

# **Public Service Delivery in Education: the BRAC Experience**

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**Salehuddin Ahmed** *PhD*  
Deputy Executive Director, BRAC

**Samir R Nath** *MSc*  
Senior Research Fellow, Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC

## **BRAC**

BRAC Centre, 75 Mohakhali Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh  
Phone: 880-2-9881265, 8824180 Fax: 880-2-8823542, 8823614  
Email: salehuddin.a@brac.net, Website: www.brac.net

### **Abstract**

BRAC, a non-governmental development organisation in Bangladesh, has been working for the socio-economic advancement of the poor, especially the women and children. It has long experience in providing basic public health services, enhancing income earning activities, and extending education. Complementary to the State initiatives, alternative public service delivery systems became relevant in many countries. This paper explores BRAC experiences in providing basic and primary educational services to the poorer section of the community. Starting with a functional literacy programme for the adult people how BRAC turned into a quality primary education provider for the children and adolescents was explored in this article. Activities on other components like continuing education, adolescent development and secondary education are also discussed. It also showed how BRAC's countrywide network, research, monitoring, accounts and audit departments – which in general are not considered as educational activities – played important roles in making the education programme grounded and expanded. Lessons learn from this experience are also summarized.

## **Introduction**

The issue here is about public service delivery. More precisely, delivering public services in the area of education. Before going to the issue in detail, it is important to know what actually the words collectively mean. By definition, public services are the services delivered by the public for the public. In this case the issue of discussion is educational services provided by the public and for the public.

There may have a general idea that services provided by the government to its people are the public services. However, such notion has changed over the period. The problem with public services mostly lies not in their intent but in the quality and efficient delivery (Canadian Heritage Alliance, undated). In most of the cases such quality and efficiency is severely impaired by the inhabitant bureaucracies, incompetent administration, political unwillingness, heavy corruption and less or no accountability of the responsible parties. Inadequate monitoring and supervision are also contributing factors in it. Today people are recognising that the public sector has no monopoly of good public services, and that on the right terms private (including NGOs) and philanthropic sectors may join hands with it (Kemp 2000). People are also recognising that delivery of good public services has essentially been linked with value for money, service for citizens, transparency, and accountability. However, these come through different ways depending on the services we are dealing with. Otherwise, it is not in any way a case of one size fits all. The private companies, which are different in nature, provides services to the public, but ultimately answerable only to their shareholders, not the public directly.

In this article we would like to introduce you how primary education is being made available to the public through their participation and making the arrangement accountable to them. This article is based on BRAC (formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) experience in Bangladesh. In doing so we would, firstly, like to say about the country itself, the world education situation and education in Bangladesh. This would help the readers to have some background of the case. Secondly, we are going to show how BRAC education programme was evolved and spread throughout the country as a provider of quality primary education. Finally, some information on impact of the programme was added.

## **Bangladesh: the Context**

Bangladesh is a small and densely populated South Asian country with rich culture and traditions. During colonial period this part of India was under British rule, which became independent in 1971 through a long and bloody struggle against the then Pakistan. It is located on the Bay of Bengal, bordered by India and Myanmar. The country has only 147,570 square kilometres of land and nearly 130 millions of population. Although there are people with different religious beliefs the Muslims counted for about 88.3 percent (BBS 1995). Various types of ethnic minorities are there in the country, some of which have their own languages, however the national language Bangla is spoken by over 98 percent of the people. A quarter of all population lives in urban areas (BBS 2001).



The general socio-economic situation of the country is not very satisfactory. However, in some sectors it improved a lot since independence. The proportion of population living below the poverty line improved from 71 percent in 1971 to 43 percent in recent past. The adult literacy rate has also increased from 23.8 percent to 41.6 percent between 1981 and 2000 (BANBEIS 2000, Chowdhury *et al* 2002). The country, in general, can be characterised by pervasive poverty, a rural based economy, high levels of under and unemployment, rapid population growth, frequently occurring natural disasters, high illiteracy- especially among women, a high degree of rural-urban disparity, and a lower status of girls and women. According to Human Development Index (HDI), Bangladesh ranks 145th among 173 countries in the globe and according to Human Poverty Index (HPI) it ranks 73rd among 90 countries (UNDP 2002). Bangladesh is committed, with the international community, to attain developmental goals and targets fixed in various global conferences.

