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1996

Proposal by BRAC and World Learning for a Pre-Primary School Project in Response to the USAID/Bangladesh APS for Basic Education Activities

BRAC is joined by World Learning, a US-based international NGO, to submit the present proposal in response to the Annual Programme Statement for USAID/Bangladesh's Basic Education Activities. For 17 years, the BRAC Education Programme (BEP) has been a major national partner in the development and delivery of quality basic education programmes to under-served communities, providing a model that has been adopted successfully in many developing countries around the world. In Bangladesh, through its most famous programme, BRAC operates over 30,000 Nonformal Primary Education schools, providing nearly 1 million children with a four-year programme that covers the government's five-year primary curriculum. BRAC's impact is expanded by its financial and technical support to (currently) 368 other local NGOs that implement 2,505 schools for more than 75,000 children (mostly girls). World Learning is a current partner of USAID in several countries, operating in the areas of education, women's leadership, civil society, democracy and governance and training. In education, World Learning projects focus on community participation, girls, teacher training, bilingual education and pre-primary education. World Learning has a long-standing Global Partnership with BRAC to deliver undergraduate and graduate training in development and NGO management studies.

The aim of the current proposal is to raise the efficiency of Bangladesh's primary school system by introducing a pre-school grade in 3,000 government schools over a three-year period. As William Fowler (1980) has written, "Children do not learn by chance, they develop according to the practice of the world in which they live¹." The world into which a child is born is an informal organization, comprised mainly of her/his family. The transition to the formal organization of the school subjects the child to unfamiliar, challenging and sometimes conflictive expectations and conditions. This situation pertains equally to the social aspects – students confined to a single classroom, and even seat, for hours under the direction of a single adult – as to the cognitive and academic requirements for successful performance. The shock of this situation is especially severe for the common rural Bangladeshi child who has no pre-literacy opportunities and little to no experience with formal institutions. Research shows that in Bangladesh children from disadvantaged social classes are characterized by a 'lack of vocabulary,'² poor verbal skills and undeveloped concepts of numbers and quantitative relations. As a result, these children tend to be penalized as they begin their school experience as the formal education system assumes (at least implicitly, but still strongly) that children arrive with at least a basic notion of the printed word and numbers. So, many of these children don't survive even the first year of school. For those who do survive (either academically or because of their parents, and their, persistence), the deficits they experience in mastering their lessons in the first year as they become familiar with the social and academic conditions of the school tend to accumulate over subsequent years. This leaves the child further and further behind in her/his studies, exacerbating the system's problems with repetition and failures.

¹ William Fowler, *Infant and Childcare: A Guide to Education in Group Setting*, Allyn & Bacon, 1980.

² Abu Hamid Latif, *Upamasthunik O Smej Sishu*, Bangla Academy, 1988.

Key Objectives

As is evident from this analysis, rural children especially need a 'bridge' for smooth transition from home to school. Where the child's family is unable to ensure such a bridge, whether due to limited resources, knowledge or even time, a formal pre-primary education is a great option. With trained instructors and basic materials, this experience provides the child both an effective socialization to the classroom environment and a crucial orientation to the affective and cognitive skills that will be necessary for a print and number-based education. More specifically, the following list presents the main objectives of the proposed pre-primary education initiative:

- ❖ create opportunities for a child to discover the world beyond her/his family;
- ❖ stimulate the child's excitement towards school and learning;
- ❖ accelerate the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child to be ready for a classroom-based instructional experience;
- ❖ prepare a child for learning to read and write by providing pre-literacy skills;
- ❖ introduce quantitative concepts and number signs to the child; and
- ❖ create institutional structures – with qualified personnel, appropriate materials, suitable support structures – to deliver an effective, low-cost pre-primary education programme that can be adopted by schools or communities across the country.

More broadly, the introduction of pre-primary instruction will afford a chance to share basic cognitive development knowledge, skills and even materials more widely for mothers and fathers to apply with their infants and toddlers. Further, within the context of rural and poor communities of Bangladesh, the creation of pre-primary education programmes offers a new category of employment for educated adolescents and young adults, particularly females. Indeed, the aim of greater women's empowerment is a secondary aim of the proposed initiative, with adolescent women' playing a key role in project implementation as teachers and supervisors. The main reasons to involve adolescent women are:

- ❖ encourage participation of adolescent women in the workforce;
- ❖ promote child-to-child activities through adolescent teachers;
- ❖ delay marriage for adolescent women by providing them with livelihood opportunities; and
- ❖ provide opportunities to adolescent women for vertical professional mobility.

