

ANNUAL REPORT



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BACKGROUND

Being a rapidly growing country Bangladesh has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world. In Bangladesh, the literacy rate of the population aged seven years and above stands at 43.3%. Illiteracy is considered to be one of the important parameters causing socio-economic backwardness. Virtually literacy is of paramount importance in reducing mortality, fertility, increasing job opportunity and improving health status of the population. The fact of high correlation between female basic education and enhancement in the status and well being of women as in better child care has also been established.¹

In Bangladesh, girls are often kept in the house and are encouraged to do the house work, until they are married. Denied their basic right to literacy and numeracy they are prevented for the rest of their lives from participating in the development of the country.

A non formal system of education has thus been necessary in the absence of schools that are suitable to the learning needs of the rural girls. They require schools that are flexible in timing, are close to their home, and have relevant curriculum, which will not only give them basic education, but also provide them with some basic skills in performing their roles and responsibilities in their families—immediate or in the future.

They also require a teacher who is a female, and one who will understand their situation, and will make the class interesting enough to hold their attention, preventing them from dropping out. It is precisely these needs which gave a structure to the NFPE programme in terms of its components and features. In its experience in the past decade, the drop out rate has been low, and the graduation rate high.

BRAC through its Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) Programme has been providing basic education to rural children since 1985. The programme started with 22 experimental schools in response to a mother in a Functional Literacy Class, who asked the staff "but what about our children, will they have to wait till they are 18 to join your school?" Today, a decade later, the number has increased to more than 34,000 schools catering to more than a million students. This growth has been in response to the demand for schools tailor made to meet the needs of the poor, who cannot afford to go to school, either due to monetary or opportunity costs.

¹ Gustavsson, S. Primary Education in Bangladesh Review, Analysis and Recommendations

Education Division Documents No 52.SIDA, Dhaka 1991



THE PROGRAMME

BRAC Schools

Two School Model :

NFPE (ages 8-10)

BEOC (ages 11-14)

- Target : Non enrolled and school drop outs
- One room school
- Three year school term
- No direct financial cost to families

In 1985, the *Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE)* model was started as a three year programme for children between the ages of 8 and 10. These were children who had never enrolled in any school or who had dropped out during class one from the formal schools.

However, there was also an increasing need for education for older children who had never attended

Special BEOC (*Basic Education for Older Children* schools known as *Kishori Schools*, Kishori meaning adolescent girls) were opened in 1988 (*BEOC*, was previously known as *PEOC*). These schools are also three years but cover five academic years of curriculum. This is possible since students are older and are better able to grasp the concepts. These schools cater to the educational needs of 11-14 year old girls only. The schools focus on the special needs of this group, particularly of health issues. These girls are groomed as health cadres also so that they can aid and advise people who are in need of their assistance. Health textbooks have been introduced from class II, and health related activities are performed by the students in and outside the school.

The schools have no fee and all learning materials for the students are provided by BRAC. BRAC schools enable these children to continue their education and prepare them for entrance into formal schools .

Creating the Schools

In order to ensure that the BRAC schools can educate as many children as possible, an extensive selection process is conducted .

The Students

The students of BRAC schools are the children of the poor and the landless. They are the "unreachable" who have been denied education because of gender and poverty. At least 70% of the children enrolled in the schools are girls. Emphasis is placed on creating an environment which would gradually lead to equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls reinforcing BRAC's efforts towards gender parity.

The Teacher

- More than 90% women
- Married and local resident
- Usually graduates of class 9
- Trained for 15 days to become para teacher
- Receive Refreshers Training every month.
- Teaches a school through a full cycle of three years.

Eligibility to become a BRAC school teacher depends on a few but important requirements. The teacher must be a married local resident of the village and must have at least nine years of schooling. Preference is given to women . Once selected she is given an initial fifteen day training at one of BRAC's training centers (TARC), followed by a periodical training at the beginning of each year. Regular monthly one day refresher courses are provided regardless of the school year the teacher is in. In all BRAC schools, the same teacher teaches the same batch of 33 students through the entire three year school cycle. On an average the teaching time in a typical BRAC school is 675 hours in Year 1 and 810 hours in the following two years making a total of

2295 hours of contact time between teacher and student in three calendar years.

The Parent and the Community

Education without parental support is very difficult. Children need to feel acceptance from their parents about their schooling. When possible, parents need to be involved in the school and community as a sign of commitment to their children's education. Parent and community participation play a critical part in programme design and form an important feature of all BRAC schools.

Each school has a school management committee made up of three parents, a community leader and the teacher who together are responsible for the smooth running of the school. This committee meets whenever necessary. The school committee and the other parents help maintain and protect the school, set school time and vacation and ensure their children's regular attendance.

Parent meetings are held once a month in each school that are meant to encourage the guardians to play an important part in the education process. On average, 80% of the parents (mostly mothers) attend the meetings. Here, parents and teacher discuss the children's progress, attendance, cleanliness and hygiene, the responsibility of parents towards their children, and any school problems requiring parental attention. The supervision by the Program Organizer facilitates the proceedings of the meeting.

Features that Make the Schools Successful

Focus on girls

Many countries around the world have unequal opportunities in education for girls and boys, with boys receiving most of the attention in education. The BRAC programme policy places special emphasis on the enrollment of girls. The recruitment of women teachers helps to retain more girls.

Reasonable class size

The small class size of 33 students to one teacher helps to forge a special bond between the

teachers and students. Students are taught by the same teacher throughout the three year course which also contributes to creating a friendly relationship between the teacher and the student.

Active parent & community involvement

It is not possible to attain an education without the support of parents and guardians. An essential feature of BRAC schools is the involvement of the community through regular parent teacher meetings and through the activities of the school management committee.

Flexible school timing

A common reason for student dropouts is the rigidity of school time. Most children are needed for work at home or in the fields during the harvest season which makes regular attendance a problem. To ensure that every child can attend school, the BRAC school hours are flexible based on agreements between the teacher and the parents. In both school models, NFPE and BEOC, class hours are flexible. Classes are held for three hours each day, six days a week, 270 days a year. This enables the students to attend school during the time of the day when it is most convenient and does not hamper family obligations. The flexibility of the BRAC schools can partially account for the high attendance rate.

Easy accessibility

Many parents are reluctant to send their children, especially girls, far from their home for schooling. However, since the BRAC schools are located near the homes of the students and teacher, it is easier for girls to attend school. For this reason, parents, children, and the teacher develop a sense of security since the schools are located in their own neighborhood. This also enables the children to receive individual attention from the teacher after class hours if necessary.

One Room School house

A typical BRAC school is a bamboo or mud walled room with thatch or tin roofs. The minimum floor space is 336 square feet. The schoolhouse is usually rented by BRAC for a nominal sum. In most cases the landowner volunteers to construct the schoolhouse, often with the advance rent paid by BRAC. Schools generally do not have their own latrines and tubewells but these are located near these facilities wherever possible.

Participatory and life related curriculum

It has been shown that students learn best through active and meaningful education. Thus, the design of the NFPE programme encourages a learner-centered and a participatory approach within a constructive learning environment. The curriculum is designed to be relevant to rural life and to suit the special needs of rural children.

There are more ways to learn than by just reading a text book. In the BRAC schools, a good amount of time is spent each day on games and fun activities like singing, dancing, story telling and role playing, many of which are related to exercising articulation, observation skills, coordination of the different parts of the body, and clarity of speech.

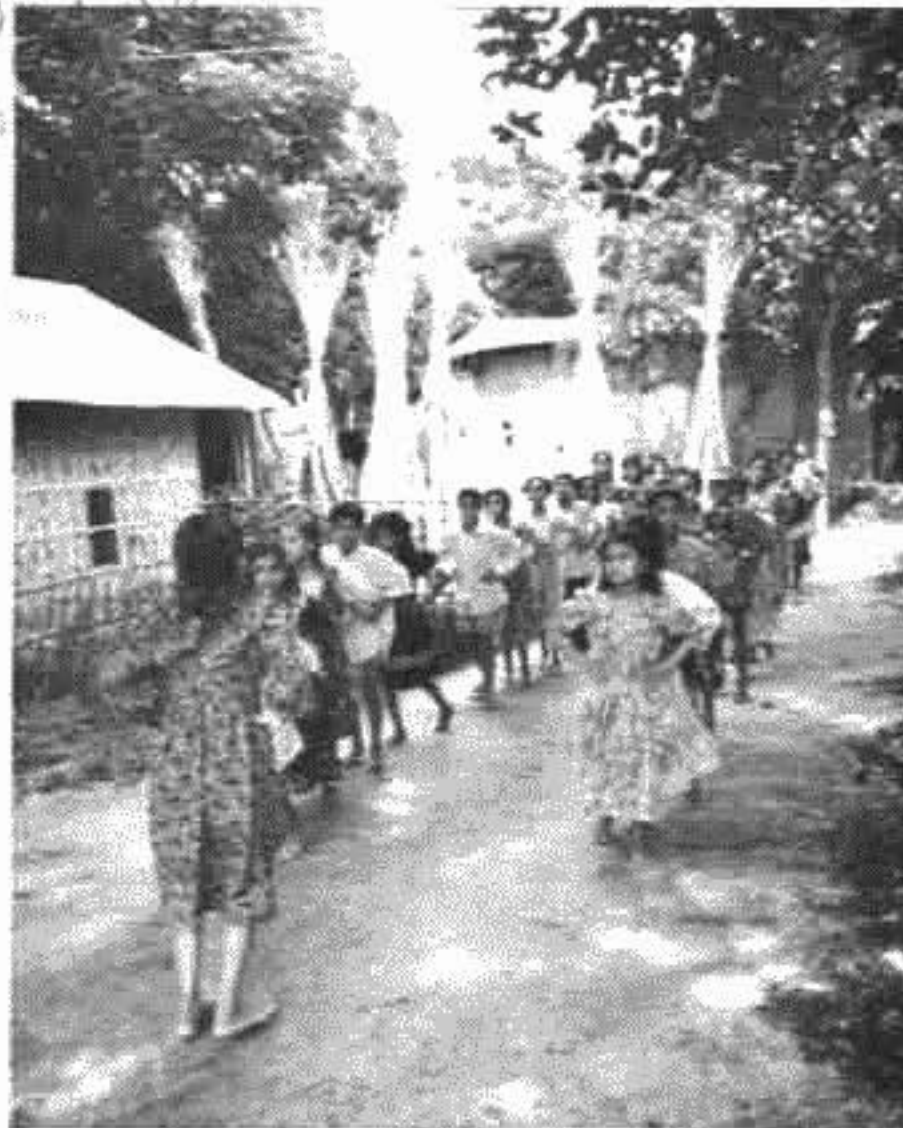
Learning through co-curricular activities

Very little or no homework

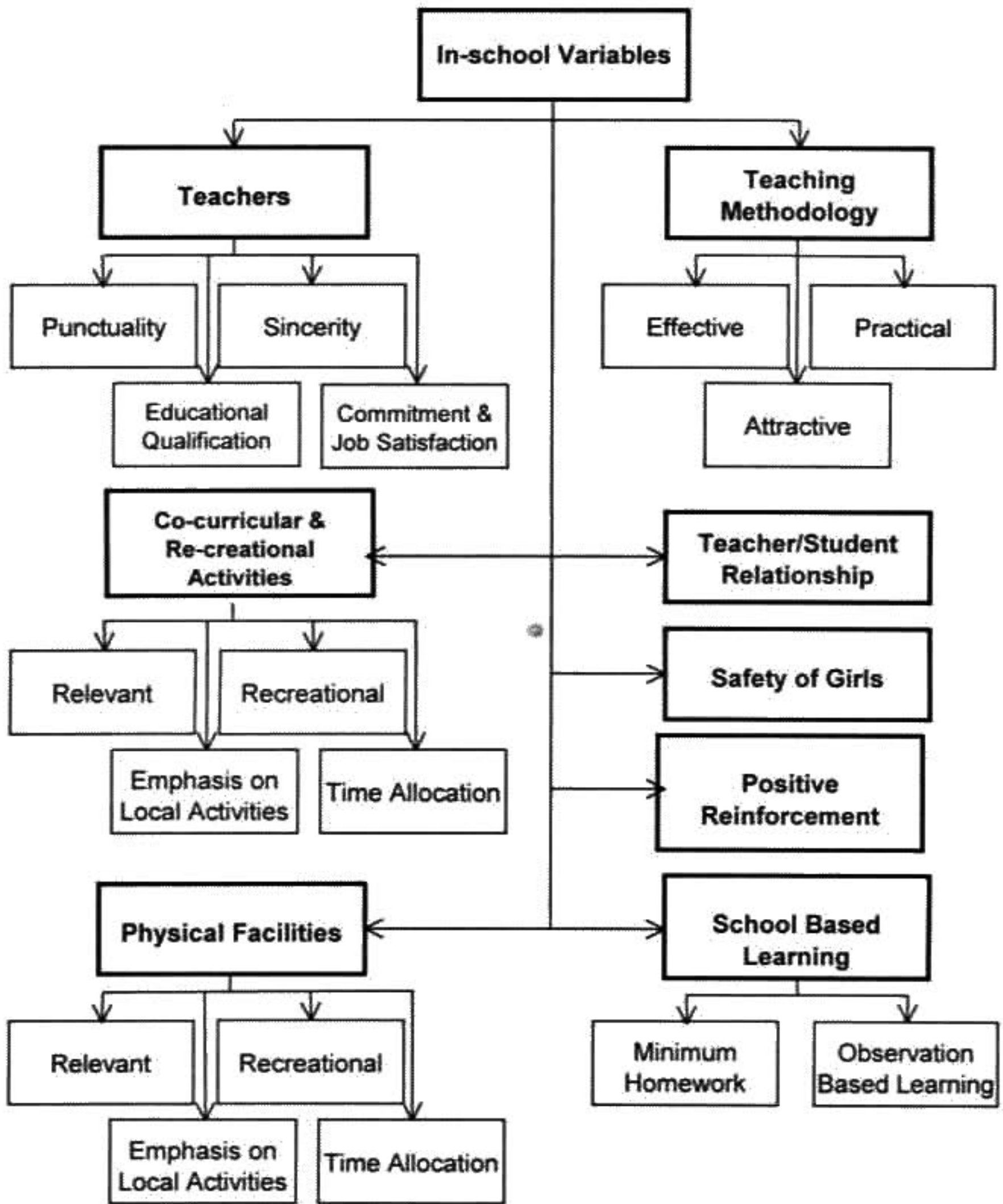
Since most students have some other obligation besides school to attend to, usually no homework is assigned the students. If assigned, it is very little, and can be done independently by the students themselves. The homework requires no assistance from parents who are mostly illiterate. This also saves the parents from the pressure of appointing a tutor.