Bangladesh has a flourishing non-governmental organisation (NGO) community with some of the most vibrant, successful and innovative organisations in the world. Some of their programmes, for instance oral rehydration teaching, micro-finance and non-formal primary education, have been replicated in a number of developing countries. Works of these NGOs mainly focus on socio-economic advancement of women in the society. In spite of poverty alleviation and fighting against illiteracy, the NGOs contribute in building civil society movements on different developmental issues.

### **BRAC: the Organisation**

BRAC, formerly known as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, is a national private development organisation established in 1972. The activities started during the War of Independence of Bangladesh aiming to help the freedom fighters in the country and to generate global sympathy towards the struggle for independence. After the Liberation War, BRAC was initiated as a relief organisation to provide reinforcement and assistance to resettle refugees returning from India. At that time the activities were concentrated in two remote rural areas only. The work mainly was to assist people with construction materials e.g., bamboos and corrugated sheets, in order to build houses. Such an initiative was taken because most of the houses in the areas were burned during the war. However, the organisers had a keen observation on the process of relief activities and its socio-economic dynamics in the lives of the people. It was learnt from the people and BRAC's work that the recipients of the relief activities were so poor and needy that they were unable to keep those housing materials to themselves. They were seen selling those at low prices to the local elites, because the people were hungry for food grains and the elites took the advantages to exploit them. Distribution of foods and other livelihood materials could not be continued due to unavailability of proper environment for its sustainability. It was also learned that free distribution of materials does not ensure its proper use. Through the process it was learned that women were the most vulnerable section in Bangladeshi society; reaching of any relief material to a household does not ensure its equal sharing to the women living in the same household. All these



observations and learning geared BRAC to turn from relief organisation to a sustainable institution with a broader perspective of human development. BRAC being a learning organisation takes full advantage of its interaction with the people especially women in developing its interventions. That is why its programmes became more down to earth, practical, and acceptable to the people and thus more effective.

BRAC today is an established, comprehensive and multifaceted development organisation working all over the country. Alleviation of poverty and empowerment of the poor are its major objectives. It promotes income generation for the poor, mostly landless rural women, through micro-finance, health, education and human resource development programmes. Training for the participants and research on their livelihoods are two integral parts of BRAC activities. BRAC recognises that poverty is a complex syndrome that must be attacked through a holistic approach, and innovative interventions are important in the process. Up to the end of 2002, 3.65 million poor landless people (99.5% of whom are women) were organised into more than 113 thousand village organisations (BRAC 2001, 2002). These groups serve as forums and collectively address key structural impediments to their development. There are some support enterprises earning of which is used in development activities. The annual expenditure of BRAC has been increased from US\$ 64 million in 1994 to US\$ 166 million in 2002. Although BRAC was fully dependent on donor funding during its inception, it is becoming more and more self-sustained over the period. In 2002, only 18 percent of total costs came from donor community. BRAC's contribution to GDP of Bangladesh was counted as 1.15 percent (Mallik 1998).

### **Education from Global Perspective**

The importance of education in human development is not a new discovery. From classical economists to recent writers on economic development fully recognised that education is critical for economic and social development (Smith 1776; Marshall 1890; Becker 1993; Sen *et al* 1995 cited in Haq and Haq 1998)). Education is the key for building human capabilities and for opening opportunities. It stimulates and empowers people to participate meaningfully in their own development.