Therefore, the proposed project will seek opportunity to adolescent women as potential leaders of their communities. The project will develop an infrastructure of adolescent women as teachers / supervisors. Education and empowerment will be encouraged in order to initiate the process of promoting women leaders in the society.

Expected Results

The results of the proposed activity will both reside at the project-specific level and at the level of the national education system. At the project level, BRAC and World Learning propose to facilitate the initiation and sustainable operation of up to 3000 pre-primary classes, each affiliated with at least one official government primary school (Because pre-primary school will be established according to the demand of individual GoB run primary schools, more than 1 pre primary school may be located to prepare children for a primary school). This will require the recruitment and training of at least 6,000 adolescent women as pre-school teachers and the availability of teaching/learning materials of suitable quality and quantity for all classrooms. In each participating community, BRAC and World Learning will also present the pre-school programme – its organization, content and purpose – to the broader community. The project will provide leadership training to supervisors and teacher trainers in order to facilitate a process of developing women leadership in the society. BRAC and World Learning will use this experience to define a low-cost model – with guide and materials – that may be adopted more broadly by other NGO and government programmes.

The creation of these classrooms will also require the elaboration of a management system that can combine government administration and support (technical and financial) with, as appropriate, community involvement and support. Towards this end, the proposed project will undertake an exhaustive effort to monitor, document and disseminate the pre-school experience. BRAC and World Learning will generate and share empirical findings from the project to help the Government of Bangladesh and its donor and NGO partners both appreciate the value of a pre-school education and perceive clear strategies to extend the model at a “scaled-up” level. This will entail equally technical, financial, management, policy and other practical dimensions of an education systems approach.

Project Strategy

The context of pre-primary education in Bangladesh traces officially to 1952 when the Akram Khan report prescribed that “There should be certain place for pre-primary education in this country’s education system, and this sector should be gradually developed through proper planning.”³ After, all education commissions of the country also gave priority to pre-primary education. But the first true initiative did not occur until 1987-88⁴ when UNICEF established a group of experimental pre-schools in ‘Valuka’ of Mymensing District for which they also developed a pre-primary curriculum and materials. The materials were “student-friendly” and effective for young learners, but the project didn’t survive due to lack of funds. The Government first decided officially to establish a pre-primary education programme in 1999. In very few schools a new grade was formed, named ‘*Choto one*,’ meaning “small one.” NCTB (National Text Book and Curriculum Board) supported this initiative by developing materials for use in the classrooms, in particular a colorful, picture-filled book called ‘*Dekhashona*.’ In the nonformal

³ Government of Pakistan, Education Commission Report, Ministry of Education, 1952.

⁴ Abu Hamid Latif, *Bangladesher Upamusthanik Shiksha*, Self, 2001.

education sector, DNFE (Directorate of Non-Formal Education) has taken the first initiative to run a pre-primary education initiative under its Integrated Nonformal Education Programme.

BRAC launched its pre-primary school programme in 1997, which it still executes successfully but on a small scale. Previously known as "Baby Class," BRAC's pre-primary class has been one of BEP's most interesting interventions. Positive results from the pilot phase encouraged BEP to expand to 1,434 pre-primary classes with an enrollment of 36,549 learners. This class has been established for up to 25-30 young learners, 60% of whom must be girls, aged 5-6 years old. The programme lasts a full 12 months and is led by two *Kishori* (adolescent) teachers, with an average age of 15 years. BRAC provides these pre-primary teachers three days of training before the start of the school year. In addition, each teacher receives a guidebook with detailed instructions for the preparation and conduct of classroom activities. Every month, all teachers attend a half-day refresher course where past and anticipated problems (and solutions) are discussed in a collaborative forum. Each classroom receives a set of pictorial workbooks for the introduction of Bangla, Science and Maths for children, and all teachers have a teacher's guide and supplementary materials, all of these materials are developed by BRAC. BRAC pre-primary schools aim to prepare students for entry into the mainstream formal primary education system, not into BRAC's (or others') nonformal primary education (NFPE) schools.

