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Bangladesh

BRAC

Mid Term Review
Non Formal Education Programme
July – August 2001

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BRAC EDUCATION PROGRAMME (BEP)

NFPE PHASE III

June 1999 - May 2004

MID TERM REVIEW 2001

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Acknowledgements

BRAC and its donor partners with the DLO as a go-between agreed to conduct a Mid-Term Review of the NFPE phase III programme. This review should be mutual transparent and participatory during the full MTR cycle from the moment of agreement on a revised TOR to the information collection and processing into the reporting and its discussion.
The Team is highly appreciative of this approach even though it made the MTR somewhat non formal and fully depending on mutual thrust. The MTR is an external review and interests and vulnerability are always playing roles. The Mission appreciates that BRAC was willing to open up for this Mission showing its strength and self-confidence. Programs show their strength by their willingness to reveal their weaknesses.

The MTR is grateful to all parties concerned for the confidence in us. The MTR proved to be a fascinating, though exhausting process, a test on how nearness combined with objectivity (inter-subjectivity) can enhance insight. Until the end the Review remained a balancing act to meet TOR requirements, deal with intricacies and still trying to assist in a modest way towards an agenda for improvement and change.

The Mission is grateful to BRAC in general and BEP in particular. We are very grateful to Kaniz Fatema, Director BRAC Education Programme, for sharing some of her insights obtained through being with the program from the start. It would have been very difficult for the Mission if it could not have benefited from her strategic insight.
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From the inception of the MTR to its completion DGIS through the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its First Secretary , Cornelius Hacking played a crucial role in financing the mission and in accepting the first MTR working with a team of international and national consultants.

It is with much modesty that we present our Final report in the hope that it helps and that we have deserved your confidence.

Wim E. Biervliet
Teamleader MTR

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

APON	Adolescent Peer Organised Network
AVA	Audio Visual Aids
AUEO	Assistant Upazilla Education Officer
BEOC	Basic Education for Older Children
BEP	BRAC's Education Programme
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (previously known as Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee)
BT	Batch Trainer
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CEP	Continuing Education programme
CLIP	Chandina Learning Improvement Project
DLO	Donor Liaison Office
DP	Development Partner
EDU	Education Development Unit
ESP	Educational Support Programme
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HO	Head Office
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
MDU	Material Development Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
MT	Master Trainer
MTR	Mid Term Review
NCTB	National Curriculum Textbook Borad
NFPE	Non-formal Primary Education, and in particular BRAC's Non-formal Primary Education Programme
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PEDP	Primary Education Development Program
PO	Programme Organizer (a field level managerial staff of BRAC)
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PMED	Primary and Mass Education Division
PTI	Primary Teacher Training Institute
PU	Pedagogical Unit
QM	Quality Manager
RC	Reading Centre
RDP/BDP	Rural Development Programme/BRAC Development Program
RED	Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC
RM	Regional Manager
RT	Resource Teacher
SAT	Standardized Achievement Test
SMC	School Management Committee
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
TARC	Training and Resource Centre
TiC	Team in Charge
Tk	Taka (monetary unit of Bangladesh)
TOR	Terms of Reference
UL	Union Library
UEO	Upazilla Education Officer

Executive summary

1. Introduction: NFPE in a nutshell

NFPE is a huge community based non formal education program for poor children especially girls in rural areas. It operates in all 64 districts of Bangladesh and in 381 Upazillas within these districts. Current enrolment stands at some 1 million children and in the present phase III of the program some 500.000 children completed a three year or a four year cycle (up to grade 5) of basic education. The program is characterised by a low drop-out rate and a high progression rate to formal schools and recently directly to secondary education. The MTR was impressed by BRACs success in creating a sustained demand for education in rural poor youth and their parents going beyond primary education into secondary now. The counterside of this success is a concern on how to meet the expectations of these children throughout adolescence for improved
meaning full and gainful living in a transformed rural economy. Interesting approaches to reach out to these adolescents were noticed in the framework of Continuing Education and EDU through Reading centres, Union Libraries and the Adolescent Peer Organised network (APON) The MTR was particularly impressed by the great confidence of children in the classrooms visited. They stand straight, look at visitors and show signs of an emerging attitude transformation not commonly perceived as part of core learning objectives of primary education. The school visits revealed that shortly trained teachers can create an atmosphere of joyful learning and manage teaching and learning in such a way that acceptable learning standards can be achieved.
It became clear that management of such a program, involving management of social transformation processes, quality management and monitoring and supervision both for control and as a mechanism for quality assessment is very complex.

2. The Review

A Mid-Term Review Mission to review and evaluate key components of the Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) phase III project was undertaken between July 28 and August 23, 2001. The Mission reviewed and evaluated key components of this program as identified by BRAC and the Donor Consortium and made recommendations for improvement.

A team of four consultants consisting of Mr. Wim E. Biervliet (Team leader), Mr. Edwin Bourgeois, Mrs. Momtaz Jahan and Mrs. Shireen Lutfunessa, undertook the MTR in close co-operation and consultation with BRAC, the DLO and the DPs.

The team reviewed the Terms of Reference and during a briefing meeting with BRAC and Development Partners (DPs) came to a common understanding of the expected results of the MTR and its methodology. The original Terms of Reference of the Mid Term Review and the MTR inputs to the dialogue on the TOR are annexed. (Annex 1and 4). The Itinerary of the MTR Mission (Annex 2) and the List of Documents (Annex 3) can be consulted.

Findings:

The MTR confirmed that the reach out of BRAC NFPE including its provision of basic education for older children (BEOC) to poor girls and boys in rural areas has been most impressive. A gigantic number of learners has been enrolled and a large proportion of these have completed schooling initially up to grade 3 and from last year up to the end of primary schooling. Wastage through dropouts has been kept to a more than acceptable limit given target population intricacies. Progression to the formal system and, more recently, straight to secondary education has been most impressive.

The BRAC Education Program (BEP) arm has grown and it is now covering a multitude of provisions ranging from pre-primary into grade 5 and through the continuing education program into adolescence and adulthood. BRAC recruitment policy focuses on young graduates combining talents with loyalty, commitment, and team spirit. The MTR found that relative lowly paid and shortly educated (up to SSC) female teachers are the cornerstones of a cost-effective and successful BRAC approach meeting minimum acceptable quality standards. These teachers are highly motivated and community-based and being good managers of their own households very good classroom managers. According to the draft recent CAMPE Education Watch Report[1], BRAC students score even slightly better than students in the formal system (even though at general low performance levels).

In general the MTR has obtained clear evidence that the NFPE provisions for Phase III are well in place and that delays in implementation due to the financial crisis have been kept within an acceptable limit. In contrast to the past when BRAC through its education program (BEP) was concentrating on providing primary education to children of poor illiterate adults, now BRAC has to provide complementary attention to a complete new target group of adolescents with primary education and in many cases proceeding through secondary education.

The MTR was impressed with the MIS approach, which was found to be up to date and comprehensive in terms of school related, teacher and staff data.

3. Access and equity

Through data provided by BEP MIS and checked by the Mission it became clear that from 1985 BEP BRAC managed and supported about 70.000 schools through which some 2.060.000 children in rural areas have completed an initial three year cycle or recently a four year full cycle of primary education. The program is presently running 28495 schools, 20658 of which are NFPE schools (72.5%) and 7837 BEOC schools. Current enrolment in BEP directly and through ESP schools stands at almost 1.1 million children. The MTR recognises that NFP with all its regional dimensions and being community-based is a program of immense proportions.

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[1] CAMPE Education Watch Report 2000. Quality of Primary Education in Bangladesh.

Given some 525.000 students having completed the cycle during Phase III of program implementation, the total number of children reached is some 1.5 million, which is around 65% of the target.

The MTR during its field visits to Comilla, Pabna and Natore observed teaching practice in a limited number of classrooms (see Annex 7). The team checked attendance records and found that not only during the days before the visit of the Team but for a number of months the attendance was consistently high. Enrolment at school opening was compared with actual enrolment and, apart from some exceptional cases (girls' early marriage, migration and one case of decease) in the classes visited enrolment was almost 100%. This has to be remarkable, given that opportunity costs for children in the rural economy are high.

The MTR noted that while early marriage is still the most common reason for girls dropping out the BEP program is decreasing the chances of girls' early marriage. This is a very significant side effect of providing access to girls at primary level and beyond to secondary education.

Recently new experiments have been launched for rural poor adolescents. The adolescent peer organised network (APON) experiment focusing on the creation of adolescent leaders and peer educators tries to combine leadership training with conscious raising of young female adolescents and relevant and interesting training (photography, computer training and journalism). The MTR stresses, that it considers forms of sustained support to BRAC graduates from an impact point of view to be essential and relevant. The MTR recommends a feasibility study to get sufficient insight into the feasibility and sustainability of APON and Reading Centres (RCs).

4. Improving quality

"The Education Watch case studies also reported that poor physical of facilities, inadequate teaching materials (including textbooks), memory-based teaching style and lack of remedial measure in the classroom are the reasons for poor performance in the primary schools. Such inadequacies are more prevalent in non-government registered primary schools and least in non- formal schools." The BRAC schools, according to the impressions obtained by the MTR during school visits, clearly showed a better picture than that indicated by these CAMPE case studies. In passing, it notes that perhaps the most significant achievement of BRAC has been the positive changes made to classroom environment.

The MTR was convinced that BRAC's NFPE's strengths depend primarily upon its teacher training strategy. Apart from initial teacher training at TARCs, BRAC applies a system of grade specific introduction, orientation programs and upgrading training. A system of supervisory support has been established which is necessary to compensate for the relative small investment in initial training. This approach is systematically different from the one applied by GoB.

The MTR observations confirmed that teaching-learning were highly memory-based. The

classroom activities observed in NFPE schools found that co-curricular activities are contributing to building confidence. The classroom activities did not give the team scope to see the small group work or pair work. It was observed that most of the time the question/answer method was going on through chorus from children's side, which reminded the team of the same chorus answers made by teachers in training and resource centre (TARC) training. Individual response was taken only on few items. The tests used mostly were taken from textbooks and teacher guides, which were heavily knowledge based.

From pilots in the transition period between the second and third phase, the school cycle has been complemented by grade 4 and 5 (increasing the school cycle from 3 years to 48 months). This necessitated a quality drive by Head ffice through EDU and at field level co-ordinated by Quality Managers. This was to enable the system to meet new competency requirements especially related to mathematics and English. Social Studies textbooks were to carry BRAC's additional competencies on gender equality etc. There is a need for further clarification on BRAC's value education curriculum and the competencies in this domain.

Issues on quality

The team checked assessment records. In general the scores on the first examination were high, if low, scores were compensated by high second scores. Hardly any low achievers could be found thus apparently contradicting the normal distribution. The team thought that this might be explained by a combination of school grading pressure and poor assessment methods. Spot checks on learner achievement in the four main subjects indicated that there are large differences in mastery with around one fourth of the children not meeting achievement standards.

Quality Managers (QMs) are responsible for the training of master trainers but they equally are in need of further competency development and confidence building. Funding constraints limited capacity expansion. The speed of implementation of the quality improvement drive has not been fully matched by a corresponding capacity building process of QMs. This, in the opinion of the MTR, puts a pressure on a system capable of meeting the specified targets according to project document requirements but being faced with problems in meeting the requirements of adequately building a critical mass for effectively developing and sustaining the quality drive.

The program is faced with the issue of restricting itself to providing teachers with training linked to the government textbooks at present being used or to proceed with the development of its own textbooks similar to the ones being used for grade 1-3. Another option under review is to use more or less traditional textbooks or to use workbook type of textbooks. The decision seems to have been made to proceed with the development of workbook type of textbooks from the next year.

BRAC BEP has accepted the challenge of preparing short-duration educated (class 9 to SSC graduates) rural women as committed teachers in their own community. BRAC is building upon their desire for gainful employment, even though at a low salary level and on their talents as managers of rural households in difficult conditions. It was observed that

they apply their managerial skills in managing schools in a family type of way. Not influenced by common norms related to co-curricular activities it is obvious they have brought joy, songs and dancing into the schools. In order to arrange for retention BRAC prefers to recruit married women and has established a system of salary incentives based on full cycle completion.

The weakness in teacher training is the need for incorporating more child centred training methods and assessment techniques of individual performance. The teaching-learning method all over the country is highly infected with chorus system and copying among peers. This is really a national education problem and introducing the necessary changes to the present system will need patient observation, cautious and appropriate actions from all stakeholders in the education process including BRAC, Government, NGOs, children, adolescents and adults.

Pre-primary/Early Childhood Development

The pre-primary/early childhood development education program initially has been designed to provide some sort of school readiness to the 5-6 years old children. The program has been initiated on an experimental basis and is designed to ensure smooth transfer of the children of pre-primary to class 1 of formal primary school.

BRAC's Education Programme (BEP) has prepared a low -cost curriculum for the pre-primary children. The two classrooms observed were full of enthusiastic children and two adolescent girls were in charge of them. The teaching learning observed concentrated on alphabets, numbers, rhymes and drawing which in a way are the pre-requisites of primary class 1 curriculum.

Preparing children of illiterates for entering class 1of primary school has no alternative, and somebody has to take the responsibility. However, in this context, the Education For All: The year 2000 Assessment, Bangladesh Country Report prepared by PMED of the Government of Bangladesh noted that on a national level "this type of education is not properly administered, nor is it systematically supervised."

Recently, BEP had done a research on the pre-primary/early childhood development, which revealed that after completion of the pre-primary the parents are facing difficulties in sending their children to the primary schools. Children who complete pre-primary at age six plus face difficulty in accessing class 1 of formal school. Based on these findings BEP has decided to open pre-primary schools in the catchments area of the government primary schools.

5. Continuing Education

The objective of the Continuing Education Programme is to retain and increase the literacy skill acquired by the children and the adults in a community.

RCs

To cater for BEOC graduates who do not get the opportunity to go to secondary schools and may hence tend to relapse to illiteracy BRAC started the Reading Centres (RC). After attending school for 3 years the adolescents lacks a literate environment, which is non existing in their communities.. They lack an environment where they can read, play games and spend sometime together. Reading Centres in former school premises cater for these requirements. At the same time BEP jointly with BRAC Development Programme (BDP) arranged life skills training for the adolescents to enable them earn an income.
The Mission thinks that the RCs have a potential to be effective in retaining the literacy not only of the BEOC graduates but also of the extended members i.e. NFPE children and adolescent girls and boys in the community. It provides an atmosphere to socialise at the same time increase knowledge by reading books and reaching out with livelihood training. The acceptance of the community to socialise adolescent boys and girls in a place other than school can be considered an achievement.

ULs

The ULs constitute an important outreach approach in achieving the objective of the Continuing Education Programme, to retain and increase the literacy skill acquired by children and adults in a community. According to the Mission ULs have several important feasible and viable dimensions. Some of these are; extending and strengthening library facilities for rural secondary schools; starting with a textbook loan scheme for poor students; mobilising community resources for thrust formation and support to ULs; attempts to enhance community participation by increasing membership beyond students and organising training and other activities of interest to the community at large. The MTR thinks that BRAC should assist ULs in gradually extending from school-based to community-based activities. Initiatives aimed at reaching out to rural adults especially women with a mobile library van (now experimented in 15 ULs) have to be carefully evaluated as a basis for broader application. It should also be assessed whether ULs should reach out to unemployed youth for skills training or whether RCs should remain the focal point for such.
Sustainability of the GKs is essential. The formation of the trusts has established a basis to meet the recurrent costs of libraries including salary of the librarian. This is an interesting approach to sustainability. Still viability in the long run will depend on capacity of ULs to extend their collection; on its running of interesting schemes such as student loan textbook schemes; on gradually reaching out to the broader community outside the school. If the program focus of ULs is further clarified and sharpened than emphasis can be put on capacity building for librarians to meet these requirements.
The Mission has recommended to pilot counselling and tutoring services in ULs catering especially to BRAC graduates now in secondary schools. This would mean according to the Mission that ULs initially focus should remain on the prime BEP target group. Still more efforts have to be made to extend library memberships beyond students in the community.

APON

APON complements the BEP Reading Centre provision by aiming at a combination of enhancing self dependency and awareness raising on aspects important to adolescents in transition to adulthood. APON is concentrating on female adolescents and particular information girls need to know but do not know in present Bangladeshi rural society. Information relate among others to reproductive health and legal right.
The Mission perceives APON as a fascinating approach to cater for awareness raising and skill requirements of young adolescent girls. It will be essential that the program succeeds in creating new forms of livelihood for girls both BEOC graduates and possibly SSC graduates.
The APON programme commenced in May 2000 and has not yet completed one cycle. With the follow up classes still on the impact of the programme is difficult to assess. The programme seems to be well designed and the decision to extend it to girls outside BEOC is encouraging. The extension of APON exclusively for boys may have to be delayed till an in-depth evaluation of APON for girls is done at the end of one cycle of APON.
One of the key objectives of the APON is to make the adolescent girl independent through life skill training. However the MTR was not provided with realistic training targets related to the different both traditional and non-traditional trades under considerations. Training plans and outlines could not be examined and no full insight could be obtained in the feasibility of journalism, computer training and photography as new areas for investment in training and for girls for investments through micro-credits. Need assessment followed by job market feasibility studies need to be undertaken. Given the utmost relevance of extending the job basis for girls in rural areas, those experiments including thorough pilots deserve full support.

6. System efficiency

Liaison between monitoring and planning

BRAC's Education Programme prepares an Annual Work Plan to reflect upon the planned activities to be achieved during the current year relating achievements to the four logical framework approach (LFA) outputs. It was noted that the linkages between the Work Plan and the Progress Reports were not always clear.

Further, internal as well as external monitoring uses a system of grading for comparative purposes (grade A, B, C). Grade A is seen as good performance, Grade C is below expected standards. This approach is applied to attendance, to regional performance, team performance, school performance, subject-wise performance and gender based student's learning performance etc. The advantage of the system is that it provides a possible warning signal. The disadvantage is that it stresses the control factor and that it does not discriminate enough to enable focused adjustments to take place.

In general the system may generate information with some built in biases towards the A and B categories. The system is not very discriminating with its emphasis on average scores and its lack of consideration of many of the variables making up the score (such as class).

The most discriminating variables noted were in Mathematics and English.

6.1 Planning and monitoring

The MTR perceives BRAC as a quite centralised and hierarchical corporate identity aimed at civic society development in rural poor Bangladesh through a set of interrelated provisions (BEP, BDP, micro-credit etc.). BEP/NFP is one of these provisions. The dilemma of such an institution is to find an appropriate balance between checking and control and monitoring for quality improvement. The MTR sympathises with the fact that this balance may be difficult to obtain considering the need to constantly control and socialise the system on accountability issues.

Annual work planning including the logical framework approach (LFA), in the view of the MTR, is dealing with these program components as discrete entities rather than integrated ones or ones to be integrated.

The MIS in the view of the MTR can be characterised as an Educational Management Information system (EMIS) with some planning sheets and sheets related to budgets. It generates a very interesting set of standard tables, which are presented in quarterly reports to executive level within BRAC as a whole. Given the great utility of these tables it is recommended to expand the restricted scope of users and potential users of MIS data.

It is not a PMIS (Programme Management Information System covering planning and expenditures related to program indicators), which might link planning and budgeting data to the Work Plan. There is the need for development of such a management tool.

In a program such as NFPE the MTR believes the whole cycle approach should be followed including monitoring, inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and possibly impact. Questions to be asked include: education for what? what have children gained and how can it be sustained if they stop after grade 5; if they proceed to secondary education (how can it be made successful, sustained etc)?. Such an approach requires institutionalising a formal liaison between the NFPE/BEOC and the Continuing Education program, with the adolescent peer organised network (APON) as a bridge between these two.

In considering the Work Plan as a tool for monitoring the status of project implementation with regard to the logical framework approach, the MTR noted:

- The Work Plan is not matched with a corresponding budget allowing reviewing the budget as a monitoring tool (under-expenditure).
- Work Plans are prepared centrally and do not account for regional plans. In fact the whole concept of the logical framework approach was found to be an alien one within the field structure .
- The excellent MIS quarterly report based on standard table formats cannot be related to the type of reporting imposed by the logical framework approach and Work Plan

BRAC has a need-based approach to planning which has however constraints forward planning beyond a three-six month framework.

