which scholarships are awarded to successful students.

The present teacher-student ratio is 1:38 for grades 1 and 2 and 1:35 for grades 3-5. However, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics reports a variation in the gross teacher-student ratio (not considering double shifts) among 21 regions. For the year 1990, the ratio was 1:34 in one region; between 1:41 and 1:55 in five regions; and 1:56 to 1:79 in 15 regions. At present, the average class size at the primary school level is 50 students and the boys to girls ratio is 53:47 (compared to 55:45 in 1990). The introduction of free education for girls up to grade 10 and the provision of stipends for girls in rural areas have accelerated enrollment and improved the completion rate of girls, both at the primary and secondary levels of education. Private primary schools are also providing education that varies in duration and curriculum.

Non-formal Education Programs

In 1980s a number of NGOs began to see the

need for initiating programs of basic education in support of their poverty alleviation activities. An important result of the Jomtien WCEFA has been that several NGOs have identified education as a priority sector for their areas of operation. Many of them have significantly expanded their education programs over the last few years. Currently more than 400 NGOs are involved in non-formal education programs in Bangladesh. In 1994, these had more than 2.6 million enrolled in about 73,000 centers. Of those enrolled, at least 1.4 million were primary-age children (63 percent of them girls), over 0.4 million were adolescents (65% girls) and about 0.8 million were adults (80% women).

Bangladesh: Primary Education Data

There is a number of government agencies involved in collecting data on primary education. The three main agencies are the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) and the Directorate of Primary Education. The problems lying with this collection of data is that the information collected are not always through direct field survey; they do not always share the information with the public, they are not analytical and they do not include information of large number of NGO schools. The government in the highest echelon is not also very happy about the quality and reliability of data. (Eusuf ANM: 1999) However, in order to

fulfill the research objective, the researchers have no way except accepting the available data and compare with data from other sources. As a result, the data sometimes do not accord or fit with even other from the same sources. This is one of the major weaknesses of data collection and analysis in the country.

Bangladesh started with a very low literacy rate for population of 7 years and above (27 percent in 1974) and also adult literacy rate for 15 years and above (26 percent in 1974) but it has succeeded in rapidly increasing this rate to 49 percent and 50 percent by 2002 respectively. (Figure 1 and 2) Bangladesh's education scene has recorded tremendous improvements since 1990 when a conscious Government policy accelerated the pace of advance of basic education.

The actual number of primary schools jumped from 46,000 in 1990 to around 89,000 in 2002 of which 40 percent belonged to NGOs. This underlined the growing contributions NGOs were making in delivering primary and basic education in Bangladesh. Official sources show that enrollment a primary level rose from 10 million in 1990 to 14 million in 1996; the gross enrollment ratio rose from 73 percent in 1990 to 95 percent in 1996.

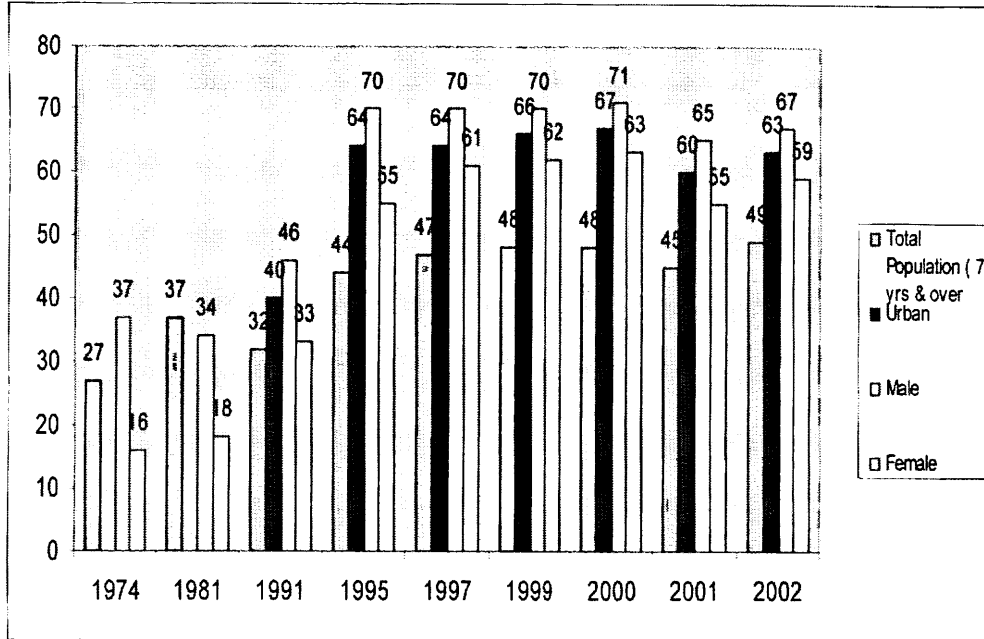
The net enrollment ratio, which is a better indicator, had risen to 78 percent by 1996. According to official sources, the primary school completion rate also improved as the drop-out rate declined from a high of 60 percent in 1990 to 40 percent in 1994. The appointment of more female teachers (Table 1)

considerably helped reduce the drop-out rate. The children attendance jumped from 56% to 73% between 1993 and 1999 (Figure 5) and rate of reaching Grade V increased from 43% to 73% between 1990 and 1998 (Figure 4).