This is the model that BRAC proposes to extend with support from USAID/Bangladesh through the APS Basic Education Initiative. As indicated above, the purpose of the proposed BRAC/World Learning project is not simply to proliferate the model to 3,000 more schools and communities. Rather, it is perhaps even more so to demonstrate the model's value, relevance and suitability for system-wide adoption by government and NGO partners to help the government attain its official education efficiency and quality aims. For this reason, this next, USAID-supported phase of BEP's pre-primary education program will highlight three new dimensions: (i) introduction of the model in new areas of the country; (ii) the active involvement of new partners – government and NGO – in this expanded dissemination; and (iii) greater integration of the initiative with other social sector dimensions, efforts and objectives, including professional / leadership development of adolescent women and the community participation element.

The specific operational elements of the proposed pre-primary schools initiative follow:

Target area: The project will have a national scope, targeting all areas of the country where BRAC has activities. A key criterion in site selection will be the existence of a government primary school with which the pre-school activity can link up formally. BRAC agents and partners will announce the initiative, with participation guidelines, to schools, their community structures and primary education officials nationwide to invite from them an expression of interest to participate.

Adolescent Teacher: The project will recruit for each pre-school two adolescent women who have completed their formal schooling up to at least Grade VIII. Both teachers should come from the community. Serving as teacher will both provide a valuable employment opportunity to

the young women and offer an opportunity for their own professional development. For the teachers incentive schemes will be provided for them to appear for the Secondary School Certificate (Completion of 10 years of schooling) and Higher Secondary Certificate (Completion of 12 years of schooling) examinations. It should be mentioned that teachers with exceptional leadership ability will be encouraged to become teacher trainers. Teachers will be encouraged to become supervisors after qualifying the S.S.C. successfully.

Teacher Training: The project will provide both initial and monthly refresher training to the teachers, which will include opportunities for the pre-school teachers to interact among themselves and with their primary school counterparts to reflect upon and improve their practice. Before a teacher begins her pre-school teaching career, she will receive from the project 15 days of orientation and training on basic child development, pre-primary teaching methodology and other academic and classroom management matters. At different intervals during and after the academic year, the project will provide additional training opportunities, focusing especially on topics that emerge from teachers' self-assessment through the facilitated reflection activities

Curriculum: The pre-school program will emphasize a *pedagogy of play* to prepare students to be able to read and write the Bengali alphabet and numbers and to count and manipulate numbers through games by the time they enter the first grade. The students will also learn to read and write simple words and develop a love of books and learning. Their vocabulary will be extended to include the days of the week, months and a wide variety of nouns, taught through picture books. Children will become familiar with the tools of learning – pencils, chalk, crayons, paper, slates, books, ... – and more broadly with the formal skills of learning from a teacher, in a group and individually. Finally, students will learn the basics of hygiene, their environments, health and nutrition, and other personal, family and community-related knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Materials: The project will provide to each teacher and student books for Maths, Bangla and Science that have been designed specifically for use in BRAC pre-primary schools. Slates and other materials will be also provided to each student. All teachers will receive a guidebook to assist with classroom teaching. This will provide detailed activity instructions in addition to strategies for creating and using local resources to augment classroom learning materials. Teachers will also receive interesting storybooks to share with the classroom, written as well to support the BRAC pre-primary curriculum.

Supervision: All of BRAC's education programmes benefit from close supervision. To supervise the pre-primary schools, the project will appoint one BRAC graduate who has passed the SSC. Any pre-primary school/teacher with the same qualification will also be considered for this post. They will be appointed as project staff and assigned to pre-schools at a ratio of one supervisor to 6-8 pre-school classrooms. It may be mentioned in this context that adolescent supervisors will be provided with incentives to delay their marriage and to continue with their education up to higher secondary. The entire employment scheme will be designed to encourage adolescent women to study and work part time. They will receive additional leave for examinations. Training related to leadership and value education will be provided in order to create a cadre of women social leaders in individual communities. In turn, these supervisors will be administered and supported by a BRAC Regional Programme Organizer and will receive

regular technical support and up-grading BEP management. They will also be principal beneficiaries of any training provided through the project by outside experts and will serve as outreach agents of the project, along with the Regional Programme Organizers, to government education and other partners.