Female Teacher

The teachers in BRAC schools are mostly women. This is mainly because parents prefer to send their children (especially girls) to schools where the teachers are females.



NFPE in School Variables :



NFPE Schools . . . Why They Are Different

BRAC schools have the reputation of being 'different' from other schools in the country. Recently, I visited six urban schools in the Dhaka city to see for myself what it is that makes the schools different—is it the *curriculum? The teaching method? the teacher? the students themselves?* I observed the schools for the whole week, at the end of which I came back with impressions that both puzzled and reassured me. The NFPE school is not so different after all—it is the educational institution that it is supposed to be. Yet, everything is different. It is not just one thing that makes it unique, it is a combination of all the facets : what is taught, who teaches and how, and the attitude of the students who receive their education there, that somehow make the school remarkable.

Let me share some of my observations with you. The classes start with the teacher ensuring overall cleanliness of the classroom. The students sit upon mats on the floor in a 'U' pattern after helping the teacher cover the walls with a calendar, wall magazines, charts and sketches that they have made themselves. One of the students leads them in singing the national anthem. Next, the teacher checks the attendance, writes down the number of students present and the date at one corner of the blackboard. She inquires after the well being of the students and invites a student from one of their groups (the 33 students in each class are divided into several groups) to select a topic for the Morning Talk session. The student talks for 2-3 minutes. This exercise is to develop her/his articulation and oratory skills.

Then follows the lessons which are selected from the day's lesson plan. Before starting a new lesson, the teacher reviews the previous lesson to ascertain how well the students have learned and retained it. She then gives them a new lesson, repeatedly checking to see if they understood it. The students normally do not get any homework, but the little they do can be completed on their own without their parent's help.

The teacher often narrates appropriate stories to drive home the message of a particular lesson. For example, during a social studies class, the teacher narrated a story about what happened to a person who ate some food that was left uncovered. The story was followed by a lecture in diarrhoeal disease, its causes and prevention. Another method that the teacher would adopt to check is, whether the students retained their lessons was to intentionally make mistakes in spellings or sums. Once the teacher made an intentional spelling mistake while writing something in Bangla on the blackboard, the students immediately corrected her.

One of the most striking aspects of the schools is the role that the NFPE teachers plays in the student's lives, both in and out of the classrooms. In the classroom, the teacher seems to adopt a role that is more of a facilitator than a 'teacher'. She does *not* 'instruct'—she *discusses* issues that range from social and moral values, personal hygiene, nutrition, etc. Outside the classroom she builds up a strong rapport with her students, visiting their homes to see how they live, inquiring after their welfare, and motivating and advising them whenever needed.

I found the students intelligent and enthusiastic. All of them seemed to have a plan for the future. One student in particular told me he was debating between two choices of profession: that of a physician and an engineer. It delighted me to see these children dreaming dreams—dreams that are no longer improbable even in face of their poverty. Sitting on their mats, learning through the life oriented curriculum that NFPE school offers, singing songs and picking up practical skills, the students are getting ready for their future. Looking at them I marveled at how bright and eager they were, believing in their hearts that life cannot let them down. The past seven days have convinced me that it is very likely true that they are far ahead than most children in dealing with life—the training at the NFPE schools ensures it.

Dr. Feroza Begum

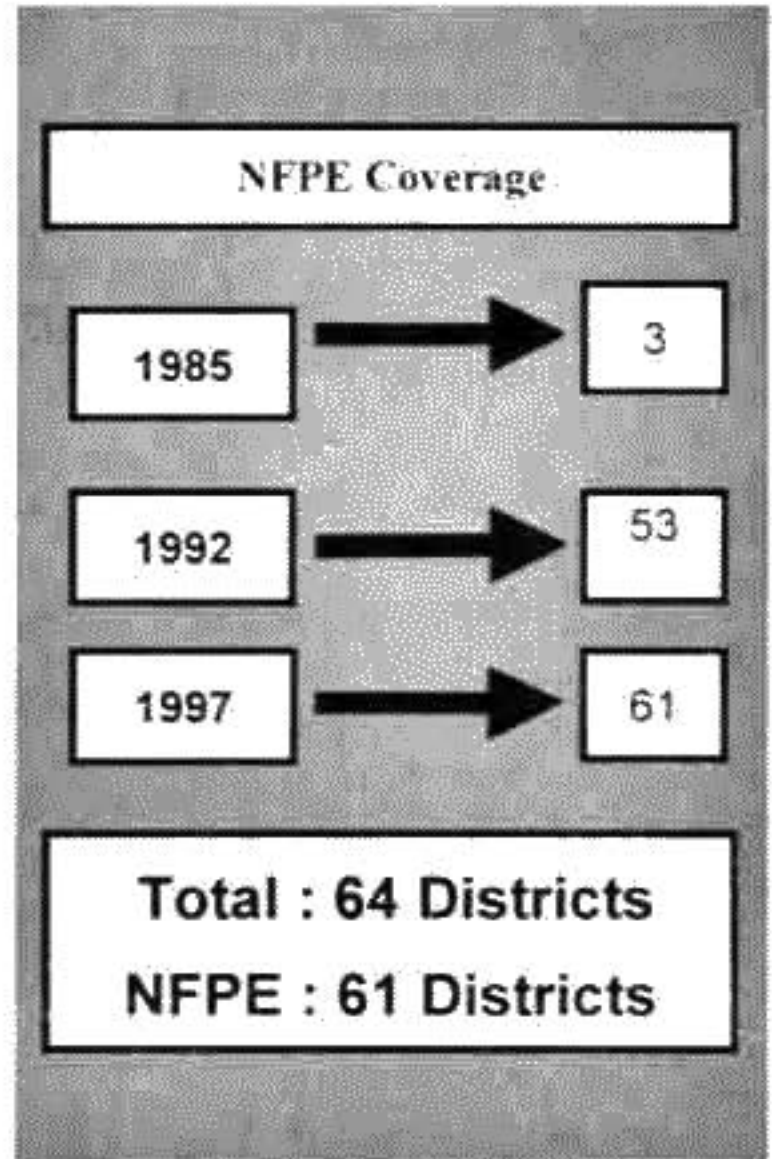
Sr. Researcher RED BRAC

Access No - 19, July 1996

NFPE SCALED UP

A Glimpse of NFPE

	1997
MDU Staff	30
Field Staff	3,800
Schools	34,334
Teachers	33,535
Learners	1,103,378
Thanas	332 (additional 45 Thanas for ESP)
Villages	22,802
Districts	61



NFPE Time Line

1992 - BRAC student, becomes a BRAC teacher

1993 - The Nutrition Programme Started
Reading Centres start

1994 - First BRAC students as SSC graduates

1995 - Majeda becomes Resource teacher
Continued Education Programme starts
Schools for garment workers

1996 - Number of Resource Teachers increased
Exgarment workers schools start

1997 - Hard to Reach schools start
English /Maths trainings for grades 4 & 5 start

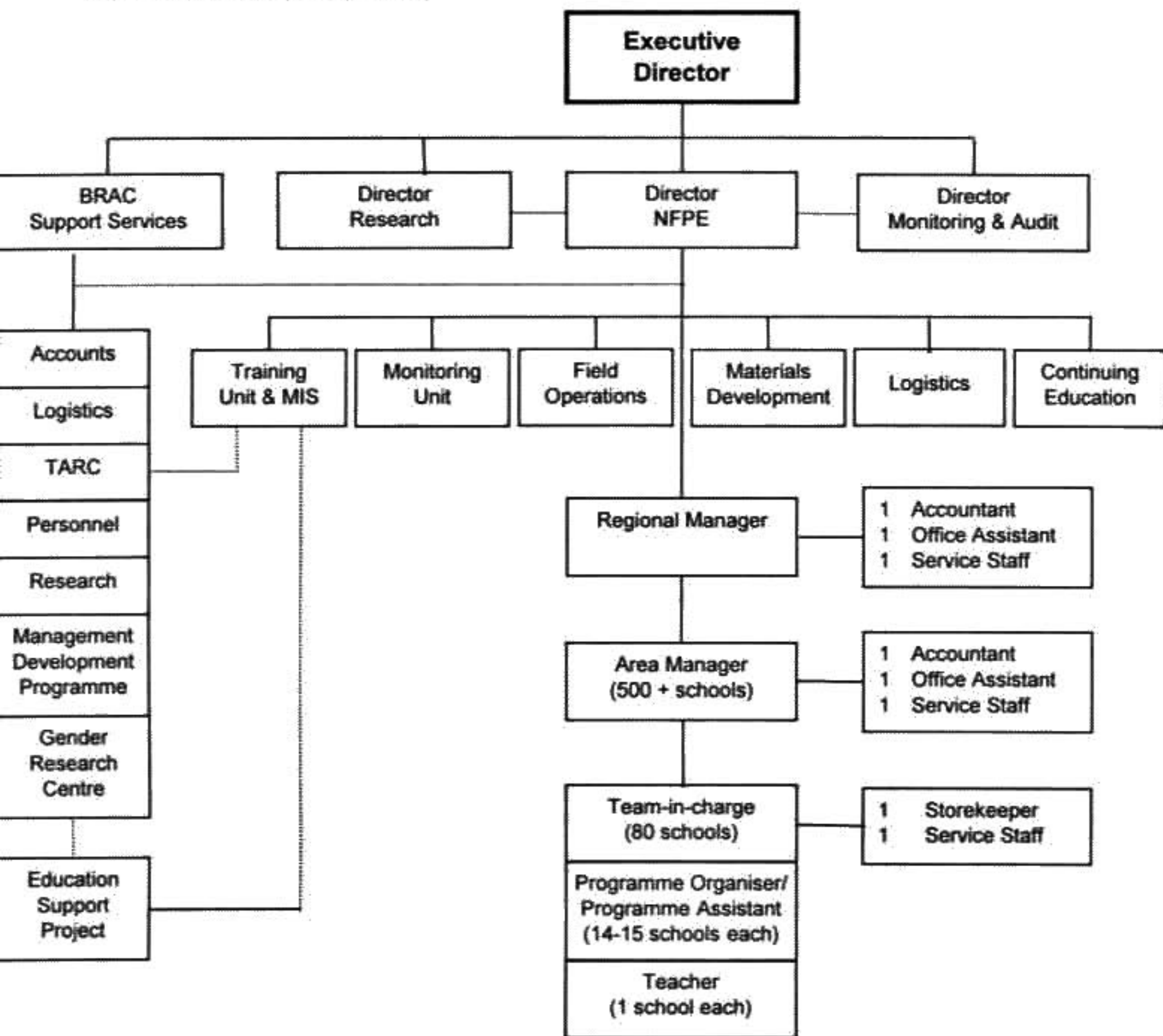
Quality Managers & MDU work on pedagogy issues

NFPE 4 year courses start



MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

NFPE Management Structure :-



Note : Figures provided in this organogram have been averaged to indicate the scale of operation at each level.

Any education programme needs to have an excellent supervisory process and an efficient management system in order to be effective. For the NFPE Programme, the overall responsibility lies with BRAC's Executive Director. Direct management and supervision are accomplished through a structure which includes the central office of the Director of NFPE and staff. To facilitate its multifaceted work, the programme has formed five support units namely Training, Monitoring, Field Operations, Material Development and Logistic Units.

The Director is responsible for developing programme policies. S/he manages the programme, and is a liaison to the other BRAC programmes, to external donors as well as to evaluation and appraisal teams.

Field Operations

According to the administrative structure, an Area Education Manager, Team in Charge and PO/PA are directly involved with the field level management. The director keeps in constant touch with the field through the Regional Managers and the field level management. A team is the main and most important unit of field level NFPE programme. A team runs atleast 80 Schools, School libraries, Union libraries and Adult literacy centres. Each team has a Team Incharge 4/5 PO/PAs and RTs, which depends on the number of schools and other programme activities.

Regional Managers (RM):

The Regional Manager is the highest position in field level management hierarchy. A Regional Manager is in charge of 7-8 areas. The Head Office implements its various decisions in field level through Regional Managers. He/she plans for field level programmes, approves of its budget and Area Education Managers of his region are accountable to him/her. A Regional Manager tries to give quick solution to the immediate problems that arise. He/she has to analyse monitoring reports and takes necessary steps on basis of that; inspects schools, and other programmes randomly and gives feed back; follows up training, orientation, workshops; discusses with the team and area staffs about their problems and lets the higher authority know ; takes plans for new school opening; appoints PAs; evaluates his/her staff and also help them to

improve their performances, to develop new skills by giving necessary feed back.

From 1997 the decision was taken to change the designation and responsibilities of Regional Managers. At the present time they are Quality Managers with the unit of Field Operations coming under their jurisdiction. The major additional responsibility to existing others is pedagogy, as part of this responsibility the Quality Managers and MDU are to directly interact in the development of curriculum materials and training. Some Quality Managers are stationed at the head office and some in the field.

Area Education Manager: (AEM)

An Area Education Manager is responsible for 7-8 teams, but the number of teams depend on the condition of transportation and communication, and on the number of schools of an area. The Team-in-Charges are accountable to him/her for their work. The main responsibility of the AEM is to supervise his/her teams and to elevate and to maintain the set and desired standard through his Team-in-Charges. Besides this, an equally important responsibility of an AEM is school inspection. He/she picks out schools randomly taking that particular Team-in-Charge and his regular work plan along and then inspects them accordingly. The AEM also has to inspect other running programmes like library, Gonokendra Pathagar, Adult Literacy etc. on a regular basis. He/she participates in the monthly Refresher Course arranged to up-grade the quality of the teachers and gives advise when necessary. The AEM appoints teachers and arranges for their training, orientation and special refresher for the weak teachers as well as making proper arrangements for survey work done before opening new schools. He/she also attends meetings at Head Office and takes necessary steps to implement the decisions taken in these meeting after discussing the different field level problems. The AEM can approve of leaves, bills, vouchers of the Team-in-Charges as well as the budget of the schools; takes steps for staff development; evaluates his staffs for promotion purposes and gives feed back to them so that they can improve their performances. He/she collects materials from the Head Office and makes sure that they reach to the respective teams. AEM tries to give prompt solution to the immediate problems and lets the higher authority know about them if

needed. He/she keeps in touch with his teams, RMs and with Head Office on a regular basis.