One Bangladesh's major achievements have been to achieve near gender-parity in primary enrollment. In 1980, the proportion of girls to boys in primary schools was 40:60. By 1995, this ratio was 53:47 and 51:49 by 2001 (Table 1) reducing the gender gap considerably. Another report shows the enrollment same (82%) for both boys and girls in 1994 which indicates 80% for boys and 82% for girls in year 2000. (Figure 3) Adult literacy rates also reflect similar efforts to overcome gender disparity in education. Female literacy has increased by 17 percentage points compared to only two percentage points for males in the period 1970-95. (Haq: 1998)

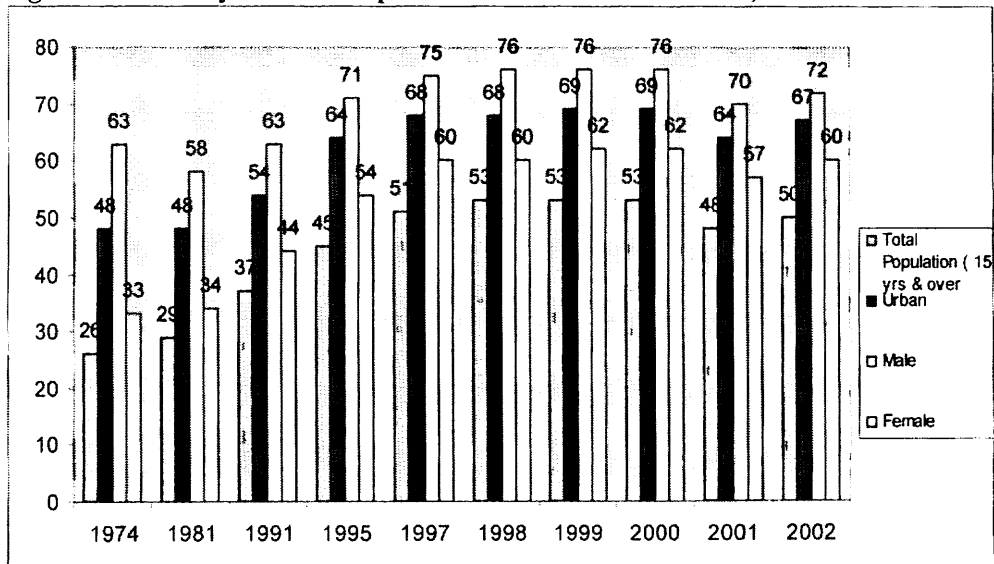
Despite these achievements, Bangladesh's education challenge remains formidable. There are 45 million adults who do not know how to read or write, and 4 million children remain out of school. Although primary education is in principle accessible to all, the hidden costs of education prevent a large majority of poor children from attending schools. The number of female teachers in primary schools still remains limited, despite vigorous efforts to increase them. The drive for higher enrollment rates has a negative impact on the pupil-teacher ratio and has led to over-crowding of classrooms. The issue of compatibility of curriculum and learning achievement between

Figure 1: Literacy Rate of Population 7 Years & Above, 1974-2002



Source: Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 2002 (23rd edition), Page no. 630, 2001 and Population Census, 2001 (National Report Provisional), July 2003, page: 74

Figure 2: Literacy Rate of Population 15 Years and Above, 1974-2002



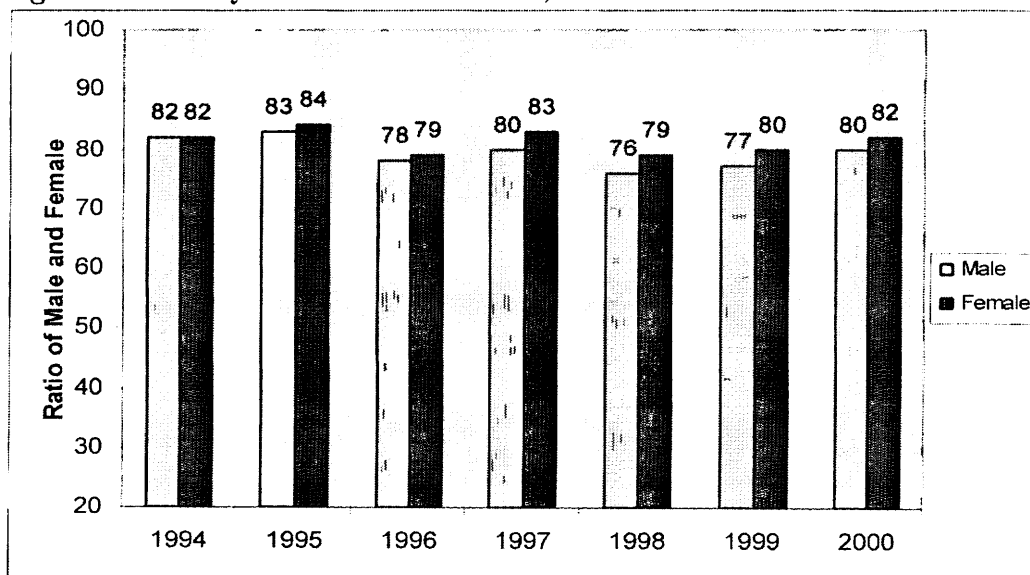
Source: Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 2002 (23rd edition), Page no. 630 and Population Census, 2001 (National Report Provisional), July 2003, page: 75