With the above knowledge of the global community, the world is still facing a large number of populations who have never been to any educational institutions. In 2000, more than 880 million adults around the world were illiterate, and more than 113 million children were out of schools at the primary level, 60 percent of whom were girls (UNESCO 2000). The crisis is more in the developing world. Majority of the world's illiterates live in these countries, of which 395 million in the South Asian region (Haq and Haq 1998). The out of school children in South Asia consists of about two fifths of such children in the globe.

The last two global conferences on education held respectively in Jomtien (1990) and in Dakar (2000) brought the world leaders in a forum and reaffirmed their commitment to basic education for all. It was reported that despite the constraints, some progress have



been made during the decade of 1990's. The adult literacy rate went up from 64 percent in 1990 to 76 percent in 1997 (UNDP 1999). The net enrolment rate reached at over 80 percent in the developing region and gender disparities declining. Even then many countries could not achieve the targets of the Jomtien conference within the given timeframe, and so Education for All is still a dream. The last conference, which was held in Dakar, Senegal has set new targets for the nations to be achieved by the year 2015AD. The goals of Dakar conference include: ensuring early childhood care, equitable access to participation in school and life skills programmes, improve adult literacy situation, improving quality of education, and especial care for disadvantage groups and ethnic minorities. The challenge for the nations is not to postpone it again.

### **Education Provision in Bangladesh**

Education arena in Bangladesh is not so developed. The country went through various phases of education from British rule to Pakistani regime and finally Bangladeshi system, which includes not only the methods but also medium of instruction and governance. At present, the system is divided into four levels – primary (grades 1 to 5), secondary (grades 6 to 10), higher secondary (grades 11 to 12), and tertiary. Alongside the national education system English medium education is also provided by some private enterprises. There is also madrasa education system which emphasis education with Islamic thoughts.

Like many other countries in the globe Bangladesh could not meet the targets set in the Jomtien conference. However, it made slow progress in some of the aspects of education. For instance about 80 percent of the primary school aged children are currently enrolled in schools, of which three quarters complete the full cycle of primary education (five years) (Chowdhury *et al* 2002). Gender parity has been achieved in these regards. The attendance rate still did not exceed 60 percent. Quality of teachers is questionable. Thus, the biggest challenge remains with achieving quality education. A recent research showed that the students do not learn much through the existing education provision in the country. Only 1.6 percent of the primary cycle completers achieved all the cognitive competencies expected from them (Nath and Chowdhury 2001). Teaching learning process needs to be revised in order to get better results. Considering the current enrolment rate and the completion rate in mind it can be said that over 40 percent of the eligible children do not complete the five-year cycle of primary education. The adult literacy rate was 23.8 percent in 1981, which increased to 35.3 percent in 1991 and to 41.6 percent in 2000 (BBS 1984, 1995; Chowdhury *et al* 2002).

Although the State is the main provider of primary education in Bangladesh with about two thirds of the students enrolled in State run schools, there are other initiatives too. Eleven types of schools are providing primary education in the country, indicating an acceptance of a pluralist culture in education. Such a provision could create a culture of peer learning among the sub-systems, however not much was translated into practice. The non-government organisations play a significant role in providing quality education through non-formal primary schools, but their size is small thus impacts little in the

overall national context. The NGO schools cover only 7.1 percent of the total enrollees at primary level. Besides the primary education provision in the country there are many small and large-scale initiatives for spreading literacy skills among the population. These include local initiatives by social organisations, literacy centres of the national NGOs and non-formal centres under the government Directorate of Non-formal Education (DNFE).

The situation at secondary level is also not so good. A major dropout occurs during the transition of students from primary to secondary schools. It was observed that only a quarter of the examinees could pass in the public exams held at the end of secondary cycle. One major difference between primary and secondary education provisions is that the State governs most of the primary schools and the private bodies the secondary schools.

### **The BRAC Education Programme**

BRAC's initiatives for the educational development could not be separated from its other development activities. BRAC believes that education is a key to any sustainable human development process. Thus, interlink between everyday life of the learners and education provision is a must. How BRAC evolved a community based effective school programme through working with the grassroots and learning from them is described in the following paragraphs.