Team Incharge (TI):

A Team Incharge is appointed to run a programme properly. Sometimes a Team Incharge is responsible for more than one team. But this depends on the number of schools and the communication and transportation facilities of the teams. To become a Team Incharge a BRAC employee has to have two years experiences and qualifications. The Team Incharge distributes responsibilities among his/her team staff and the staff are accountable to the Team Incharge. The Team Incharge distributes 14/16 schools to the PO and 10/12 to the PA and RTs.

The main and the most important responsibility of a Team Incharge is school monitoring and supervision. School supervision (randomly) and also attends the Parents meetings. A Team Incharge is to also visit the School libraries, Union Libraries, and Adult literacy centres operating within his/her team. The Team Incharge gives his/her advise to problems which arise during visits. The teams proper management depends on the success of the accurate implementation of these decisions. When a Team Incharge is responsible for a team he/she has visit each and every school once a month. If they are responsible for more than one team then visiting every school takes 2/3 months depends on the number of schools.

Another important responsibility a Team Incharge has is staff development. All new staff has to be attached with an old staff for at least 15 days, so that the new staff gets to know the basics about the filed and office, which the Team Incharge has to make sure takes place. The Team Incharge sits in a meeting with the whole team staff once a week. In the meeting they discuss the problems of the schools that each and everyone is responsible for. These issues can range from student attendance, teacher disabilities, school house construction etc.

A Team Incharge plans the monthly teachers refreshers and conducts them. Prior to the refreshers meetings are held and issues are discussed which helps in the construction of a refreshers module. He/She takes all the necessary steps to improve a weak teacher. A Team

Incharge has to report to the Area Education Manager all the happenings of the team.

Programme Orgainiser/Programme Assistant/Resource Teacher (PO/PA/RT):

To run a team properly the role of an efficient PO/PA and RT is very important. But they are all accountable to the Team Incharge and not to each other.

A PO/PA and RTs main responsibility is to visit schools, improve the quality of the schools, arrange parents meetings, and through that develop interest and awareness about education amongst the community.

Apart from this PO/PA and RTs survey villages/ students, arrange parents meetings and select teachers. A PO is responsible for 10/16 schools, where as a PA and RT is responsible for 10/12 schools. Each PO/PA and RT has to visit allotted schools atleast twice a week.

Any problems arising from school visits are solved immediately, in all cases the Team Incharge is made aware of any problems arising and needing his/her assistance.

A Team Office is done to accommodate the teachers. This way they do not have to travel long distances to attend the monthly refresher courses at the Team Office.

Material Development Unit

One of the most important aspects of an education programme is the curriculum. The Material Development Unit creates and modifies the curriculum that is used in the schools. Most of the teaching and learning materials are created and produced by the MDU. Ideas for the curriculum come mostly from the government books, using references from other text and resource books.

A continuous process of writing, field testing, rewriting, and monitoring the curriculum takes place. In this process, interacting with field staff and teachers provide an important basis for information and feedback. In order to bring new and innovative ideas of teaching to the schools, material developers also attend training sessions and workshops in Bangladesh and abroad.

National and international consultants are hired to assist in developing the materials and to aid in teacher training. Some members of the MDU are

also involved in the training of the field staff on the new curriculum once it is developed.

Books Used In BRAC Schools Written By The MDU Staff

Bangla

- Preparatory Phase Book, 1984.
- Esho Pari-Shishu Path (Let's Read- Children's Reader), 1984; Revised : 1993.
- Esho Pari (Let's Read) Part I, 1984; Revised 1992.
- Esho Pari Part II, 1985; Revised 1991.
- Esho Pari Part III, 1985; Revised 1992.
- Esho Pari Part IV (BEOC only), 1994.
- Esho Pari Part V (BEOC only), 1994.
- 15 story books for Classes I-III.

Social Studies (Paribesh Parichiti)

- Paribesh Parichiti *Part I*, 1984; revised 1992. Teacher's guide, Workbook & 8 Story Books rewritten & published Oct. 1996.
- Paribesh Parichiti *Part II*, 1985, revised 1991. Teacher's guide & Student's copy rewritten & published Dec. 1997.
- Paribesh Parichiti *Part III*, 1985; revised 1992.
- Paribesh Parichiti *Part IV* (BEOC only), 1994.
- Paribesh Parichiti *Part V* (BEOC only), 1994.
- Paribesh Parichiti Hand Out for urban schools , 1995, revised Paribesh Parichiti 1996.

Mathematics

- Esho Gonith Shikhi *Book I*, 1985; revised 1991; new Gonith Shikhi & Teacher's Manual for *Book I*, 1994.
- Esho Gonith Shikhi *Book II*, 1985; revised 1992, new Gonith Shikhi & Teacher's Manual for *Book II*, 1995.
- Esho Gonith Shikhi *Book III*, 1985; revised 1992.
- Gonith (Maths) *Book IV* (BEOC only), 1994. Teacher's Manual for *Book IV*, 1995.

Others for BEOC Only

- Amader Shastha (Health), 1992; Revised 1995.
- Amader Biggan (Science) *Part IV*, 1993.
- Amader Biggan *Part V*, 1993.

Several Story Books and Posters are also written & designed by the MDU.

In addition to books, there are support materials such as line drawing sheets, and a letter chart and cards for Bangla, story cards for Social Studies, and number chart and cards for mathematics. Each school receives 4 copies of a children's monthly magazine called "Allo" and a single adolescent/adult magazine called "Gonokendra" both published by BRAC's publication division.

Training Unit

Along with relevant curricular, a good education programme needs motivated teachers to effectively teach the materials. The Training Unit is responsible for the training of the teachers and of the staff. An Education Specialist plans all teacher training, including the training of the teachers and staff. He develops the training calendar, training modalities and the training materials. He also advises the Director and other units of the programme and matters related to pedagogy as well as teacher and staff development.

Staff Training

All PA's Receive:

- 19 day pre-service training
- 12 day in-service training
- 6 day training of trainers

All PO's Receive:

- 3 day pre-service training
- 12 day teachers basic training within one and half months of service
- 12 day Operation Management Course within four months of service
- 12 day training of trainers after six months of service

All TIC's Receive:

- 12 day Development Management Course

All TIC's and senior PO's also attend a 6-day Gender Awareness and Analysis course which addresses a wide range of gender related issues essential to the programme.

Teacher Training - The teacher training component is very thorough and comprehensive. It rests on the principle of "distributed training" throughout the school term rather than providing a lengthy training course at the beginning of the teacher's career. Hence BRAC NFPE teachers training is composed of many training sessions throughout the teaching cycle.

Pre-Service-Newly Recruited Teachers Receive:

- 12-15 day basic training course
- 3 day orientation before the start of year 1

In Service-All Teachers Receive:

- 2 day refresher at the end of the 2nd and 3rd months of school the first year
- 4 day refresher at the end of the first year
- 3 day refresher at the end of the second year
- 12 day refresher at the end of the third year
- 1 day monthly refreshers (when teachers are not receiving any of the above)

The trainings are informal and participatory, yet structured. They introduce basic skills, new content and activities. The refresher courses address day to day teaching and learning issues and renews teaching methodologies to prepare the teacher for the coming year or month of school. The general purpose is to equip the teacher to be able to facilitate her class better.

MDU involved in Mathematics and English training

During 1997 the NFPE programme decided to expand its schools into grades 4 and 5, from Phase - III. As a pilot programme 1,000 NFPE schools were selected to continue into grades 4 and 5, for this reason training were planned and conducted. In a total 1,400 Area Managers and Team in Charges were trained English and Mathematics. The MDU 12 member training team is involved in developing and conducting these training.

Logistics Unit

The Logistics Unit aids the delivery of school supplies to the field office. The NFPE's internal logistics unit periodically draws up a plan which shows the type and number of teaching materials needed in a particular area and submits a requisition to BRAC's Logistics Department. Where printing is required, a requisition is made to BRAC Printers. For import-able items the requisition is usually given on a six monthly basis. BRAC's Logistics Department delivers all school related materials to specific areas, usually to the NFPE Area Manager office.

Monitoring Unit

As a programme expands, continual assessment and monitoring of quality is necessary. Especially in an education programme where new curriculum is being introduced, where innovative ideas are being tried out, and where long term planning is necessary, monitoring is extremely important. The NFPE Programme has its own monitoring unit that

An interesting finding from the last topic about the urban school children was that of the families surveyed, 50% of their only income source came from pulling rickshaws or working in garment's factory. However, when the BRAC students were asked what they wanted to do after school, none of the boys wanted to be rickshaw pullers and none of the girls wanted to be garments worker

This is already an indication that these children are hoping for a better life for themselves.

The existing monitoring mechanism helps to cross check information and is a constant supply of information to the Director and Senior Managers.

consists of five members selected from the ranks of field officers. They carry out random inspections to look into student/teacher attendance, school infrastructure, classroom discipline, academic achievement of learners, students' participation, and evaluation of the teacher. The Director, Regional Managers, and individual field offices concerned are informed of the findings, after which necessary adjustments to the programme are made.

The NFPE Monitoring Unit is also responsible for monitoring the effect of any changes that are introduced, whether in curriculum or in another aspect of school activities. Monitors are able to observe up to 40 schools every month. Their task is guided by specific objectives set for them in advance by the Director in consultation with the Education Specialist and the monitors themselves. Qualitative dimensions of the NFPE Programme are also evaluated by BRAC's Monitoring Department. Data are collected by field monitors who are usually former NFPE programme staff and know the programme in depth. BRAC Monitoring Unit surveyed the following topics:

- Parent's meeting
- Newly built BRAC schools
- New school structure
- Material supply to the BRAC schools
- Graduate students of BRAC schools
- Knowledge retention of BRAC school students
- Home task (homework) of BRAC school students
- Background of BRAC urban school students

Policies and decisions are strongly influential by reports and feedback of the monitors. To maintain neutrality and objectivity of monitors, all NFPE monitors report directly to the Programme Director.

Progress over the last Ten Years

Over the past ten years, BRAC's Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) has educated more than one million children previously left out of the formal primary school system. This has meant rapid expansion of the programme from only 20 schools in 1985 to 34,334 schools by the end of 1997. The challenges have been multi faceted, and every effort has been made to meet the needs of the programme, the learners, and the community. The following are some of the changes that were made during Phase I (1993-95) and till 1997.

Modifications Required For Expansion

Expansion to Non RDP areas

In order to facilitate rapid expansion, new ventures were necessary. One such venture was extending NFPE to the non RDP areas. Till December 1991, the NFPE program functioned in the RDP areas, hence schools were opened in areas where RDP had programs. However, in December 1991 NFPE ventured in a non RDP area in Kaliakoir. As there was no other BRAC programs in Kaliakoir, there was hardly any familiarity with BRAC among the people. Yet the whole hearted acceptance of the program by the local communities ensured NFPE's ability to sustain itself without other program support. The success of opening NFPE schools in Kaliakoir has led the program to open schools in other new districts in 1993. However, NFPE kept the projection plan of RDP in view while planning its extension in non RDP areas, so that there were areas that would be covered by RDP in the future, and hence the link between the two programmes has been maintained.

Experience in the non RDP areas shows that there is a lot more involvement of community in the RDP areas due to the participation in so many RDP programmes. This in turn complements the NFPE programme, and vice versa.

Resource Teachers

It has been found that supervision of schools requires some level of teaching experience in order to appreciate the dynamics in the class room. Hence, the programme has considered promoting some efficient teachers to the supervisory position at the level of Programme Assistants. These teachers are known as 'Resource Teachers'. There were some initial problems, such as the difficulty of teachers to ride a bike and to travel too far. However to overcome this sort of problems, they have been assigned to supervise 12 schools in a cluster near their house. These teachers have to supervise two schools a day, and are also responsible for holding parent teacher meetings. They also have to visit the local NFPE office once a month to submit action plan and conduct the two day refresher training courses. By Dec. 1997, there were 162 such resource teachers. These teachers are selected on the basis of good class room practice, good communication skills, and completion of one cycle of teaching. There will be a large batch of teachers completing the cycle, so the programme hopes to assign two Resource Teachers per team office by the end of Phase II, 1999.

The Concept of Master Trainers

- In every area in the field there will be trained staff for each subject empowered to exercise their good judgment in a flexible pedagogy.

- These staff will go through several training sessions after being screened properly.

- They will be introduced to the idea of flexibility in teaching techniques which they will transfer into the whole system.

- They will also be the contact persons between the field and the Head Office concerning their respective subject areas.

Training for Developing Master Trainers

A major initiative regarding quality was taken by MDU through designing and conducting training for Master Trainers, in 1997. It was strongly felt that the innovative curriculum produced by the MDU together with the participatory teaching techniques designed for the classrooms would continue to prove to be unsuccessful if the training of staff/teachers continued to be too structured and methodical. One major problem was - there were big gaps between the Unit that conceives ideas and produces materials with the assistance of expert consultants and experienced teachers (i.e. -the MDU), the trainers- who think and work in a secluded cluster with very little classroom experience or the knowledge of philosophies behind new and innovative materials (i.e. trainers of TARCs), and teachers who are told to follow teacher's guides and copy every teaching techniques and methods of trainers without understanding the necessity of these and also without having *enough scope of developing/choosing their own techniques.*

The whole model of classroom teaching was being channeled through a top down process since the programme was first conceptualised. When NFPE was a small programme, this worked well. But as it has scaled, the different units started losing touch with one another and the gaps, as explained above, made it very difficult for teachers to understand new materials and the reason behind the constant change.

At this point, the programme feels a necessity to transfer its skills to a mid level -who works directly with the teachers - and empower them to an extent so that they can offer assistance to the teachers.

So MDU has decided to take the problem areas, Mathematics and English, and have started to develop the group that is involved with conducting monthly refresher's training for the teachers i.e., the Master Trainers.

Master Trainers for Math & English

Math : Experience from BEOC schools indicated that, teachers do not feel confident with

the level of Math in grades IV and V. As a result, it was felt that a special training is required to give the programme staff and teachers an orientation on Math level IV and V. A Head Office based core team was formed in August, 1997. 1,400 field based staff - from all levels - received the 15 days residential training.