Table 1: Primary Education in Bangladesh

Year	No of School			No. of Teacher			No. of Student (000)		
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total
1981	99	1	42,447	91	9	174,447	61	39	8,260
1985	99	1	43,588	87	13	183,638	59	41	10,082
1990	99	1	45,783	80	20	200,056	56	44	12,345
1995	98	2	62,617	73	27	248,783	53	47	16,429
2000	99	1	63,658	67	33	259,441	52	48	17,378
2001	99	1	63,255	67	33	264,502	51	49	17,456
2002	89,373	264,177	17,016

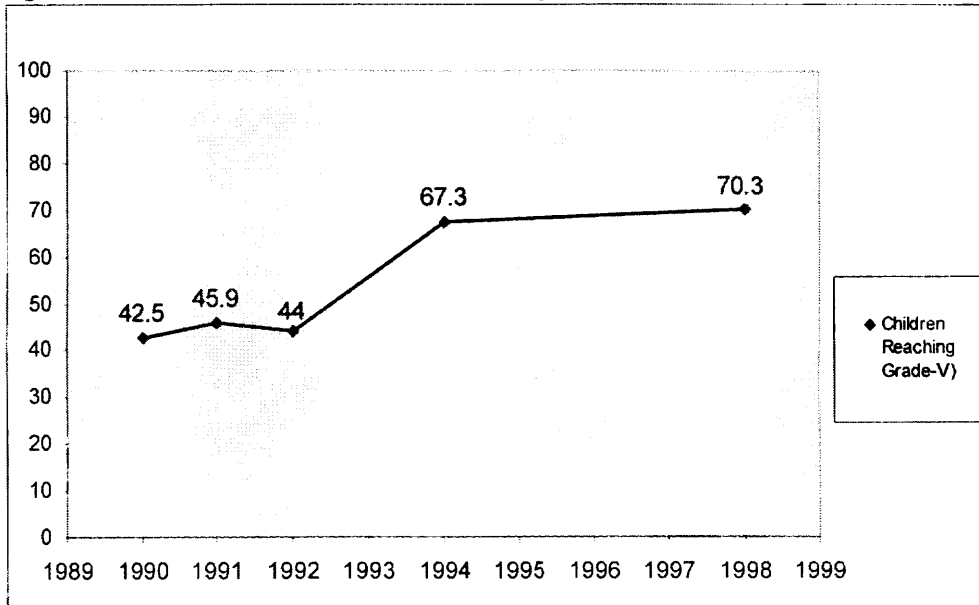
Source: I. Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 2001, Page: 606, Statistical Pocketbook, 2003, page: 349 & 350

Figure 3: Primary Net Enrollment Ratio, 1994-2000



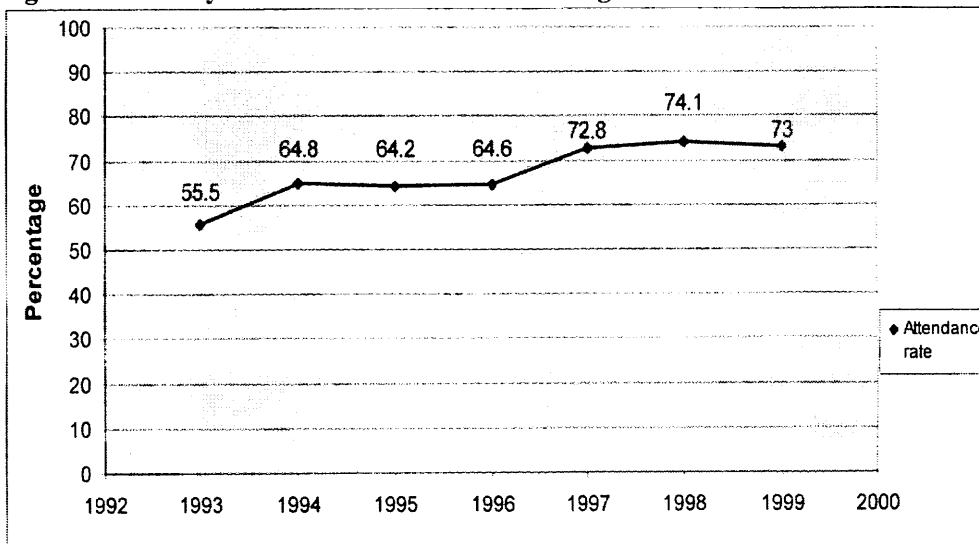
Source: MICS, BBS/UNICEF, National Report on Follow-up to the World Summit for Children 2000, Bangladesh. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Govt. of Bangladesh, Page: 54

Figure 4: Children Reaching Grade-V in Bangladesh.