6.2 Research

Curriculum development, textbook writing and implementing more child centred teaching methods require accurate surveys from the field to analyse existing weaknesses and give orientation to the continuous process of quality improvement. Although development partners or other observers may wonder why the organigram shows a research function in the EDU, in addition to the Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC (RED), the MTR mission is satisfied that there is no duplication of work going on. Rather, the research functions in the RED and in the EDU are different in scope and complement each other.

Several of the scheduled research activities regarding the development of the social studies curriculum and teaching methods, on mathematics learning outcomes, on the operation of reading centres, on the role of pre-primary education, and on the performance of NFPE students in grades 4 and 5, have been completed. Particularly interesting is the development of a standardised achievement test (SAT), which was initiated in 1995 in co-operation with the Institute of Education Research of Dhaka University and the Bangladesh Forum for Educational Development. The RED is further developing that assessment tool with the intention to hand it over to the BEP for monitoring the quality of its education program. However, the complexity of developing an educational assessment tool and the high level of educational expertise required should not be underestimated.
The development of a tool for assessing learner achievement is of vital importance to the NFED program. The question then is whether the RED has the human resources available. The MTR mission wonders whether the RED's own resources will be sufficient for the development of the SAT to cover adequately the entire primary education level. It suggests it would be safe to envisage possibilities for collaboration with specialised institutions or consultants.

The tasks of the RED education team are challenging indeed and MTR mission considers the progress made to achieving the targets as adequate. The research function is essential for informed management decision-making. The Mission is impressed by the remarkable CAMPE Education Watch reports to which BRAC researchers have given outstanding contributions.

6.3 Role of the Education Development Unit

The MTR is satisfied with the new quality drive of the Education Development Unit (EDU) bridging towards the Quality Managers and the supervisory support structure at field and team office level. It is concerned about the proliferation of tasks being undertaken by this young and dynamic unit. EDU seems to have transcended from Material Development into a fully-fledged unit. This unit covers curriculum design, development and revision, textbook design and development, teaching learning methodology development, design,

testing and development of teacher guides and supplementary materials, assessment, monitoring and supervision and training of supervisory staff.

7. Strategic issues

General issues

From the start the MTR saw the review as complex: given the influence, beyond control of the mission of macro (societal factors), meso (BRAC factors) and program factors. The ToR emphasis was on program factors but these were strongly influenced by macro and meso factors (BRAC as an organisation or a movement).

After two years and three months of implementation of a very complex multi-dimensional program, there is a need to know where the NFPE program stands and where it is going. Where the program stands relates to the degree to which it has succeeded in providing education to poor and ultra poor girls, the degree to which they complete education and whether the system is characterised by wastage (low cohort survival rate, drop outs, teacher absenteeism) as often observed in the formal system. The MTR concluded that priority attention should be given to the degree to which NFPE phase III is positioned adequately in terms of achieving these super goals and key success indicators.

New approaches related to counselling and livelihood and skills training are needed to n meet requirements and expectations of the new generation of better educated youth in general and educated girls in particular. The target group for basic education especially NFPE most probably will gradually decrease and be complemented by secondary education students and students having completed primary education who need support provisions.

A review can only lead to useful contributions to the program if it considers contextual and cultural factors impinging on the program: including its anchorage within an environment which is not conducive to change, which is highly hierarchical, which is strictly defining as to women's role, and which is often is torn apart by political animosity and direct influence and interventions of fundamentalists.

BRAC's core vision transcending the different programs and its general mission may be to mobilise and further equip rural poor for processes of civic society development and social transformation. One of the key venues is its focus on females as vehicles for change through socialisation and changing role models. Values and transformation of values is a crucial domain of the BRAC intervention, which should be better exposed to some stakeholders including its donor partners.

Remainder of current phase 3

For the remaining period of phase 3 there may be a need for revisiting targets and objectives and possibly approaches to project implementation.

A first issue relates to a gradual shift from NFPE to BEOC provision. While the MTR considers that BRAC is well on target with regard to meeting the stipulated number of rural poor children provided with access to primary education, according to the MIS data NFPE enrolment and school openings are faced with a gradual decline.

The MTR would favour a demand based need assessment building upon MIS data and existing village surveys. It seems to be questionable whether a mapping process and a process of inventorising needs on a longer basis than 6 months for basic education has taken place as a basis for targeting and planning. Considering the state of program implementation and less than 3 years to go – a revisiting of targets and the whether and how to meet the targets, may be required.
Although planning is essentially based on demand and situation analysis at local level, the MTR considers that there is scope for a more forward-planning approach beyond six months. Monitoring systems cannot be fine-tuned to that so there is no way of monitoring achievements related to targets.

A second issue deals with new partnerships.
The goal of the Educational Support programme (ESP) is "to form partnerships for non-formal primary education with organisations working in Bangladesh and to develop their technical, conceptual and human skills to replicate BRAC's NFPE model successfully". These type of partnerships, according to the MTR, are very important because they would foster a different role for BRAC in reaching out to the poorest segments of rural society eligible for NFPE type of education.

This would imply that BRAC rather than concentrating on a role of direct implementation of basic education alone could disseminate its approaches to opening schools, its curriculum and learning teaching materials, its basic teacher training to be provided by TARC and upgrading training and supervisory structure to other NGOs. Such a supporting role could yield a higher rate of return on BRAC's and the Development Partners' investments in NFPE.
In this context the ESP is an important experiment for one of BRAC's partnerships modalities. BRAC needs to become clearer on its vision and agenda for such a partnership.

Financial sustainability given selection criteria of small community based NGOs, without donor funding and which already require matching funding seems hard to achieve. This would change if, through GoB provisions, ESP could be extended into a BRAC-GoB- small NGO program provision. Technical sustainability is equally difficult to achieve and could only be realised if those small NGOs could become "paying customers" for BRAC training and material provisions.

As its final conclusion, the MTR confirms it is very satisfied with the progress made so far. The key is that BRAC has assisted in creating a sustained demand for education at primary level now being expanded to secondary education. Children are receiving reasonable quality, joyful and child-friendly education and in general systems are in place. The scope of the program remains wide both in terms of program components, type of provisions and regional coverage.

Follow-up

The MTR is of the opinion that the remaining part of phase III gives a scope for a renewed focus on quality and on consolidation and well designed piloting as a basis for mainstreaming, rather than on diversification.

A set of issues has been identified by the MTR, which are to be considered carefully by BRAC BEP and its donor partners. These are further elaborated as recommendations in Part III of the MTR Phase III report.

Issues

- NFPE and BRAC common philosophy, facilities and resources: the need for sharing.
- Need for an expanded planning scope
- Need for focus within quality drive
- Inspection versus Support: Need for staff development for supervisory structure
- Learners have become secondary education students: Need for Continuing Support?
- Strengthening capacity for utilisation and interpretation of MIS and monitoring data: the need for policy analysis
- Research expertise available within BRAC and need for consultancy inputs or collaboration with other specialised institutions
- Chorus method of teaching/learning and child-cantered learning
- Pilots towards mainstreaming: filling the gap
- Copying versus developing creativity and problem solving skills

PART I

BACKGROUND, APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

1 MTR ToR and Implementation

1.1. Background to the Mid-Term Review

A Mid-Term Review Mission to review and evaluate key components of the Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) phase III project was undertaken between July 28 and August 19, 2001. The Mission reviewed and evaluated key components of this program as identified by BRAC and the Donor Consortium and made recommendations for improvement.

A team of four consultants consisting of Mr. Wim E. Biervliet (Team leader), Mr. Edwin Bourgeois, Mrs. Momtaz Jahan and Mrs. Shireen Lutfunessa, undertook the MTR in close co-operation and consultation with BRAC, the DLO and the DPs.

The team reviewed the Terms of Reference individually prior to the assignment and as a Team on the day of arrival .The MTR team: BRAC and DPs came to a common understanding of the expected results of the MTR and its methodology.
The original Terms of Reference of the Mid Term Review are annexed. (Annex 1)
The Mission implemented an extensive set of interactive consultations and feedback sessions with stakeholders and interviews at BRAC NFPE HO. The MTR studied documents and through field visits to Comilla, Natore and Pabna had ample opportunity to concentrate on the field structure of the service delivery system of BRAC NFPE and schools and learning children which are the crux of the NFPE program. The itinerary of the MTR Mission (Annex 2) and the List of Documents (Annex 3) can be consulted.

Building upon the thematic expertise and considering assets of both the national and international expertise while adopting a strong team approach, a division of tasks and key responsibility for different components between team members was agreed upon from the start. Momtaz Jahan concentrated on classrooms, teachers and curricula, pre-primary, teachers, teacher training and pre-primary. Shireen Lutfunessa covered APON, Reading Centres and Union Libraries. Edwin Bourgeois covered the Education Development Unit, Research and Training and Capacity Building, Wim Biervliet concentrated on the Methodology, targets and achievements, ESP, Monitoring including the NFPE MIS , internal and external monitoring.

The team members assume professional responsibility for their respective areas while Wim Biervliet (team leader) in the framework of Edburgh Consultants assumes responsibility for the overall draft and final MTR report.

The MTR wishes to stress the excellent support provided by BRAC at all levels in HO and field and DLO as well as the pleasant and transparent atmosphere in which the Mission could be undertaken.

1.2 Comments on the ToR

The MTR prepared comments on the Terms of Reference (see Annex 4) which were extensively discussed at a briefing meeting chaired by Josephine Kalinauckas (EC) with representatives of several DPs, the DLO and BRAC , Director Education Program, Kaniz Fatema, programme coordinators and managers.

The team in its presentation tried to obtain a consensus between all parties concerned on the TOR and on ways and means of operationalising the TOR into a Work plan. The MTR also tried to obtain data on targets as specified in the project document and program achievements at Mid-Term (June 2001) through requesting BRAC to complete sheets (see Chapter 2).

The Meeting agreed to further focus the scope of the Mission TOR by concentrating on NFPE grade 3,4,5 excluding BEOC and the other grades in the review. It was also agreed upon that given the early stage of implementation of the EC additional support to NFPE, a review of such was premature.

Gender, M&E and where appropriate GoB-BRAC relationships could be seen as crosscutting issues of relevance to all or several of the components under review. It was also agreed upon that assistance to BRAC in revising the LFA to better incorporate ESP could not be seen as part of the scope of the MTR. The MTR could, if relevant make a recommendation to revisit the LFA and to launch a Workshop to adjust the LFA in line with program status so far.

The revised scope of the MTR agreed upon based on project document components covered the following components (See annex 1 and 4)

SHEET 1: MTR TOR COVERAGE of NFPE III Components (as completed by BRAC based on July 29 briefing meeting)

COMPONENTS	REMARKS
NFPE schools	
ESP	ESP has NFPE schools
Grade III, IV and V	
Pre-primary	
Skill Development Training in Union libraries	
Initial teacher training	
Refresher teacher training	
Staff training (local and overseas)	Discussion with Staff
Training of Quality Managers	Discussion with QMs
Master trainer training	Discussion with MTs
Resource teacher training	Discussion with RTs(Its part of staff training)
Research and Evaluation	
Monitoring	
EDU	
Curriculum/learning materials	
APON	
SATs-Learner Assessment	
Grade IV and V primers	
Union Libraries	
Reading centres	

1.3 Approach and Methodology

1.3.1 Approach

The MTR adopted from the start an approach aiming at a review which should be:

- **Jointly** involving all stakeholders in both design, implementation and feedback related to the MTR
- **Owned** by BRAC and DPs in order to provide a foundation for constructive change (reflective and prospective)
- **Transparent** sharing data-collection formats, approaches and ideas behind types of data-collection with BRAC and DLO. BRAC and DLO being equally transparent and co-operative.

- **Review cum Capacity Building** aiming at demystification of "reviews" and combining the review with transfer of knowledge and experience of different methods of reviewing and monitoring. The capacity building is reciprocal in that the MTR mission members could not adequately review without learning from BRAC about their intricacies.

The approach and methodology were outlined and discussed during the briefing meeting on the TOR (see 1.2). The Director BRAC Education Programme Kaniz Fatema extensively exchanged with the MTR and gave a "green light" to BRAC for an "open door" and strongly collaborative approach of BRAC towards the MTR . This approach was coordinated by Erum Marium, Programme Coordinator EDU and Dr. Safiqul Islam, Programme Coordinator Continuing Education.

Representatives of DPs including DLO observed and participated in most of the consultative briefings and interview sessions at BRAC Head Office. BRAC provided the Mission with strong guidance during the field missions transcending beyond logistical support into "sharing" including assisting in data-collection. A DP representative accompanied the MTR during field visits to Comilla , while the same DP and DLO accompanied the sub-team visiting Natore during one full day.

1.3.2 Parameters for a New Approach

The team faced the complexity of a traditional review of a very complex multidimensional program combined with increasing perception of the difficulties involved in applying alternative innovative approaches.

The Mid Term Review of BRAC NFPE III was faced with macro (societal factors) meso (BRAC factors) and program factors . Given the TOR emphasis was on program factors but these were strongly influenced by macro and meso factors (BRAC as an organisation or a movement).

Macro and meso factors of relevance to the MTR were the following:

- There is an obvious link between BRACs mission (poverty reduction and economic and social advancement of the population) and the purpose and objectives of NFPE III. Hence there will be and actually is a link between NFPE and other BRAC programmes such as RDP.
- There is a need to consider contextual and cultural factors impinging on the program (environment not enhancive to change, highly hierarchical, strictly defining women's role, and political animosity, influence of fundamentalism.
- Environmental factors (difficult access to formal schools, flooding of poor communities and thus schools)
- Values and transformation of values is according to the Mission a crucial domain of the BRAC intervention. E.g. a question asked by one of our observers: Is the teacher beating you; it also relates to singing and dancing by boys and girls in the classroom and by BRAC foundation teacher training giving opportunities to

trainees to bring in their children with their mother in law or somebody else to take care of the children

- Emphasis on values and attitude formation (What is BRACs education vision and how does it differ from formal education in terms of channels for value transmission and civic society development). This may relate to the curriculum per se and female staff and teachers playing new "role exemplary models". According to the MTR BRACs BEP and Continuing Education Program may be seen as both a pilot for and a catalyst to new roles for the new generation especially girls but also boys in poor segments of rural society.

The following factors, although not officially part of the ToR, have been taken into account by the mission:.

- In such a program according to the MTR the whole cycle should be followed of monitoring, inputs, processes ,outputs, outcomes and possibly impact (rather than just saying we want to see rural poor children proceeding through primary education). Education for what?; what have children gained and how can it be sustained if they stop after grade 5: if they proceed to secondary education (how can it be made successful, sustained etc)
- This asks for a liaison between the NFPE/BEOC and the Continuing Education program with APON as a bridge between these two. The TOR and probably the project design including the LFA is dealing with these program components as discrete entities rather than integrated ones or ones to be integrated.
- We have to look at the whole philosophy of BRAC staff development including core components (what should each BRAC family member know) and how TARC training is catering for that. What is the relationship between core competencies(BRAC) and program specific requirements.
- Consider costs and actual outputs (given costs) ;efficiency versus effects of differential additional investments.
- How to cope with staff development requirements given growth of NFPE staffing (staff development philosophy of BRAC based on recruitment of highly committed and adaptable young people versus the growing need for professionalisation). Consider in this respect e.g. investments in textbook development versus investments in teacher guides and support systems.

1.3.3 Methodology

Completely in line with the TOR and the agreements with BRAC and DPs on the scope of the MTR, data-collection could proceed according to plans.
There was a constant exchange with BRAC on MTR stands including data-collection formats, sampling for field visits (NFP schools, etc); problem-oriented in-depth discussions sessions; new approaches towards tracing former BRAC graduates and the reporting outline was equally shared.
BRAC was directly involved with the team in planning for the field visits in Pabna and Natore applying a set of criteria for selection of schools and approaches towards data-

collection which the team had developed based on insights obtained during the first field visit to Comilla.
Annex 6 gives the outline of a planning approach to data-collection in Pabna and Natore. In Pabna and Natore the team was split in two sub teams in order to increase the scope of data collection. In order to arrange for a consistency in approach an outline for the field visit planning and data collection were agreed upon. Moreover it gave BRAC direct input in their logistical planning of the field visit to Pabna and Natore.

Getting access to information available at the Office of the Regional Manager at the start of the visit (minimum half day in RM/TiC office)

The following was attempted:

- What are the basic processed data available (not raw data but standard tables) in the RM office (MIS type of data; enrolment, retention, attendance, drop out, learning achievement,; completion and progression to grade 6; training planning and training implemented so far in the third phase). Emphasis on what is available to be used rather than creation of new tables.
- Meeting with POs of the schools to be visited: Information about schools based on POs supervision reports (general trends); observation checklist; school grading; village survey
- Graduate follow-up checklist; where are the high schools which accommodate many NFP graduates

As indicated above the MTR developed and discussed with BRAC instruments and formats specifically prepared for the Review.
Reference has already been made to the "Sheets" to relate achievements and targets. These were duly completed by BRAC.

Given the importance of having insight in the degree to which children are learning and into the teaching/learning methodologies applied, a Classroom observation guideline was developed jointly by Wim Biervliet and Momtaz Jahan. Again by this our approach to classroom observation could be shared with BRAC and could be consistently applied by the MTR team in a total of 15 classes (9 NFPE, 3 ESP, 3 pre-primary). Case studies based on these observations prepared by Momtaz Jahan are incorporated in Annex 7)
The classroom observation during which the MTR team was accompanied by the responsible PO proceeded with a sample check on attendance register over a period of a few month; a check on initial enrolment compared to present enrolment; checking assessment scores in the four subjects; classroom observation and sample checks on learning achievement in the 4 main subjects (Bangla, Math, English and Social studies) developed by Momtaz Jahan. (for the School observation guideline instrument see Annex 5)

The team applied a simple, but certainly cost-effective approach to tracing former BRAC full cycle (completion of grade 5) students in secondary schools adjacent to their visit to 3 Union Libraries. Some 350 former BRAC students were thus traced.

Apart from interviews with a selected number of key staff MTR used structured group interviews as one their approaches to increase the coverage of the MTR (assisted by BRAC in enabling such an approach).

This involved:
-a whole team approach by interviewing whole cluster teams (Teams in Charge, POs (including MTs), PAs, RTs, BTs)
-Interviews with 4 batches of female trainees (plus 1 male PO in each batch) attending to foundation teacher training at the TARC in Comilla and Pabna.
- Interviews with 8 internal monitors (out of 21) guided and recommended by Erum Marium.
-Meetings with the Curriculum Development, training, research and adolescent related initiatives teams of EDU.
-Meeting with all Quality Managers who participated in the Monthly EDU-QM meeting.

1.3.4 Sample

The field visits covered the following:

- The team visited , observed and took simple learning achievement tests in 9 NFPE schools; 8 grade 4 and 5 and 1 grade 3. The under representation of grade 3 BRAC NFP was caused by no grade 3 NFP schools being operational in either Pabna and Natore. The reason for this could not be clearly detected by the Team(but became clear later based on BEP MIS data)
- 3 ESP schools (grade 3)
- 3 pre-primary classes
- 4 reading centres
- Linked to the visit to the Reading Centres the team visiting Natore could attend to 2 APON training sessions going on
- Four Union Libraries
- In Pabna the Team could observe the mobile van used as an outreach approach
- Very important the Team saw the communities in which NFPE and ESP schools are located which offer hardly anything which can be called a literate environment, nor any facilities apart from possibilities to survive at a minimum level. Schools and Reading Centres suddenly introduce a literate environment in these Communities.
- The MTR saw some 460 children in the classrooms they visited who were eager to learn. They obviously enjoyed a kind of joyful learning which previously had been denied to them; adolescents in the Reading Centres playing games; union libraries offering to secondary schools newspapers and a school library which previously was not available.

PART II

FINDINGS

2 Key Success Indicators: The Status and Constraints in Program Implementation at Mid-Term

2.1 Introduction

The BRAC education experience started in 1985, originating from demands from "parents" participating in the RDP program. It started with little expertise in non formal education but initially the program was embraced and catered for by 5 people at BRAC's Head Office.