Learning experience: the programme learnt that developing someone's skills related to mathematics does not ensure that s/he will be a good trainer/teacher. The training that the staff received had certainly improved their skills as far as solving problems was concerned. But the training failed to develop their teaching and training skills. To this end, MDU is planning to design and carry out another series of training that would effectively develop the group as Master Trainers.

English Training

As is mentioned under English through the Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) programme-research and interaction with the graduates in the formal schools showed that BRAC graduates entering formal schools are particularly weak in English language skills. Also, NFPE's decision to complete the full primary schooling, i.e. grades I to V, presented the problem that the programme had been trying to solve with the IRI pilot project concerning its weakness in English as a subject area. *It is a two-fold problem. On one plain it is the teachers; on the other plain, it is the trainers themselves.* Although government English curriculum is introduced in BRAC schools from the middle of class II (after 18 months in schools) most BRAC teachers are not sufficiently equipped to facilitate English language beyond the very preliminary stage of alphabet recognition; hence there is tendency to revert to rote methods of teaching the language. Moreover, BRAC school teachers have limited years of schooling. They are not sufficiently familiar with the English language to be able to teach it as a second language. Worse, the staff/trainers who conduct the monthly refresher training for the teachers have never received any training on teaching/training English apart from their Basic Training and as a second language they have their own weaknesses in this area.

To overcome this limitation, the MDU designed a thorough text based training which covers class III and IV. To this end a team of 8 MDU members has started working together from August 1997 intensively training all levels of staff- Regional Managers, Area Managers and Team in-Charges and also the TARC based Trainers to introduce them to the idea of this training as well as to screen them. It is the first time MDU has got directly involved in training. For English, it was decided that from the network of Team in-Charges- the competent ones will be selected as Master Trainers. After the first round of screening, over a 100 T.I.C.s have received at least one to two 5 days training so far. These sessions are preceding one after another in a trial and error basis trying to improve the participants' level of English, familiarize them with the contents of the text, as well as transferring important teaching skills.

Need-based Additions to the Programme

ADDITIONS	YEAR
Urban Schools	1991
School Libraries (Patha Ghar)	1992
Union Libraries (Gono Kendra)	1995
Adult Literacy Centers	1995
Schools For Ex-Garment Workers	1996
Hard to Reach Programme	1997

The above table lists the need based additions to the programme. The following paragraphs will describe these additions and the progress of these during the phase.

Urban Schools

The need to open schools in the urban areas of the city was evident when a door to door survey in 1991 revealed that the children of the slum areas lacked adequate facilities and opportunities for education. Not many schools cater to the educational needs of

working/distressed children in cities and those that exist are quite costly. Hence, BRAC extended its service to the slum children by opening ten urban schools on a pilot basis in 1992. The opening of these schools required a lot more effort than that required in rural areas, mainly because of a general suspicion amongst the parents to help them.

Urban schools follow the NFPE curriculum and methodology, though certain modifications had to be made to accommodate the programme to the urban environment. Several urban related issues such as kidnapping, begging, cleanliness, skin diseases and so on were added to the existing social studies curriculum. These topics are given in activity form, to allow a lot of room for discussion and to create a scope for developing skills in problem solving. Moreover, year end formal examination had to be introduced due to parental demand.

The schools in Dhaka are run by 10 team offices in Narayanganj, Moghbazar, Mirpur, Jatrabari and Kamrangichar. In Dhaka Urban 100% of the teachers are females. Since many students do not continue in the government schools after finishing their course in BRAC schools, some fourth year schools are also being run by the programme. It is further hoped that these students can eventually join the UCEP vocational schools. Arrangements are being made in this direction.

Although financial constraints, domestic chores, involvement in odd jobs and a general lack of motivation prevent these children from going to school, it has been good to see that a good percentage of the initially enrolled children have seen their way through class three, and are now in class four. Equally impressive has been the involvement of various slum communities in school activities. In the face of the various constraints, NFPE has built in its policies a little flexibility, both in terms of facilities and approach, with a view to providing basic education to children of urban slums.

Parents' meetings are held once a month, but many working parents cannot attend the meeting due to their work. The topics discussed in these meetings are: regular attendance, the need to educate their child, child rights, health, early marriage, crossing roads and traffic light,

kidnapping, begging, diseases, cleanliness etc. - these are also the topics discussed in the class room.

Given the success of the urban schools in Dhaka, these schools were also opened in several other cities as shown in the table below.

Urban NFPE schools opening schedule from 1993 to March 1996

Urban Area	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Total
Dhaka	32	148	238	27	193	638
Chittagong		49	48		77	174
Rajshahi		50	30		22	102
Khulna		60	50		29	139
Sylhet			21	11	30	62
Comilla			31	21	31	83
Mymensingh			10			10
Gazipur			20			20
Jamalpur			10			10
Rangpur			20			20
Dinajpur			10			10
Bogra (Naruli)			10			10
Total	32	307	498	59	382	1278

Schools for Ex-Garment Workers

BRAC is collaborating with UNICEF, ILO, and BGMEA to provide schooling to ex-garment workers, under the age of 14. Kishor-Kishori model schools were specially opened in 1995, for the child laborers in Dhaka and Narayanganj and about 2,200 child labourers are studying in these 'Garment Schools' run by BRAC. These students receive Tk 300 as scholarship.

School Libraries (*Pathaghars*)

The opening of the school libraries is an illustrative example of how the programme has incorporated need based demands of the students into the programme as identified by the field staff:

By 1993, this library programme was formalized at the head office came to be known as the *Kishori Pathaghars* (Adolescent Library).

Kishori Pathaghars open once a week for one and half to two hours in a BRAC school room, in the off hour. Initially Tk 2 was taken from the students as

subscription fee to buy the materials and games for the library, however, since some students found it difficult to pay the subscription fee, this Tk 2 was collected as their savings each month. All the facilities, such as books, games etc. are now provided by BRAC and the BRAC school room is used as the library when the school is off hour.

In 1993, training for skills like sewing was introduced, while in 1994 poultry farming, and in 1995 book binding was introduced to these graduates. Home gardening was also introduced in 1995, and in 1996 students used their savings to buy the seeds to do home gardening. The cost for the training for sewing is shared with the students.

The library is also used for cultural activities. The teacher is paid a basic stipend to maintain this library.

The libraries have also proved to be a good place for girls to come and meet and socialise at an informal level. The magazine produced by BRAC called *Gonokendra* together with other journals and books help them keep in touch with BRAC

news and read about various issues and articles. The average membership is usually 25-40 students. The success of this programme has led to expansion during the phase:

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Expansion of *Kishori Pathagars* from 1993 to 1997

Total Items	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Pathagars	1025	1858	2026	2,514	5,640
Members	20946	42824	75583	96,069	1,81,990
Savings (TK)	124088	584896	1743096	32,58,170	57,47,244
Books Provided	23036	73410	170904	2,61,907	6,52,778

Reading Circle (*Path Kendra*)

The Reading Circle is yet another need based addition to the programme. The need arose when it was found that *Kishori Pathagars* could not be opened where BRAC schools were not reopened, and also when adequate number of members is not found. As a result small reading groups were formed with a contact person chosen from the group. This person is held responsible for the books and magazines provided to him/her for reading in his/her group in his/her house. This addition was made in 1995, and 1165 study groups with 7573 girls. The students are mostly those continuing their education in the formal schools, and also those who are not studying anymore. The minimum number of members in each group is 5. Each circle is given 7 books for a month, as supplied by a Programme Organiser.

Union Libraries (*Gono Kendra*)

In order to foster a learning environment in the villages, BRAC has opened union libraries, known as '*gono kendras*'. In December 1995, there were 30 such libraries with an average membership of 189 each. Each library is equipped with about a thousand books, two dailies and journals. The libraries are usually housed in a 500-600 sq feet room provided by the community and are kept

open for 6 hours a day Saturday to Thursday. A locally recruited part time librarian runs the library against a monthly honorarium of Tk 650. Library users pay a small subscription fee depending on their occupation and economic position. A committee is formed from among the subscribers to provide guidelines and conduct routine affairs of the library. The average membership per union library under operation stands at 511, in Dec. 1997.

Totals	Dec '95	Dec '96	Dec '97
Libraries	30	70	175
Members	5811 (32% women)	40,059 (40% women)	89,465 (42% women)
Average Member per Library	194	572	511

Scholarship Program

Since monetary factors prevent several rural girls from continuing in the formal system, BRAC Scholarship Programme was formed in 194 to enable these students to continue in the secondary schools. Initially the programme was undertaken through the Catherine Lovell Memorial Fund and

Peter Thompson Memorial Fund. The candidates interested in receiving the awards should have the potential for successful completion of mid secondary school level (i.e. class VIII). The awardee should be a girl, but an exception to this rule may be made if a boy holds a record of outstanding class performance and his economic background meets the criteria for selection.

Under this programme the students received TK 60 per month, paid on a quarterly basis, for one year. It was then renewed every year for a total of three years if conditions for renewal were fulfilled.

Initial target was to bring 250 students under this programme and by December 1993, a total of 135 graduates (all girls) had been identified and thus far a total of 150 students have received this scholarship. However, this programme had to be discontinued since the government started a scholarship programme to enable rural girls to go to school, hence there was no need for BRAC to continue with this programme.

Nutrition Program

BRAC students are encouraged to use their knowledge of health and nutrition at home. In April 1994, BRAC introduced a home gardening project in NFPE and BEOC schools to inform children about healthy food which encourages the planting of such food and the consumption of these foods at home. Seeds of a variety of vegetables were distributed to children in class III of the NFPE and the BEOC schools. The first planting was done in April 1994 involving 243,527 children from BRAC schools. Based on lessons from the first season, the second planting began in October 1994, with seeds given to 55,570 students with more guidance from an agronomist and his team. The Programme Assistants were given a six day training in home gardening. The total production of vegetables from the second planting was 1,053,005 kg which is much better than the first harvest. From this, each student was able to bring enough vegetables home to enable their family to consume vegetables everyday and to sell some vegetables also.

However, it was difficult to sustain this programme due to unpredictable weather and hence uncertainty in the production of these vegetables. This programme had to be stopped. Instead, seed is now being provided via the *Kishori Pathagars*.

Adult Literacy Centers

To give the Education for All by the year 2000 , NFPE decided to explore the adults who are not literate. Given their enthusiasm in this regard, 3 adult literacy centers have been opened on a pilot basis three villages in Manikgonj in December 1995. During the same month another 12 centers were also opened, making it a total of 15 centers.

These centers have 25 learners each and a teacher. All the teachers have had the experience of running one cycle of BEOC/NFPE school. The adult learners come in for two hours a day, six days a week. They have a ten month long course with a total of 450 contact hours. The course includes two major curriculum area, namely, Bangla and Math.

There seems to be an immense and growing demand in the community for such adult centers. NFPE plans to not only provide basic literacy and numeracy but also complement the course with a two month long post literacy follow up activities on health, nutrition, legal and social issues. The follow up initiatives are basically intended to help them retain the learners' literacy skills. During Jan-March 1996, 36 more centers were opened, making the total number of centers at 51. All these centres have been opened in RDP areas and more than 50% of adult learners are RDP members. The materials, strategy and training needs are to be further explored and experimented.

The programme will be working with GoB from 1997 with 2625 centres. The future expansion of these centers depends on the willingness of the adults to attain literacy and the programme's future plans.

	Dec. 1995	Dec. 1996	Dec. 1997
Total Centers	15	63	2625
Total Learners:	375	1575	78,750
Male	97	191	16,140
Female	278		62,610

NFPE Graduates Complete Secondary Schooling

In 1994, NFPE graduates from the very first schools of 1985 completed their S.S.C. (secondary school certificate) examination. One of the students, Rashidul Islam Ratan, who secured a

first division, obtained Letter Marks (>80%). This would not have been possible of these children without the help of the BRAC school that came to their village more than ten years ago.

Education Support Programme (ESP)

To mobilize partnership for Non Formal Primary Education for the eradication of illiteracy from Bangladesh, BRAC undertook the Education Support Programme (ESP) in September 1991. Through the ESP programme, BRAC provides technical and conceptual support in addition to human skills to other NGOs to replicate BRAC's NFPE model successfully.

Goal of ESP

Before September 1991, attempts had been made by some NGOs to replicate NFPE model. Although no in depth study was made to measure the degree of success of these efforts, off hand observations showed that none of the NGOs involved could run schools over a full course period successfully as per NFPE standard operational procedures. This not only involved a waste of funds for the organizations concerned but meant a waste of time for BRAC who had invested much training and professional time into these ventures. Recognizing this and the need to eradicate illiteracy from Bangladesh, BRAC undertook the Education Support Program (ESP) in September 1991. Through ESP BRAC hopes to share its expertise in a) school organization b) teacher training c) staff training d) classroom management and instruction e) making the community participate in the program f) school supervision g) progress monitoring h) development of curriculum and materials with other organization.

Hence the goal of ESP is "to form partnership for non-formal primary education with organizations working in Bangladesh and to develop their technical, conceptual, and human skills to replicate BRAC's NFPE model successfully."

Objectives of ESP

The main objectives of ESP are to :

- form partnership for non formal primary education;

- develop partner organizations' skills to replicate BRAC's NFPE model;

- ensure women's participation in the implementation and management of primary education program;

- minimize wastage of time, and money in primary educational enterprises in Bangladesh;

- promote girls education; and

- support national efforts towards basic education for all.

Criteria for Selecting Partner NGOs

NGOs for implementation of the NFPE programme are selected under the following criteria :

a) the NGO must be registered under the Social Welfare Department or Society Registration ACT or Women's Affairs Bureau of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

b) ESP partner NGO should be small and local working in an union, a *thana* or a district.

c) ESP provides financial support to the NGOs which have little or no access to the donor agencies for funds. ESP does not provide financial support to large national or international NGO's.

d) To be an ESP partner the NGO must be motivated to accept the whole NFPE model.

e) To be an ESP partner the NGO must be secular and follow secular approach to development

d) To be an ESP partner the NGO must have some experience in development activities.

- e) Preference is given to women headed NGOs.
- f) The NFPE area proposed by the NGO should not be Dhaka city.