Local Participation: The Bangladesh Education Commission Report of the Government of Bangladesh declared in 1974 that, "Considering the local need in primary schools, pre-primary classes could be established with financial and managerial help of the local community." BRAC embraces this policy and will apply it in the proposed project, as it has successfully done in its broader education programmes. Financially, the project will expect local communities to contribute at least 14.2% of the total costs of operating its pre-primary school with cash contributions. In addition, also borrowing from a highly successful BRAC participatory model, the local community will play an active, decisive role in the supervision of the pre-primary class programme primarily by involving parents in the management of the schools. BRAC and World Learning will assist communities to fulfill this function with formal orientation and training, regular monitoring and support and the provision of written guidelines and ideas for operation and activities.

Advocacy: BRAC and World Learning will invite government, NGOs and other partners, as appropriate, to participate in strengthening infrastructure from pre primary to primary schooling as both beneficiaries and contributors. Outside, international partners (likely, Children's Resources International) may also be enlisted as appropriate to bring further technical expertise to strengthen the BEP pre-school model and abilities of its implementing agents and partners. BRAC and World Learning will seek opportunities to strengthen the 'women leadership component'. Finally, the project will investigate with local education officials and individual schools opportunities to share some of this pedagogical training with the teachers in the associated primary schools.

Operational Mechanism: BRAC will undertake mobilization effort in order to identify the demand related to the primary schools run by the GoB for all 3,000 schools/communities, which will be added incrementally over the life of the project. Next, for the selected communities, the project will conduct (with the school and a community committee, as possible) a student survey within selected catchment areas. Based on the findings project staff, the teacher and supervisor will be selected from local community, encouraging strong community participation in this choice. The supervisor will visit each school at least once a week during the first year (and less frequently in the second year), contacting and supporting both the teachers in their classrooms. Communities will be encouraged to actively participate in running the school. This will be facilitated by holding parent forums every month.

Target Population and Region

The project will work predominantly in the rural areas of the country, but BRAC and World Learning will be open to opportunities to launch pre-school classrooms in urban areas as well. In all cases, however, the focus of efforts will be on poor, under-served populations. As stated above, BRAC currently operates in virtually all regions of the country, and the project will offer

to officials and schools across these regions the opportunity to participate. While the primary factors in deciding where to initiate activities will be the willingness and demonstrated commitment of the local primary school, officials and community, it will also be necessary to consider the logistical burden of supporting 3000 pre-schools. For this reason, pre-schools will be grouped to maximize coverage by the supervisors and Regional Programme Organizers.

Illustrative Timeline

With the bulk of the administrative structures for project implementation already in place within BRAC, mobilization to initiate the project will be quick. Assuming the project award happens early enough, the timeline for start-up should allow for the first group of pre-school classrooms to start with the new school year. Over this period, BRAC and World Learning will undertake the following major actions, repeated each subsequent year for the remaining pre-schools:

1. solicit interest (and applications) from schools/communities to participate;
2. organize teacher and supervisor recruitment and conduct orientation and training;
3. close interaction with GoB run primary schools (and local officials), establish pre-primary classroom infrastructure; and
4. distribute materials and initiate pre-school classes.
5. provide leadership training to adolescent teacher trainers/ supervisors in order to create a network of women leaders.

Organizational Partners

BRAC will take the technical and delivery lead on the project, serving as the lead grant recipient. World Learning will contribute especially in helping to establish and implement a monitoring and evaluation programme and in facilitating a process by BRAC and the government (along with other partners, as relevant – e.g., NGOs and university programs) to analyze, document and disseminate the project experience and outcomes. This will include internal and public forums to share results and to define opportunities for broader diffusion and policy measures. As appropriate, US-based technical partners will furnish advanced expertise. BRAC and World Learning will seek to engage local education officials and different local NGO partners to broaden the diffusion prospects for the model. As opportunities arise, BRAC will enlist some of its other traditional partners both to receive and deliver training and to participate in reviewing the experience and in advocating for further action. The Government of Bangladesh and USAID will play an important role in identifying such opportunities.