With Jomtien as an important starting point and with the strong support of donor partners, this small new branch in the BRAC tree had a booming growth as exemplified by data kindly provided by BEP MIS. Since 1985 through some 70.000 schools some 2.060.000 children have completed an initial three year cycle or recently a four year full cycle of primary education (see table 2.2, Annex 8). These include several provisions not covered by the MTR TOR such as Garment Worker Schools, Hard to Reach Schools and Domestic Child Labour Schools.
Considering the different phases of the program , there is no linear growth. While already in the first phase 34000 schools could become operational, the number of schools was consolidated in the second phase at a somewhat lower level with a marginal shift from girls to enhancing access of boys and a slow but gradual shift from NFPE to BEOC provisions. From pilots in the transition period between the second and third phase, the school cycle was complemented by grade 4 and 5 (increasing the school cycle from 3 years to 48 months). This necessitated a renewed emphasis on quality within the whole NFPE structure especially for EDU.

While BRAC was initially among the few NGO providers reaching out to the unreached, GoB entered this difficult arena with the establishment of DNFE. The outline plans related to Education for All as expressed in the National Policy Paper on Education and the attempts to arrive at one uniform delivery system for Basic Education through the PEDP program are challenges to be considered by BRAC in reflecting on and planning for its BEP related provisions.

2.2 Overall Achievements and Trends in the BEP (school) Program

After two years of implementation of a very complex multi-dimensional program, there is a need to know where the NFPE program stands and where it is going to. Where the program stands relates to the degree to which it has succeeded in providing education to poor and ultra poor girls, the degree to which they complete education and whether the system is characterised by wastages(drop outs, differences in formal and actual contact hours, teacher absenteeism in a similar way as the formal system.

Key phase III data on program : coverage,, inputs and outputs of the school program.(for full details and extensive tables see Annex 8:Tables generated by BRAC BEP MIS)

2.2.1 Coverage

According to data originating from NFPE MIS, BRAC's Education Program is presently co-ordinated by 32 Regional Offices, implemented by 467 teams. The full set of MIS data presented and prepared for the MTR has been annexed to the report as Annex 8)
These teams operate in all 64 Districts of the country and within these districts in 381(including 48 Upazillas in which ESP is operating and BEP not (77% of all 496 upazilla). So, there are BEP upazilla, ESP upazilla and upazilla where both BEP and ESP schools are being run.

2.2.2 Schools, and Learners Enrolled

The program is presently running 28495 schools, 20658 of which are NFPE schools (72.5%) and 7837 BEOC schools.
Current enrolment in BEP directly and through ESP schools stands at almost 1 million children. The MTR notes that NFP with all its regional dimensions and being community based is a gigantic program.

Table 1: Enrolment in NFPE, BEOC and ESP schools in June 2001(source BRAC MIS)

School Type	No. of Schools	Boys	Girls	Total
NFPE	20658	239964(35%)	441450(65%)	681414(68.5%)
BEOC	7837	72660 (30%)	166066(70%)	238726 (24%)
ESP	2505	21005 (28%)	54145(72%)	75150 (7.5%)
Total	31000	333629(33.5%)	661661(66.5%)	995290 (100%)

NFPE and BEOC schools are catering presently for 920140 enrolled pupils of which 74% in NFPE schools. The average number of students per school in NFPE stands at the norm number of 33, in BEOC is 30,5 and in ESP at 30. Girls constitute 65% and 70% of overall enrolment in NFPE/BEOC.

The BRAC managers of classroom learning for these children are some 27733 teachers. Almost all (97.4%) are lowly educated (from grade 9 to SSC level and 12.5% H.S.C[1]) females, and resident of the same community where the school is located.
There are a total of 743 male teachers which is a small fraction "minority" in a female dominated BRAC learning environment (this being in strong contrast to the situation in the formal system).

BRAC BEP MIS has also attempted to provide the MTR with class-wise data of actual running schools. This proved to be a problem as in the past, years coincided with classes and now given the full cycle approach this does not apply anymore.

[1] See Annex 8, Table 3.1

Comparison of key data of NFPE and BEOC schools/enrolment in operational schools

Characteristics	NFPE	BEOC
New schools, class 1 in % of operational NFPE/BEOC schools	7680 (37%)	4455(57%)
Proportion of all schools	20658(72.5%)	7837(27.5%)
New schools to be opened, august 2001	1266 (42%)	1734(58%)

The MTR wishes to commend BRAC on its direct (NFPE) and indirect involvement in providing some 650000 girls, poor and ultra poor, who through a combination of poverty, being over the primary school age, having difficulties to access the formal schools, have either never accessed primary education or dropped out of the formal system at an early stage.

Some 3000 new teachers are being trained bringing the total number of teachers to some 34.000 and the overall 2001 enrolment around 1 million learners.

2.2.3 Staff Support System

The School Programme support linked to these enrolled learners and around 31000 teachers (by August 2001) is supervised by 287 team offices and coordinated by 32 Regional Offices. Overall support (see table 4 in Annex 8 for details) consists of 2630 field level staff of which 26% female. Females are well represented among QMs (39%), TiCs (37%) and RTs, which are recruited from the teaching ranks (85%) but underrepresented at PO (19%) and RM (16%) level.
Total Head Office staff amounts to 80 of which 48(60%) now in the Education Development Unit. Of these 48, 25 staff at EDU office is working directly in support of the BEP school program.

2.2.4 Outputs and Wastages: Completion, Progression and Dropouts

What did the system generate during NFPE Phase III in terms of learners completing part (3 years) or full cycle primary education.

BRAC BEP MIS provided the MTR with the following crude data, which will be complemented, by more fine tuned MIS data to be presented subsequently. The crude data indicate that some 525.000 learners proceeded through the cycle through NFP, BEOC and some 48000 (9%) through ESP. Cohort survival rate was high at 90% with 50932 learners, 35809 females dropped out. Cohort dropout rate among girls is higher than among boys but still remaining at acceptable levels (almost 20%).

In Phase 3 NFPE among the 10242 NFPE schools completing the cycle (see Annex 8, Table 1.2), with an initial enrolment of 336764, there were 31888 drop-outs (9.5%), in

which group the girls were slightly over represented. A similar trend was observed for BEOC in phase III.

Between January and March 2000, 4911 schools with an initial enrolment of 151399, a total of 138304 (completion rate 91%) completed a three-year cycle. Of these graduates 66% were girls. Among those 124363 (progression rate 90%: class cohort progression rate 82%) were admitted to formal schools in different grades. Some 82000 girls proceeded through the formal system (Progression rate among girls 90%; class cohort progression rate is 81%).
MIS provided the MTR as well with January-March 2001 data revealing the first systematic data on full cycle completion within NFPE.
7111 schools completed the full cycle education generating 212334 graduates (grade 1-5) of whom 132700 (62.5%) girls. In comparison with initial enrolment this constitutes a completion rate of 91%. Of those completing 198108 students proceeded to formal schools, the majority of whom 186498 (94%) to grade 6(some to grade 5, and some to grade 7). 124590 girls were admitted to formal schools (94%). Progression rate among girls is more substantial than among boys.

In general class cohort survival rate is very high with dropouts remaining within the 10% limit. Among a variety of reasons for drop-out the main factor leading to drop-out among boys (45%) is their involvement in work of their parents; among girls early marriage constitutes the main reason (40%) for drop-out among the 17970 girls registered as drop-outs to the NFPE system.[2]

In the formal system the phenomenon of teacher absenteeism plays a strong role but teachers conditions of work and retention are hardly leading to resignations or quitting.
In BRAC absenteeism is well under control but teacher retention a slight problem. According to data from BEP MIS during phase III 3536 teachers dropped-out from ongoing schools. According to the MTR this issue would need further research.[3]

2.2.5 Conclusions

The MTR notes that the reach out of BRAC NFPE including BEOC to poor girls and boys in rural areas has been most impressive. A very large number of learners have been enrolled and a large proportion of these have completed schooling initially up to grade 3 and from last year up to the end of primary schooling. Wastage through dropouts have been kept to a more than acceptable limit given target population intricacies and progression to the formal system and recently straight to secondary education has been most impressive. Main reasons for dropping out are for boys having to assist in the rural economy and for girls early wedding. The MTR notes that while early marriage is still the most common reason for girls dropping out the BEP program is decreasing the changes of girl's early

[2] See Annex 8: Information on drop out students in schools having completed NFPE full cycle or three years cycle between January and March 2001.
[3] BRAC made reference to the 1998 study by K. A. Khan (RED), Reasons behind discontinuation of BRAC teachers in NFPE programme.

marriage. This is a very significant side effect of providing access to girls at primary level and beyond to secondary education.

The MTR detected a trend with enrolment in NFP schools declining with a proportional increase in enrolment in BEOC. This may be obvious as through the years the first layer of learners not reached by the formal primary system being gradually accommodated by BRAC leaving the more difficult to reach over aged students to reach for.

2.3 Component specific targets and achievements

2.3.1 Introduction

At mid-term of program implementation, each MTR looks at the original intentions as expressed in the project document to see whether targets as stated are reached.
BRAC provided the MTR with a number of sheets on their achievements related to the targets.
The first sheet relates to where the program stands in terms of meeting stipulated outputs related to its key objectives.

SHEET II: STATUS (end of June 2001) OF NFPE IMPLEMENTATION AT MID-TERM (vis a vis product outputs)

COMPONENT/ITEM	TARGET	ACHIEVEMENT	% Remarks
1. Children reached (60% girls)	2,402,277	1,571,832	65.4%
Quality improvement in curriculum/teacher-staff training			
2.New teachers trained	29,601	10,737	36.3%
3.Master trainers trained (in each NFPE subject area)	400	Total MT developed-2,300	Bangla- 450 English- 490 Math- 485 Social Studies (1-3)- 460 Social Science (4-5)- 415 In the year 2000, 250 MTs have been transferred to BDP (BRAC Development Programme).
4. Teachers in monthly refresher	34000	1999- 34,000 2000- 31,082 2001- 31,000	in 2000 there were 31,082 schools. In

			June 2001, there are 31,000 schools.
5. Training days NFPE for teachers in school cycle	Each teacher 100 days	125 days	
6.Teachers trained on Maths and English	46,979	24,530	52.2%
7. Courses on Primary Education attended	QMs TARC trainers MTs RTs Teachers	A training on Participatory methods in education and independent learners was held in Oct. 2000 with 32 QMs. The training was conducted by Prof. William Gibbs from Leeds University.	A workshop on "Equity in the classroom" was held in June 2001 with 8 QMs, 8 RMs and 14 Material Developers. The workshop was conducted by Deborah Llewellyn, Senior Associate, Creative Associates a project on Education funded by USAID.
Quality Improvement through revision, development of learning materials and introduction of new initiatives			
8.Revisions in existing subject areas: activity based enjoyable (2004)	All existing subject areas	Revisions are being made in Maths grade 1 & 2, English grade 2	Math: To cover all the govt. competencies and to fill up the gaps that existed in grades 1,2 & 3 and to make it at it level with grade 4 & 5. English: To cover the

			govt. competencies.
9 Clip materials developed and mainstreamed (2002).		CLIP materials have been developed and mainstreamed in Bangla. S. Studies 4 & 5 and supplementary materials are being used in Formal schools	The CLIP methodologies are being used in grades 4 & 5. But experience indicates demand for development of child materials.
10. IRI materials revised and mainstreamed (2001)		Not being done	More emphasis was given in developing traditional materials which were found to be more effective in the classroom.
11. Supplementary materials for grade IV and V developed and completed (2001)		Supplementary materials were developed in Bangla, Maths, Social Studies and English	General impression is that govt. primers are complex. The Education Watch research reveals the need for workbook materials.
12.AVA developed for refresher courses based on MT training (2002)	Math English Social Studies Language	Not being done	Currently AVA is not being developed. The need of AVA will be assessed.
Continuing education expanded catering to adults of the community as well as NFPE graduates who have very			

little access to literacy materials.			
13. New Union Libraries opened by March 2004	500	200	40%
14. New Reading Centres opened by March 2004	10,000	2,379	24%
15. New members in Union libraries (400 each) and Reading Centres (30 each) by March 2004	500,000	Union Library:88,000 (444 in each library) Reading Centres:73,749 (31 in each centre)	
16. Life skill training attended in Reading Centres by March 2004	68,000	***From June-Dec '99*** Vegetable tr.: 1,808 Nursery: 485 Poultry: 2.3 00 Tailoring: 3,784 ***From Jan 2000-June 2001*** Members reached out through APON: 52,729 APON training: 2,852 Adolescent leader: 291 Peer Educator: 2,495 Agriculture:30 Photography:78 Computer: 58 Journalism:58	The courses were disseminated through APON

Below are the MTRs comments on the status of program implementation.

Another set of sheets completed by BRAC BEP on request of the MTR is incorporated in Annex 9. These sheets cover activity plans for the main program components. They will be dealt with in the respective paragraphs. [4]

Outputs related to: Equitable Access to Cost Effective Primary Education Ensured for Poor Children Especially Girls

2.3. 2 Children Reached

In the previous paragraph we already noticed that some 920000 learners are enrolled in NFPE and BEOC schools of which 66% are girls. Considering the 3000 schools to be opened in August 2001 some 99000 additional learners will be enrolled. Given some 525,000 students having completed the cycle during Phase III of program implementation, the total number of children reached is some 1.5 million, which is around 65% of the target.

[4] The following sheets are presented in Annex 9:
SHEET III: Activities related to curriculum and material development
SHEET IV: List of activities related to training
SHEET V: Activities related to research and evaluation

Outputs related to: Quality Improvement in Curriculum/Teacher-Staff Training

2.3.3 Teachers

According to the MTR it is very difficult to assess how on an annual basis the remaining target of 29601 new teachers are planned for and trained:

- The fact that several schools operate more than one cycle , hence new teachers do not have to be trained for such schools
- In some cases already trained teachers of completed cycles are transferred to BEOC if and when BEOC is in the same or nearby locality.
- Although planning is essentially based on demand and situation analysis at local level, the MTR considers that there is scope for a more forward-planning approach beyond six months. Monitoring systems cannot be fine-tuned to that so there is no way of monitoring achievements related to targets.. Given this achievements related to targets is difficult to actually express in terms of percentages.

Details on teacher training are presented in Chapter 5.

2.3.4 Support Staff and Teacher in-Service Training

The review on teacher supervision and support is provided in paragraph 5.3.
The MTR notes however that it was only capable to observe on-going initial teacher training for new batches of teachers recruited for new schools to be opened in August 2001. Refresher training was not on during the MTR hence it could not be observed.
The basic problem in reviewing achievements related to targets on teacher in-service training and strengthening teacher supervisory structures relates to data on training planning, outlines and monitoring could not being made available to the MTR in a systematic and accessible way. It was made clear to the MTR during field visits that this planning as far as training in TARC is concerned depends on TARC capacity (capacity utilization serving all BRAC programs is high). Training at Regional Office level are mostly planned by TiCs and discussed with QMs. Planning is incorporated in the QMs notebook and brought to the meetings with EDU staff where both planning and reporting on training is finalized. This particular planning and monitoring system works in practice but seems far from transparent to those external to the system and does not easily allow to have regional and overall program overviews. This lack of clarity in planning and design applies to all training being implemented at field level, whether it is for teachers or Master Trainers.

Quality managers according to the MTR are the crucial channels between Head
Office capacity in the EDU and the supervisory structure which should provide surplus value to the "highly motivated-shortly trained female teachers".

QMs are responsible for the training of Master trainers but they are equally strongly in need of further competency development and confidence building. The speed of implementation of the quality improvement has not fully been matched by a corresponding capacity

building process of QMs. This according to the MTR puts a pressure on the system. At present it seems to be capable of meeting the specified targets according to project document requirements. However the system faces problems in meeting the requirements of effectively building a critical mass for an adequate developing and sustaining the quality drive.

2.3.5 Quality Improvement through Revision Development of Learning Materials and Introduction of new Initiatives

The low investments in teacher salaries and initial teacher training which is the main source of BRACs capability and determination to keep the unit costs within the $20 limit has to be matched with appropriate learning/teaching materials and adequate textbooks to enhance quality learning. Both the adoption of the full cycle approach and attempts to arrive at a better fit between the BRAC curriculum and approach to learning and GoB, NCTB (53 basic competencies) necessitated the quality improvement as stipulated in the project document.

A comparison between BRAC and GoB formal education approach to learning is presented in paragraph 6.3

The program is faced with the issue of restricting itself to providing teachers with training linked to the government textbooks for grade 4 and 5 at present being used or to proceed with the development of its own textbooks similar to the ones being used for grade 1-3. Another option is to use more or less traditional textbooks or to use workbook type of textbooks. The decision seems to have been made by BRAC to proceed with the development of workbook type of textbooks from the next year.

A dilemma presented by the Director is that BRAC having decided to keep unit costs per student fixed at US $ 20, then measures to increase quality require additional investments in teacher training. This, combined with development costs would become beyond the scope of the program unless other interventions such as decreasing the contact hours would be considered.

2.3.6 Continuing Education Expanded Catering to Adults of the Community

In chapter 7 Reading Centres, APON and Union Libraries will be extensively dealt with. In general when viewed from the perspective of targets stated in the project document progress in achieving targets has been satisfactorily for Union Libraries , reasonable for Reading Centres, while APON is progressing in an experimental phase..
All these initiatives according to the MTR are essential for BRAC to be able to arrange for an appropriate transition of their graduates from youth to adolescence and adulthood and from school to working life. In contrast to the past when BRAC through its RDP program was targeting ultra-poor adults often illiterates, now BRAC has to shift attention to a complete new target group adolescents with primary education and in many cases proceeding through secondary education.

Reading Centres are an embryonic impulse to provide schooled young people in their own community with some aspects of a literate society which is completely lacking at present. This emphasis on bringing simple material in the classroom is matched with providing a meeting place where young people can meet and play games. This continuous reach out to the new generation in poor rural communities might equally provide a venue for sustained

value transformation and skill development and future community leadership. Initially the follow-up provision was mainly consisting of the traditional training provision (nursery, poultry, tailoring and vegetable growing)

Recently new experiments have been launched for rural poor adolescents.
The APON experiment focusing on the creation of adolescent leaders and peer educators tries to combine leadership training with conscious-raising of young female adolescents and relevant and interesting training (photography, computer training and journalism).

The Union Libraries, according to the MTR, are targeting two different groups, which are difficult to be combined: secondary school students and especially female adults. In most cases Union Libraries are located within secondary schools where there are no school libraries. This is combined with thrust formation but membership will be biased by location and hence capital acquisition restricted.
Union Libraries are equally focussing on two categories of service provision, providing access to journals, textbooks and other categories of books (fiction and non fiction) with the provision of livelihood skills training.

The MTR wishes to stress, however, that it considers forms of sustained support to BRAC graduates from an impact point of view essential and relevant.

2.3.7 Conclusions

The MTR considers that BRAC is well on target with regard to meeting the stipulated number of children reached. Still the MTR wishes to voice the following concerns:

- Within the present phase the cycle duration of BRAC NFPE has increased from 36 to 48 months.
- The MTR would favour a demand based need assessment building upon existing village surveys. It seems to be questionable whether a mapping process and a process of inventorising needs for basic education in the NFPE (probably less in the BEOC) target groups has taken place to substantiate targets on an annual basis(as a basis for work planning).
- Considering the state of program implementation and less than 3 years to go revisiting of targets and whether and how to meet the target may be required

A systematic staff development plan for supervisory staff from RMs, QM to RTs seems to be lacking.

Revisiting the Appraisal report recommendations for management decisions for developing quality components the MTR wishes to note the following:

- There is still a need for a focused increase of educational expertise in curriculum, materials and training
- Decentralisation of expertise to the field remains a key issue for consideration.
- Within the limits of cost constraints there remains a need to concentrate on quality improvement in classroom materials and processes

The MTR sees initiatives related to Reading Centres, Union Libraries and APON as attempts by BRAC to develop a new model for rural development for the new generation of young people educated through BRAC.

The MTR wishes to note that there is a need for a feasibility study of both the Reading Centres, Union Libraries and APON to obtain sufficient insight into the feasibility and sustainability of such.

BRAC may according to the MTR be faced with a number of dilemmas:

- The former target group of often illiterate landless poor for RDP is decreasing and complemented by BRAC graduates
- The livelihood type of training programs may meet less demands and not relate effectively to the requirements and expectations of the new generation of better educated youth in general and educated girls in particular
- Primary education in itself when not properly followed up through value based approaches for adolescents may not have a long lasting effect given constraints in the rural economy and the rigidity of the existing value system in society.
- The target group for basic education especially NFPE is gradually decreasing and is replaced by secondary education students and students having completed primary education who need support provisions. BEP should obtain further insight in this shift and how it might affect the program overtime.

