

Watch Report

No. 28

Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC, Bangladesh.

September 1997

Trends and Differentials in School Enrollment in Bangladesh Villages

Abstract: Based on data from a nationally representative sample survey of children aged 6-15, the author concludes that the enrollment rate has been declining since 1995 particularly among the boys in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Most children begin their school at age 8. Regional variation in enrollment is very wide. Dropout rate has remained high particularly at the lower grades. Nearly half of the students are enrolled in non-government institutions. The enrollment can be raised further if the education program provides special emphasis on younger children, low-enrolled communities and the children of illiterate parents.

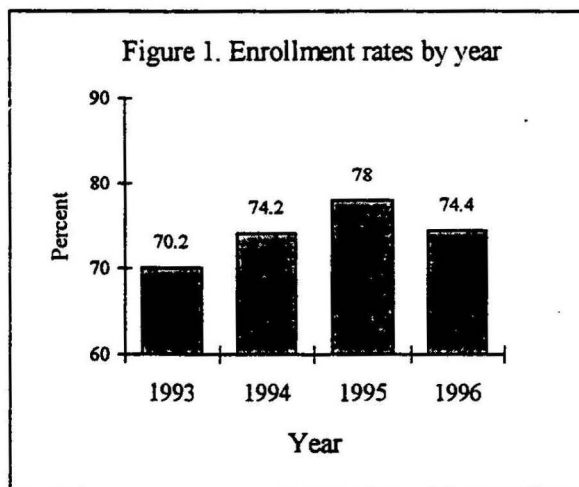
Introduction

While illiteracy has remained widespread in Bangladesh, available reports indicate that enrollment rate has consistently been increasing in Bangladesh. Both the government and non-government organizations have been making efforts to raise enrollment and reduce dropout particularly in rural areas and especially among girls. As a result, the enrollment scenario is expected to improve. In this report, the trend in school enrollment in Bangladesh villages are shown and variations are examined.

Methodology

Data for this report came from a nationally representative intensive monitoring system, known as *Watch*, in 70 villages located in ten districts of Bangladesh. A total of 2,064

children, selected at random, was included in the study. The mothers of the selected children were interviewed to collect relevant information in December 1996.



Results

The enrollment rate has been estimated as 74.4% in 1996 among 6-15 year old children. Figure 1 indicates that enrollment in school has consistently been increasing till 1995. Since then, a sharp declining trend has been observed. During the last four years, the school enrollment in Bangladesh villages ranged between 70 and 78 percent.

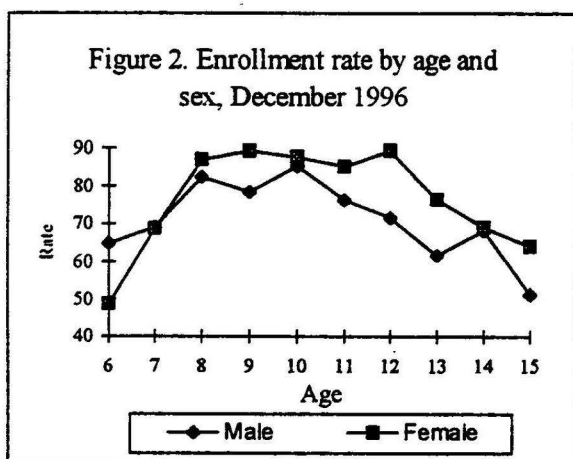
Table 1 compares the trend of school enrollment by sex. Like Figure 1, the

enrollment rates have declined for both sexes after 1995. The declining rate was much higher among male than female children. Enrollment rate has consistently remained higher among female than male.

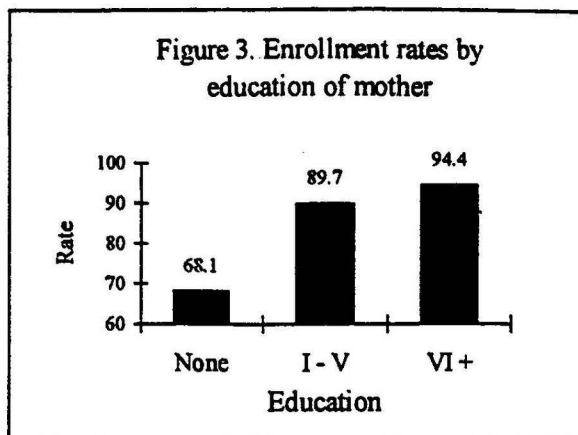
Table 1. Enrollment rates by year and sex, Bangladesh

Year	Sex	
	Male	Female
1993	71.0	69.7
1994	75.0	73.7
1995	77.4	78.7
1996	71.2	77.7

The variation of enrollment rate and age appears to have inverse U-shape relationships for both male and female children (Figure 2). The enrollment rate was much lower among female than male at the younger ages, reached its peak at the age of 9 years, continued till 12, and started to decline thereafter particularly among male children.



It is surprising to note that 68.1% children of illiterate mothers were enrolled in schools (Figure 3). If the mothers were educated, the chance of being their children in schools would have been even higher. The enrollment rate among literate mothers was as high as 94.4%.