Criteria for selecting NFPE location/village

It is the responsibility of the partner NGOs to select their own NFPE locations. With ESP's financial support, in 1997 there were 270 partner NGOs administering 2022 schools in 58 districts of Bangladesh. The criteria that the partner NGOs usually follow are :

- Availability of potential teachers
- Availability of school accommodation
- Availability of eligible children
- Easy accessibility from project office
- Intra and inter-village communication
- Necessity felt by the villagers
- Closeness of the village to other feasible villages
- Existence of other program(s) in the area.

Implementation and Management of ESP Projects

ESP implements its projects through partner NGOs. The Program Manager of ESP is entrusted with the responsibilities of the projects within the present administrative structure of BRAC. A two day orientation program on NFPE is organized by ESP for the partner NGO heads before starting operations at the field level.

For the implementation and management of the NFPE program, each of the partner organizations has its own Program Organizers. These POs are responsible for all field level activities. Before starting operational activities, the POs of partner organizations are also provided a 4-day training on school organization. Selection of NFPE village, children selection, teacher selection, arrangement of school accommodation, organization of parents, organization and facilitation of teacher refresher courses, school supervision and other activities are performed by POs of partner NGOs. POs of partner NGOs are accountable to the respective supervisors of their own organizations. But they

submit weekly and monthly reports on the progress of project activities to ESP POs and to the Program Manager of ESP. ESP provides financial supports the partner NGOs in goods, services, and money.

NFPE-RDP Fit

The NFPE programme demonstrates a perfect fit with the Rural Development Programme's overall philosophy. NFPE believes that better educated children become better educated parents, who in turn seek better educated children. BRAC sees its education intervention as a programme, perfectly integrated and reinforcing all other programmes through its curriculum, through the employment and training of local women, through eliciting partnerships and participation of local individuals, families and communities in the schooling of children. As a direct intervention to eradicate illiteracy among the adults of tomorrow, the non formal primary education programme is active in most RDP catchment areas and forms one of RDP's major programme components. Given RDP's relatively wider geographical coverage, most NFPE programmes automatically reside within the RDP areas.

In the field level there are several areas where the two programmes interact. In doing the survey for children to recruit, the two programmes interact a lot in order to select the learners. Preference is given to the children of village organisation (VO) members, and the group members also help in locating and building the house of the one-room class room, thus getting a sense of ownership. Moreover, many VO members of the RDP programme invite the NFPE staff to open the schools which gives them a sense of leadership in owning the school and in participating in its operation, and maintenance. In this way community participation is enhanced.

Moreover, the RDP programme reinforces the issues discussed in NFPE, such as importance of education for girls, health issues, child marriage, and so. In the same way RDP issues are reinforced in the parent teacher meetings. Other school related problems are also discussed and solved here.

Moreover, during crisis periods like the fundamentalist problem in December 1994, it was the united action of the different programmes in

the field such as RDP, NFPE, HPP which together overcame the problem.

The programmes also interact at district level, with government heads in solving district or *thana* problems.

Finally apart from informal meetings, there are also formal meetings in the Head Office between the staff of the two programmes, in discussing issues, and in solving problems. Because of NFPE's integration within other BRAC programmes, specially RDP, NFPE appears to be administratively and programmatically fragmented (i.e. NFPE; NFPE under RDP, NFPE in HPP etc.) This is created largely because of the separate proposals and funding arrangements for the separate programmes. However, from 1996 onwards this artificial separation has no longer exist for all NFPE schools are under the Non Formal

BRAC Student Becomes BRAC Teacher

In 1992, one BRAC student could not continue her studies in the government school due to poverty. After studying up to class 8, joined BRAC school again but this time as a teacher.

NFPE Teachers elected into the Union Parishad 1996

As a result of the 1996 general elections 43 NFPE Teachers were elected as Union Parishad members.

This is an encouraging example of the role the rural women can play in their community.

Primary Education programme in NFPE Phase II.

It maybe noted that the target group of BRAC programmes is the poorest of the poor. However, many school houses were offered by non target members (on the acceptance of their houses) which tended to increase the number of non target students from better economic status in the class rooms. Once this was identified, some strict policies were taken to maintain the target group. In RDP areas, the school houses were to be obtained from the group members, thus ensuring their participation in non RDP areas too strict policies were passed to take the houses of the poorest people only. As a result of this policy, it was found that 89% of the houses were obtained from the target group.

Hard to Reach Schools start 1997

With funding from the Government and BRACs implementation expertise 105 centres were operated in 1997. These centres which are called the Hard - to-Reach centres will avail basic education to the working children between the ages of 8-14 years of Dhaka metropolitan city.

Training for Grades 4 and 5 starts 1997

In 1997 the NFPE programme expanded 1,000 schools into grades 4 and 5. For this reason the MDU unit carried out 9 batches of trainings involving the Area Managers and Team in Charges in Mathematics and English. This is a preparation for Phase III when the programme has plans to have a full primary cycle for the NFPE schools, grades to 4 and 5.

The other forums of interaction are-

- Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED)

: BRAC submits information for individual schools to PMED on quarterly basis and this is also submitted to the NGO Affairs Bureau.

- Directory of Non Formal Primary Education (DNFPE)

: This was known as INFPE or Integrated Non Formal Primary Education Program. BRAC has interacted in this forum by preparing modules and materials for training, by monitoring training modules, and has assisted in curriculum development.

- General Education Programme (GEP)

: This was a three year project, which started in 1992 (December). The project target was to open 1000 non formal primary schools in the villages for 8-10 year old children. The schools enrolled 30,000 children (70% girls) from the poorest rural families.

The GEP experience shows that the BRAC system is not indeed a parallel system and it confirms that BRAC complements the government in educating the masses.

Moreover, BRAC also provides education to almost a million learners, of which 70% are girls, hence the programme also helps all these girls attain their basic rights—education and in this regard also the programme helps the government in its effort for **Education For All**.

BGMEA-UNICEF-BRAC are also collaborating in providing education to the ex-garment workers in the urban areas as is noted earlier in this report.

BRAC staff also maintain bilateral relations with the government officials at the field level. Enrollment of learners to BRAC schools and transfer of BRAC graduates to government schools are all done in collaboration with local officials. Moreover, the BRAC learners participate in the sports and cultural programmes together with the formal school learners.

GO-NGO Collaboration in NFPE in BRAC

By providing Non Formal Primary Education to the out of school and out of reach students, BRAC provides a vital link to the formal schools. The government of Bangladesh has taken important steps to provide education facilities and increase capacity and enrollment. However, to increase capacity at the rate of increased enrollment would be a Herculean task, given the huge amount of investment that is required, and the limited amount of resources. This is where the non formal system education can act as a stop gap measure and provide education to those who cannot be covered by the formal system. The non formal system is flexible and simple and hence can be started anywhere there is a need. The non formal system holds the students for 3-4 years and then mainstreams them into the formal system thus allowing the government to focus on increasing space and capacity to fit them in.

Moreover, the bridge between the non formal and formal system can be formed through the curriculum as is exemplified by the BRAC schools. The non formal system can play an important role in providing tailor made education facilities, in terms of accessibility time or duration and even attraction for these learners. Hence, through the non formal primary education, BRAC has been able to promote the goals both at the macro and micro levels. Moreover, BRAC also uses the English book and the Religion book of the government, and participates in various meetings on curriculum with the government's National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB). The competencies as spelled out by the NCTB are also followed in curriculum design of BRAC books. Hence while it is innovative, the curriculum also acts as a bridge to the formal system.

QUALITY IN BRAC CLASSROOMS

" A year of schooling is not just a year of schooling. It can be anything from a delight to a torment, depending on the imagination and devotion as well as cognitive skills of the teacher. It can be anything from experience of growth and mastery to a stunting and confining time."

(Dore , 1976)

Quality has been the key criteria in BRAC classrooms. While quality is a debatable issue universally, and there are also debates about who decides issues of qualitative learning, nonetheless, NFPE programme has been investigating its own perception of "quality" inside the class room and has identified a range of indicators. Phase I has seen several changes in both class room behaviour, and the curriculum, which have been directed towards improving the quality of learning in the class room.

*** It is impressive to see how the children have their books and materials neatly organised. Each has a small bottle of water to help clean their slates, a bundle of coloured bamboo sticks and their books are carefully covered in paper or plastic. Children have also improvised holders for their slate "pen" and have extra mats neatly rolled up and attached to the wall. A high standard of neatness is maintained on the slates. In fact, the children were often writing more neatly on slates than on paper. Each child has a wood board which can act as a support for their exercise book. This and the solid nature of the slates allows children to vary their sitting posture when writing.**

W. Gibbs , Leeds University

Today after more than a decade, the question of quality has taken a new turn : field reports have shown that despite the effort to move away from the rote method of learning, there is a tendency of teachers to do just the same. As a result several new methods are being introduced to break out of this in each subject, and to allow more individual active learning to take place in the classroom. This has further called for curricular changes, in terms of content, presentation, and teaching methods-

which has been going on for the past few years. There has also been a most recent progress towards training. Below is a brief description of changes in both directions- different subject areas and training.

Training: another Major Initiative to Improve Classroom Teaching

A major initiative regarding quality was taken by MDU through designing and conducting training for Mathematics and English, in 1997. It was strongly felt that the innovative curriculum produced by the MDU together with the participatory teaching techniques designed for the classrooms would continue to prove to be unsuccessful if the training of staff/teachers continued to be too structured and methodical. Our major problem was - there are big gaps between the Unit that conceives ideas and produces materials with the assistance of expert consultants and experienced teachers (i.e. -the MDU), the trainers- who think and work in a secluded cluster with very little classroom experience or the knowledge of philosophies behind new and innovative materials (i.e. trainers of TARCs), and teachers who are told to follow teacher's guides and copy every teaching techniques and methods of trainers without understanding the necessity of these and also without having enough scope of developing/choosing their own techniques.

The gaps need to be closed. So MDU decided to take the problem areas- Mathematics and English and have started to try and improve the situation through reaching the group that is involved with conducting monthly refresher's training for the teachers.

Innovations in Developing Curriculum Continues

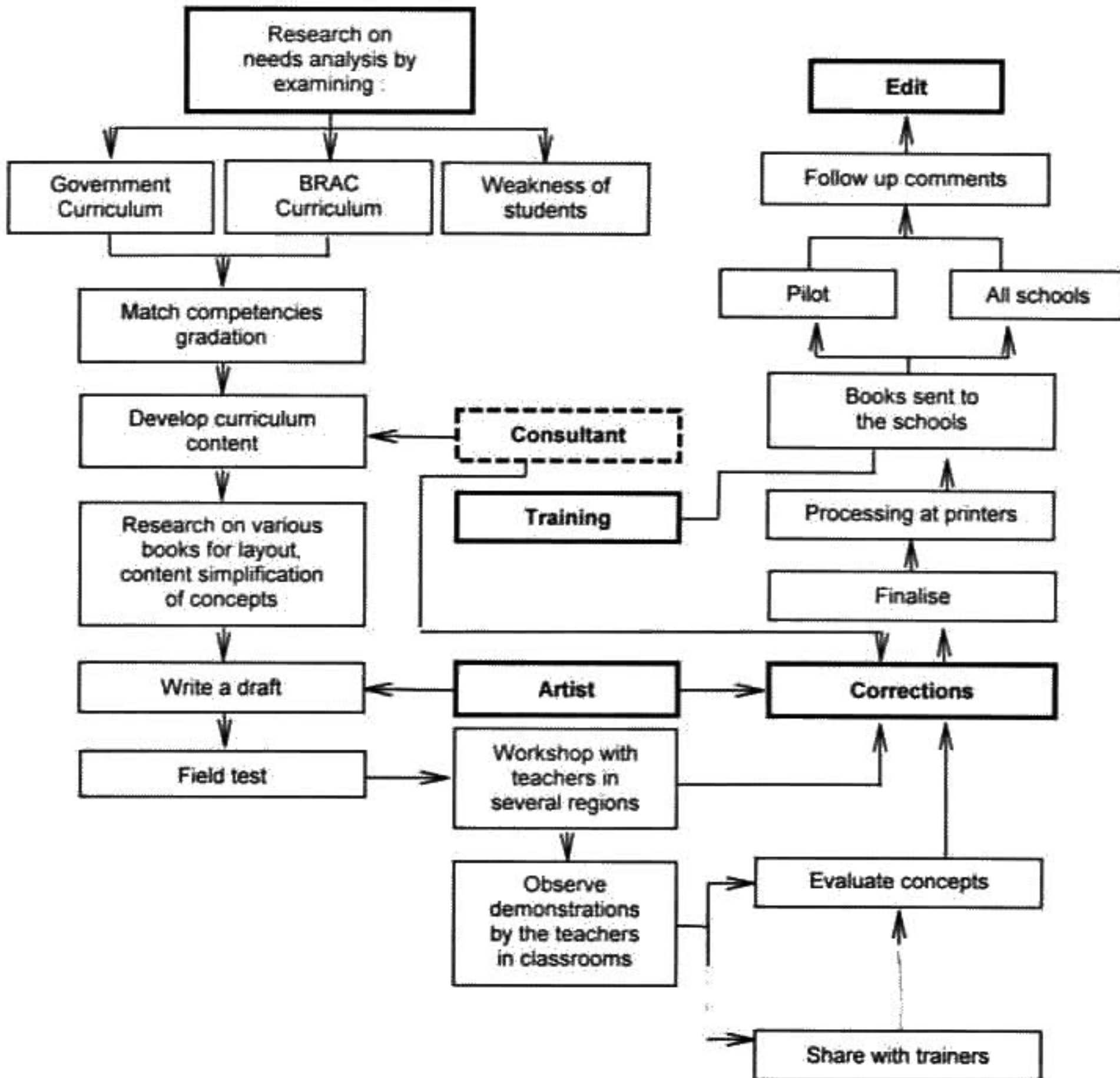
Apart from these, since 1994, the MDU had focused on the various methodologies of teaching and learning materials. These changes allowed the curriculum to be more interesting and participatory and helped increase the retention level of students. These allowed for more creative thinking and activity. Group reading, story books, cards, role plays, field trips, group discussions, dealing with open ended question - are some of

the changes made in language and social studies, and through maths.

The Material Development Unit follows a certain methodology in preparing the materials and curriculum based on analysing needs, consulting with books and educational experts, field testing,

receiving feed back at various levels, editing and finalising the materials. This process allows for inputs both at field level and level of experts. It further allows modification of new ideas to suit local needs and environment. This process is illustrated in the following pages.