3 Monitoring and Research

3.1 Introduction

Monitoring and research are approaches to obtain evidence from field practice which can be systematise to improve policy and practice.
Both monitoring and research as cross cutting areas in the NFPE III program will be dealt with in this chapter.
The first two paragraphs cover monitoring approaches, systems and feedback loops both external and internal applied by the program.

The first issue which will be dealt with is the degree to which the main emphasis of monitoring is on inspection (control) or linked to supervision (quality related).

Processes of monitoring are directly linked to perceptions of top institutional management about the degree and character of process control and adjustments required.
The MTR perceives BRAC as a quite centralised and hierarchical corporate identity aimed at civic society development in rural poor Bangladesh through a set of interrelated provisions (BEP, BDP, micro-credit etc.). BEP/NFP is one of these provisions. The dilemma of such an institution is to find an appropriate balance between checking and control and monitoring for quality improvement. The MTR sympathises with the fact that this balance may be difficult to obtain considering the need to constantly control and socialize the system on accountability issues.

A second aspect is the coverage of the monitoring system.

A monitoring system linked to an educational measurement system may have to cover the four categories; inputs, processes, outputs and ultimately outcomes.

A third aspect is the liaison between monitoring and educational planning.

Monitoring processes can become most effective when directly relating to planning processes:
BRACs Education Programme prepares an Annual Work Plan to reflect upon the planned activities to be achieved during the current year relating achievements to the four LFA outputs. The link between the Work Plan and the Progress Reports is not always clear.

A fourth aspect relates to the degree to which stakeholders are involved:[5] Planning can be centralised and monolithic or "participatory", transactive and interactive. Monitoring outcomes can serve information users: at policy, planning, middle level management (RMs, QMs) or operational levels (Pos and ultimately teachers)

[5] See: A Retrospective of Educational Planning in Comparative Education by Joseph P. Farrel. In: Comparative Education Review, Vol. 41, no. 3, August 199

Usage may relate to the different components of the information cycle such as record keeping,collection,processing,storage,retrieval,analysis,dissemination and utilisation.

3.2. Approaches to Monitoring

NFPE phase III avails of three approaches to monitoring. Management Information System (MIS) . an internal monitoring system and periodical external monitoring by the independent monitoring division.

These three approaches to monitoring together (especially the MIS) have generated consistent and solid information that:

- NFP and BEOC are characterised by high attendance, low drop-outs, high completion and high progression rate. BRAC has created a sustained demand for education by rural poor (for which opportunity costs for education are high)
- The few drop-outs are mainly due to early marriage and migration. At the same time it should be stated that parents seem to be willing to delay marriage of their daughters considering a new value attached to education. This is important.
- All of these approaches could not yield hard evidence on learning achievement. Indirect evidence that children are learning as shown by the high progression rate. Direct evidence is provided through the Quality Watch Report indicating low achievements level with BRAC schools scoring somewhat better than formal schools but remaining below required mastery levels.

Internal monitoring is done on a monthly basis by 21 field-based monitors, co-ordinated by 2 staff members attached to EDU. MIS has five staff members, while the data entry coding control; data cleaning and checking is being done by BRACs computer department. External monitoring is performed for all BRAC programs by an independent department headed by a Director who directly reports to the executive level.

3.2.1 Internal Monitoring

Internal monitoring concentrates on student's attendance and drop out, class room management, uses and care of materials, assessment system, teaching learning process, subjects wise learning performance. These are brought together under 3 broad aspects physical aspects, teacher aspects and learning aspects related to the 4 key subjects in the NFP/BEOC curriculum. The teacher and student related indicators are scored based on a five point Likert type of scale. Learning assessment concentrating on different subject components is scored in percentage and placed in three categories (good, average, low). BEP's internal monitors monitor to identify the deficiencies and gaps of the programs in different issues related to the quality of program. BEP management uses this feedback and takes further steps to develop the program.

Investment in monthly monitoring is high as in a cycle of 2 months a sample of 1365 schools is being covered. In bi-monthly meetings specific performance indicators are

established for learning achievement, subject-wise and grade-wise to concentrate upon. This is the variable component within the internal monitoring.

The MTR was informed that the possibility of monitoring staff can identify learning achievement test items on their own within the learning domain and textbook chapter to be covered. This brings according to the MTR a bias in the system because of:

- Using textbook related assignments may lead to measurement of memorization competencies rather than subject mastery.
- Comparison and average score calculation based on usage of different test items(which may have a different degree of difficulty) decreases the reliability.

The MTR has taken good notice of the results of the internal monitoring as reflected in the Monitoring Report Analysis.[6]

The process covers monitoring design including action planning, random sampling, and monitoring plan implementation. The results of the internal monitoring are fedback to HO top management, QMs and RMs.
The internal (but also external) monitoring uses a system of grading for comparative purposes (grade A, B, C). Grade A is seen as good performance, Grade C is below expected standards. This approach is applied to attendance, to Regional performance, Team performance, School Performance, subject wise performance and gender based Student's Learning Performance. The advantage of the system is that it provides a possible warning signal. The disadvantage is that it stresses the control factor and that it does not discriminate enough to enable focused adjustments to take place.
In general the system may generate information with some built in biases towards the A and B categories. In fact from the information obtained from internal monitoring, differentials in learning achievement may not be detected.
The system is not discriminating very much through its emphasis on average scores and its lack of consideration of many variables making up the score (such as class). The most discriminating variables were in Mathematics and English.
The results are not in line with normal distribution patterns which contradicts observations and spot checks done by the MTR when visiting schools. Is the system geared towards adequately tracing areas where bottlenecks in learner achievement are apparent? If so better approaches, clearer standards, clearer feedback loops have to be developed in close cooperation with MTs and POs capable of developing approaches to accommodate problems perceived.

3.2.2 MIS

The MTR is very impressed with the MIS approach. Seldom in the experience of the MTR team members with other projects, a system was found which is so up to date and so comprehensive in terms of school related, teachers and staff data. The MIS can according to the MTR be characterised as an Educational Management Information system (EMIS) with some planning sheets and sheets related to budgets. It is not a PMIS (Programme

[6] Monitoring Report Analysis (April-may 2001), June 2001, BRA, EDU Research and Monitoring.

Management Information System covering planning and expenditures related to program indicators) which might link planning and budgeting data to the Work Plan.

Records have been maintained from 1985 while the system became computerised from 1993. The generation capacity of the system is revealed in Annex 8. Annex 9 provides the list of forms and the list of standard tables generated on a quarterly basis.
There are 23 forms, which are catered for by the field offices and send to Head Office on a regular basis.
From these 23 forms the following are submitted to head Office and processed:

1. School opening form
2. Information of course completed learners
3. Monthly report on teachers
4. Monthly report on schools
5. Monthly reports on staff
6. School completion report

The other formats contain a full treasure house covering data originating from village and school mobilisation (including surveys on boys/girls in age groups 8-10, 11-16); list of potential teachers; list of selected teachers and learners, bio-data of teachers, information on village committee and data originating from POs weekly school visits (to mention some of these).
All of these data are stored at the team office; others reach the Regional Office consolidated for the clusters covered (the 6 formats referred to). The Team wise consolidated reports are being channelled to HO but no feedback is obtained at Regional Office level as to the Regional aggregations of data generated and available for specific team offices.
MIS generates a very interesting of standard tables which are presented in quarterly reports to executive level within BRAC as a whole and the BEP program. Given the great utility of these tables it might be considered to expand the restricted scope of users and potential users of MIS data. The list of formats and standard tables is attached to this report as Annex 10.

Apart from the standard tables the system can generate and some special tables prepared by MIS at the MTRs request (see Annex 8) the system generates two sets of tables with a broader type of dissemination. MIS also generates the following sets of tables which are disseminated outside BRAC:
The first are quarterly school information sheets, district/upazilla and union wise submitted to the NGO Affairs Bureau and PMED. The system provides school-based information covering the name of the school, village, specifies union and upazilla, enrolment of boys and girls, period of school cycle. Based on this list TEOs implement regular inspections checking on the data provided. The MTR considers this as additional evidence of the validity and reliability of BRAC BEP MIS data.
Team Offices and Regional Offices are getting copies of MIS HO processed tables based on team Offices data on Team Wise School Information are covering apart from information contained in the sheet referred to above also teacher information.

The MTR noticed concerted efforts to mobilise new learners, identify teachers and classes through village surveys. So far, village surveys are ad-hoc affairs solely concentrating on getting new schools started. The MTR notes that the age population surveyed 8-10 and 11-16 years instead of younger age groups makes surveys in their present format not suitable as planning instruments. It is clear that village surveys, combined with HO and field data on graduates constitute an unique source for planning follow-up research and development activities.

3.2.3 External Monitoring

External monitoring of all BRAC divisional programs is done under the responsibility of an Independent Department consisting of the Director, a Manager, 7 analysts at HO and 32 field monitors attached to BDP offices. In a meeting with the Director and the Manager Monitoring the Monitoring Process was explained from the planning process including indicator selection, a yearly monitoring plan, data collection, processing and consolidation; sharing of results at area and team level, at regional manager level and at top management level: to short reports covering one week and narrative reports covering a month.
Issues are identified through holding meetings and instrument development with the help of specialized departments such as BRAC RED.
As in all BRAC programmes monitors consist of people having joined BRAC after graduation and having had several years of field experience e.g. at PO level.
Capacity building is being done through internal TARC courses e.g. on PRA which was introduced through Robert Chambers in 1992.
The MTR took notice of monitoring areas related to the BEP program and found out that there is a large amount of overlapping between internal and external monitoring and between external monitoring and MIS.
External monitoring has dealt among others with Kishori Reading Centres, School completion, lesson plans and sequence of teaching, preparation for opening of schools, village surveys.

3.3 Conclusions on Monitoring

Several approaches are being applied related to monitoring, which, though interesting, tend to cover different echelons of control, starting from RT and PO level, through QM and RM, HO missions, to internal and external monitoring.

Emphasis is placed on :

- Control and accountability
- Standard approaches applying to all program provisions
- Little feedback but monitoring as a policy tool for top management

In considering the Work Plan as a tool for monitoring the status of project implementation with regard to LFA the MTR faced a number of problems.

- The Work Plan does not match with a corresponding budget which allows to review the budget as a monitoring tool (under-expenditure)

- Work Plans are prepared centrally and do not account for regional plans . In fact the whole concept of LFA was found to be an alien within the field structure of BRAC.
- The excellent MIS quarterly report based on standard table formats can not be related to the type of reporting imposed by LFA and Work Plan
- BRAC has a need-based approach to planning which has however constraints for forward planning beyond a three-six month framework.

The program although officially decentralised is still highly centralised. It is not fostering planning capacities at field level. Very few operational manuals are available as tools for users. No job descriptions, job/training specifications are available as a basis for staff development planning. Based on commitment and loyalty of staff the system is, considering the above mentioned constraints well in place.
MIS is very strong in data gathering and processing but more utilization, dissemination and interpretation of these data is required. If BRAC could then mobilise data and combine them with village level data and data stored in records at Regional Offices and Team Offices, a source of potential powerful policy analysis and civic society intelligence could be generated.

3.4 Research

3.4.1 Introduction

Regarding research, the ToR calls for the MTR mission's views on two broad aspects:

a) studies undertaken, i.e. research outputs, by the RED and their quality, and
b) educational research capacity, particularly the staff resources available for research activities, at the RED and the Research Group within the BEP EDU.

3.5 Research Output:

The "List of Activities Related to Research and Process Evaluation", as designed at the time of project appraisal three years ago, appears in the project document "Education Programme (NFPE Phase III)", pages 85 and 86. The present status of implementation reported to the MTR mission is given on Sheet V, in annex 9. The sheet shows that several of the scheduled research activities regarding the development of the social studies curriculum and teaching method, on mathematics learning outcomes, on the operation of reading centres, on the role of pre-primary education, and on the performance of NFPE students in grades 4 and 5, have been completed. Particularly interesting is the development of a standardized achievement test (SAT), which was initiated in 1995 in cooperation with the Institute of Education Research of Dhaka University and the Bangladesh Forum for Educational Development. The RED is further developing tools with the intention to hand them over to the BEP for monitoring the quality of its education programme. The complexity of developing an educational assessment tool and the high level of educational expertise required should not be underestimated. The question then is whether the RED has the human resources available. Indeed, the development of a tool for assessing learner achievement is of vital importance to the NFED programme. The tasks of

the RED education team are challenging and the MTR mission considers the progress made to achieve the targets as adequate.
The document "Education Research Plan 2001" supplied to the MTR mission by the RED, indicating the topics, the research teams and the timing, is reproduced in annex... It mentions research for Education Watch 2000 on learning achievements at the end of Grade 5, which has in the mean time been completed, while the studies on research led curriculum development on mathematic and social are reportedly being finalized[7].

For a clear understanding, it should be borne in mind that research on education is undertaken by BRAC researchers in two distinct teams with contrasting and complementing features: on the one hand the researchers in the Research and Evaluation Division (RED), an independent unit within the framework of BRAC[8], and, on the other hand, also a small research group in the Education Development Unit (EDU) of BRAC's Education Programme (BEP).[9] The Research and Evaluation Division (RED) conducts studies regarding BRAC's own programmes, including of course the education programme, and also on various other topics at the request of national and international organizations, donors, NGOs. The RED is well known in Bangladesh and has been maintaining linkages with academic institutions and organization in the country and abroad, for instance, the Government of Bangladesh, UNICEF, the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), the university of Manchester, to mention only a few. The publication "BRAC Research 2000"[10] gives an overview of all research activities, including those on education, undertaken by the RED of BRAC. In addition, it also gives information on dissemination of the research through studies published by BRAC and by other publishers and journals (e.g. "International Review of Education", "Perspectives in Education"), and through the RED researchers' participation in workshops.
The list and copies of research papers on education that have been produced by the RED since the beginning of phase III were made available to the MTR mission. The list, reproduced in annex 11, can give the members of the donor consortium some idea about the topics covered, but it should be borne in mind that the titles do not always reflect accurately the field of investigation.

Title:	**Field:**
Impact of the BRAC Education Programme on the Adolescents.	Kishor Kishori schools, now called BEOC.
Causes behind gender difference in mathematics: an exploratory study in BRAC schools.	NFPE schools.
Textbook Distribution Programme of BRAC.	Loan of textbooks to poor secondary school students.

[7] Meeting with the RED education team on 30 July and interview with dr. Mushtaque Chowdhury, Director of RED, on 13 August 2001.
[8] BRAC Research 2000, p. 10.
[9] See BRAC organigram and BEP organigram on pages ...
[10] BRAC, Dhaka, June 2001, 118 p.

3.5.1 Qualitative Assessment:

The MTR mission looked at the relevance of the research topic, of the objectives of the studies, the appropriateness of the methodology adopted to reach the objectives and the soundness and usefulness of the conclusions in the contribution to the overarching objective of quality improvement of the various education programmes for the poor piloted and implemented by BRAC.

Regarding the relevance of research undertaken by RED, it should be borne in mind that most of the above-mentioned research papers have been written in support of BRAC's own education programme and at the request of its Director. The Director of RED estimates that about 60 to 70 percent of the RED Education Research Group's research activities are in support of the BEP en some 30 to 40 percent on education research requested from outside BRAC.[11] Substantial research work was conducted as part of BRAC's collaboration to CAMPE's Education Watch reports and covers the primary education sub sector nationwide (and therefore also important for the BEP, since the various BRAC education programmes need of course also to be seen in the context of the Bangladesh education sector). Suggestions and requests by donors are also taken into account. It can be said, therefore, that the research agenda is largely demand driven.

Research studies directly in support of the BRAC Education Programme, completed since the beginning of phase III, deal with the following programme areas: NFPE (8 papers, 2 of them also on ESP) and/or BEOC (4 papers), Union Libraries (4 papers), secondary education (2 papers) and pre-primary (1 paper). In several papers, for instance on assessment of performance, correlations are made with factors such as parents' education background, socio-economic status, and gender. However, only one paper[12] has gender difference as specific topic of the research.

Regarding methods used, almost all combine the random sampling and a pre-selected choice of the population surveyed. Two papers are based on case studies. The instruments used are mostly interviews, often in combination with written tests of cognitive knowledge, competencies and achievements. Language competencies are also assessed on the basis of written tests, no oral tests. Three studies also adopted observation as a tool for data collection.

[11] Interview with dr. Mushtaque Chowdhury, Director of RED, on 13 August 2001.

[12] Shahjamal MM (2000). Causes behind gender difference in mathematics achievement: an exploratory study in BRAC schools [dissertation]. Dhaka: Department of Non-formal Continuing Education, Institute of Education Research, University of Dhaka.

Title (abbreviated)	**Programme area**	*Method*	**Instrument**
Textbook Distribution Programme of BRAC	Secondary	Quantitative	Interview
Impact of the BRAC Education Programme on the Adolescents	BEOC	Quantitative & qualitative	Interview
Learning achievement of the students after completion of grade 5 from BRAC schools	NFPE, secondary	Quantitative	Test & interview
An analysis of issues and problems of BRAC's Gonokendra Pathagar	Union libraries	Qualitative	Interview
Cognitive knowledge in English of the staff and teachers of Non-Formal Primary Education Programme of BRAC	NFPE	Quantitative	Test, interview & observation
Basic competencies of the graduates of BRAC's non-formal schools 1995 to 1999	NFPE, ESP, BEOC	Quantitative & qualitative	Test & interview
Continuation of BRAC non-formal school graduates of 1995 in formal school	NFPE, ESP, BEOC	Quantitative & qualitative	Interview
Assessing Operational Status of BRAC Gonokandra Pathagar	Union libraries	Quantitative	Form (questionnaire)
Follow up study of the teachers of BRAC schools who lost their job due to shifting of school	NFPE, BEOC	Quantitative & qualitative	Interview
Perception of different stakeholders regarding BRAC pre-primary schools	Pre-primary	Quantitative & qualitative	Interview & observation
Causes behind gender difference in mathematics achievement in BRAC schools	NFPE	Qualitative	Test, interview & observation

3.5.2 Research Capacity

Research at BRAC since the Start of NFPE

After scaling up the coverage of the programme, more emphasis was given to qualitative improvements. At BRAC Head Office the Materials Development Unit and the Quality Managers, Master Trainers and Batch Trainers in the field were developed as the major promoters of educational improvement. Beyond the need for curricula and textbook writing, the drive for quality education generated the need for formative evaluation, assessment and learning management tool development. These strategies of pedagogic improvements required the RED to conduct research and provide additional feedback.
In 1991 a specialized unit for educational research was set up within the RED to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of BRACS NFPE school programme. The education specialists of the RED developed two testing tools to evaluate the performance of BRAC pupils: the Assessment of Basic Competencies (ABC) test to study the reading, writing, numeracy and life skills, and the Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) or NFPE

Achievement Test (NAT) which was developed to study the level of learners who graduate from BRAC schools.[13]
During Phase III the Materials Development Unit of the BEP was developed into an Education Development Unit (EDU), and within the EDU a research team was created to assist in the quality improvement efforts in close liaison and with the methodological assistance from the RED.

Respective Roles of RED and EDU Research Teams

In addition to research on education conducted by the RED, as discussed above, research tasks are also carried out by a small group of four staff members of the BEP EDU undertaking research in addition to other tasks. They do not have much experience in research but they have acquired a lot of field experience in the BRAC Education Programme (BEP). In contrast, the RED researchers are highly qualified in research methodology and one of them is also a qualified educationist doing education sector analysis, but they lack field experience regarding the teaching-learning processes in the BEP schools. Therefore, Kaniz Fatima[14], the Director of BEP, feels that it is very useful to have the small EDU research group readily available to undertake ad hoc research regarding problems of the BRAC education programme in a flexible way, when the need arises, in support of decision making within the BEP. The RED researchers can concentrate on larger research projects in line with their approved annual work plan, and taking into account the agenda of studies for various organizations outside BRAC. The RED also works closely with the M&E Department and helps develop capacity in the BEP MIS. Thus, while both teams carry out research activities, they complement each other since the scope of their activities and the degree of flexibility of their work agendas differ in nature.

[13] NFPE report Phase 2, pages 3, 17, 19, 20-25, and 47.
[14] Interview with the MTR mission on July 2001.