Source: MICS, BBS/UNICEF, National Report on Follow-up to the World Summit for Children 2000, Bangladesh. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Govt. of Bangladesh, page: 55.

Figure 5: Primary School Attendance Rate in Bangladesh.



Source: MICS, BBS/UNICEF, National Report on Follow-up to the World Summit for Children 2000, Bangladesh. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Govt. of Bangladesh, Page: 5

formal and non-formal schools also needs to be tackled. Again average years of schooling (Table 2) and other indicators (Table 3) such as students per school, teacher students ratio and government expenditure in education (2.9% of GNP in 1996) do not give us favorable picture to achieve the goal of universal primary education combined with liberal access to relevant vocational and technical skills.

Primary Education in Chittagong

Basic Information about Chittagong

Chittagong is the second largest and prime

port city of Bangladesh. Considering the industrial, commercial, and institutional potentials, the government of Bangladesh has declared it the 'Commercial Capital' of the country. Chittagong town began to grow as a tiny municipality which at present, under the title of 'Chittagong City Corporation' occupies around 155 sq km of land area with approximately 3.7 million population. According CCC official, the population is 4 million. (Daily Janakantha, July 29, 2004)

The population was 1.4 million, 2.4 million and 3.2 million in the year 1981, 1991 and 2001 respectively. (Table 4) The birth rate declined

Table 2: Rate of Schooling in Primary Education by Age, 2001 (In 000)

Age Group		Population (In 000)			Average Years of Schooling		
		Both sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Bangladesh	5 Years	5,388	2,777	2,611	3.41	3.85	2.95
	5 - 7 Years	5,049	2,599	2,451	3.63	4.09	3.13
	7 - 10 Years	2,289	1,288	1,001	7.24	7.54	6.85
Urban	5 Years	1,279	692	587	4.91	5.58	4.24
	5 - 7 Years	1,216	660	556	5.15	5.74	4.46
	7 - 10 Years	733	428	305	8.13	8.46	7.65
Rural	5 Years	4,109	2,084	2,025	2.95	3.30	2.58
	5 - 7 Years	3,833	1,939	1,894	3.14	3.53	2.74
	7 - 10 Years	1,556	860	696	6.82	7.08	6.49

Source: BBS, National Report (Provisional), July- 2003, page- 82

Table 3: Indicators of Primary Education System in Bangladesh (1994-2001)

Indicators	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Number of Schools	62,617	61,583	61,638	66,235	65,610	63,658	63,255
Teachers per School	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Avg. Student per School	262	277	277	266	298	273	276
Ratio: Teacher & Student	1.66	1.68	1.70	1.70	1.71	1.67	1.69
Total Government Expenditure (million US\$)	308	336	359	420	464	-	...

Source: Compiled of BBS, 2001 & 2002, page-579 & 571.

from 26.3% to 13.2 %, death rate from 9% to 4%, growth rate 3.6% to 1.0% between 1981 and 2001. The sex ratio declined to 119 from 150 between 1974 and 2001. The projected labor force will be 0.8 million in 2006 and 0.9 million in 2011 of which female percentage will be 22% and 28% respectively. (UNDP: 1992) According to 2001 statistics, 24% population is under extreme poverty (1,805 Kcal per person per day) line. The daily income of 39% population in the city is between US\$1-2. More than 6% population lives in slums in bamboo structured housing with 6% latrine facilities only.

Chittagong: Major Achievements in Primary Education

Though the government primary schools are dominant in Bangladesh and an important role is also played by others including private primary schools, Ebtedayee madrassas, non-formal schools of NGOs and English medium kindergartens (Education Watch: 1999), it is apparent from the data collected from different sources and compiled that the number of NGO schools are dominant in Chittagong. (Figure 7) As on June 2005, in Chittagong 57% primary including non-formal schools are run by the