Curriculum Development Process



Feedback Processes



Writing Skills

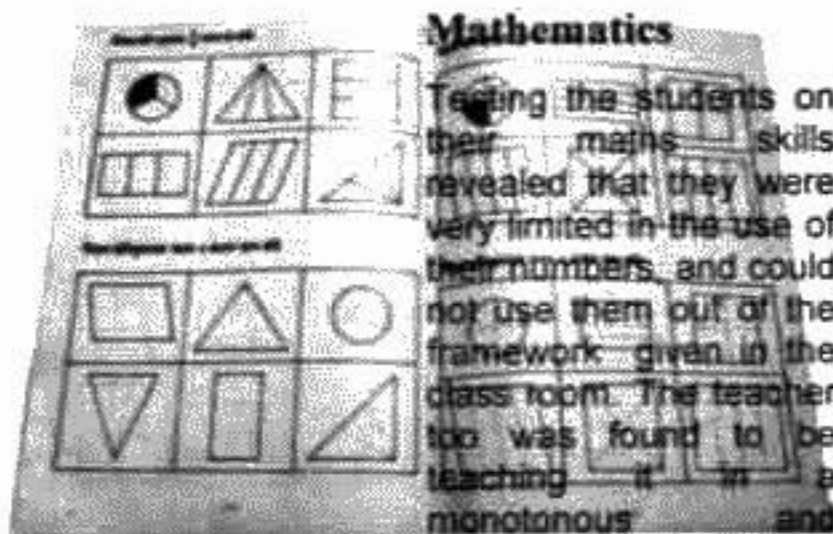
Monitoring reports showed that BRAC students needed to improve their writing skills. As a result *wall newspaper* was introduced in the class room in 1993. The wall newspaper is about writing on a given topic, with illustrations. This is not edited by the teacher, and the learners can be as imaginative as they want with total freedom. This idea proved effective and improved the imagination and creativity of the children. It entails students to draw pictures and write stories about them fortnightly.



Reading Skills

Group method of reading story books was introduced in 1993 in order to improve the reading skills. These supplementary reading packages not only help in breaking the monotony of a prescribed curriculum, but also in improving the atmosphere of teaching and learning. Children now enjoy more story books during the course of the year, reading nineteen story books, rather than only ten. Moreover, earlier, there was just one copy of each story book, and the teacher would read them out to the class. However, now with four copies of each, the children can read and discuss stories in small groups.

CHANGES IN NFPE CURRICULUM



Mathematics
Testing the students on their maths skills revealed that they were very limited in the use of their numbers and could not use them out of the framework given in the class room. The teacher too was found to be teaching it in a monotonous and

structured manner. As a result the Maths team formed new work books and manual in with the assistance of a consultant from Leeds University. These allowed more practice of the concepts, and also provided the teacher with more guidelines and ideas about each chapter. Pair work, group work, games and pictures also helped to make the subject more enjoyable.

The Maths Consultant found the "level of arithmetical competency of the NCTB text books (for government schools) very high". The new

curriculum hence tried to take advantage of the terrific opportunities this provides and to create activities that allow the children to use the basic numeric skills they have developed in challenging and creative ways. The maths activities of the new book, further attempt to exploit existing resources as imaginatively as possible. For example, the number cards have become the source of many class and pair work activities and the child's bundle of sticks is also being used for many shape, pattern and measuring activities.

The first set of guiding principles behind the new maths curriculum was to find out the areas where teachers felt they needed the most help, and to use teachers in testing the new ideas and to involve them wherever possible in the process of curriculum development. The second set of guiding principles was to simplify the learning sequence for children so that the steps in learning are graduated, to rationalise the mathematical content so that valuable mathematical processes and knowledge are given precedent.

Maths work-books for class-I were written and field tested in 1994 and disseminated in the schools in 1995 and the book for class-II was written and field tested in 1995 and was disseminated in 1996.

In 1997, Math year III workbook and teachers' manual have been revised, field tested and finalised. These will be published in 1998.

Social Studies

Since 1994, the material developers have been working on the new social studies curriculum which aims at making learning more active learning with a focus on life skills. The topics are also very much life oriented for our rural children. This is specially designed to help learners break away from their reliance on memorising. In the new curriculum each single activity requires thinking and analysing & transferring information from the stories told by the teacher, and each of the activities are single segments of a chain that ultimately lead to a conclusion. The activities will help develop various skills, such as researching, communicating, sharing information, analysing, problem solving, sequencing, categorising, decision making, drawing conclusions etc.

focus on gender : Social Studies has also included several of the Meena episodes that UNICEF has brought out to promote the girl child. It aims to sensitise young adults and sets a value system gradually which should allow the society to be more equally active, supportive, tolerant, intelligent and capable. The stories and

illustrations represent girls/women in positive roles and as equals against boys/men and aims to alter the gender biased mind set. Its holistic approach is designed to improve "the quality of life" rather than impart solely information.

In October 1996, the first set of books, which includes a textbook-plus-teacher's manual for the teacher, a 4 colour workbook for the students and 8 attractive *Shared Reading* picture story books for students were published. These books were introduced in schools which opened after Jan. 1997.

It was felt that a training video could enable the teachers to cope with the new method of teaching where the teacher's role is more like a facilitator and where she would need more organising skills. The interesting thing was, because of time constraint the entire video was made without any help of scripts, and the role played by the teacher was played by mostly teachers who were involved in the pilot project of the curriculum/texts. They

were familiar with the materials, but had no previous experience in "performing" in front of cameras. Considering the shortcomings, the end result was quite impressive. The training video proved to provide sufficient help to teachers as well as trainers.



In Dec. 1997 the Year II materials for social studies were published which includes a textbook with instruction for the teacher and a student's textbook which has some activity sheets. The 2nd year materials are designed to build up knowledge, awareness and skills of higher degrees from the basis of 1st year materials

Social Studies for Urban children

After the activity based, child friendly Social Studies materials were published- it was evident that the materials were not suitable for our urban children because they live in a totally different social set up. Keeping the urban, specially slum, scenario in mind- different topics were selected to address the need of this other group of children.

So another set of books- including an activity book for students and an information based story book for the teacher - were developed for Year I, in Sep. 1997. The 2^{ed} year materials are expected to follow in 1998.

Bangla

From February 1996, *concentrated language encounter (CLE)*, which is a Thai adaptation of an Australian language scheme, was introduced in the NFPE schools for teaching Bangla. 10 schools were initially identified in December 1995 for the CLE pilot which went on for a year. This method of teaching uses story books instead of/along with the regular text books or primers. Children learn alphabets, words, sentences etc. from the stories. Shared reading, games with flash cards, making big books, acting out stories are the major activities for language development under the CLE method. In February 1996 the selected teachers have gone through a two day training to orient them on this new method of teaching language. And in this connection books for shared reading have been developed and the teachers manual finalised during January to March 1996.

However, no more initiatives were taken in 1997 because the CLIP programme has been extensively experimenting with teaching language along with the other subjects and if it proves to be a success, NFPE plans to adopt the methods they use for the programme.

English through the Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) Programme

Research and interaction with the graduates in the formal schools showed that BRAC graduates entering formal schools are expected to have English language skills at least up to a level of class IV. Although government English curriculum is introduced in BRAC schools from the middle of class II (after 18 months in schools), most BRAC teachers are not sufficiently equipped to facilitate English language beyond the very preliminary stage of alphabet recognition; hence there is tendency to revert to rote methods of teaching the language. This does not enable children to experience and use the language adequately. Moreover, BRAC school teachers have limited years of schooling. They are not sufficiently familiar with the English language to be able to teach it as a second language. Given these factors, the Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) was seen as a possible solution.

IRI is a method which uses the radio to impart effective education which emphasises on active learning and meaningful interaction between the radio, the teacher and the students. BRAC believes that once introduced, this teaching method could strengthen the level of comprehension of the learners.

The work of IRI project began in November 1993, initially MDU designed it as a 20 month programme, consisting of 340 lessons. In March 1995, IRI commenced its second pilot project. In Nov/Dec '96, IRI saw itself extending its 3rd pilot project into 1,000 schools at the rural areas.

In Feb 1997, IRI was introduced in an additional 20 schools- among which 10 were in urban areas. During the period all relevant training took place, with necessary materials being distributed. This brought the total of IRI schools to 1,020. In March, NFPE took the decision to introduce IRI into 166 urban Year-II schools.

In March 1997, the programme introduced IRI into 17 Government schools. These 17 schools are situated in Gazipur, Manikganj, Moulvibazar and Dhaka areas. In this venture BRAC is to supply all necessary materials. Research has shown that the standard of IRI is a bit too high and 'urban' for our

target children who are mostly from rural areas. The Programme is now planning to revise the project to make it more as an aid to the government text.

CLIP (Chandina Learning Improvement Project)

Since 1997, NFPE, along with some qualitative improvements, focused mainly on the extension of its programme and planned to implement a pilot project that would aim to improve the qualitative aspects of the programme.

Known as CLIP, this project aims to improve both the students learning quality and the teacher's teaching quality. Its agenda is to work on the teaching methods, training of the teachers and trainers, classroom set-up, adding supplementary materials to the main text books, and any other aspects of the current NFPE schools that may contribute to the overall qualitative improvement, and the student's and the teacher's learning capacity. The long term objective of CLIP is to promote the students and the teachers as reflective practitioners and independent life-long learners, so that they can utilise their learning on a continuing basis. The short-term objective is to promote thinking, creativity and life skills, to accelerate and widen the areas of learning.

CLIP's first pilot programme commenced in 1997 with 100 grade-1 and 82 grade-2 schools located in three teams in Comilla region. In 1998 it plans to mainstream the project into 1,000 NFPE schools.

The CLIP Approach a. Effective use of peer-learning through small group and independent learning/assignment. b. Child-to-child interaction through student-centred activities. c. Develop an adequate Teacher Support System by teacher training, and by providing academic and administrative support to teachers by supervisors and developing a resource centre (to supply support materials). d. Develop Staff Training- Staff to regularly attend basic and refresher's training, maintain close interaction with the Core-group (Head Office team), attending workshops on pedagogy. The approach of CLIP is to develop teachers as facilitators rather than instructors. The training sessions are concentrate on small group activities and practical demonstration (blending of theory and practice).

The CLIP Curriculum The CLIP curriculum involves BRAC textbooks, Government books (NCTB), and supplementary materials on subjects

of Bengali, English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science. The Social Studies package consists of textbooks, a new area called *Nana Katha Nana Kaj* –based on general knowledge (covering geography, science, history and civic knowledge & practical skill based work) and field trips. In order to develop language skills, along with reading, special emphasis was given on creative writing.

CLIP Evaluation Structure: The CLIP evaluation is a blending of continuous assessment with standardised test. Teachers will carry out daily evaluation on every subject, with teachers, PO/PA and RT carrying out monthly oral and written tests. A half-yearly assessment is being carried out by RED. All CLIP schools are being supervised by PA/RT at least twice monthly during which they are required to fill up monitoring sheets and developing a report. The Head Office Core-group monitors the programme closely.

CLIP Achievements in 1997: The skill of reading, speaking, listening, writing has been increased in all subjects. Student's performance indicates that learners are now reading more fluently and that too at a much faster pace. Moreover, skills related to creative writing has been improved considerably. Children are able to write paragraphs on topics of their choice from grade-1. It has been observed that learners are also more confident in answering questions and oral presentations. Peer learning through small group activities has been institutionalised. Small group activities are integrated in all subject areas and preliminary observation indicates that students are learning faster through close interaction with their peers. Finally, the new design of refresher course provides opportunities to teachers to become more active and independent.

Religious Studies

In 1994, Religious Education was introduced in all class III schools. The reason for this introduction was that parents were interested in having their children learn about religion and that the government schools teach religion in their classes. Currently the government religious education books are being used in the BRAC schools.

Audio Visual Materials

Feedback from the field shows that the teachers are seen as the main vehicles of change. Hence several areas of training are being addressed to in order to disseminate changes more effectively. The use of videos in training has been one such of focus in order to improve the quality of teaching, since an effective method in learning is by visualising. Since 1994, the Audio Visual unit has assisted the NFPE programme in developing a set of training videos to increase the standard of the teacher and trainer's training. Already in use in the teacher training sessions, the videos are an aid to trainers and help them to demonstrate teaching-learning processes and how to facilitate a class. By using the video taped lessons, new teachers can see what a typical NFPE classroom situation is, and how a particular activity can be done. They also discuss the learning situation. This is particularly helpful in Social Studies where there are games and health activities and field trips that need special facilitation skills in the classroom and outside- from the teacher's part.

Audio tapes are also being used to assist NFPE to record the English Radio programmes, selected songs used in the schools and stories for the children.

The Material Development Unit is working with several consultants and with the trainers themselves to bring about more required changes in the teachers themselves.



CLIP Materials

Indicators of Quality

Apart from the above mentioned efforts to improve quality in the classrooms, the Programme has its own range of indicators to assess quality and these have been broadly categorised as follows:

Teaching Methods and Practices

1. Non Text book materials
2. Group/pair work takes place
3. Class begins and ends on time
4. Class routine is followed
5. Lessons have clear introduction and a conclusion
6. Teacher moves around in the class during lessons
7. 60% of the lesson time is child centred
8. Objective of each lesson is clearly achieved.