#### ***Starting with functional literacy***

The educational activities of BRAC was started with functional literacy programme in mid 1970's when BRAC observed that without having minimum literacy skills people were not able to take the advantages of income generating activities, health and other social services. So, a number of literacy centres were started in different areas of the country, especially where its development programmes were spread. The basis of the curriculum for the programme and the contents of the textbooks were set in light of the day-to-day needs of the people for whom the programme was designed. However, previous experiences in the country and the neighbouring countries were also consulted. Mostly all participants at that time were served under the literacy programme. Doing literacy works with the rural poor people BRAC learned two lessons:

- Firstly, education can be provided if it is made accessible at the door steps of the un-accessible.
- Secondly, people do learn more and better if it is matched with the needs of everyday life.

It can be remembered that the adult literacy rate was only 24 percent at that time and the females were much behind the males.

#### ***Experimental schools for children***

A major shift occurred in the programme when rural mothers, who were also participants of BRAC development programmes and were attending in the functional literacy classes, questioned that "..... but what about our children, will they have to wait till they are 18 to join your schools?" It was in 1984, BRAC started to think about school programme



for the young children. BRAC from experience and research observed the following through a closer look at the then primary schooling system:

- Schools are situated far from the poorer communities, it is difficult for the young children to cross such distances everyday and so they do not enrol there, especially the girls.
- Teaching learning system was set in such a way that it needed extra help and guidance at home. As the parents in poor communities were not able to do so and they did not have financial ability to keep private tutor, they got a feeling that these schools were not for their children.
- Classrooms were crowded and the teaching learning atmosphere was not child-centred, so the learners lost their interest to continue in schools within a short period. The dropout rate was so high.
- Due to need for child labour in households it was not possible for the parents to allow their children to attend classes at a fixed time during all the seasons. This caused discontinuation of the learners from the schools.
- Girls did not enrol in schools as much as the boys did.

With the above learning, in 1985, BRAC started 22 single room one-teacher experimental schools called Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE) in 22 rural villages. The aim was to learn and develop a school model for the poorer children to equip them in basic reading, writing and numeracy along with life skills and social studies. A three-year curriculum (including textbooks and other materials) for grades I to III was developed under the supervision of local experts. The targeted learners were those children who never enrolled or dropped out from the existing system due to poverty or gender barrier. In each school there were 30 students, 70 percent of whom were girls. The teachers were all married women with at least nine years of schooling taken from the same village. It was thought that the teachers would be paraprofessional and a short orientation course (12 days) was also developed for them. Schools were divided into clusters and one Programme Organiser (PO) was given responsibility to oversee 5/6 schools. The challenge, at that time, was how to ensure regular attendance of the learners in the schools. The concept of community participation through regular parents-teacher meeting came into the scene. A very effective mechanism came out from this which became a part of the model. Followings have been learned from this:

- School timing should be flexible according to the seasonal needs of the families.
- Regular (once a month) parent-teacher meetings helped the parents to understand what was going on in the schools and what role they needed to play for the sake of the children. It also helped the teachers to understand parents' views about the schools and what they intend to have from school.
- Such meetings made the teacher and the POs accountable to the community to whom they were serving.
- Along with the above, visits of the teachers and the POs to the unattended learners' houses helped a lot in ensuring regular attendance and protecting dropout.



Introduction of monthly experience-based training and yearly refresher training for the teachers were another innovation with respect to quality assurance. This helped the teachers to prepare better and make plans on a monthly basis and share experiences among themselves. In addition to this, the programme organiser's regular visit to the schools ensured proper supervision and management of the system.