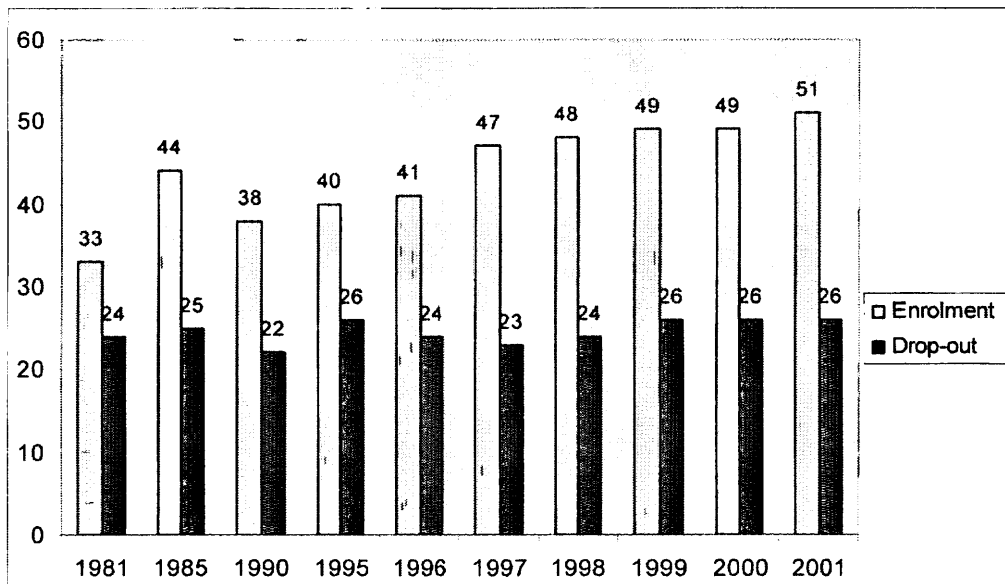
Table 4: Population in Chittagong City Corporation

(1981– 2001 & age of 0-5 to 6-10 years and Table below for per 1000 Live Childs.)

Survey Years	No. of Population	Births rate	Deaths	Growth rate	Age:0-5 years		Age: 6-10 years	
					Male	Female	Male	Female
1981	13,91,877	26.3	9.07	3.63	17.0	15.4	15.6	14.3
1982		22.9	8.5	3.50	16.8	14.1	14.0	13.5
1983		25.2	8.6	...	16.1	13.6	13.9	...
1984		24.8	7.1	...	15.2	13.3	14.4	13.9
1985		25.9	7.9	2.80	15.0	13.0	...	13.4
1986		27.5	6.9	2.22	14.8	12.6	14.8	13.1
1987		25.0	7.6	2.08	14.4	12.1	14.0	12.8
1988		24.8	7.5	1.90	13.9	12.3	13.8	12.5
1989		20.9	7.3	1.80	13.7	12.0	14.2	...
1990		24.2	7.8	1.67	...	11.7	...	12.0
1991	23,48,428	23.9	7.8	1.60	13.6	11.31	14.1	11.81
1992		23.4	7.5	1.58	12.4	11.3	15.0	14.4
1993		21.1	7.2	1.49	11.3	11.0	15.2	14.1
1994		20.2	7.1	1.38	...	10.4	14.9	13.7
1995		19.4	6.7	1.27	11.6	10.8	13.1	13.1
1996		19.0	6.5	1.25	9.6	9.4	13.2	12.8
1997		16.9	4.2	1.20	9.0	8.5	13.0	12.0
1998		14.0	4.0	1.17	8.8	9.3	12.8	11.3
1999		14.2	3.8	1.8	9.2	9.0	12.2	10.4
2000		13.9	4.1	1.6	8.1	8.9	12.0	11.0
2001...	32,02,710	13.2	4.3	1.0	8.9	8.4	12.4	11.7

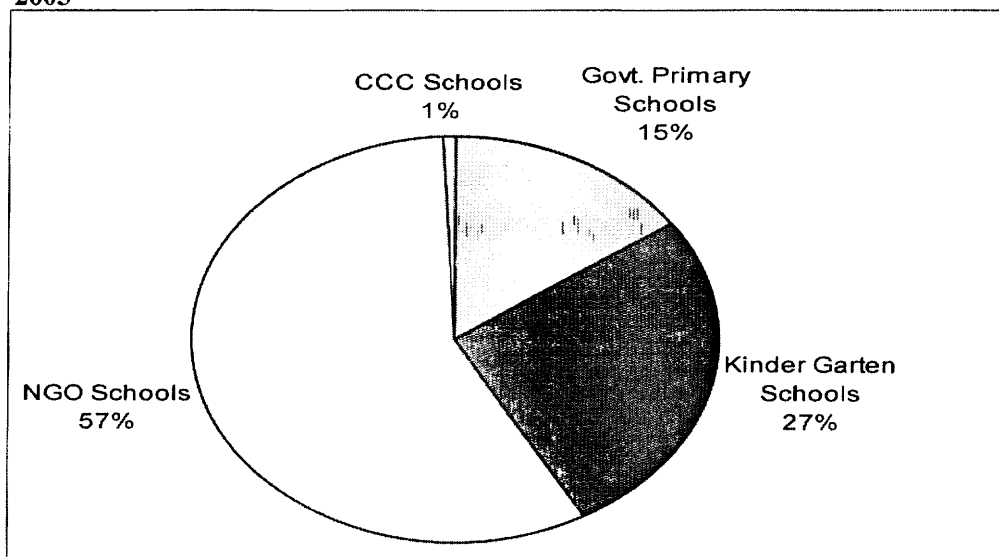
Source: Population Census of Bangladesh 2001, BBS and Population Survey, CCC, 2000.