Comparison:

RED Education Group	**EDU Research Activity**
HR: 6 researchers. Full time on research. Only one has BRAC field experience.	HR: 4 staff with field experience, engaged in research activities. Part time on research (full time in EDU). All have BEP field experience.
Work for BEP and for other clients outside BRAC.	Work exclusively for BEP.
Topics of research for BEP given by BEP. methodology proposed by RED en discussed with BEP.	Topics and methodology decided by BEP. Research proposal shared with the different groups in EDU.
Annual work plan, timing (by month) of delivery of research as agreed with BEP. Possibility to recruit outside consultants, if necessary to meet time constraints.	Flexible timing, research undertaken as the need arises. Prioritisation depending on immediate needs and time constraints.
Scope: impact studies, repetition of tests already conducted by RED in previous years, SAT, follow up surveys on BRAC graduates. Work for other clients (e.g. collaboration to CAMPE's Education Watch studies).	Scope: small and specific research, directly useful for quality improvement, curriculum development and/or capacity development (for instance, when it is reported that teachers and pupils face a problem with sentence construction in English, research will start at short notice aiming at solving the problem).

3.6 Human Resources for Research Activities

The RED Education Research Group consists of six researchers with degrees in education and training in statistics or research methodology, but without experience of BEP field work except one of them. They benefit from guidance and supervision by the Director of RED, who has extensive qualifications and experience in research.

The BEP EDU has designated four of its staff members for research activities. They hold master's degrees and have adequate field experience as PO in the BEP, but, except one of them, have no experience in research. They received 10 days training on "research led curriculum development" by experienced external consultants[15] and the RED researchers give them methodological advice as part of their capacity building tasks.

[15] Mike Harrison and Caroline Dyer of Manchester University.

The development of these human resources is largely demand driven, for instance RED may need to provide some of its researchers with additional ad hoc training which would be useful to help them carry out a particular research project that has been commissioned. The BRAC Human Resources Department is then asked to contact donors, who often try to help (the assistance given by the British Council, for instance, is highly appreciated). However, the Director of the RED agrees that annual HRD plans are indispensable, but at the same time it should be recognized that additional needs for capacity building at an ad hoc basis for human resource development do arise.[16]

[16] Interview with dr. Mushtaque Chowdhury, Director of RED, on 13 August 2001.

Comparison of Human Resources for Education Research in RED and in EDU:

	Degrees	Research experience	BRAC field experience	BEP field experience
RED Education Group				
Samir Ranjan Nath (Co-ordinator RED Education Group)	MSc Educ. Research method. (Oxford) MSc Statistics (Jahangirnagar)	Since 1991 with RED.		
Md. Altaf Hossain	M. Ed. (Manchester) M.A. Philosophy (Rajshahi)	Since 1993 with RED	PO RDP (1989-91)	NFPE Trainer, TARC (1991-93)
Md. Kaisar Ali Khan	M. Ed. (Manchester)	Since 1991 with RED		
Md. Abul Kalam	M. Ed. (Manchester) M.S.S. Sociol. (Dhaka)	Since 1991 with RED, 1987-88 with NCTB.	Field based RED research (1991-96).	
Shaheen Akter	M. Ed. (Dhaka) M. Sc. Psychol. (Dhaka)			
Mirja Mohammad Shahjamal	M. Ed. (Dhaka)	3 months in the study Education Watch 2000.		
BEP EDU Research Group				
Md. Kabir Tafiqul Islam	MSc. Geography (Dhaka)	Research assistant, Centre for Urban Studies, Univ. of Dhaka (1988-89)	ESP (1992-93).	PO (1989-92), Area Educ. Manager (1993-97).
Md. Abdul Bareque	MSc. psychol. (Rajshahi)			PO & Area Educ. Manager (1991-98).
Sk. Md. Ashrafuzzaman	MCom. Management (Dhaka)		Training Division (1992-96)	PO & Area Educ. Manager (1989-92).
Md. Azmal Hossain	MSS econ. (Dhaka)			PO, Area Edsdfvghu7uc. Manager & Monitor (1990-2001).

3.7 Conclusions

The research function is essential for informed management decision-making.

Curriculum development, textbook writing and the implementation of more child oriented teaching methods require accurate surveys from the field to analyse existing weaknesses and give orientation to the continuous process of quality improvement. Although DPs or other observers may wonder why the organigram shows a research function in the EDU, in addition to the RED, the MTR mission is satisfied that there is no duplication of work going on. Rather, the research functions in the RED and in the EDU are different in scope and complement each other.

One ambitious activity of the RED requiring highly specialized skills is the development of the SAT. While appreciating the dedication of the researchers and their experience in activities such as sample surveys, tracer studies and conducting tests, the MTR mission wonders whether the RED's own resources will be sufficient for the development of the SAT to cover adequately the entire primary education level. It would be safe to envisage possibilities for collaboration with specialized institutions or consultants.

The Mission is impressed by the remarkable Education Watch reports to which BRAC researchers have given outstanding contributions.

As mentioned in earlier paragraph, the field trips allowed the MTR mission to meet numbers of former BRAC pupils attending secondary schools or other continuing education, and to see the follow-up registers in the Team Offices were the progress of those children was recorded and updated yearly. The data in those registers should be fully used for an extensive and gender specific survey study on the progress of BRAC graduates throughout the years, to complement the existing tracer studies made on the basis of relatively small samples.

4. Enhancing Quality: EDU and Field Structure

4.1 Preliminary Consideration Regarding Quality of Primary Education in Bangladesh:

Recent research (achievement tests carried out for Education Watch 2000) has shown that country wide the quality of education is generally poor, but in BRAC schools pupils' performance is less weak than in other schools.
The same research indicates that in general boys do better than girls, urban children do better than rural children, and socio-economic background and educational facilities have significant influence on learning achievement. Since the BRAC schools' target population is situated in the socio-economically most vulnerable groups, in rural areas, and predominantly female, the combination of those three factors would lead us to expect performance levels far below average. However, in actual fact the BRAC pupils perform better than average. What then are the quality factors which could explain this success?

4.2 Provisions for Quality Pedagogical Support at BRAC HO

After scaling up the NFPE programme from 1985 till 1996, during Phase II the emphasis was put on qualitative improvements. A Materials Development Unit (MDU) at BRAC HO and a field structure with Quality Managers, Master Trainers and Batch Trainers were developed as the major promoters of educational improvement. During the present Phase III the unit taking care of curriculum and textbook development was further expanded to cope also with research driven and decentralized training and supervision of teachers. The expected outcome would be improved pupil performance due to more child teaching methods and user-friendly textbooks and teacher guides. The driving force for quality improvement within BEP became known as the Education Development Unit (EDU). The emphasis is still very strongly on quality improvement and the EDU's activities have gradually been expanded far beyond curriculum development and textbook writing. These activities now also include the research function which must allow the EDU to steer all those activities in a purposeful way, as explained earlier (chapter 3 on monitoring and research), liaison with the field structures through Quality Managers, and the piloting and development of new initiatives such as pre-primary education and education for adolescents and ethnic minorities (which is closely related to the BRAC philosophy).

The present status of Phase III regarding quality improvement through the "revision, development of learning materials and introduction of new initiatives" is summarized on Sheet II, items 8 and 9 (Annex 9). More details regarding implementation of activities related to curriculum and material development were supplied to the MTE mission on Sheet III. On the one hand, the progress accomplished is considerable, but at the other hand the tasks still remaining are extremely challenging. The development of curricula, textbooks and appropriate teaching methods are very complex and specialized areas requiring skills in the fields of child psychology, pedagogy, methodology as well as subject knowledge. Up till now the BEP curriculum group has developed attractive materials for grades 1 to 3, and

they have started work on materials for grades 4 and 5. This has required considerable investments in staff development as well as research and high-level consultancy services.

Work on new mathematics textbooks for grades 4 and 5 have already been completed. However, the MTR mission is concerned about the magnitude of the tasks and the human resources required for developing new grade 4 and 5 science and social science textbooks, as well as additional materials for Bangla and English in order to help teachers adopt new child teaching methods. The BEP management should carefully assess the specialized competencies required for all that work against the human resources available.

At present, the BEP EDU consists of a Programme Coordinator and 49 staff members, 27 female and 23 male. Amongst them:

- 17 are in the curriculum group, 15 working on curriculum and textbook development and 2 on illustration and design,
- 16 work on adolescent related initiatives,
- 4 on research

The remaining staff is involved in various other essential tasks such as training, liaison with field operations, training, coordination with Quality Managers, pre-primary education or education for ethnic minorities.

The list of qualifications, experience and job descriptions of the staff of the curriculum group were supplied to the MTR mission and are reproduced in annex 12. The human resources available in the curriculum group at present can be summarized as follows:

Working groups	Qualifications		Experience	
	Psycho-pedagogic	Subject specific	BEP curr. Dev.	Teaching
Bangla		1 B.A. 1 M.Sc. (zoology)	2001 2000	
English	1 M.Ed.	 1 M.A. (English) 1 M.Sc. (botany)	1998 1999 2001	2 semesters 1997-1999
Mathematics		1 M.Sc. (maths) 1 M.A. (Bengali) 1 M.Sc. (botany)	1998 1997 2001	
Social studies grades 1-3		1 M.Sc. (public administration) 1 B.Sc. 1 B.A.	1994 2001 1996	
Social studies & science grades 4 & 5		2 MSS (econ.) 1 B.A. 1 MSS (public administration)	1997 & 2000 1996 2001	
Illustration		1 M. Fine Arts 1 B.A.	1994 2001	

Only one member of this group has a pedagogic degree. All of them have received additional in-service training, as can be expected in a continuous staff development process. They also have opportunities to do field visits for classroom observation.

However, the range of tasks for this group is quite impressive. In order to be able to develop subject specific materials in a purposeful manner, analysis of monitoring reports and field visits to schools are indispensable. They also conduct training and workshops with QMs and TARC trainers, and preparing these requires time. In addition, the English subject group writes progress reports, work plans and liases donors.

Tasks listed in job descriptions	Staff engaged in the various tasks listed					
	3 (Senior) Material Development Specialists	8 Material developers	1 QM	2 POs	1 Management Trainee	Total
Developing materials for specific subject	All 3	All 8	1	2	1	15
Field visits for school observation	All 3	All 8	1	2		14
Conducting training and workshops with QMs and TARC trainers	All 3	All 8	1	2		14
Refreshers training follow-up	All 3	All 8	1	2		14
Monitoring report analysis	2	6				8
QM liaison	1	1				2
Writing progress reports & work-plans		2 (English WG)				2
Donor liaison		2 (English WG)				2

One special feature of the BEP as an organization, in contrast to government departments, is the flexibility. This includes changes in staff allocation and shifts from one group or unit to another. The above picture is that at the time of MTR and it can and will change according to the needs.

4.3 Provisions for Quality Pedagogical Support in the Field

To ensure the delivery of quality education by teachers who have not enjoyed formal pre-service teacher training, an elaborate system of staff has been put in place in order to ensure administrative and pedagogic school supervision..[17]

Type of staff	Predominant nature of tasks	Total numbers	Female	Female as % of total
Regional Managers	Administrative	32	5	16

[17] Table 4, Annexure 8.

Quality Managers	Pedagogic	31	12	39
Team In Charge	Administrative & pedagogic	287	105	37
Programme Officers	Administrative & pedagogic	2086	405	19
Resource Teachers	Pedagogic	171	146	85
Monitors	Pedagogic	23	3	13
Total		2630	676	26

In addition, amongst the staff and the teachers those who have good subject knowledge or communication and pedagogic skills are selected to give support and advice to the teachers. They carry out those functions next to the normal duties of their rank. For instance, amongst the Team-in-Charge, Programme Organizers and Resource Teachers, some who have particular subject-related skills are selected for the function of "Master Trainer" and will assist in teacher training programmes or refresher courses. Among the schoolteachers, some who possess good subject knowledge and communication skills are selected and designated as "Batch Trainers". Their duty is to help other teachers in their neighbourhood, in addition to their normal work as a schoolteacher, RT, PO or TIC. Thus, in addition to the regular teacher training courses (these are discussed in the following chapter, paragraph 5.2), efforts are made at the local and school level to constantly help teachers to improve their teaching and the quality of the NFPE system in general.

The next question then is in how far that unique system of teacher supervision, guidance and motivation effectively and efficiently generates improved outcomes. For instance, if the QMs, TiCs, POs, RTs and BTs during their frequent visits always check the attendance register, one can expect that the teacher will ensure that school attendance is optimal. But in how far can the teacher really put into practice the child teaching methods advocated by the BEP? In how far is the work of the children in small groups, in contrast to the rote learning by large classes as practiced in the formal school system, really effective in helping them acquire problem-solving skills? Or could it be that the five groups of children in a class study the same topic at the same time, with the children just listening to their group leader and repeating what he/she says, instead of each group working creatively and progressing at its own pace? In short, the BRAC system of pedagogical support to the teachers in the field is an essential and important achievement, but the next step is to ensure that it effectively generates improved teaching-learning practices in the schools, in particular the child oriented approach which EDU is aiming to implement.

The BEP field structure ensures no doubt a very low degree of teacher and pupil absenteeism, a very high degree of commitment by the teachers and a child friendly and happy learning environment, compared to the formal school system, but as Director Kaniz Fatema mentioned to the team[18], still more needs to be done to further improve the quality of education, and this will remain a challenging task for years to come.

[18] Interview with the MTR mission on 30 July 2001.

4.4 Liaison between HO and Field

Of crucial importance is the delivery of quality education - transfer of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values - to the ultimate beneficiaries of the BEP, namely the children in the schools. That is the reason why the liaison between the provision of quality pedagogical support by the BEP EDU in BRAC HO (see paragraph 4.2 above) and in the field (paragraph 4.3) is of utmost importance.

To ensure that linkage, a system has been put in place whereby feedback from the teachers regarding difficulties they meet in using the materials designed by EDU, curricula, textbooks, teacher guides, teaching methods etc., as well as observations by the field staff, POs, TiCs, QMs and RMs, can be transmitted to EDU through reporting and monthly QMs' and RMs' meetings at HO in Dhaka. All QMs and RMs from all over the country have such a monthly meeting at HO in Dhaka, lasting usually two full days. MTR mission members had the opportunity to be present as observers in the QM meeting for the month of August 2001. Items on the meeting agenda were: report of last month's activities and feed back, small group discussion on BT orientation, problems and possible solutions, QM administration, planning of staff training, exchange with curriculum group maths & sciences, etc.
The discussions were remarkably open, and that openness seems to be a characteristic of the communications among field staff and of the guidance and advice transmitted to the teachers.

During field visits, the MTR mission noticed the fact that field staff takes notes of their observations in an ad hoc way in their diary. Checklists are perhaps present in their mind, but apparently no written forms are used. The diaries allow them to keep a record of their observations and to follow them up during consecutive school visits, but no standard type reporting formats seem to be used for transmitting those observations to HO. The volume and quality of feedback from field to HO seems to depend largely on the monthly meetings of QMs and RMs in the absence of institutional systems.

The link between EDU staff in HO in Dhaka and the schoolteachers in the field is also ensured through monthly visits. The summary of the job descriptions of the EDU curriculum group at HO in paragraph 4.2 shows that such field visits are part of their normal tasks, as well as liaison with QMs and monitoring. On average the staff of the curriculum group spends at least one week every month in the field. These frequent opportunities to keep in touch with the every day problems faced by the rural teachers in their schools, again are in sharp contrast to the practice in formal education systems in many parts of the world, where curriculum and materials development is often conducted in more academic and urban institutions and model schools.

However, careful attention should be given to the clarification and focus of the purposes and modalities of the different visits to the schoolteacher to avoid overlapping and duplication of effort. For instance, do the EDU staff during their frequent field visits supervise, advise and/or observe schools and/or field staff? How do the RMs, TiCs and POs, who all have school supervision in their job descriptions, coordinate their school

supervision and support activities among themselves and with the BTs' pedagogic support to the teachers?

In general, one could say that the link between EDU at HO and the field predominantly depends on the contacts, observations and exchanges by staff, both field staff and HO staff, and less on standardized reporting in writing. In BRAC, with ethical, committed and motivated staff, this approach seems to work remarkably well so far. Human resources development will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter.

4.5 Conclusions

An important factor ensuring the motivation of the teachers is the quite unique system developed by BRAC for administrative and pedagogic supervision and guidance of the teachers through frequent school visits by field staff as well as HO staff[19] .

The MTR mission is concerned about the magnitude of the tasks involved in developing new grade 4 and 5 textbooks and new child teaching methods. The suggestion was made that, instead of developing more textbooks for grades 4 and 5, the existing Government textbooks could be used and the BEP could invest in extra training for teachers and field staff to help them overcome the difficulties they face in using those textbooks. That would allow the EDU to concentrate its human resources more on research driven continuous improvement of the BRAC materials, curricula and textbooks, that have already been developed and of the teaching methods used in the existing schools, as well as on the challenges of new initiatives, particularly pre-primary education, and adolescent related initiatives. However, the EDU prefers to go ahead with the development of new science and social science textbooks for grades 4 and 5, with the help of consultancy services.

Of crucial importance is the effective delivery of quality education to the ultimate beneficiaries of the BEP, namely the children in the schools. In the liaison between the work of the EDU at HO and the teaching and learning practices actually being implemented in the schools, the human factor seems to dominate.[20] The liaison is ensured largely through frequent field and HO staff meetings and field visits, and depend less on formal, standardized systems of reporting in writing. The roles and duties (pedagogic, administrative, inspection) of the different actors (EDU HO staff, various field staff, RM, QM, POs, RTs) regarding field visits to the schools should be clearly identified.

[19] An other important factor of success is the child friendly atmosphere and relatively low pupil/teacher ratio in the BRAC schools. See also chapter 6 about quality of learning and teaching.
[20] Human resources development will be looked into in chapter 5.

3 Capacity Building and Staff Development

5.1 Staff Development Provisions, Needs and Constraints

This paragraph deals with capacity development of permanent, full time staff from the time of their recruitment through their deployment in the field or at HO, while the training of the teachers is the topic of the next paragraph, 5.2.

5.1.1 The Needs for Staff Development:

From the preceding chapters it has become clear that all staff, at HO as well as in the field, face enormous challenges and quite heavy and diverse tasks. In the all important BEP EDU, mostly young staff is engaged in a variety of important activities such as curriculum and materials development and pedagogic research, which are of crucial importance for quality education delivery. In chapters 4.2 and 3 respectively, their different tasks were reviewed in the perspective of their qualifications and experience. Equally important, are the field staffs that ensure the link with the schoolteachers, through diverse administrative and pedagogic supervisory and advisory tasks, as analysed in chapter 4.3. What emerged was a clear need for staff development in order to help them carry out their respective duties adequately. This need for constant staff development is in fact indispensable in a dynamic and flexible organisation such as BRAC, which is constantly adapting its programmes to the changing needs of a civil society in transformation.

In this context, special mention should be made to one key factor in the drive for quality improvement, namely the Quality Managers (QMs), who are responsible for the training of Master Trainers. They strongly need further competency development and confidence building. The speed of implementation of the quality improvement has not fully been matched by a corresponding capacity building process of QMs. This, according to the MTR mission, puts a pressure on a system capable of meeting the specified targets according to project document requirements which has problems in meeting the requirements of building a critical mass for effectively developing and sustaining quality.

In order to effectively and efficiently develop human resources to meet the objectives of the BEP, definitions of clear job descriptions are a prerequisite. Indeed, well defined job descriptions and analysis of competencies and experience required can be developed into training specifications. For each potential trainee, that is to say for each staff member, training specifications need to be developed taking into account the qualifications and experience (s) he has on the one hand, and the skills required in accordance with his or her job description on the other hand.

A comprehensive human resources development plan can then be developed, adopting various modalities such as
- training programmes organized by BRAC,
- other in country training courses,
- short training in neighbouring countries, or

- fellowships abroad.

5.1.2 BEP Staff Development as it is at Present:

Status:
The original activity plan regarding training, made at the time of preparation of phase III, and the status at mid term is reproduced in Annex 9, Sheet IV. A more concrete picture - real case studies - can be extracted from the brief CVs of EDU staff in Annex 12.