Regional variation in school enrollment has remained very high ranging from 87.4% in Jessore to 53.5% in Kishoreganj (Figure 4). However, the enrollment rate was more than 80% at least for half of the study regions indicating the need of targeted approach to raise enrollment in under-served regions of the country.

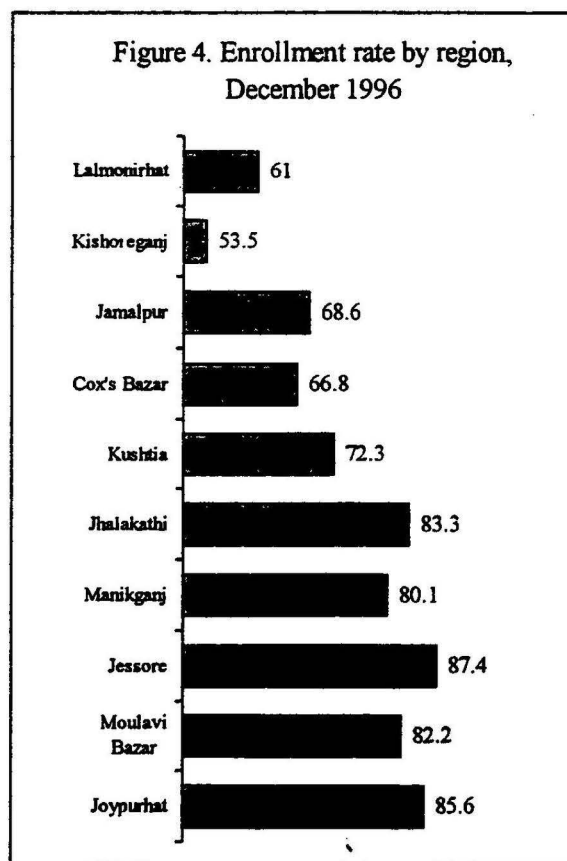
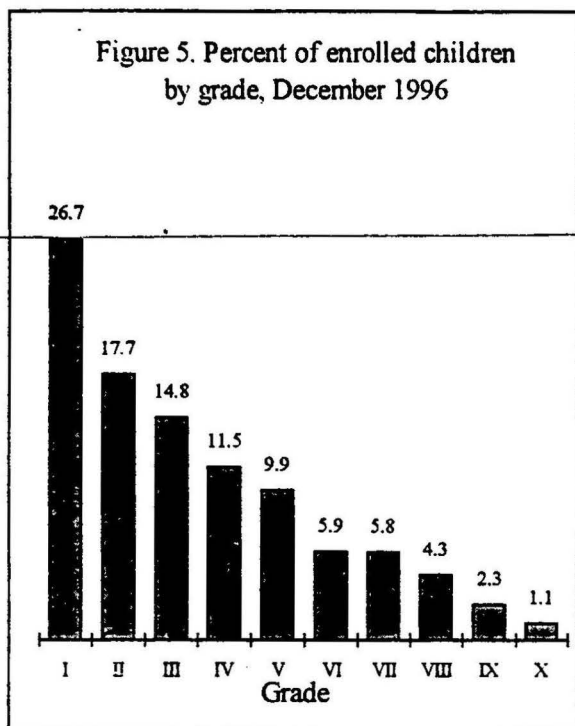
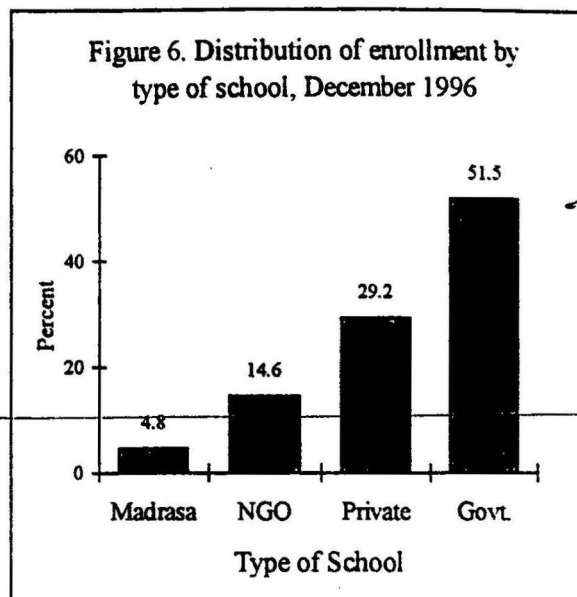


Figure 5 shows that most of the enrolled children were in the lower grades of the school while more than a quarter were found in grade I. This indicates a heavy dropout as the students progress to higher grades.



While the government has remained the major service providers in education (51.5%) followed by private sector (29.2%), a significant proportion of students (14.6%) were enrolled in schools run by the non-government organizations (Figure 6).



Conclusions

The enrollment situation in rural areas has improved significantly in recent years. But most children begin their school after they are 8 year old or more. The regional variation is also very high. The enrollment can be raised further if the education program provides special emphasis on younger children, low-enrolled communities and the children of illiterate parents.

This report has been prepared by Abdullah Hadi of the Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC in August 1997.