Figure 6: Enrollment and Dropout of Primary Education in Chittagong City, 1981-2001



Source: Bangladesh Population Census, 1981, 1991 & 2001 (Primary Report), BBS.

Figure 7: % of Types of Primary Level Institutions in Chittagong City as on June 2005



Source: DD Primary Education, Kindergarten Associations, NGO's and Chittagong City Corporation

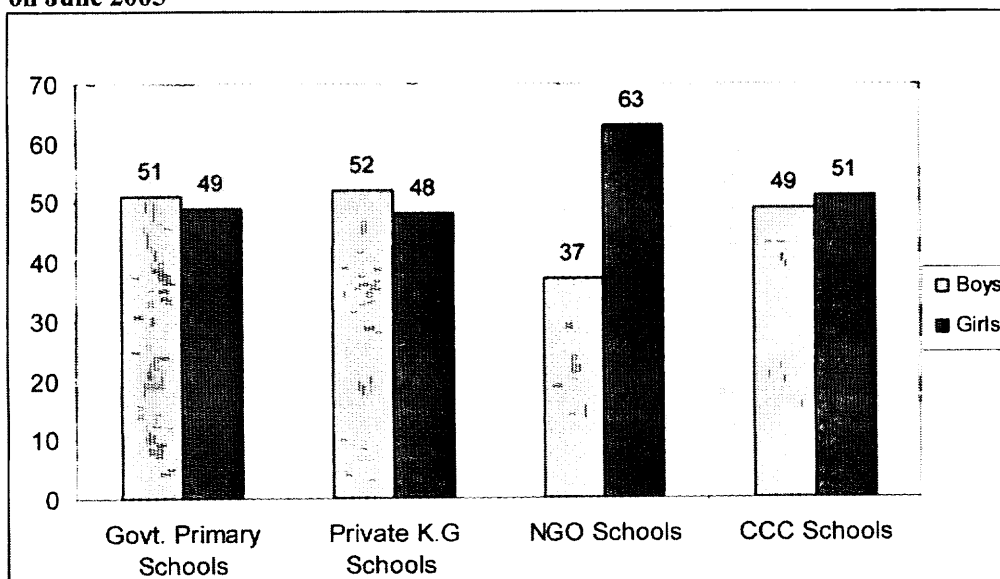
NGOs. The percentage of government primary schools is 15% which is less than the percentage (27%) of private – not English medium but English emphasized kindergarten schools. Chittagong City Corporation runs only 1% of the primary schools in the city.

Again in terms of the report provided by the government office of primary education, Chittagong, 34% (156 numbers) primary schools are run by government out of total 465 schools in the city. It is the same (34%) for the kindergarten schools, 3% for Registered Non-government primary schools, 6% for Community schools, 14% for High School attached primary schools, 2% for non-registered non government primary schools, 2% for Ebtedayee Madrassas, 5% for High Madrassa attached Ebtedayee Madrassas, and

1% for NGO-run full primary school. The interesting point is that the government report in district/city level does not keep any such record for the private kindergarten or NGO schools for which it becomes rather difficult to get a clear understanding about the status of the schools responsible for development of basic primary education in Chittagong.

Enrollment: Nationally the enrollment rate is 77 percent, which means that 23 percent of the primary school age children (6-10 years) are not enrolled at all. (Chowdhury, Nath, and Chowdhury: 2002) In Chittagong, **Figure 6** shows a positive growth in enrollment from 33% to 51% between 1981 and 2001. Again Table 5 shows that for the boys, the percentage rose to 65% in 2001 from 41% in 1981 and for the girls, it is 26% to 44% between

Figure 8: % of Boys and Girls of Primary Level Institutions in Chittagong City as on June 2005



Source: DD Primary Education, Kindergarten Associations, NGO's and Chittagong City Corporation.

1981 and 2001. Though the rates vary significantly among different years for the boys, for the girls it is somehow steady.

If we consider the national data, the enrollment rate shows lowest for Chittagong Division (74%) against the highest rate in Khulna Division (83%). The reasons for preponderance of boys over girls and also the lower rate in Chittagong could be identified in the difference of socio-economic background of the families including financial, parent's educational level, and religious. Data collected from different sources as on June 2005 shows unique growth that jumped to 93% as represented by all sorts of schools including NGOs. As per information and report provided by the government primary education office,

the enrollment rate 97% which is higher than the rate of private kindergarten (93%), NGO schools (94%) and CCC schools (86%). The reasons for this jump might be the impact government and NGO initiatives for the programs including consolidation and rehabilitation program, subvention program, food for education program, free school and books/materials etc. that provided incentive for primary school age children. Moreover, the awareness through different medias, civil society efforts, NGO network and so on indeed had greater impact on the enrollment.