The 22 schools with the above understanding ran for next three years. It was observed that only two percent of the enrolled students dropped out over the cycle of three years. The first evaluation study on this by the World Bank (1988) showed that although the learners of the BRAC schools came from lower socio-economic groups and those of the government primary schools from the middle class, both did equally well in reading and writing tests. However, the BRAC school learners did lower in mathematics and social studies. The reason behind this was that the test was constructed on the basis of government curriculum, but such texts in BRAC schools were different. In BRAC, more attention was on practical use of mathematics and placing a different emphasis in social studies. Many of these graduates enrolled in formal primary schools in a higher grade. It should also be noted that these were children who came from different economically endowed groups.

#### *Expansion of the programme*

After the inception of the programme, demands were created among the mothers of different parts of the country to open schools in their villages. It was not possible to ignore those demands, so new schools were being opened, however in a limited scale, from the following year. Demand for education for the adolescents was also created. Considering as second chance for the adolescents a new model of schools called Primary Education for Older Children (PEOC), now called Basic Education for Older Children or BEOC, were started in 1988. It was a two-year course for poor children aged 11-14 years. By the end of 1990 total number of schools of both models reached 3,479. It seems that similar to inception of primary schools, its expansion was also generated by the expanding demands from the parents. In such a situation BRAC realised that 'small was beautiful but big was necessary'.

After the Jomtien conference in 1990, new programmes have been initiated round the world in order to achieve Education for All (EFA). BRAC models created an interest to the international community including the donors. Donors started offering money to BRAC to expand faster. For instance, two international donors offered to open 13,000 schools of both the types by 1993. The number of schools jumped to 4,500 by 1991 and kept increasing afterwards. Now there are 34,000 schools operating all over the country. Till date a total of 2.4 million learners have been graduated from BRAC schools, and 1.1 million are currently enrolled. How was it possible for BRAC to expand so rapidly? Following factors might be responsible for this:

- BRAC had over 15 years of experience to provide livelihood services to the people, including income generating, functional literacy, and nation-wide health services.

- A structured plan for supervision of the schools and a strong management system operating from the grassroots to the centre were very effective in overall implementation of the programme.
- Strong support service infrastructure was already in place. The growth would have not been possible without support from the personnel office, accounts department, training division, logistics office, audit section, research division, monitoring cell, and a printing press.
- BRAC has been operating in a learning mode, it learned how to learn by listening to the people, and was motivated to help them what they wanted to achieve. Experiment at initial stage, modify according to the need, enlarge that works, replicate that is effective and change what does not work – are the integral parts of BRAC learning mode.

The school programme was extended in urban areas in 1991 in response to the growing demand for education in urban slums. Although these schools followed the NFPE curriculum but certain modifications had to be made, especially in social studies, to make it sensible to urban environment. Earlier less attendance and higher dropout due to heavy under aged employment in urban slums affected the programme. The problem was resolved through motivating the parents and in some cases the employers.

#### ***Costs and funding***

Two principles have been considered in relation to the costs of the programme. Firstly, costs per child should be minimum as much as practicable, and secondly, largest share of the costs should be used for assuring quality education. During the initial stage, annual cost per child was US\$ 15. Books and supplies for the students, supervision of schools and teacher training received two thirds of total costs. Although costs per child increased to US\$18 recently, but the proportions for different heads did not change. As the teachers are paraprofessional they are paid a small amount of stipend, not salary. It can be mentioned here that, largest share (over 90%) of the total costs is used for teacher salary in the state owned primary schools. Again, BRAC provides the supplies to the students free in BRAC schools, which is not the case for formal schools.

It would not have been possible for BRAC to run such a big public service enterprise without external funds. As the service is dedicated to the children of poor families it has no income of its own. Other way, it is a cent percent subsidised enterprise. The learners and their parents are motivated to education and so give their time for this. In this way they obviously sacrifice some amount of income earnings.

#### ***Changes through learning***

As mentioned earlier that BRAC activities are always on a learning mode. Some important changes have been made in the programme on the basis of lessons learned through operating the programme over the period. Some of these are as follows.