Regular BRAC training programmes offered:

In the past, staff training modules were prepared in collaboration between staff from BEP HO and staff from the TARCs. A study by the BEP research group on the perception of staff and teachers of those training modules showed a gap between the trainers experience and the realities in the rural schools. This led to the decentralisation of training in order to make it more relevant.[21]

BEP now offers the following staff training programmes at TARCs and in the field:[22]

TARC based staff training by TARC Trainers:

Trainees targeted:	Course:	Duration (days)
New staff	Foundation Training	6
All, after 2 months	Operation Management Training	6
All, after 4 months	Pedagogy Management Training for Staff-01	12
All staff, after 6 months	Pedagogy Management Training for Staff-02	12
All staff, after 10 months	Subject Specialisation & Trainers' Training	12
Old staff	Trainers' training	6
TIC	Operation Management Training	12
QM	Advanced Pedagogy Management Training	6
RM	Development Management Training	10
RM & QM	Basic Computing	6

Field based staff training:
Need based workshops, trainings and special refresher courses organized by field level management, mainly in Team Offices, or in Regional Offices.

Apart from the BEP courses mentioned above, there are other BRAC staff trainings on:

- Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL)
- Organization Development Training (OD)
- BRAC's Values Training

[21] A brief on BEP Research GROUP, BEP Training Group, Set-05, BEP, BRAC, Dhaka, August 2001.
[22] Id.

Well aware of the limitations of the training programmes in the past, and of the need for improvement, the BEP and he BRAC Training Division have formed a four member Training Core Group. Two members of EDU ensure liaison with the Core Group. Responsibilities of the group are:

- To overcome pedagogical gaps, they have to sit periodically with different groups of BEP (subject groups, QMs, MTs).
- They also have to visit school according to needs of BEP.
- They are responsible for preparing of modules and training materials with the help of BEP personnel.
- They have to develop other trainer for the training division.
- Ccollected reports from TARC (Both quantitative and qualitative).
- Two members of EDU and QM jointly evaluate TARC training in order to ensure quality of training .[23]

Training abroad:
Regarding staff training abroad, at present most donors want to break with the past habit of "ad hoc" requests for financing study trips and participation in workshops and training abroad, and insist on a training plan. This was analysed in paragraph 3.3.3.3 above, regarding training needs for researchers. The MTR considers that a staff development plan based on competency requirements and training needs may accommodate the existing ad hoc approach through training

5.1.3 Conclusion:

BEP has drawn lessons from the limitations of the BEP and TARC staff training programmes organized by the BEP and TARCs in the past, and of the "ad hoc" approach to training abroad, as it was prevalent in the past.
The key issue now is to move away from an ad hoc, need-based training to comprehensive human resources development planning.
The challenge is to prepare a systematic staff development plan starting from tasks, proceeding to job descriptions, training specification and linking training plans with implementation plans (including involvement of consultants or sub-contracting during training periods).

[23] Id.

5.2. Teacher training

5.2.1 Target Group and Basic Training Provision

BRAC BEP has accepted the challenge of preparing lowly educated (class 9 to SSC graduates) rural women for committed teachers in their own community. BRAC is building upon their desire for gainful employment, even though at a low salary level and on their talents as managers of rural households in difficult conditions. It proved and that was recognized in the class observations that they apply their managerial skills in managing schools in a family type of way. Not influenced by common norms related to co-curricular activities they have brought joy, songs and dancing in the schools. In order to create conditions to improve retention, BRAC preferably recruits married women and has established a system of salary incentives based on full cycle completion.

There is no doubt about the fact that BRAC's NFPE's strengths lie primarily upon its teacher training strategy. A glance at the number of people for providing academic support to the teacher, the main actor in the classroom, is really surprising while we look at the govt. teacher training mechanism.

Box 1: BRAC Basic Teacher Training Program Showing Allocation of time on Different Training Aspects

TARC basic Training on NFPE	12 days
Introduction general idea on Education and primary Education	8 h 10 m
BRAC Education Program	32 hours
Child Psychology	1 h 20 m.
Teaching/Learning methods	11 hours 30 m.
Participation in learning by learners especially girls	20 m.
Introduction to Co-curricular activities of BRAC	30 m.
Assessment techniques	30 m.
Parent- Teacher relationship	1 hours
T/L on Readings stage	20 m.
Lesson Plan and demonstration	19 hours 30 m.
Development of teaching aids (discussion)	45 m
Subject teaching with aids- Bangla	3 hours 20 m.
Subject teaching with aids – Maths	3 hours 20 m.
Subject teaching - Env. Studies	1 hour 45 m.
Creative Writing	1 hour 20 m.
Characteristics of an Ideal school & teacher	2 hours 15 m.
Discussion on other courses, course review & written evaluation	3 hours 15 m.
Practice of co-curricular Activities (dance, song, drawing, story telling, recitation)	8 hours

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Practice of co-curricular Activities (dance, song, drawing, story telling, recitation)	8 hours

5.2.2 Upgrading Training and Supervision

Apart from basic training BRAC applies a system of grade specific introduction, orientation programs and upgrading training. A system of supervisory support has been established which is necessary to compensate for the relative small investment in initial training. This approach is systematically different from the one applied by GoB.

BRAC	**Govt.**
• TiC	• Subject people at NCTB (Need based)
• Subject people in EDU (need based)	• PTI Instructors
• Quality Manager	• ATEO
• Master trainers	• Head Teacher
• Batch Trainers	
• Resource Teachers	

Programme Organisers, (POs) supervise schools. The best performing POs are selected as master trainers. The best performing teachers are selected as Batch trainers. Those supervisory staff are playing roles in improving teachers performance in classrooms. Separate from BEP staff there are TARC trainers responsible for implementing initial training to all new teachers. At regional level, there are two key persons, the Quality Manager and Team-in-charge who supervises overall quality of NFPE in the region, and team in charge responsible for the team office. The quality managers gives feedback of the field level academic problems to the HO on a regular basis, once a month. In the meeting, QMs share the field level experience with the EDU curriculum planners and through 2 days meeting, they try to find solutions also. One QM's meeting was observed for some time, where all types of academic problems were shared with the EDU people and in the presence of the review team, some QM informed the house about the copying practice of children as a hindrance to actual learning.

The supplementary materials are nice productions with a good number of illustrations written in simple Bangla. Those materials would help learning to be easier and more attractive. The following box on TARC Basic Training Programme provides a good picture of teacher preparation mechanism of BRAC. BRAC is keen to improve its teacher preparation mechanism in order to ensure quality education in NFPE schools. Within TARC initial training, 19.5 hours is spent on lesson plan preparation and participants are provided with 11.5 hours teaching-learning methods. The lesson plan has received 19.5 hours and Teaching-Learning methods has received due consideration, 11.5 hours in the TARC Basic Training Program. . Within the training 8 hours are allocated to co-curricular activities

5.2.2 Upgrading Training and Supervision

Apart from basic training BRAC applies a system of grade specific introduction, orientation programs and upgrading training. A system of supervisory support has been established which is necessary to compensate for the relative small investment in initial training. This approach is systematically different from the one applied by GoB.

BRAC	**Govt.**
* TiC * Subject people in EDU (need based) * Quality Manager * Master trainers * Batch Trainers * Resource Teachers	* Subject people at NCTB (Need based) * PTI Instructors * ATEO * Head Teacher

Programme Organisers, (POs) supervise schools. The best performing POs are selected as master trainers. The best performing teachers are selected as Batch trainers. Those supervisory staff are playing roles in improving teachers performance in classrooms. Separate from BEP staff there are TARC trainers responsible for implementing initial training to all new teachers. At regional level, there are two key persons, the Quality Manager and Team-in-charge who supervises overall quality of NFPE in the region, and team in charge responsible for the team office. The quality managers gives feedback of the field level academic problems to the HO on a regular basis, once a month. In the meeting, QMs share the field level experience with the EDU curriculum planners and through 2 days meeting, they try to find solutions also. One QM's meeting was observed for some time, where all types of academic problems were shared with the EDU people and in the presence of the review team, some QM informed the house about the copying practice of children as a hindrance to actual learning.

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Box2: BEP Training after TARC Initial Training of 12 days

Grade 1 -	For NFPE	-14 days
	For KK	-17 days
Grade 2 -	NFPE (after 6 days orientation on grade 2 curriculum .)	-14 days
	KK	-12 days
Grade 3 -	NFPE (after 6 days orientation n grade 3 curriculum.)	-23 days
	KK	-20 days
Grade 4 -	NFPE (on each subjects)	-25 days
Grade 5 -	NFPE (on each subjects)	-12 days
	KK (on each subjects)	-12 days
	Total training days for NFPE	114 days
	Total training days for KK	83 days

The box on trainings provides a picture of BRAC's attention for quality in NFPE as well as KK education programme. The NFPE teachers are receiving 114 day's trainings including subject based training which is an additional assistance which other NGO school teachers may not receive. The Govt. school teacher's foundation training is of one year which includes pedagogy as well as subject based training and co-curricular activities.

The weakness in training as discussed in the chapter 6 on Teachers and curriculum and classroom, is that the TARC training contents could benefit of changes incorporating more child oriented training methods and assessment techniques of individual performance. The teaching-learning method all over the country is strongly based on the chorus system and has a high frequency of copying among pears. This is not only the problem for BRAC training and teaching but for Govt. and other NGOs as well.. This is really an upcoming national education problem of which needs patient observation and cautious and appropriate actions of all – BRAC, Govt. and others engaged in providing education to all – children, adolescent and adult.

6 Enhancing the Quality of Learning and Teaching

6.1 The Classroom

6.1.1 Introduction on Classroom Observation

The MTR during its field visits to Comilla, Pabna and Natore observed a total of 12 classrooms. Observations were made by means of an observation schedule (see Annex 7). The team checked attendance records and found that not only during the days before the visit of the Team but also during a number of months the attendance was consistently high. between 30 and 33 children. Enrolment at school opening was compared with actual enrolment in the classes visited, almost 100%. This is remarkable because opportunity costs for children in the rural economy are high There were some cases of early marriage, migration and decease which caused drop out.. The team checked assessment records. In general the scores on the first examination were high. In those cases were first examination scores were low they were compensated by high second scores. Hardly any low achievers could be found contradicting the normal distribution found in general. The team thought that this might be explained by a combination of school grading pressure and poor assessment methods. Spot checks on learner achievement in the four main subjects indicated that there are large differences in mastery with around one fourth of the children not meeting achievement standards.

The Team found a number of common features in all schools visited: for example, a rented tin or thatched house, 6 windows, female teacher having education up to at least class IX to SSC. Most roof and wall hangings were pieces of creative writing and some traditional paper works also were in the classrooms and a blackboard. . They use landowners tube well for drinking water and toilet.

The visits were scheduled and all the children and teacher were waiting to show their best performances with much eagerness. The children were sitting in U shape. It was a bit crowded and not much space was there to move, in spite of this the children danced and sang so well that it made the whole classroom full of joy and fun. These were evidences of their very strong training on co-curricular activities.

BRAC schools clearly showed a better picture than that sketched in the CAMPE
The Education Watch Report 2000, Quality of Primary Education in Bangladesh according to the impressions obtained by the MTR during school visits:

"The Education Watch case studies reveal that poor physical of facilities, inadequate teaching materials (including textbooks), memory-based teaching style and lack of remedial measure in the classroom are the reasons for poor performance in the primary schools. Such inadequacies are more prevalent in non-govt. registered primary schools and least in non-formal schools." The observations confirmed that teaching-learning were highly memory based but the classrooms in terms of space, air and light were not that bad.

" However, student's participation in co-curricular activities had no influence in their learning achievement." From observations it was found that co-curricular activities were contributing to building confidence among children.

6.1.2 Child- Learning

The classroom activities observed did not give the team scope to see the small group work, pair work except in one school for few minutes. Most of the time the question answer method was going on through chorus from children's side which reminded the team of the same chorus answers made by teachers in TARC Training. Individual response was taken only on few items. The tests used mostly were taken from textbooks and teacher guides which were heavily knowledge based. The teaching -learning was focusing mainly Bangla reading, writing and maths, a bit of English reading.

6.1.3 Spot Checks on Learning

A quick test was taken on math's, Reading, and writing skills which was supplemented by checking student's daily work books. The numbers were changed in maths and Reading was taken from a new story of same level of competency. The theme of writing skill was given from children's lives. Every child could do the sums, in reading 7 – 8 children had difficulty and in writing, groups of the children wrote same sentences having same mistakes. This was copying from stronger one by the weaker ones. On the basis of copying the class could be divided into four groups' work. They narrated the same events too except few very good writer children.

This habit may emerge from:

- the practice of making a group leader to be responsible for groups, so others follow him/her abandoning their own responsibility.
- weaker ones depend on stronger ones and in chorus, weaker ones follow stronger ones, they become followers, not independent leaders.
- Copying is a very common feature in the national Exam. system which has already influenced the children
- Teacher does not care for finding copying practice because then it is a heavy workload for them in order to help all children acquire all skills and indeed, acquiring reading and writing skills are the most challenging tasks in Govt. as well as non-govt. schools. During writing test in one school, outside adolescents were found to be prompting to the children.
- The testing of learner's performance was textbook based questioning and answering in chorus, sometimes few children were asked individually. It is interesting to find that both girls and boys could do all the sums. But few children could write correctly and independently with this level of achievement in literacy, they may soon face difficulty in secondary schools. There is a risk of passing without learning. This would further aggravate the situation in secondary schools because both govt. and non-govt. schools are sending students with low quality literacy skills thus affecting secondary schools which are the providers of primary teacher.

The checklists used by BRAC supervisors to observe classrooms, were brief in terms of instructions, but then the instructions given demanded heavy workload, for example:

- for **English grade** I, on reading, the supervisions checklists is like:
  - let children read what did they complete
  - pick up 1/2 line from the middle of Para.
- **Spelling check:** From teacher's guide and lesson plan, spelling can be checked
- ***Writing***
  - Sentence making with words.
  - Essay , Letter/Applications , paragraph, grammar & Translation writing.
- ***Social Studies***

  For class III - Answering informative small questions like:
  - What did the children understand from Activity?
  - Telling what he/she has learned from the story (using small questions)
- **Bangla**

  For grade IV&V:
  - To check whether they discuss pictures of the lesson through questioning.
  - To check whether children can read stories/essay /poems using right rhythm, pause and pronunciation.
  -

These are some of the examples taken from checklists made for school supervisors. Actually supervisors need a list of detailed activities that is to check using only ( ) tick mark.

The maths supervision checklists have given a long list of syllabus to check children's arithmetic's skills.

It appears that syllabus wise, content wise checking is good in terms of checking cognitive domain only. But it is the task of a teacher. For a supervisor, a quick means for classroom observation would be more helpful other wise checking may become a monotonous and heavy task. BRAC's special resources - quite good classroom activities, chain of teacher training, committed teachers and supervisors, nice books may produce a number of graduates without effective literacy skills if Child-centred teaching-learning and individual attention are not given due importance. Copying and chorus learning have endangered these efforts. So may be a bit more detailed but specific list of pre-conditions that make learning happen may help improve the standard of teaching/learning situation in BRAC NFPE schools.

6.2 The Teachers and the Curriculum

BRAC has evolved a good, creditable system that is able to provide similar or sometimes better performance level even though it has utilized less qualified teachers than the government system.

However, in the formal system the terminal competencies have further been detailed out as class and subject based learning continua, which give directions to the teaching learning process and indicate assessment criteria. The teaching learning in NFPE, from observations, is found to be more catered to content or knowledge domain. As a result, the

teacher's guide or lesson plans of teachers and classroom teaching -learning process were easily oriented towards rote learning or memorization of information and facts.

Box 3:A Matrix on Govt. & BRAC Primary Education Program

Formal Primary Schools	**BRAC Non Formal Primary Program**
Type of Schooling : 1 - 5 classes	**Type of Schooling :** 1 cycle of 3 years (4& 5 newly added)
Teacher-Student Ratio : 1 -80-100 (approx.)	**Teacher-Student Ratio :** 1 : 33
Contact Hours & Duration : Class III : 12 months Contact hours : 734 hours Class IV : 12 months Contact hours : 734 hours Class V : 12 months Contact hours : 734 hours	**Contact Hours & Duration :** Class III : 10 months Contact hours : 735 hours Class IV : 10 months Contact hours : 840 hours Class V : 10 months Contact hours : 840 hours
Curriculum: Number of Subjects: 7 major Bangla, Maths, English, S Studies, Science, **Religion(4), Music.	**Curriculum:** 5 (Bangla, Maths, English, S. Studies)
Teacher Qualification: Minimum SSC **Teacher Training :** * PTI (one year in service compulsory) Cluster Training by ATEO (once a month) Weekly Thursday meeting by H. Teacher.	**Teacher Qualification:** Minimum IX **Teacher Training :** TARC Basic Training of 12 days Attachment with a school for 10 days Orientation -3 days Refresher Training by QM, RT-6 days Weekly meeting by QM, RTPO, MT
Monitoring & Supervision Mechanism: Academic/Administrative Curriculum Specialists monitors occasionally need based (academic) Directorate people visit (administrative) Upazilla EO visits (administrative) ATEO does academic supervision Head teacher does academic and administrative supervision. Occasionally visits are done by PMED people (administrative)	**Monitoring & Supervision Mechanism: Academic/Administrative** EDU subject groups visit (academic supervision) RM visits (administrative) T IC visits (both) QM visits, provides training (academic) RT visits (academic PO/MT/BT does academic supervision.

*Although it is compulsory under the framework of PEDP many teachers are still in the system without PTI training.

** For minority students same teacher gives instructions on their respective textbooks.

But same rote learning method is also common picture of formal teaching -learning process in spite of their training on competency based teaching -learning methods given to them and which is a part their regular in-service PTI and clusters training. Teachers of all type of schools prefer textbook based question-answer method in the country. So is the case in BRAC schools.

Beneath is an example of part of one of the twelve case studies. For the full case studies see Annex 5.

Classroom Observation **7/8/2001**

Kismat Pratappur BRAC School
Teacher: Arifa Sultana
Boys - 9, Girls - 24, (age - 8-12)
Class IV

Classroom Environment: The classroom has similar structure, air and light were moderate a little bit crowded room having little room to move freely, students had their own seats, quite clean. Some paper hangings and pieces of creative writing were on the walls. A blackboard was there, no sign of use. They were sitting in circle.
Teacher: She is an SSC graduate and has gone through BRAC foundation and basic refresher training. She had copies of all textbooks and teacher guides. She was doing creative writing, which children most probably did earlier. She had lesson plans with her, which she followed. She is an old teacher.

It would be interesting to see the Box - At a glance - the curriculum Development and Transaction Process of govt. and BRAC to have clearer understanding about curriculum dev. process.

Box 4: Curriculum Development & Transaction Process of Formal schools and BRAC NFPE

Formal Primary Education	BRAC Non-formal Primary Education
↓	↓
Assessed Learning Needs	BRAC AIMS & Objectives of Basic Education
↓	↓
Framed Objectives of Primary Education	53 Terminal competencies to establish equivalency emerged from material development
↓	↓
Terminal Competencies (53)	Instructional materials (Text books)
↓	↓
Subject wise Terminal Competencies	Supplementary Reading books
↓	↓
Grade wise, subject based learning continua	↓
↓	↓
(Instructional materials) Text books	↓
↓	↓
Supplementary Reading materials procured	↓
↓	↓
Teacher guide, T. aids.	Teacher guides, T. aids.
↓	↓
• Primary Teacher Training from PTI (In service)	Attachment in a school for 10 days
↓	↓
Cluster Training (A group of school teachers are trained by As once a month)	Basic Training for Teachers from TARC (In service)
↓	↓
Weekly meeting of Teachers (Every Thursday) by H.T.	Refresher's Training (Monthly once by MT, RT, QM)
	↓
	Year Promotion Training by QM.
	↓
	Weekly meeting on Thursday by RT, MT, BT, PO

Teacher Preparation

• Although it is compulsory, but still many teachers are yet to get PTI training.

The attempt of making the teaching-learning method more children, BRAC has developed a number of their own new textbooks, workbooks for children to do activities and a number of supplementary reading materials. But little scope the team had during the observations to see the use of the supplementary books or workbooks. BRAC BEP indicated that teacher guides are considered to be supplementary materials and that there are no workbooks or any other supplementary materials for grade 4 & 5. In fact, the teachers were more

concerned to do better in reading, writing and arithmetic's because of the pressure of school grading as A, B, C grade schools. It appeared that the grading of schools is very important for teachers and the supervisors of that area and region. The books developed are good and useful also because most of the children could read and write except 5 - 7/8 children in all the schools observed.

One of the most significant achievement of BRAC in changing classroom environment is its co-curricular activities in which classroom teachers were fully successful to make the children dance and sing so brilliantly. In the Muslim traditional community it is really remarkable that teachers, boys and girls are dancing and singing - it was not common even five years back.