Attendance and Completion: In terms of attendance, shown in **Table 5** that it is 55% for the boys and 46% for the girls in 2001 that jumped from 41% and 24% in 1981

Table 5: Enrollment of Primary Education in Chittagong City

Survey Years	All age		Attendance: 5-10		Drop-out		Completed	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1981	40.7	26.4	41.4	23.7	28.2	20.1	26.0	23.1
1982	41.0	25.3	38.2	24.9	22.0	25.3	32.5	23.8
1983	45.2	30.0	40.4	36.2	26.1	25.5	36.7	20.0
1984	39.0	37.3	45.1	29.0	23.7	20.9	30.1	20.7
1985	36.5	30.0	50.1	37.1	25.7	25.0	29.8	19.5
1986	37.2	31.7	40.9	32.4	24.0	20.1	30.3	20.4
1987	40.4	29.0	41.0	31.3	24.5	23.0	30.1	22.3
1988	39.8	30.8	42.3	30.2	25.0	23.5	30.2	24.6
1989	41.3	37.3	42.7	31.2	26.0	22.9	31.0	25.0
1990	40.4	34.7	45.3	29.9	23.2	21.5	29.8	23.5
1991	40.2	38.2	41.9	32.0	25.0	23.3	32.3	25.8
1992	42.1	39.4	43.0	32.1	24.2	22.4	33.0	26.1
1993	47.0	38.8	43.2	31.7	25.5	23.0	32.6	26.3
1994	51.3	39.3	45.5	32.3	27.1	24.2	31.5	26.5
1995	54.9	40.0	47.3	33.1	26.3	25.0	30.4	26.3
1996	57.1	42.1	49.1	32.8	25.4	23.3	32.3	25.8
1997	60.2	41.4	50.8	42.3	24.2	22.4	33.0	26.1
1998	63.0	41.0	51.3	44.2	25.3	23.0	32.6	26.3
1999	63.8	42.1	53.0	45.5	27.1	24.5	31.5	26.5
2000	64.0	39.5	53.8	45.1	26.3	24.7	32.2	27.5
2001	65.2	43.7	55.0	46.0	26.3	25.0	33.0	27.2

Source: Bangladesh Population Census, 1981, 1991 & 2001 (Primary Report), BBS.

respectively. According to the government office of Chittagong, the attendance rate as on June 2005 is 86%, which they show same for both boys and girls. The rate shows a higher rate than the national (73%). The completion rate shows 33% for the boys and 27% for the girls in 2001 that rose from 26% and 23% in 1981 against the national data for reaching Grade V at 70% in 1998. The completion data as a matter of fact does not include the NGO records in a proper manner for which it is shown lower.

Drop-out: The drop-out situation shows that (Table 5) it is 26% for the boys and 25% for the girls in 2001 which experienced slight decline

for the boys but increase for the girls between 1981 and 2001. The reason might be recent increase of female child labor in the garments factories and other income generating activities for the women as initiated by the NGOs through micro financing program. In terms of data collected for the survey as on June 2005, the dropout shows 5% only in Chittagong, which is 12% in the government primary schools and average 3% in other schools. The reasons for higher rate of dropout in government schools could be the less attraction in terms of quality of teachers and teaching methods, physical facilities and lack of interest of the teachers due to non-payment or delayed

Table 6: Literacy Rate of Children in Chittagong City.

Survey Years	Total (Age: 15-24)	Boys	Girls	Girls % Boys
1981	38.7	42.0	25.2	60
1982	48.1	42.3	33.1	78
1983	39.3	47.0	29.5	63
1984	30.5	45.8	26.1	57
1985	34.2	43.9	30.4	69
1986	34.9	48.3	31.3	65
1987	35.2	40.1	38.0	95
1988	36.0	47.1	33.0	70
1989	38.6	42.2	37.2	88
1990	38.5	47.4	34.9	74
1991	43.2	50.3	35.0	70
1992	37.6	50.9	36.2	71
1993	37.0	50.2	37.5	75
1994	36.8	40.1	37.9	95
1995	38.4	38.4	36.1	94
1996	40.1	49.1	37.2	76
1997	35.5	48.4	35.3	73
1998	42.1	49.2	37.4	76
1999	39.3	49.7	38.1	79
2000	35.9	50.0	39.3	79
2001	40.3	50.2	40.0	79

Source: Bangladesh Population Census 1981, 1991 & BBS, 2001.

payment of the wages by the authorities.