There was no place of religious education in the curriculum of BRAC schools for first ten years. It is because of BRAC's intention to create more secular learning atmosphere for



the children. During 1994, it became clear that most of the parents want its inclusion. From 1995, all students of grade III receive textbook on religious studies according to religious faith of their parents.

BRAC thought that the children would not go for further education after completing three years course in BRAC schools, however this was not the reality. Majority of the children have been enrolling in formal primary schools in grade IV after completing BRAC courses from its very beginning. But they were facing some problems there. For instance, the students suddenly face a large class size in formal schools and teachers do not take care of the students as much they were used to in BRAC schools. These children were not able to get support from private tutors due to financial involvement in it. All these were barriers for the BRAC school graduates to go with others with equal quality. In some cases formal schools were very much reluctant to admit BRAC schools graduates due to shortage of space. Some years ago, in 1999, the government had started female secondary school stipend (FSSS) programme, which provides scholarships to all female students in rural secondary schools. The parents were very encouraged and requested BRAC to complete the full cycle of primary education in NFPE schools. In response to these problems and demands from the parents BRAC decided to provide full cycle of primary education in a span of four years. To maintain the quality of the programme teacher training schemes had to strengthen a lot, especially for mathematics and English. All BRAC schools operate for full cycle of primary education since 1999.

BRAC introduced pre-primary education in its programme from 1997. It is a one-year course for children aged five years who want to enrol in grade I in formal primary schools. The pre-primary classes are arranged near to the formal schools. Each class contains 25 students and two teachers. The teachers are the ex-graduates of BRAC schools. Over three thousand such classes have been completed and 2.5 thousand are in operation.

Recently BRAC has started to provide some input in the secondary education of the country. An opinion survey on the students and the teachers, and an analysis of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam results showed that English and mathematics are too difficult subjects for them. Failure in the final exam is mostly due to failure in these subjects. In consultation with the experts in these subjects BRAC initiated short training courses for the secondary school teachers. The secondary school programme has started since 2002.

#### ***Other educational initiatives***

In response to the local NGOs BRAC has decided, in 1991, to establish a unit called Education Support Programme (ESP) in order to help them set up school programme in their working areas. The challenge here was how BRAC school programme could be replicated in a non-BRAC environment. It was found that if BRAC's countrywide support services could be available to the local NGOs it was possible to replicate BRAC school programme in other areas too. This creates partnership between small NGOs and BRAC. BRAC provides technical and financial support to the partner organisations. It is

a window for in-country technology transfer in the field of education. At present, 313 NGOs are operating nearly 3,000 schools all over the country.

In 1995, a nationwide survey done by a consulting firm showed that a very few rural people have access to print media (Mitra and Associates, 1995). BRAC also observed that library facilities are almost non-existent outside the urban towns. Even the rural secondary schools were not equipped with libraries; in some there is no such facility. In order to initiate a 'culture of learning' BRAC felt the need of establishing libraries attached to the secondary schools and colleges. Although the students are the prime users, others have access too. Till date 700 such libraries have been established facilitating over three hundred thousand members.

The idea of adolescent girls reading centre came in order to continue learning habit among ex-graduates of BRAC schools. These are established in the BRAC school houses. It is a place where the adolescent girls can read various types of books and magazines, play some indoor games, and arrange some cultural programmes. It is just like a small club forum for them. In addition to above, these clubs arrange discussion meetings on different issues faced by them. This initiative, for the first time in the country, created an opportunity for the rural girls to meet outside their residences and do something what they like to. Various types of training especially on reproductive health created a lot of interest among the participant-adolescents. There are 7,896 such centres across the country, each having 30 members.