Indicators of Successful Results

BRAC and World Learning will institute a monitoring and evaluation programme that assesses achievement of the following key results: (i) a nurturing, student-centred learning environment with effective use of materials; (ii) effective pre-school management by young women of the

community (iii) a collegial association between the pre-school and affiliated primary school(s) and education officials; (iv) successful performance of pre-school "graduates" in primary grades one and two; and (v) Professional/ leadership development of adolescent women of the community. The M&E programme will combine external assessment methods with self-assessment to analyze the experience and contribute to documentation and, more importantly, reflection by the many partners on ways to improve and, as appropriate, extend the model.

Cost-share contributions

A major portion of cost-share contributions will come from the local communities. This will include both the cash, material and direct labor inputs generated through the 14.2% minimum match requirement and other contributions associated with organization and management activities. Parents will contribute a monthly token fee of Tk. 10 and Tk. 20 at the beginning of the year for materials and admission respectively. Exemptions will be made for children from the poorest households. BRAC and World Learning expect to attract resources from other donors that will both strengthen the work of the project in the proposed 3,000 pre-school classrooms and fund its expansion into even more communities.

Estimated Budget

The estimated budget of this proposed proposal is enclosed in Annexure 1.

The project at a glance

- Purpose:** Increase retention in GoB run primary school by establishing pre primary schools in the primary school catchment area.
- Geographical coverage:** Nation wide
- Target population:** 5-6 years old pre school going children of whom 60% will be girls.
- Teachers:** Two adolescent teachers in each school
- Duration of course:** One year (January to December)
- Curriculum:** The pre-primary school curriculum includes Bengali, Maths and Science.
- Supervision:** 6-8 pre schools to be supervised by each adolescent supervisors
- Community involvement:** Schoolhouse will be provided by the community on rent , a token fee of Tk. 10 per child per month accompanied with Tk. 20 at the time of admission.
- Social Development Feature:** Effort will be made to delay the marriage of adolescent teachers, supervisors. Moreover adolescent women who are teacher trainers and supervisors will be provided with leadership training to create social leaders in the community
- Cost:** US \$ 11 per child per year
- Other Partners:** Government of Bangladesh, World Learning

Institutional Experience Summary

Project Name	Funding Amount Dates	Description
BRAC Education Programme (BRAC)		
NFPE(from gradeI-III)	1985	This innovative approach was first introduced in Bangladesh as a supplementary primary education programme.
BEOC	1987	To Provide with a second chance of education for the 11-14 years old children(2 years duration)
Facilitation Assistance Programme on Education(FAPE)	1988	To assist the Government Primary Education to prevent drop outs, integrate the community people in primary education, to motivate the teachers etc.
Urban nonformal primary education programme	1991	Established NFPE schools in urban slums of the capital
Education Support Programme(ESP),	1992	BRAC started funding other NGOs to replicate NFPE models
Kishori pathagar(Reading centres),	1992	BRAC started establishing reading centres for BEOC course completed adolescent women for continuing their education
Union Library	1995	BRAC established Union library(micro libraries) under Continuing Education Programme.
Adult Learning Centres	1995	BRAC started establishing adult learning centres to provide functional literacy for adult illiterates with GoB funding.
School for Garments' Child Labour	1996	To reduce child labour in garment sector BRAC started some special schools funded by the ILO, GoB and UNICEF.
Upgrade NFPE from 3 years schooling to 4 years	1997	NFPE curriculum was extended to grades IV & V within 4 years of schooling
Hard to Reach	1997	BRAC started to run some special schools in collaboration with the GoB for children engaged in labor
Govt. Community Schools	1998	BRAC was allocated dysfunctional community schools by the GoB to make them operational BRAC is now operating these schools with participation from the community.
Pre-primary schools	1997	BRAC experimented with pre-primary schools near formal primary schools.
Ethnic minority project	1999	To provide equal opportunity in primary education for children of ethnic minority origin.
Formal Laboratory Schools	1998	BRAC established 11 formal primary schools on an experimental basis for transfer of methodologies from non formal to formal
Adolescent Peer Organized Network(APON)	2000	To provide life skill and livelihood education for the adolescent women
Primary Initiatives in Mainstreaming Education(PRIME)	2001	Initiative to strengthen linkages with GoB in the primary education sector.