Gender-Balance: The percent of share of the boys and girls in primary education in terms of enrollment, attendance, completion, dropout etc. give us very positive picture for the improvement in the gender-balance situation. In order to mitigate the disparity, though many programs like free education for girls up to

class VIII and other benefits for the parents encourage significantly, still there remains gap. It is still 51% and 43% for boys and girls in 2001, which is 85% of the boys for the girls. (Table 7) The literacy rate shows (Table 6) a big gap, which is 50% for the boys against 40% for the girls in 2001. It is only 79% of the boys. Though there is the increase during the

Table 7: Disparity in Primary Education by Gender, 1981-2001

Survey Years	Boys	Girls	G%B
1981	31.2	21.6	69
1984	32.1	26.0	81
1987	35.8	28.9	81
1990	31.5	25.0	79
1993	34.6	27.0	78
1996	40.0	35.6	89
1999	45.5	40.0	88
2001	50.9	43.1	85

Source: BBS – 2001, UNICEF 1998 & World Bank 1998

Table 8: Total Students of Primary Level Institutions in Chittagong City as on June, 2005.
(000)

Types of Primary Level Institution	Total Schools	Total Student	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Enrollment (%)	Drop-out (%)
Govt. Primary Schools	196	164,838	51	49	97	12
Private K.G Schools	344	87,225	52	48	93	3.5
NGO Schools	742	30,729	37	63	94	3
CCC Schools	12	2,664	49	51	86	3
Total	1294	285,456	47	53	93	5

Source: DD Primary Education, Kindergarten Associations, NGO's and Chittagong City Corporation.

Table 9: Total Teachers of Primary Level Institutions in Chittagong City as on June 2005.

Types of Institutions	Total	Male (%)	Female (%)
Govt. Primary Schools	1,186	32	68
Kindergarten Schools	4,427	32	68
NGO Schools	831	0.4	99.6
CCC Schools	92	25	75
Total	6,542	22	78

Source: DD Primary Education, Kindergarten Associations, NGO's and Chittagong City Corporation.

Table 10: Student of All Kindergarten Schools in Chittagong City as on June 2005

Types of Kindergarten Schools	Total School	Total Student	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Enrollment Ratio	Drop-out
Kindergarten Association of Bangladesh	114	32,450	52	48	95%	3%
Chittagong Kindergarten Association	110	25,300	51	49	90%	4%
Bangladesh Kindergarten Association	85	21,250	54	46	96%	3%
Ctg. Kindergarten Schools Association	35	8,225	51	49	92%	4%
Total	344	87,225	52	48	93%	3.5%

(000)

Source: Kindergarten Associations of Chittagong City.

Table 11: Teachers of Kindergarten Schools in Chittagong City as on June 2005

Types of Kindergarten School	Total Post	Male (%)	Female (%)
Kindergarten Association of Bangladesh	1,710	35	65
Chittagong Kindergarten Association	1,320	30	70
Bangladesh Kindergarten Association	1,012	31	69
Ctg Kindergarten Schools Association	385	33	67
Total	4,427	32	68

Source: Kindergarten Associations of Chittagong City.

Table 12: Total Students of NGO Schools in Chittagong City as on June 2005 (000)

Name of NGO's	Total School	Total Student	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Proshika Schools	95	2,610	42	58
BRAC Schools	292	12,873	30	70
UDC Schools	102	3,055	46	54
UCEP Schools	8	5,591	50	50
Other NGO's (NFE & ALS)	245	6,600	33	67
Total	742	30,729	40	60

Source: Combined Report of NGO's Located in Chittagong City.

Table 13: Total Students of Primary Level Institutions in Chittagong City (Organized by CCC) as on June 2005.

Types of Primary Level Institutions	Number of Schools	Student	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Enrollment Ratio	Dropout
Primary School	2	1,106	46	54	90%	3%
Kindergarten School	6	1,208	50	50	99%	2%
Sweepers Colony School	4	350	56	44	70%	3%
Total	12	2,664	51	49	86.32	2.7%

Source: Chittagong City Corporation.

years from 1981 to 2001, it is not as much as increasing in other urban areas of the country. There is the tremendous growth (78%) in the rate of female teachers which is three times larger than the male in all the primary schools run by the government, NGO and private sectors.

Conclusion

It is evident that major population in the country faces discrimination to ensure access to basic education institutions. Majority of the parents send their children to school to educate them as conscious citizens. The other reasons for sending children to schools are: pursue higher education mainly for boys, access to better jobs, upgrade social status, and get better bridegroom or marriage in the case of girls. The reasons for not sending children to schools are financial crisis, transportation and communication problem, sudden accident, lack of security and lack of interest especially in the case of girls. Though the government say that everything free for primary education but according to the many sources, schools charge

fees for books and other facilities in different disguise ways and give pressure to the student/parents to engage teachers as private tutors at home which is hard for the poor to provide. The quality of the teachers, standard of the teaching methods, infrastructure and physical facilities of the schools is not up to the mark. The major reasons for dropout of children are financial crisis and migration of the poor. Other reasons include inattentiveness to study, sudden accident and insignificantly early marriage and having many children. In order to improve the situation, interventions such as: improvement of communication, increase number of institutions, increase number of teachers, introduce technical education, improve physical facilities, initiatives for income generating activities for the children at schools, and increase extra or co-curricula activities need to be addressed properly.

[Note]

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