#### ***Collaboration with the government***

The government has recognised the importance of the education programmes of the non-governmental organisations in the National Plan of Action for Children. BRAC as the largest NGO in the country has been collaborating with the government in different issues like health and education. The education programme of BRAC, although independent, is supplementary to the government's effort towards Education for All (EFA). The Directorate of Non-formal Education (DNFE) of the government offered BRAC to run adult education centre in 1997. Besides, non-formal school programme for the garments child labour and hard to reach urban working children are also DNFE sponsored. The government officially handed over 67 'non-functional' community primary schools to BRAC in 1998. The schools are operating well after BRAC's intervention. Recently the Ministry of Education offered BRAC to do some work in formal primary schools (both government and registered) in order to improve community participation and teaching learning environment there. BRAC was also asked to open pre-primary classes nearer to the formal primary schools.

#### ***Impact of the programme***

Impact of any education programme can be seen in two ways, internal and external. In case of internal impact one generally looks at what happens inside the classroom and for later case impact in socio-economic life is explored. Two national sample surveys showed that over six percent of the total students at primary level were enrolled in BRAC schools (Chowdhury *et al* 1999, 2002). A comparative study on assessment of basic



competencies showed that the students of BRAC schools did significantly better than their counterparts in government primary schools (Nath *et al* 1999). One recent study based on NCTB (National Curriculum and Textbook Board) determined terminal competencies observed that the students of BRAC schools did significantly better than those in regular and formal primary schools (Nath and Chowdhury 2001). Such a positive impact was possible because of its small class size, frequent in-service teacher training, care driven teaching learning system and accountable management in BRAC schools. It can be mentioned here that all these are lacking in the formal education system. Over 90 percent of the graduates of BRAC schools enrol in secondary schools for further education.

Different studies have shown that socio-economic status of the BRAC school students is poorer compared to those of formal primary schools. There is a study on the socio-economic impact of education (Hossain *et al* 2002). It showed, although BRAC school students came from poorer families they performed equally with their counterpart in formal schools in different livelihood indicators (income, employment, asset accumulation etc.). Moreover, people with BRAC school background had better knowledge on health and other development issues including awareness than the people with formal school background. All these indicate that BRAC is helping the children of poorer families to do equally well with others in their adult life.

## **Conclusions**

Starting from a relief and rehabilitation organisation BRAC is now a multi-sectoral, multi-faceted development organisation. It was possible due to its learning mode of delivery system. In case of education it started with functional literacy for the adults, now doing teacher training for the secondary schools. Starting from 22 experimental schools for three years, now there are 34,000 non-formal schools providing full cycle of primary education. It was possible only because BRAC moved with the demands of its clients, here the learners and the parents. Education was provided according to the needs of the community, however culture of the community was not ignored during implementation. Another important issue is that quality of education has never been sacrificed at the cost of expansion. This ensured a continued public interest to the service. The international donor community always extended their hands with financial assistance. Regular monitoring, supportive supervision and continued research on the services are part of managing an overall delivery mechanism. A holistic approach of development is crucial for the uplift of the poor.

## ***Lessons learned***

Following lessons have been learned over the period in providing public services through the non-formal primary school programme of BRAC.

1. Education can be provided to all if it is made accessible at the doorsteps of the un-accessible. People can learn more and better if it is matched with the needs of everyday life.

2. Small is beautiful but big is necessary if one really wants to respond to public's demand for education.
3. Young children especially the girls do face some special problems in order to avail existing schooling facilities (e.g., formal). Distance between school and home, and some other insecurity issues need to be taken care of.
4. Listening to the people and learning from them is important. That is, learning mode of service providing organisations is necessary. In case of education, demands of the children and their parents (especially the mothers) should carefully be looked at.
5. Each and every new step should be piloted before implementation. Scaling up of the service should be done according to the demands of the participants and needs of the society.
6. Development approach is better than the relief approach in order to provide public services.
7. A holistic approach to development is a necessity for meaningful and sustainable development.
8. To make an educational programme successful it is necessary to ensure other support services beyond education e.g., monitoring, training, research, audit and public support in general.
9. Culture of the community where the service is being provided needs to be honoured and incorporated in the service management system.
10. Financial dependence on the donors is a limitation.

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