Teacher

1. Teacher is affectionately tactile with learners
2. Teacher knows every learner by name
3. Teacher responds to learners' problems individually.
4. Teacher sets class/home assignments regularly
5. Teacher knows all the objectives in the curriculum
6. Teacher checks pupils' work regularly and ensures correction
7. Teacher is regular and punctual.
8. Teacher has a lesson plan and follows it
9. Teacher regularly and accurately assesses learner progress
10. Teacher is clear about the objective of each lesson
11. Teacher interacts enthusiastically with learners

Learner

1. 85% learners attend school regularly
2. Children are curious to learn
3. Number of children replaced/drop out does not exceed 6%
4. More than 70% learners raise hands to respond in class
5. Learners' handwriting is clear and legible
6. Children support/correct each others responses
7. 90% learners attend school on time for the entire school day

Teaching Materials

1. Every learner has all the necessary learning materials free of cost
2. All exercise/text books are jacketed and in usable condition
3. The chalk board is used by both teacher and learners
4. Non textbook materials is used as appropriate

School Environment

1. Pupil work (wall newspaper, crafts etc.) is displayed in the class room
2. All displays are relevant and in good condition
3. Teacher/learners take pride in the school premises
4. Absence of a slick in the class room
5. School room is clean and well maintained
6. School room has adequate air and light

Community Participation

1. Children come to school neatly
2. Children come to school regularly and on time
3. 70% of the parents attend monthly parents meeting regularly
4. School room is maintained and is in good condition
5. Learners keep the school premises well maintained and clean
6. School space is rented from members of the community (only from RDP group members in RDP areas)

Other indicators of Quality

Moreover, the level of self esteem and confidence is one important out fall of the programme, and can be seen as an indicator of quality. This is best seen in the BRAC graduates who are now completing in the formal schools. They have chosen to follow this path through negotiation at the house hold level. The following are seen as the out falls of the programme:

Delayed Marriage

The three years spent in BRAC schools helped most of the girls delay their marriage and thus avoid child marriage. This may be due to the fact that schools "hold" them for a longer time, because parents realize the importance of education, or because the girls have learnt to negotiate with her parents. The latter seemed to be the case as can be seen from the following voices.

"I want to stand on my feet and marry later. Proposals come, but I have rejected them. My sister married early, and now she is not too well. If we don't have education, then we have to face difficulties. If we are educated, then even if we are married, then we can make certain decisions."

(Shethi Akhtar, class 11)

"If there were no BRAC schools, then I would be married off by now. My parent want me to get married now, but my brother has convinced them that girls should be educated."

(Josna class 11)

"Good education would lead to getting a good boy and thus good marriage."

(Asma class 10)

This illustrates that the girls have developed some level of empowerment "from within" (Moser, 1993) which encourages them to negotiate and make some important decisions about their own lives.

Continuation of Higher Education

Several of the BRAC graduates enter the formal schools and many are in the process of completing their high school. This is important, because before they were recruited in the BRAC schools, they were denied by their parents to join the government schools. After graduating from BRAC schools, it seemed more

like a natural progression to continue their education in the government schools. Hence though they still have to pay 'out of pocket' fees, it seems that they are now willing to pay this having appreciated the importance of education.

Multiplier effects on the family

The topics learnt in school are related to every day life such as cleanliness, habits, nutrition and health care. These, when taken home can have a multiplier effect on the whole family. As Monira (Class 11) said "I would go home and share something with my parents and siblings and I encouraged my parents to send them to school." Kalpana (Class 10) said, "I gave more importance to wearing sandals and cleaning my hands before eating. In health class we were told to brush and keep away flies. I live with my grand mother and work at home, so all this is quite useful to me". Meena (class 11), says, "I learnt to plant trees, wash my clothes regularly and keep my hair and nails clean. I also taught these things to my younger sister."

Vision

The young girls also learnt to visualise themselves as active members of society. Kusum (class 11) was quite sure that she would be a village lawyer for women to save them from the injustice they suffer in every day life.

Manners

Moreover, the community members o feel that BRAC students are well mannered and can be trusted. As one member mentioned "BRAC students are always very polite, and greet you with a salaam"

On the whole, the issue of quality in the BRAC class room could be further researched on. BRAC has been learning by doing, and this is true about the class room realities also. In fact the Research and Evaluation Division is being assisted by researchers from the University of Manchester for developing a framework for NFPE research. These informal talks with graduates showed that education not only taught them to read and write, but also opened the path to further studies. Apart from the skills they learnt, they established a sense of self esteem, and thus are able to face the rigors of every day challenges more positively. However, more research is needed in this direction. These voices throw some light on how the curriculum can affect the learners.

Gender Issues

There are four kinds of gender transformations going on through BRAC schools. Changes in the students that are either explicitly sought as part of a gender sensitive curriculum or through equally sensitive co-curricular activities, those changes taking place in women staff as a result of values within the BRAC organisation, those which are taking place among teachers by virtue of their new social roles, and those happening among mothers who come to parent's meetings."

Boeren et al., 1995

1. Curriculum

The curriculum is gender sensitive, and promotes equity in sex roles. The illustrations present women doing both work at home and outside, and similarly men helping in house hold chores. Moreover, the main characters are females in most of the stories. The curriculum also encourages skills in decision making, negotiations and communication.

2. Changes in Women Staff

The very fact that women are riding cycles (the PAs), and motor bikes (the POs) in the villages where women are supposed to stay at home and do house work is rather unconventional. While it has not been easy, these women have managed to break the norms and create a level of acceptability in their environment.

3. Women as Teachers

The married women teachers of BRAC are also making social changes in their own right. They report being easily recognised in their community and having people talk to them eagerly, and with respect. Moreover, earning their own income also gives them a sense of empowerment and independence.

4. Changes in Parents

Interacting with BRAC staff, especially the women staff has helped the parents of BRAC acquire a broader outlook even towards their own daughters. Moreover, seeing their daughters gain from the BRAC education has also helped them see their daughters in a different light, though many still want to get them married off as soon as possible.

5. Changes in Learners

Learning through the BRAC curriculum helps the young learners gain a new perspective to themselves in their society and hence play a new roles in the future. As seen from the above section, girls learn to break from the norms, and pursue higher studies after graduating from the BRAC schools.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The findings of a survey revealed that out of 91 learners a large number (n=24, 26%) want to do various types of Government and Non government jobs, while 21 learners (21%) want to be doctors and 16, i.e. 18% want to be teachers. Rest of the learners wanted to be Barristers, judges, Engineers in the future. Not only that, a few of them want to join the defense service. Moreover, a girl expressed that she wanted to teach her children by educating them herself.

The Research and Evaluation Division (RED) has the responsibilities for the dissemination of knowledge and needs for the entire organization. However, the research department included a unit on Educational Research very recently in order to throw some more light on the programme, and to evaluate it.

Aside from monitoring and evaluation, studies on schools and the outcomes of these studies can help to shape a programme. It is important to see the effects of schooling on the children, on their parents, and on the community. It provides a basis for making changes and planning of the next steps.

During the last few years, RED independently carried out several research studies for the NFPE programme in areas such as standardized test, the future of the BRAC graduates, families of these students, reasons for dropouts, and many more listed below. The findings from their research helped NFPE programme to assess its schools and the impact it is having on rural development, and the future of the children of Bangladesh.

The following are the research papers completed by RED beginning of Phase I till to-date.

List of Education Studies Completed by Research :

- 1996 A feasibility study on reusing text books in NFPE schools of BRAC.
- 1996 Exploring the status of BRAC Gonokendra Pathagar.
- 1996 Gender Equality in Education : What BRAC School Graduates Think.
- 1996 Knowledge and Practice of NFPE Adolescent Girl Graduates regarding Menstration .
- 1997 Participatory Development and BRAC
- 1997 Uniform in BRAC Schools : Why ?
- 1997 Baseline Survey on CLIP.
- 1997 A Survey on English Ability of the Government Primary School Children prior to Introduction to Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) Programme.

List of Outgoing Studies

- * A probe into status of Adult Literacy Centre
(an explorative study)
- * Exploring Reasons For NFPE Teacher's Dropout
- * Mainstream of NFPE Graduates
(joint study in collaboration with University of Manchester)
- * An Achievement Test of CLIP and Non-CLIP Learners.
- * An In-depth Study on the Classroom Culture of NFPE Schools.

Assessment of Basic Competencies (ABC)

The methodology for ABC has evolved through intense discussion with experts in education, social science and survey techniques . Field and pilot testing in each of these divisions and some urban areas were also carried out.

ABC has been carried out at several levels in BRAC schools. Two studies aiming to assess the level and pattern of basic competency of the children who graduated from the BRAC schools in 1995 and 1997 and to identify the socio economic determinants of this achievement have been conducted recently. Respondents satisfying all **four criteria of reading, writing, numeric and life skills were considered to have the minimum level of basic competency.** Graduates of three category of schools supported by BRAC viz., NFPE under RED, NFPE under ESP and BEOC under RDP were considered for this study, the data for which was collected within ten months of their completion. The modified instrument used in the 1993 national survey was used for this survey with a total of 42 items (questions). Apart from providing an aggregate estimate, the study also provided gender based estimates of competencies for the three school categories.



Young student demonstrates to class mates - how to make "Oral Saline"

It was found that on average, 73. 8% of the graduates satisfied all four criteria of basic competency. Among the graduates of the three school category, those of BEOC in RDP areas performed the best (76.4%) followed by the NFPE under ESP (75.2%) and NFPE in RDP areas (73.1%) the differences, however, were not statistically significant.

Although girls of all the three types of schools performed better than boys, this was not statistically significant. On average, 74.4% of the girls and 72.6% of the boys had basic competency. It was further found that respondents of socio economically better off households were more likely to have basic competency than those of poor households. Five socio economic factors which came out as the significant determinants of basic competency of the graduates of BRAC schools are age and current enrollment status of the graduates, fathers' education, cultivable land owned by households, and the graduates' exposure to television. Graduates currently in schools whose fathers had some schooling whose households have more

than 50 decimals of land and those having access to television were more likely to have basic competency than other groups.

NFPE Achievement Test (NAT)

How far the children in NFPE and KK schools achieve knowledge in different subjects were studied by a standardized achievement test NAT (NFPE Achievement Test). The test battery was developed on four subjects like Bangla, Social Studies, Mathematics and English based on NFPE curriculum and textbooks. The validity and reliability of the test battery was duly determined

and a norm was developed on a sample of about 500 NFPE students.

In December 1997, the test was administered to a group of 400 NFPE and 100 K.K schools (14,500 learners) within a month of their three year course is over. The sampled students were selected from all over the country by using a stratified random technique. The results of the achievement test is given in the following table.

Average achievement of Knowledge in NFPE and KK Students (combined) in Different Subjects.

Subject	Max. Score	Boy	Girl	Both Sex
Bangla	30	18.56	18.08	18.23
Social Studies	30	15.84	15.73	15.77
Maths	30	19.21	18.52	18.74
English	25	10.69	10.81	10.78
All Subjects	115	64.31	63.14	63.52

It is found from the table that around half of the children scored more than 50% marks in Bangla, Social Studies and English, while similar number of students obtained more than 66% mark in Mathematics.



A teacher training session being held in a Team Office

SHARING EXPERIENCES

Exposure of BRAC staff to new ideas is promoted by long and short term courses abroad, and via interaction with various consultants. Such exchanges has been useful in developing the staff and also in developing aspects of the programme such as, the development of training materials, relevant learning skills, and teaching methodology. However, it maybe noted that the NFPE staff adapt their learning to the needs of the local environment.

In early 1997, an eight member team consisting of Head office (MDU) and field level staff were sent to United Kingdom for a 5 month courses in management and curriculum development.

Then in late 1997, a second team of 10 members from NFPE and RED were sent to Rajasthan, India on training in Education and Research.

NFPE in other countries :

While comparative education experience does not necessarily transplant successfully from one cultural environment to another, visits to the programme by different delegates from different countries have often crystallised into adopted concepts of the NFPE Programme in various countries.

BRAC's Non Formal Primary Education Programme concept is now being replicated by many African countries. In Zambia, 43 primary schools, designed after the BRAC concept have already been set up under the Zambian Open Community (ZOC) school programme. Another 50 schools were opened in January 1998. Moreover, since the BRAC education concept is successful in reducing the cost of the primary schooling without affecting the quality, Save the Children USA has decided to adopt the BRAC approach for a new concept school in Mali called "The Village School". Such wide spread interest was generated following visits to BRAC schools by a number of delegates from the continent during the last couple of years.

In October 1994, UNICEF under its Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) in Nairobi invited BRAC to facilitate countries in Eastern and Southern Africa in their efforts to improve children's access to basic education, particularly girls. The process involved networking with UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and NGOs working prominently in the region. By December 1994, preliminary work had already begun in Uganda, where BRAC provided them with a strategy for planning and implementing non formal basic education.

Sierra Leone has opened a number of schools in 1993 adapting BRAC concept, where UNICEF has funded the programme.

Pakistan has shown keen interest in NFPE concept especially as it focuses on girl child's education.

In 1993, a number of community schools adapting BRAC concept and the programme were opened in Egypt under the financial assistance of UNICEF.

Not all countries have the same dimensions, hence some countries have benefited from learning about the NFPE Programme and not necessarily implementing it. China is such an example. Their interest in BRAC's NFPE was its replicability. Given China's huge population, they feel that their exposure to BRAC concepts would help them in designing their own model to reach the out of reach community. According to them, two thirds illiteracy means millions of people.

Visitors From Abroad to see BRAC schools :

The BRAC schools received many foreign visitors like different high Government officials from Britain, Japan, Vietnam, Canada, India, France, Pakistan, United States of America, the Netherlands, Myanmar, Nepal, Britain, Iraq, China, Sudan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan etc. Hilary Clinton in April 1995 and John Major in January 1997 also visited BRAC's NFPE schools.

Not only does this expose other countries to BRAC's NFPE concept, but BRAC also learns about educational innovations and developments in other countries which is equally beneficial.

LESSONS LEARNT

Lessons Learnt In Phase One

Some important lessons were learnt in the last few years, which will help to direct future plans. These are :

- An important focus of the programme is **quality** at all levels.
- Important lesson learnt in the past years is that supervision requires some teaching experience, and understanding towards the class room situation. Hence, teachers who have finished a cycle are now eligible to become Resource Teachers, and thus supervise a cluster of schools near their homes. This allows both as an opportunity for career development for the teacher, and as a new perspective in the supervisory system within the programme. Resource teachers can also provide valuable input to trainers, and are an important level for contributing to and disseminating new items in the curriculum through Refresher training.
- It is also realized that Refresher training is a suitable area for improving the skills of teachers and helping them in acquiring additional skills which they themselves can generate via discussion, and learning from each other.
- It is felt that trainers need to spend some time in the classrooms as well. Though most of the trainers have field experience, contact with the schools is still quite important in order to keep in touch with the realities of the class room. Space needs to be created for this. Moreover, training needs to be more participatory.
- New teachers will find it helpful to observe some schools before they participate in Basic Training.
- High attendance of children can be maintained if children can be kept interested in the learning that takes place inside the class room.
- Parents are willing to send their children, especially girls, to school and they are willing

to get involve in school affairs. 80% of the parents regularly attend parent-teacher meetings.