It is known that for developing different kinds of textbooks, workbooks, assessment mechanism, many foreign consultants worked who followed national 53 terminal competencies as goals of NFPE. It appears that subject wise, class wise learning continua would provide direction to the writers of the textbooks and teacher guides.

In classroom observations, it was found that a number of contents /chapter/ stories poems of govt. textbooks have been omitted from teaching. The reasons they mentioned are:
Some of them are in another class textbooks; similar stories are in the textbook of other class. From observations, it was found that in Bangla one story, which was on one War hero, has been omitted which had quite a good number of conjunct words which may be another reason for omission. BRAC in reaction to the draft MTR report referred to a study done by QMs assessing the time allotted to grade 4 & 5. In order to economize on time, it was decided to omit certain stories such as in Bangla.

The teachers guides developed in different subjects provide an idea that there is an effort visible that BRAC is trying hard to make NFPE to be able to provide more quality education to the children.

BRAC informed that there is an addition in the list of the terminal competencies on value education. Although this list was not available but the team received indication that, for example, in Social Studies, they have incorporated a chapter on gender: women's roles, equality that focuses that all religions are equal etc.

However, from discussions it became clear that BRAC provides children value education included in Social Studies 1-3. Values relate among others to gender, social and family values etc. The team is not yet very clear about the goals and competencies of value education.

6.3 Education Support Program

6.3.1 Introduction

The TOR emphasizes, type and quality of assistance given by BRAC to the other NGOs; the selection process of NGOs, factors leading to success or failure and the sustainability.
From a thorough briefing by Mr. Sunil, and documentation provided [24] it became clear that the goal of ESP is "to form partnerships 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" These type of partnerships according to the MTR are very important because they would foster a different role for BRAC in reaching out to the poorest segments of rural society eligible for NFPE type of education.
This would imply that BRAC rather than concentrating on a role of direct implementation of basic education alone, it could disseminate its approaches to opening schools, its curriculum and learning teaching materials, its basic teacher training to be provided by TARC and upgrading training and supervisory structure to other NGOs.
Such a supporting role could yield a higher rate of return on BRACs and DPs development investments in NFPE. This would lead to an increase in scale and scope of the BRAC NFPE program, especially in upazilla's in which BRAC is not operational yet.
It proved to be that the ESP program is operational in 48 upazilla in which BRAC is not operational so far.
A side effect of ESP, though according to the MTR an important one, could be that the capacity of small NGOs to run community-based school and rural development programs could be strengthened. It became clear to the MTR that those NGOs in several cases are running schools through other support sources and in many cases have other relationships with BRAC in the framework of the BDP. This may lead to NGOs having to meet different requirements imposed by different types of support systems. This may influence supervisory provisions, management procedures and ultimately effectiveness of support.
The MTR noticed that ESP resorts under the Training Division and hence that there is no offical reporting line to BEP.

6.3.2 ESP Trends

Between its inception in 1991 until 2001 the ESP program initially was characterized by a strong growth both in terms of NGO partners and in terms of on-going schools. Between 1991 and 1996 the number of NGO partners grew from 26 to 272 with a corresponding growth of schools from 22 to 2041. Between 1997 and 2001, the number of ESP partners initially stabilized followed by slow growth to 303 NGO partners cateri9ng for 2505 schools in 2001. In he meantime 89 NGOs dropped out.
Reasons for these failures among others are:

- -Lack of adherence to BRAC methodology
- -Lack of stability in supervisory structure (POs) and overload on the supervisory structure through PO combining this role with too many other responsibilities

[24] Education Support Program (ESP), Forming Partnerships for Education, September 1991-June 2001, BRAC, June 2001

- -Lack of stability in NGO boards
- -Lack of capacity to develop personnel and management system and for project supervision
- -Lack of reliability in terms of teacher salary payment and other financial irregularities

6.3.3 Achievements

Data on ESP schools are collected by the responsible NGOs and further processed by BRAC. It is clear that there is no similar guarantee on reliability of ESP data than can be given for NFPE and BEOC. MIS covers the ESP data on enrolment, retention, completion and progression in line with those provided for NFPE and BEOC (see Annex 8). A full analysis of these data goes beyond the scope of the MTR.
The MTR perceives ESP as a program partly concentrating on areas under covered by both BRAC and formal education provisions. If so, the progression rate to formal schools would be surprisingly high.

ESP AT A GLANCE
(As on 30 July 2001)

No. of NGOs received technical support from ESP: 458
No. of NGOs received technical and financial support: 401
No. of NGOs dropped by ESP due to inefficiency of NGOs and shortage of Our funds: 98
No. of NGOs now receiving technical and financial support: 303
Total no. of schools funded by ESP (ESP NFPE schools): 6425
No. of ESP NFPE schools completed the 3-year course: 3920
Total enrolment in the schools completed the course: 117600
Percentage of students completed the course: 99
Total no. of on-going ESP NFPE schools: 2505
- Class-I: 1070
- Class-II: 495
- Class-III: 940

Total enrolment in the on-going ESP NFPE schools: 75136
- Boys: 21000 (28 %)
- Girls: 54136 (72%)

Average Enrolment in the on-going ESP NFPE schools: 30 (29.99)
Average attendance in the on-going ESP NFPE schools: 28.50 (95 %)
Dropout in the on-going ESP NFPE schools: 14 (girls-9, boys-5)
No. of total teachers in on-going ESP NFPE schools: 2505
- Female: 2477 (99 %)
- Male: 28 (1 %)

Estimated cost per child per year: Tk.710 or US$ 12.45
Estimated expenditure of ESP per year: Tk.5, 33,56,500
- Service- 17%
- Goods- 21 %

Money- 62%
No. of staffs (including PC) in ESP: 34

The MTR visited 3 ESP classes (all grade 3) and obtained during those visits mixed impressions.
One school in Pabna was located in a weaving village (hand looms for longis). There seemed to be a large number of out of school children in the village involved in the full cycle hand weaving process. The age range of children in the school was quite large leading to a kind of combined form between NFPE and BEOC. A big adolescent boy was eagerly displaying his achievements on spot checks done. Yet, the MTR noticed that lesson plans for previous days were not available; attendance records of previous weeks were in the teachers house, classroom environment was quite bare and the range of achievements on the spot checks was large with quite a bit of underachievers noticed. PO claimed to have had foundation teacher training only from BRAC in 1998. PO seemed to be weak and it is questionable whether BRAC PO supervision merely covered inspection type of activities or really consisted of quality related support aimed at within regular BRAC schools.

The MTR equally observed very successful ESP schools. In Comilla noticed a pleasant classroom environment, a committed teacher, joyful learning and very few low performers in the spot checks .In Natore, the MTR observed a grade 3 school run by an NGO with basic education as its main provision and running 10 ESP BRAC schools. BRAC approach, material, textbooks were followed apart from the school calendar in which a full year was applied. In contrast to NFPE schools there were no wall maps but the school was lively decorated with teacher and children paintings. Attendance was found to be high; assessment records well maintained. One new child had been enrolled after migration from a neighbouring village. Teaching was child friendly and achievement as measured by spot checks high. The school is now in the second cycle.

6.3.4 Selection and Support

Selection , contracting , subsequently preparing teachers. PO and NGO for school program implementation followed by applying a dual system of supervision by both BRAC and NGO POs is a very complex process.
Selection follows a set of simple procedures based on formal characteristics of NGOs (registered. secular. law abiding). financial. regional considerations (audit report. beyond regional scope of BRAC NFO operations. lack of donor funding. small but not too small)
Still. the MTR wonders whether these are the essential criteria or whether other BRAC related criteria such as building upon existing partnership (e.g. BDP). adhering to the BRAC "philosophy" play a role.

BRAC provides financial and technical support to the ESP schools. Generally the duration for financial support is for three years and there is no time limit for technical support. In some cases the duration of financial support is extended considering the partner NGOs level of motivation, efficiency and intensity. BRAC ESP has 33 experienced POs for monitoring. supervision and training of the partner NGOs. Each BRAC supervisor manages maximum 10 partner NGOs. BRAC ESP PO visits each school twice a week.

BRAC Training to POs and teachers of partner NGOs

- 4 days training for school organisations
- 12 days teachers training (the training module is slightly different from NFPE)
- 1 day monthly refresher for three years
- 6 days training for class management
- 10 days training of trainers

6.3.5 Conclusions

The MTR considers ESP as crucial test for BRAC related to mobilising, maintaining and strengthening partnerships with other NGOs in implementing child friendly primary education to ultra poor and poor children in remote rural areas. The partnerships covers support rather than direct implementation and could constitute a way to explore new roles as "quality laboratory" and "development unit" for other NGOs reaching out to students beyond BRAC reach (or at far higher costs than for community-based NGOs).
Referring to ESP as an important experiment for one of BRAC's partnerships (other partnerships are with GoB related to among others Community Schools, formal and schools for Hard to Reach), BRAC will have to become clearer on its vision and agenda for such a partnership.
Is BRAC in favour of replication, adoption or does it allow NGOs to explore together with BRAC new approaches. Is BRAC perceiving this program as linked to its other program provisions or as an outreach approach for the BEP program.
Sustainability remains a difficult issue. No data have been provided on the degree to which financial support has been ceased after 3 or even 6 years and schools would still continue. These data would need to consider village surveying data on number of out of school children in NFPE/BEOC age groups not enrolled yet.

Financial sustainability given selection criteria (small community based NGOs, not donor funded) and already requiring matching funding seems according to the MTR hard to achieve. This would change if through GoB provisions ESP could be extended into a BRAC-GoB- small NGO program provision
Technical sustainability is equally difficult to achieve and could only be realised if those small NGOs could become "paying customers" for BRAC training and material provisions.
However it could be expected that PO provisions gradually could become restricted to the inspection rather than supervision role (indicating that NGO POs are trained in such a way that they can fulfil the PO tasks adequately).
This would mean a gradual withdrawal of BRAC from the ESP programme to remain there as a programme manager and selective quality and accountability watch.

6.4 Pre-primary

6.4.1 Introduction

The pre-primary education program initially has been designed to provide some sort of school readiness to the 5-6 years old children. The program initiated on experimental basis is expected to ensure smooth transfer of the children of pre-primary to class 1 of formal primary school. The obvious reasons are well known. Young children of rural, poor and illiterate parents go to the school without any readiness which academic activities of schools demand.

6.4.2 Key Characteristics

The following are the main features of BRAC pre-primary schools:

- The duration of the class is 12 months.
- The age of learners is 5-6
- The number of students is 25-28 in a class.
- The class runs for two hours each day and five days in a week.
- The students pay Tk. 40 for materials and Tk. 15 as a monthly tuition fee.
- The teachers get a pocket money of Tk. 200/- per month
- There are more than 50% girls in each class.
- Parents are paying tuition fees for all children, even for girl children.

There are 1900 pre-primary schools at present and BEP has an estimated target number, 2000 for the next year.

6.4.3 Key Characteristics and Constraints

Recently BEP had done a research on the pre-primary which revealed that after completion of the pre-primary the parents are facing difficulties in sending their children to the primary schools because of physical distance of the primary schools. The reality is that the children completes pre-primary at age 6+-face difficulty in attending class 1 of formal school. During the team's visit, the parents, mostly mothers, were requesting the team to extend the

pre-primary up to two years, same was the finding of the study too. Considering this, BEP has decided to open pre-primary schools in the catchments area of the govt. primary schools.

However, BEP has prepared a low -cost curriculum for the pre-primary children. The two classrooms observed were full of enthusiastic children and two adolescent girls were in charge of them. The teaching-learning observed concentrated on alphabets, numbers, rhymes and drawing which in a way the pre-requisites of primary class 1 curriculum.
Preparing children of illiterates for entering class 1of primary school has no alternative, and somebody has to take the responsibility. In this context, the Education For All: The year 2000 Assessment, Bangladesh Country Report prepared by PMED of govt. of Bangladesh, mentioned " there are many primary schools that have" "baby classes" and many privately owned kindergartens that have 'play-group' / 'nursery' group sections; but their impact on child development has not been studied in details 'Baby class' is a pre-primary education arrangement attached to primary school. Although this arrangement is recognized by the govt., this type of education is not properly administered, nor is systematically supervised." This is the picture of govt. primary schools of which most of them have "Baby classes " because young siblings of the primary school children accompany them in schools regularly. For this reason, the school teachers have to organize some kind of education which is also comprised of mainly alphabets, numbers and rhymes. NCTB with UNICEF help worked on this on several occasions, on experimental basis, which was to assist children of illiterate poor to acquire the pre-requisites of class 1 curriculum.

The classrooms observed in two regions provide a glimpse of the regular activities of pre-primary which has a scope for further improvement because only alphabets and numbers cannot help children fully. The children have their own age-specific development as well as learning needs. Education for young children so needs a careful programming skill. Moreover, the alphabet and number teaching pattern in govt. and non-govt. schools are similar which is primarily chorus and memorization which again push the classroom away from being child-centred one and may rather be limited to child-friendly one.

Very recently, PMED has completed a plan of Action for 2015 following Dakar Conference on EFA which clearly indicated that with the objective of nurturing the children for their physical and mental development and preparing them for schooling with right attitude and habits govt. is going to undertake an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Programme very shortly. This promise is waiting for a well designed comprehensive educational package that would have pre-reading, pre-writing, pre-arithmetic skills, simple problem solving games, rhymes, stories, dances and songs.

BRAC has rightly recruited teachers from the Ex-BRAC NFPE graduates. This kind of linkage is really praiseworthy. BRAC's experiment has a very positive side which is that even poor people is ready to pay for their children's education and for girl's education too.

Box 5: Current Status of Pre-primary

No. of Schools	No. of Children			Target for Next year
1837	Boys	Girls	Total	2000 classes estimated

	23153	30732	53885	

7 Continuing Education Programme

7.1 Introduction on Continuing Education Programme

The objective of the Continuing Education Programme is to retain and increase the literacy skill acquired by the children and the adults in a community.

To cater for BEOC graduates who do not get the opportunity to go to secondary schools and may hence tend to relapse to illiteracy, BRAC started the Reading Centres (RC). After attending school for 3 years the adolescents lack the literate environment they were in. They lack an environment where they can come and spend sometime together. In other words they do not have a place to socialize. Therefore the adolescents get the opportunity to develop academically and socially by visiting the RCs once a week for two hours. At the same time BEP jointly with BRAC Development Programme (BDP) arranged life skill training for the adolescents to enable them earn an income. The Adolescent Peer Organized Network (APON) is the extension of the RCA. To cater for graduates of NFPE and BEOC and the neo literates, literates, secondary school students, educated unemployed youth of the community and others Union Libraries (UL) or Gonokendro Pathagars (GK) were started with the vision for long-term solutions.

Appraisal Mission Comments: Continuing Education to promote a "Learning Society"
The Programme aims to stimulate interest in acquiring information and encountering new ideas in order to create an environment that is conducive to a "Learning Society". In this way literacy is not an end in itself but rather a mean to an end.

The RCs were set up to develop the reading habit of the adolescents and their entrepreneurial skills by providing them with life skill training. The concepts of GKs emerged primarily for reasons similar to the adolescent libraries (RCs). However it was to cater to a larger audience. Therefore they are in essence to create a learning environment by developing reading habit of the literates in the community. Both aim to increase the knowledge of the literates by promoting reading habit. While the duration of the RCs are limited to 3 years the GKs aimed to be more permanent or for a longer time.

7.2 Reading Centres (RC)

7.2.1 Operation and Supervision

There are 6000 RCs running in 32 regions of the country. The team could visit 3 RCs one each in Comilla, Pabna and Natore.

Each RC has a librarian known as Pathagar Parichalanakari (PP) who is in charge of the library with 25 to 40 members. The PP is supervised by a Kishoree Supervisor (KS) who is in charge of 7 to 9 RCs. The KS reports to the Regional Programme Organizer for RC

(RPO) and the Team In charge (TIC) who reports to the Regional Manager (RM). The RPO maintains Liaison with the RM and TIC in the field level and with the Coordinator and the Senior Material Development Specialist (SMDS) at the HO level.

The Programme Coordinator is in charge of the RCs at the HO. We were informed that this is the structure followed for the operation and supervision in all the RCs. The days of operation varies from area to area but the timing is same i.e. once a week for two hours. The posts of KS in place of Programme Organizer (PO) who used to supervise the RCs previously along with NFPE is a recent development. In Natore the team met one KS in her new role. She will receive salary of Tk. 500 p.m. She was a student of Class IX but has to complete SSC as condition to her job. At this time there are 544 KS in post and the plan is to cover all the 6000 RCs.

The KS has received orientation for 2 days only at the Team Office; a well-planned training for all KS before joining is necessary to accomplish her job. The KS prepares weekly action plans and reports to RPO based on which the RPO prepares the monthly reports. The RCs are graded quarterly by the KS.

BEP provides the forms for action plan reports but there is no checklist of the KS for the supervision of the RCs.

7.2.2 Usage

The membership was extended from BEOC graduates to NFPE children and adolescent girls and boys from the poor rural community. The target group was extended to include 11 to 20 years old. There are 186601 members in the 6000 RCs presently in operation of which 156745 are BEOC graduates with 11196 boys. Of the operating RCs 2313 are running second cycle. Till now 4198 RCs have been completed with 125940 members of which 7556 were boys. It seems that gradually more boys are using the RCs. Till now 125940 members have been members of 4198 RCs completed.

7.2.3 Literacy skills and Book Selection

The RCs were created to increase the knowledge and literacy skill by promoting reading habit among the adolescent females of the community. Therefore the selection of reading materials for the target group is important. The selection of right materials for each group, especially now when it is catering for three different groups children, adolescents of the community and BEOC graduate.

Reading habit can be developed only when the reader finds something attractive and interesting for him to read. The books for children have to be attractive only then it can attract the children and encourage him to read the book. The books have to be useful also in context to the members as well as to the community. The books found in the RCs visited ranged from fiction, novel, fairy tales, and poems to storybooks. Each RC has between 150 to 250 books and magazines to read.

The readers in the RCs visited mentioned that they have read all the books of interest and did not have new books to read. Sometimes the new books are not of interest also. The team was informed that the selection of books and games are done at HO level and users do not seem to have much said in it. Although sometimes suggestions are taken from the librarians but rarely met. There was no daily newspaper in the RCs as they are open once a week only.

BRAC at the moment has no plan to increase the 3 years cycle of RCs. In case there is a Union Library nearby can be used by them otherwise the situation will be more frustrating for the RC members as they become used to reading and socialize for sometime.

At the end of a cycle the old books are taken back to the Head Office and ultimately sold away as trash. The books provided in the third year remain relatively new are sent to a new RC in which case they add to the list of that RC. The teams think that it would have better served if these books were distributed among the members. BEP may think about it.

The purpose of the savings of Tk. 2 Per member per month is not clear except developing a saving habit and most of the members asked replied that it is the membership fee of the RC, not aware that it will be refunded

7.2.4 Life Skill Training

The training plan is to train 11507 members during the third phase. As there was no ongoing training it was not possible to know the quality of training. In the second phase of the project 65030 female members were trained under the joint BEP and RDP effort but there was no reporting available on the effectiveness of the training provided except the photography and journalism that are able to utilize it.

7.2.5 Conclusion

The Mission thinks that the RCs have a potential to be effective in retaining the literacy not only of the BEOC graduates but also of the extended members i.e. NFPE children and adolescent girls and boys in the community. It provides an atmosphere to socialize at the same time increase knowledge by reading books. The acceptance of the community to socialize adolescent boys and girls in a place other than school can be considered an achievement.

But the main weakness of the programme is the short duration of 3 years during which the RCs are open once a week for two hours only. Appropriate, interesting and useful books for the right groups in the RC are essential.

7.3 Union Libraries (UL) Gonokendro Pathagars (GK)

7.3.1 Operation and Supervision[25]

As opposed to the RCs the GKs are open to every one in the community. At this moment there are 550 GKs having 244.588 (450 per GK) members with 43 percent or 104936 of them being female members operating in the country. According to target 900 GKs are to be operational by the end of Phase III (2004). There were 400 GKs operational till Phase II and another 500 were targeted for Phase III of which 150 has been established i.e. 30 percent has been achieved so far. 85 percent or 468 GKs are situated in the secondary schools and 51 (11 percent) of them are in female secondary schools operating as Women Gono Kendro (WGK). The WGKs have a total of 19635 members of which more than 95 percent are female and they are all students of the school the GK is situated in. Each library has a librarian who is in charge of the library and 84 percent of them are females.