Project Name	Funding Amount	Dates	Description
World Learning			
Guatemala Access to Bilingual Intercultural Education (USAID)	\$6.8 M	1999-2003	Create, implement and help establish sustainability for bilingual intercultural primary education with initiatives in the areas of teacher training, materials development, community participation, early childhood development, policy and women's leadership.
Cambodia Quality Improvement Grants to School Clusters (World Bank)	\$120,000	1998-1999	Provide technical assistance to Cambodia's Government of Bangladesh, Sports and Youth to design, pilot, and refine a system of grants that support community-based education initiatives in 65 schools organized into 10 clusters in Takeo Province.
Uganda Community Action to Support Education (private)	\$660,000	1998-2004	Employ an integrated package of grants, training, and technical assistance to enable nascent and emerging education NGOs to implement innovative education-related programs and grow as implementing partners of the government in pursuit of UPE.
Community School Activities Program (USAID)	\$5.6 M & \$8.25 M	1996-2001 & 2002-2007	Strengthen structures, capacity and policy for decentralized school management by helping to create and training School Management Committees (SMC) to define, plan and implement school quality and equity needs, with a small grants component. Help strengthen government structures to collaborate with SMCs.
Guatemala Girls' Education Activity (USAID)	\$900,000	1996-2001	Support community, school, government and private sector structures to identify, plan, implement and monitor joint and separate actions to support directly girls' primary school completion.
Education Assistance to Burmese Refugees (USAID)	\$3 M	1999-2002	Support curriculum, teacher training, materials and community dimensions of refugee primary education delivery (as a sub-partner), and to help prepare teachers to return to Burma.
Angola Female Literacy Center (private)	\$300,000	1999-2002	Provide basic education and vocational training to teenage girls saved from the streets of the capital, and provide them with basic shelter and social orientation.
Ethiopia Popular Participation in Curriculum and Instruction (private)	\$169,000	2000-2002	Pair local experts with teachers to develop and deliver lessons and texts on topics selected by the community for introduction in the primary classroom. Train teachers to incorporate local lessons into their delivery of the conventional curriculum.

BRAC EDUCATION PROGRAMME
PRE PRIMARY SCHOOL
SUMMARY BUDGET FOR 3000 SCHOOL

	Year -1 Taka	Year -2 Taka	Year -3 Taka	Total Taka	% of Total
A. School cost	59,286,000	59,286,000	59,286,000	177,858,000	83.74%
B. GOB Linkages	1,400,000	1,400,000	14,000,000	4,200,000	1.98%
C. Research, evaluation and monitoring	620,860	620,860	620,860	1,862,580	0.88%
D. Management and Support Services expenses	6,068,600	6,068,600	6,068,600	18,205,800	8.57%
Total Cost	67,375,460	67,375,460	67,375,460	202,126,380	95.16%
D. Inflation Cost	0	3,368,773	6,905,985	10,274,758	4.84%
Total Project Cost	67,375,460	70,744,233	74,281,445	212,401,138	100.00%
	In Taka				
	In US \$				
F. Project Income	10,080,000	10,080,000	10,080,000	30,240,000	14.24%
	Taka				
	In US \$				
Net Requirement	57,295,460	60,664,233	64,201,445	182,161,138	85.76%
Net Requirement	1,005,184	1,005,184	1,005,184	3,015,551	
	In Taka				
	In US \$				
Total cost per children per year in Taka	637				
Total cost per children per year in US \$	11				

Current Exchange Rate US \$ 1 = Taka 57
(5 % devaluation of Taka against dollar in each Year)

Existing Donors

1. Donor Consortium for BRAC Education Programme under NFPE-III
Comprises of DFID (UK), CIDA (Canada), Aga Khan Foundation, European Union, Royal Netherlands Embassy, UNICEF, NOVIB
2. Other donors
 - UNICEF, for adolescent development programme
 - ILO, for reducing child labour in the cigarette sector
 - UNICEF, for IT dissemination through union libraries