- Continuous refresher training for teachers and regular school inspection are key factors for success of the schools.
- Some level of testing is necessary in the system to allow for comparison with students in the formal system, and to assess the basic competencies of the BRAC learners. ABC and NAT are such tests. As a result, this has been introduced in the urban schools.
- More reading materials like story books encourage and reinforce learning. From research findings it became clear that BEOC graduates who had completed 2 years of schools stood at risk of forgetting how to read and write unless their new literacy skills could be supported. Hence BRAC decided to open rural libraries for female BEOC graduates as well as extend the school calendar year by 12 months.

Gender Issues

- It has been learnt that given the gender-neutral curriculum, girls have learnt to get a new perspective of seeing their position in the society. Moreover, boys in the class too learn to respect this position of girls, where they are respected and seen as equals. Hence the curriculum does play an important role in improving the gender atmosphere for girls.
- It has also been found that teachers who otherwise would have been house wives, have benefited a lot from working as teachers, both monetarily and socially. They are now more empowered in that they have some income of their own, and also are more respected in the society.

Other Lessons learnt

- During 1994 it became obvious that most parents regarded the inclusion of religious education in the schools as essential. NFPE decided to add religious education in the third year of some selected schools in 1994. From 1995, all children received a text book on religious education corresponding to the student's respective religious faith.
- Most slums are non permanent, and under constant threat of eviction from land owners or by law. Incidents such as fire, toll collection by local "muscle" groups and unnotified evictions are not uncommon. BRAC schools operating in slums have not been an exception from this. School rooms have been used after school hours by local boys for unsocial gambling, drinking and has even been vandalized as a consequence of local brawls between rival political youth clubs. Under these circumstances, BRAC felt that, shifting the schools to "safety" of rented premises on the slum fringes was necessary so that the schools could operate undisturbed.
- It has also been realized that during times of crisis such as the *fundamentalist problem* during 1993, the concerted efforts of all the programme along with the community was important in overcoming the problem. In fact during this time, it was also the participation of the religious leaders themselves who collaborated with the BRAC staff in solving the problem.

- In the case of *GO-NGO collaboration*, it has been found that projects such as GEP has illustrated that BRAC in fact complements the government, in its efforts in EFA and UPE.

• Union Libray : Trust Formation

For smooth and efficient functioning a Trust board was incorporated into the Union Library structure. This Trust board has the power to develop and administer any rules and regulations necessary but can not take any decisions that can hamper the functioning of the Library. The trust board has 5 but not more than 11 members. While looking towards the future BRAC has initiated a programme within the library which can make it sustainable. For which reason the community members are initially asked to raise funds of about TK. 50 thousand after which BRAC adds another TK. 50 thousand. Like wise over a period of time the Union library is to have a total of TK 2 lakh for it to be sustainable when BRAC is no more operational within that community.



A drama being performed by adolescent girls

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

NFPE Evaluation and BRAC's Responses

An evaluation of NFPE was done in October 1995 by a team comprising of Nelly Stromquist, Adrian Boeren and Abu Hamid Latif to assess the performance and potential of NFPE programme as a whole. Some concerns were raised which were in unison with NFPE's own findings and experience, and recommendations made for those areas for further qualitative improvement of NFPE.

• *On Monitoring*

The team appreciated NFPE's *monitoring procedures* as it enables the programme to detect its shortcomings and problems quickly and to respond to them immediately. The Programme has been very efficient in monitoring the quantitative indicators and should emphasise on the qualitative aspects of the school program and address pedagogical needs of the teachers. The team also felt that there should be regular independent external monitoring.

• *On Gender*

"Regarding Program functioning - NFPE was found to be doing exceedingly well in terms of serving young girls and fostering social changes in young and adult women. The increasing ability by women to have access to education and to play occupational and professional roles with greater status in society are by no means to be minimised in the context of cultural and religious norms that impose values that are strongly asymmetrical along gender lines."

"The married women teachers of BRAC are also making social changes in their own right. They report being easily recognised in their community and having people talk to them eagerly. While they earn little, they report satisfaction along several lines: being involved in the process of teaching others, leaving the house and getting an independent income, being able to visit the town

once month for the refresher course but also having an opportunity then to do some shopping. Several of the teachers interviewed reported to have control over their income. They often share it with their husbands and family but feel free also to expend it for their own wishes. In a few cases, they are saving it for greater investments in the future."

• *On Quality*

"The curriculum program of NFPE offers appealing elements in terms of the learning environment and pedagogical content. The classes have diverse activities, a good mix of passive and active work, and the children have access to textbooks that carry pleasant illustrations and stories with substantial messages about equity, productivity and respect for others.

Since, quality of education is to be a prime focus of NFPE in the phase II, the programme has already picked up the issue in terms of monitoring, supervision, teaching learning process, classroom management and organisation and the like. Resource teachers who excel in teaching and have run at least one cycle of BRAC school are being identified. They will be facilitating the monthly teachers refreshers with the school supervisors and will be responsible for a cluster of school nearby to their home. These teachers will work alongside the new teachers in co-teaching some of the subject areas taught in the schools, with lesson planning, advice on classroom management and organisation, monitoring etc. The appointment of the resource teacher focus on teacher development as well as to bring forth qualitative improvement to the programme.

Responding to the team's suggestion on hiring local consultants to accelerate the development process, NFPE wishes to add that from time to time the programme has been hiring local illustrators, story writers, audio-video producers (with particular reference to the Interactive Radio Project). Researchers have also been engaged

during 1995 to improve cost, quality and time efficiency of tasks.

Although the programme policy is to enroll at least 70% girls. But in areas where a second or third cycle of school has already been completed and there are still adequate number of interested learners, this policy may be flexed to accommodate more boys. NFPE has already responded on this need based issue, on top of the teams comment on flexibility of learner ratio in a classroom.

In relation to student drop-out, a child may be replaced by other unserved children from the neighborhood during the first three months of schooling. The initial two months of school is the preparatory phase where a child basically is introduced to school norms and is exposed to pre-writing, pre-reading activities and exercises as well as pre-numeric skills. Any child remaining absent from school after the third month is categorized as a 'dropout' and NFPE prepares a final list of students.

- Since NFPE will concentrate on qualitative improvement in phase II, it plans to take up a lot of evaluative and research studies to assess the effectiveness of various programme components as well as focus on more qualitative issues like learner performance, teaching learning process and other cognitive skills. NFPE also plans to take up action research in the area of learning improvement and in the process develop its in-house research capabilities at all levels. The action research also aims at promoting creativity, thinking and skills of pupils and help them develop more effectively as independent life long learners and develop teachers as reflective practitioners.

• **On Expansion...**

"The project has been well managed with regard to the implementation of the school expansion programme."

• **On Financial Issues...**

"The Budget and Accounts Department should improve the transparency in calculating unit cost and the presentation of expenditures. It is possible to create a more visible relationship between unit cost and expenditures."

BRAC's response: Calculating the total programme expenditure in terms of individual school unit cost may not be quite a practical and feasible task. The learners' books and supplies are procured, printed and stocked in advance. There are other programme costs too which incur either in advance or at different points in time, for example, the teacher training, the deployment of the school supervisors, survey etc. Hence all these costs incur in an aggregate.

The Budget and accounts section is in the process of developing a form which will be sent randomly to selective areas and team offices. These forms aims at collecting actual school unit costs of a particular area. This will help see differences in school unit cost and be more of a control mechanism for expenditure.

• **On Research.....**

"To make it possible for better quantitative and qualitative investigations to take place with in BRAC, greater steps should be taken to promote the training of young researchers both in country and abroad.."

BRAC's Response : BRAC has always encouraged researchers to avail of trainings both nationally and internationally. Recently BRAC has been particularly encouraging researchers to study in the different areas of Education. Moreover, the new action research project (CLIP) aims at involving the managers, the school supervisors, the trainers and all in collecting, collating and analyzing information and with the help of RED researchers carry out a base line survey.. The process of establishing the resource center in the process aims to build up the research capacity of the NFPE personnel.

Future Planning

The NFPE programme has successfully achieved its target and completed phase I in March 1996 with a total 34,175 schools including 19,000 schools operated from the NFPE expansion (phase I) fund, 15000 schools operated from RDP funds and 175 schools from funds of the BRAC's Health and Population Division. The NFPE programme of BRAC has commenced its second phase beginning April 1996 and spanning 3 years will complete on March 1999. During this phase

only those schools which will be closed will reopen to keep the number of schools operating constantly at 34,000 in a year.

The 15,000 schools funded by RDP in the earlier phase merged with the 19,000 schools operated under the NFPE expansion fund, thereby taking the total number of schools to be operated under phase II to 34,000 From April 1996. The rest 175 schools (for adolescent girls only) funded by the HPD programme in phase I will continue to be funded by the same programme in phase II.

Phase I has been primarily a period of expansion for NFPE and in phase II the programme intends to concentrate on stabilizing the horizontal consolidation of its expansion in terms of qualitative improvement. Taking into account the experiences and the lessons learnt over the past 10 years, and given the scale of issues yet to be addressed, the NFPE programme envisions a wider role for itself during April 1996- March 1999. The programme aims to achieve the goal of Government's Education for All targets through increasing the access to an improved quality of education. Reflecting on its goal and purpose the programme plans to continue operating non formal schools to mainstream the children who have been left out of the system. Only those children are enlisted into the BRAC schools who come from poor families and have either never attended school or have dropped out from the formal school. In its second phase NFPE also intends to

concentrate on improving the quality of education delivered through the BRAC schools by revising and improvising its curriculum, teaching learning materials and teacher development.

BRAC also believes that strengthening its own capacity is also crucial to bring about qualitative changes to the programme. From its past experience BRAC has learnt from experience that continuing education is very important to sustain the newly found literacy skills of all learners, both children and adults. Hence in the next phase NFPE programme plans to explore new ways to deliver continuing education as well as to expand the existing components. In Phase II NFPE propose to operate 4,000 school libraries, 300 Union libraries and form 2,000 reading circles. In addition, BRAC feels more coordinated and collective effort of all providers of both formal and non-formal education is critical to bring about substantive changes and improvement in the area of basic education. During Phase II NFPE also aims to forge effective alliances with the government and other non government organizations to share the lessons learned for an improved level of understanding and coordination amongst one another.



Parents regularly attend school meetings

Project wise Donor List :

Name of Project	Donor's Name
1. NFPE Phase - II (34,000 schools)	UNICEF, KFW (Germany), DGIS (Netherlands), NOVIB (Netherlands), DFID (U.K), AKF/CIDA (Canada), EC.
2. Family Planing Facilitation Programme (175 schools).	Pathfinder International (US AID)
3. Education for Under Aged Garment Workers (250 Schools).	UNICEF
4. Adult Education (2,595 Schools).	Government of Bangladesh
5. Hard to Reach (105 Schools)	Government of Bangladesh

ANNEXURE

Annexure 1. Number of Schools & Students from 1993 to 1997

Year	Schools opened	Enrollment	Total schools	Total students
1993	12795	419043	20388	647550
1994	9611	311175	28274	906867
1995	10822	348530	35175	1137767
1996	5946	188310	34395	1112471
1997	12547	402896	34334	1103378

Annexure 2. BRAC Graduates & the percentage entering Government Schools (1993 to 1997)

Year	No of completed schools	No of Graduates			Course completion rate of students (%)			% of Graduates Entering Govt. schools			Dropout rates before the course completion		
		NFPE	BEOC	Total	NFPE	BEOC	Total	NFPE	BEOC	Total	NFPE	BEOC	Total
1993	3515	44027	56183	100210	97.9	88.7	92.5	93.6	52.5	71.0	2.1	11.3	7.5
1994	1725	26445	22369	48814	97.7	90.3	94.1	93.2	61.6	78.7	2.3	9.7	5.9
1995	3921	87877	22386	110263	96.0	85.7	93.7	94.5	72.2	90.0	4.0	14.3	6.3
1996	6726	164327	35908	200235	94.9	88.8	93.7	92.0	75.5	89.0	5.1	11.2	6.3
1997	12608	317736	63769	381505	93.8	86.9	92.6	93.6	82.1	91.7	6.2	13.1	7.4

Annexure 3. Number of staff attending NFPE staff training from 1993 to 1997

Type of staff training	Total staff trained				
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
12 day Inservice for PO/PA	661	1413	3163	383	345
3 day Pre-service PO/PA	1035	225	0		221
12day Operation Management Course OMC-1 for PO/PA	865	193	258	398	669
12 day training of trainers of PO/PA	404	326	208	255	625
12 day Development Course for AM's & TIC	161	14	0	100	0
GQAL	26	38	0	6	1435
6 day Training of Trainers for PA	141				
12day operation Management Course OMC-2 for Team Incharge					166

Annexure 4. Number of teachers attending training & refreshers during 1993 to 1997

Type of staff training	Total staff trained				
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
12/15 days Basic teachers training*	12071	9889	9681	6306	8645
3 days orientation	14050	9580	9931	7764	12197
2 day refreshers after preparatory phase	12242	10050	10011	6907	11884
2 day refreshers for Introducing social studies	7031	9093	10202	6530	11972
4 day refreshers at the end of first year/phase	6657	15846	0	0	0
3 day refreshers at the end of second year/phase	3360	6306	0	0	0
12 day training at the end of third year/phase	0	763	0	0	0
1 day refresher at the beginning of every month	135671	216224	298190	306511	308347
6 day refreshers at the end of first year/phase	0	0	8106	14688	10240
6 day refreshers at the end of second year/phase	0	0	12825	10450	12430
4 day refreshers at the end of third year/phase	0	0	0	4091	3802

* Including ESP funded teachers training.

ACRONYMS

AEM	-	Area Education Manager
BEOC	-	Basic Education for Older Children
BRAC	-	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CLE	-	Concentrated Language Encounter
CLIP	-	Chandina Learning Improvement Project
KK	-	Kishor Kishore
MDU	-	Material Development Unit
MT	-	Master Trainer
NCTB	-	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NFPE	-	Non Formal Primary Education
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organisation
OMC	-	Operational Management Course
PA	-	Programme Assistant
PO	-	Programme Organiser
RDP	-	Rural Development Programme
RED	-	Research and Evaluation Division
RM	-	Regional Manager
IRI	-	Interactive Radio Instruction
TARC	-	Training and Resource Centre
TIC	-	Team in Charge
QM	-	Quality Manager