The mission has been able to visit one GK each in Comilla and Pabna. two in Natore and one small mobile library in a van in Pabna. BEP at the moment is experimenting with 15 mobile libraries in vans.

As 85 percent of the GKs are based in secondary schools the libraries visited by the mission were all based in secondary schools. Given their location it is not surprising that 83 percent of the members are students of the particular school. Less than 20 percent of the members are from the community outside the school. Because the GKs focus mainly on the students group being the future generation of the country and the most literate group of the community Attracting other members of the community is difficult. Of the total 244588 members 188067 are students and 56521 are from the other categories of which 11846 are females. But it is important to note that one of the objectives of GK is to provide services to all the people of the community and not to any particular group.

At present 82 (15 percent) GKs are not housed in any school because that was the most suitable place available in the community. But it is not far away from a secondary or high school in order to ensure extensive use by students.

The mission does not know the differences in membership between the GK housed in the secondary school and the GK not housed in a secondary school. It might be that the members in the GKs housed in secondary schools have more members than those, which are not housed in the secondary schools.

7.3.2 Trust & Fees

The formation of the trust envisages the sustainability and impact of the libraries. An eleven member Trustee Board is formed with the Head Teacher of the school as one of the member by portfolio. The Board selects the Chairperson. The Board consists of five permanent members and six non-permanent members of which two members are changed

[25] All data incorporated in this chapter are originating from data sheets provided by BEP to the MTR mission.

every year. Till now 77 percent i.e. 423 libraries out of 550 have formed trusts with 21 percent female members of the Trustee Board. Once the trusts are formed BRAC cash support ceases. The trust funds a minimum of 50 percent of TK100. 000 is provided by BRAC and the remaining 50 percent as matching fund (TK.50. 000) is generated by the library through membership fee and donations from the community. The interest earned from the Trust fund is Tk.1000. which covers the running cost of the library at the moment. Depending on the fee the user pays the memberships are classified as the students – Tk. 10 per year. general members - Tk. 40 per year. life members – Tk. 500 one time payment and the donors – Tk. 1000 one time payment where as Tk. 2 as admission fee for all.

As student membership fee is Tk. 10 per year and a GK have an average 450 members of which 83 percent are student. They can contribute around Tk. 3735 only in a year.
The establishment of a thrust fund and levying fees is according to the MTR a useful and necessary but not sufficient condition for creating sustainability through interest raised on the fund enlarged by a BEP matching grant. However, according to the MTR. the large proportion of student members may restrict thrust fund capital generation. The MTR considers the issue of sustainability of ULs too complex to be able to support a BEP statement presented as "Lessons learned" that Gonokendros are financially sustainable.

7.3.3 *Usage*

One of the objectives of the GK is to widen its use in the community. People of any segment or group can use it. It is expected to have a greater impact in the local community by creating a learning environment in the area. It aims to develop the reading habit of the people and retain the literacy achieved by some.

With the focus mainly for students it has narrowed its objective. The students form 90 percent of the members in the libraries visited by the Mission and 76 percent of the total members are students.

The students of the schools are the main users and now 319 GKs have incorporated library use in the class routine. Therefore the data received from the HO of average 66 readers using the library per day is excluding the library class. No recent data were however provided to the MTR to substantiate non student utilization of the GKs.

The library is open from 6 to 8 hours during day time and is closed on weekly and national holidays. The key issue in terms of extending membership and usage beyond the large group of students is the high threshold for "outsiders" to use secondary school facilities including its library.

The mobile van" library" is according to the MTR an interesting experiment in trying to reach out to a broader adult reader groups including females. This pilot deserves careful evaluation in terms of its reach out to literate adults including females, their reading habits and interests and how adequate book acquisition can enhance sustained outside school female readership.

7.3.4 Literacy skills and Book selection

Retention of literacy skill, increasing knowledge and developing reading skills are is the main aims of the GK. Therefore to fulfil these aims the selection of books is very important. The right books for the right group members are essential. After visiting the libraries it has been found that the GKs has books on specific subjects. The Mission had the opportunity to talk to some members of the GKs visited who seemed not to be fully satisfied. There is a need to balance between the fiction and the non-fiction. The reading habit cannot develop unless the reader finds something interesting or useful to read. The poor semi literate potential user group of the UL will be interested if the UL can cater for their reading skills, habits and interests. It is clear that these may be significantly different from the readership of secondary school students.

The selection of the books is made at Head Office level based on nucleus of books preselected to be used for all the libraries. This nucleus of books is static for the last five years for which the 5/6 years old libraries do not have new books for the users. This discourages them to come to the library. There is a need to revise the list of books. At present the composition of 1000 books consists of 325 novels , 210 story books including fairy tales , 95 history books including biographies , 37 poems, 12 dramas , 64 books on the liberation war , 105 children books , 61 science fiction , 15 books on nutrition, 22 on occupations, 30 reference books , 10 touristic books on visits to places of interest, and 14 others .

The MTR appropriate the careful position adopted by the Library Management Committees based on BRAC advise to accept book donations.(given the danger of collection pollution with religious or politically biased views)..

The textbooks in the libraries are provided on requisition by the Headmaster of the school. As per data sheet provided by the HO 375 GKs have distributed textbooks among 12385 students, which is an average of 33 books per library. The mission, in the libraries visited, found 15 to 20 sets of textbooks from class VI to IX in the library and all distributed. The students had to pay Tk. 60 per set, which will cost Tk.180 to 200 in the market i.e. 30 percent of the actual cost. The mission considers text book loan schemes of vital interest to poor families in decreasing the cost of secondary education for their children. Needs and affordability of loan textbook schemes should be carefully examined. The Mission, however strongly welcomes, initiatives developed within the framework of Uls to experiment with textbook loan schemes for poor students.

7.3.5 Community Participation[26]

Community participation is at the heart of the UL concept. This participation consists of community mobilisation for donation of space for the libraries (often in private schools), pre-thrust board local committee, fund generation and membership recruitment. As with cooperative formation it involves community organisation including thrust board

[26] See: Key features of Union Library (Gonokendro) Operation

formation. Formation of the trust involves financial obligation from the community. The Trustee Board members are also from the community. But the community's participation outside the students as users of the GK needs to be further developed. BRAC BEP perceives ULs as developing into a multi-purpose Community Centre for learning, gathering information, developing skills in the area of writing, debating, organising and performing socio-cultural activities. This medium term view has to be founded on adequate design but especially on a stronger rooting of ULs in the Community as a whole. Initially the MTR perceives this as a step by step approach to transcend from basically a school library with some outreach into the local community into a Community Centre. Thrust Boards are to play a key role in this respect as well as relevant courses which are being piloted if and when successful.

7.3.6 Life Skill Training

The libraries activities are not limited to lending and borrowing of books. Activities of the libraries ranged from academic to socio-cultural and skill training. The Computer training on a pilot basis on market price is working and to replicate it under UNICEF funding for 200 libraries in two years will further help in making computers use more effective. 20 GKs have been provided with computers to be able to provide computer training. The formation of computer club for those who received training but unable to use it for retaining the computer literacy achieved; by payment of TK 50 for five hours in two months encourages others for receiving the training. But its use again remains a question. The Mission did not receive information that the need for computer-trained personnel in the community has been assessed.
In order to broader assess relevance and feasibility of computer training insight should be obtained in training outline, target groups, trainees reached and socio-economic status of trainees. It is also not fully clear whether these courses aim at general computer literacy and awareness in non IT environments or aim at gainful activities using computer skills.

Based on the data sheet received from the HO life skill training with the Department of Youth till now has been provided to 7195 members of which 3111 are female. The areas of training were Tailoring, Poultry, Fisheries, Livestock and Agriculture (Horticulture). These were short-term field based training. The objective of the training was to enable the unemployed youth to earn and be independent. There was no ongoing training during the visit of the mission and it was not possible to comment on the quality of the training. The role of the UL in this respect is not clear. Did the unemployed youth become member to qualify for training or where they readers who through membership obtained training?
After discussing with the PO it was apparent that these training need to be more structured and planned. The MOU, which is in process between BEP and the Department of Youth for providing life skill training is to cater for training for UL members.

7.3.7 Monitoring[27]

There is no dearth of monitoring ULs, maybe there is even over-monitoring.. The MTR would like however monitoring to lead into better approaches for guidance, activity planning and innovative activities which could be undertaken by ULs as part of the step by step approach to becoming a vibrant Community Centre. There is reporting at different levels but still it is difficult to access information on ULs which are thriving and the reasons for their success. Model formation, innovative activities, strong approaches to community activities, good indication of the "real results" of the mobile van approaches remained inaccessible to the MTR.

What is clear that an annual planning and monitoring chart is being used by each library to track records on a number of library loan related issues. Monthly meetings are organised between the librarian and the community (thrust board). The Programme Organiser (CE) also does an inspection type of monitoring, and so do the BRAC staff, and the Area Education Manager(AEM) responsible for 40-50 libraries. Monitoring is done at several stages at field level and at HO level. During the monthly review meeting at the HO with the AEM the findings are discussed and issues resolved. What exactly the issues are is more difficult to detect especially as far as vision development of ULs are concerned. A full description of monitoring mechanism is available with BRAC (see footnote) but how HO is providing impulses to an UL system which can only foster by creativity did not became fully clear.

There is a separate supervisory structure for the programme i.e. are supervised by Programme Organizer Continued Education (POCE) who is supervising 6 to 8 GKs. The POCE reports to the Area Manager Continued Education (AMCE) who supervises 5 to 7 POCE and the AMCE reports to the Regional Managers Continues Education (RMCE) at the field level. The RMCE report to the Programme Coordinator Continued Education at the Head Office.

7.3.8 Conclusions

The ULs constitute an important outreach approach in achieving the objective of the Continuing Education Programme, to retain and increase the literacy skill acquired by children and adults in a community. According to the Mission, ULs have several important feasible and viable dimensions. Some of these are; extending and strengthening library facilities for rural secondary schools; starting with a textbook loan scheme for poor students; mobilising community resources for thrust formation and support to Uls, attempts to enhance community participation by increasing membership beyond students and organising training and other activities of interest to the community at large. The MTR thinks that BRAC should assist ULs in gradually extending from school-based to community-based activities. Initiatives aimed at reaching out to rural adults especially women with a mobile library van (now experimented in 15 ULs) have to be carefully evaluated as a basis for broader application. It should be carefully assessed whether ULs should also reach out to unemployed youth for skills training or whether RCs should remain the focal point for such.

[27] See: Union Library (Gonokendro); Monitoring Mechanisms.

Sustainability of the GKs is essential. The formation of the trusts has established a foundation to meet the recurrent costs of libraries including salary of the librarian. This is an interesting approach to sustainability. Still viability in the long run will depend on capacity of ULs to extend their collection: on its running of interesting schemes such as student loan textbook schemes; on gradually reaching out to the broader community outside the school. If the program focus of ULs is further clarified and sharpened than emphasis can be put on capacity building for librarians to meet these requirements.

The Mission has recommended to pilot counselling and tutoting services in ULs catering especially for BRAC graduates now in secondary schools. This would mean according to the Mission that ULs initial focus should remain on the prime BEP target group. Still more efforts have to be made to extend library memberships beyond students in the community.

7.4 APON (Adolescents Peer Organized Network)

7.4.1 Introduction

The 6000 Reading Centres aim at socialization of and providing access to reading materials to the BEOC graduates (See para 7.2). APON complements the BEP Reading Centre provision by aiming at a combination of enhancing self dependency and awareness raising on aspects important to adolescents in transition to adulthood. APON is concentrating on female adolescents and particular information girls need to know but do not know in present Bangladeshi rural society. Information relate among others to reproductive health and legal right. It should be understood that sexual abuse of girls is more than incidental in both rural communities but even in schools. It is planned to implement the APON program in 2000 Reading Centres covering more than 50.000 [28] adolescent girls.

The awareness raising is to provide girls with both knowledge and attitudes to effectively approach life issues including sexuality and early marriage. It was understood that this awareness raising had to be followed by life skills and other type of training in order to be able to combine awareness with adequate mechanism for survival.

BEP is following an extremely innovative but very complex approach of utilizing local human resources nearest to the target group by which adolescents could become both leaders, trainers and facilitators and trainees. This is an adjustment of an earlier approach to APON in which RC librarians were trained as trainers. This approach has some resemblance to the successful approach of BRAC in transforming lowly educated housewives (up to SSC level) into effective teachers and managers of NFPE/BEOC schools.

Identifying and utilizing an adolescent's potential cadre is done in an experimental way along the following lines:

[28] See APON LFA in BEP Workplan 2001

- A peer educator, talented girl, who is recognized as a leader by the group, is in charge of an APON class with 25/30 girls.
- A peer group leader is selected to assist the peer educator in catering for a group of girls within the peer educator's class.
- An adolescent leader is the highest level of leadership in APON identified among the peer educators and trained by BEP through TOT to train the peer educators. At the same time she is also a peer educator in her reading centre.

APON is an attempt to intervene in a complex process of culturally determined positioning of women in poor rural communities. Such a process needs to be guided and monitored considering those intricacies which become cruel realities when the transition from girls into adulthood has been made.
Initial experiments in 25 regions are encouraging. It seems according to the MTR important that the UNICEF sponsored APON in the seven remaining regions is being perceived as a pilot to obtain further insight.

The Mission was unable to observe any APON class as there was no ongoing classes at the moment. However it could visit 2 peer educators training classes in Natore. The Mission received briefings on the APON programme through meetings and discussions with APON staff at HO and field offices.
The remaining paragraphs outline how NFPE fared with regard to APON. Issues like extending to boys may have to be delayed awaiting an in-depth evaluation of APON for girls not with regard to its components but related to its sustaining effects on girls lives. BRAC convened to the Mission that it is planning to pilot APON for boys and that planning and design is currently under way. According to BRAC an evaluation of APON for girls is being done by the population council with a baseline having been completed. The MTR was not provided with the evaluation outline and with the results of the baseline study. BRAC BEP informed the Mission that APON for boys will be piloted in two regions on social and reproductive health issues for implementation in 2002.

7.4.2 Objectives

APON's objective is to enhance independency of adolescent girls who are especially BEOC graduates by providing relevant and innovative livelihood training, credit and employment opportunities. The livelihood, credit and employment provision will be provided by BEP in collaboration with BDP.
The key feature of the programme is that the life skill education or the counselling will be provided by one of their fellow mates called peer educator. The peer educator will be in-charge of a group of 25 members of a RC. Hence the use of a peer educator for a group resulted in the inclusion of a leadership component also in the programme.

7.4.3 Life skill Education

In order to provide life skill education a group of young HO staff developed 20 books through trial and error on topics related to health, social and environmental aspects.

- Reproductive health – Menstruation, birth registration, early marriage, family planning, STD and Aids, post natal; care.
- Legal rights – Marriage registration, divorce, laws of inheritance etc.
- Social issues – Polygamy, Acid throwing, gender relations, leprosy
- Environmental issues: air pollution, water pollution, ground polution etc.

These books were developed based on consultation with the adolescents in the RCs. The topics were selected after discussing with the RC members and sometimes with their female guardians too. The topics are on issues relevance to adolescent girls lives.

In the formative period it became clear that adolescents see their peers rather as discussion leaders than adults including teachers. It also became clear that storybooks were the best associative modality for learning rather than formal lessons. Based on these lessons peer educators became the crucial catalyst for knowledge transfer to be positioned in each RC and based on this the programme's name was changed from Adolescent Family Life Education (AFLE) to Adolescent Peer Organized network (APON).

Taking these into consideration the course was designed for 40 days to be completed in five months i.e. 2 times a week. The total duration of the APON course is 18 months comprised of 40 days classes in five months and follow up for the remaining 13 months. Follow up classes for these 13 months will be held for one hour fortnightly. At the end of the APON course the RCs will run as before.

7.4.4 Peer educator

Two peer educators are selected for each RC. They receive 5 days training at the team office mainly on how to conduct classes. The 20 books developed for APON are taught in the classes by the group leaders. The peer educator plays the role of a facilitator in the class at the same time a counsellor for the members. Their duties include:

a. Hold parents meeting to inform them on the contents and objectives of APON
b. Peer educators are introduced to the parents/community
c. Divide the class into five groups
d. Select the group leader
e. Explain the group leaders duties
f. Teach in four stages
    i. One page or para reading and discussion
    ii. Small questions and answers
    iii. Any taboos or changes are explained
    iv. Peer educator explain the job through pictures

Lesson plans are prepared by the peer educators including a reinforcement section, core messages, evaluation of the lesson, dos and don'ts. The 40th class is used for certificate awarding. Three refreshers are held in between the 40 classes for the peer educators.

After the 40 classes are over, follow up classes are held for one hour every fortnight for 13 months. Therefore altogether it is an 18-month course. In the follow-up classes they discuss the issues, exchange views and share the experiences gathered during discussion with the family or community. The reactions of the family and the community are important to share.
According to the BEP Work Plan two workshops will be held during APON courses this year for adolescent girls to improve their skills related to communication and group interaction.

Peer educators seem to be the vital factor in APON success. They need to combine aptitudes and skills related to trainers and counsellors of sensitive issues e.g. sexual harassment, divorce, acid attacks. These need expert counselling which often asks for a good amount of maturity The MTR wonders whether peer educators can combine roles of trainers and counsellors and how if that is not the case counselling can be provided effectively. It should be noticed that BRAC is taking the counselling aspect very serious and is developing linkages with specialised agencies to this respect. Training was provided by a partner organisation "Breaking the Silence" and one APON staff completed a ten week course on psychological counselling funded by UNDP

7.4.5 Training of peer educators/leaders

According to the Work Plan 2416 peer educators in rural and 79 in urban areas have been trained to provide APON courses in 2395 reading centres covering 53000 adolescent girls. Core trainers have trained 291 Adolescent Leaders (AL) at TARC. The core trainers received training from HO staff also who are basically the material developers. The peer educators are selected by the teachers who have received training for 5 days at the team office.

The RPO receives management training only for APON.
Other modalities of training applied include refresher training, experience sharing which was held so far for 14 adolescent leaders as well as exchange workshops.

7.4.6 Operation

The Mission was briefed that with the completion of the APON course design and materials classes commenced from May 2000 in 25 of the 32 BRAC regions.

APON will be extended to the remaining 7 regions of the 32 regions in 2000 RCs with UNICEF funds as APON Kishoree Abhijhan. The leadership and the livelihood training component will be developed in particular.

7.4.7 Supervision

The APON courses will be conducted by the peer educators. Each class will have two Peer Educators who will be responsible for 25 members/participants. Adolescent leaders will monitor 8 Reading centres. This is done on an experimental basis top assess the degree to which adolescents can be developed for monitoring purposes.. The Kishoree Supervisor will be supervised by Pathagar Supervisor (PS) who will report to the Regional Programme Organizer (RPO) for APON. The RPO APON reports directly to Programme Coordinator at HO. The financial aspects are supervised by the Team In-charge.

7.4.8 Life skill training

The APON training covers the traditional BDP agricultural training provision. Thirty girls selected from Als, peer educators and others received a 6 months residential poultry training. Of these 21 have been absorbed into the BDP programme. BDP has also indicated a need for poultry and agricultural workers thus, more training is being provided. Apart from this type of training APON tries to spearhead training for "new vocations" such as photography, computer training and journalism. BEP through APON considers these training programs as pilots to see whether the traditional range of "gainful rural based activities can be extended by others linking rural village and broader rural markets. In 2000, 23 adolescents received training on photography. Training on photography is linked to a Tk. 3000 credit out of which procurement of a camera is costed. For the year 2001, APON targets 500 girls for photography training. Another innovative venture relates to computer training including data entry among others for the BDP micro-finance program. It is envisaged that the BDP offices planned to be computerised during 2001 will provide employment for those having completed this computer course. Journalism is probably the most interesting but according to the MTR the most riskful training venture in terms of arranging for post training employment or gainful activities.

The APON programme as a whole plans to provide training to 68000 girls in the fields of Photography, Journalism, Computer training, Tailoring, Agriculture, Poultry and dairy, Vegetable nursery. Detailed training targets were not made available to the MTR. The training will be provided jointly with BRAC partners in each field and job placement by BDP.

7.4.9 *Conclusion and Issues*

As there was no ongoing programme of APON during the visit of the Mission the information available is limited to the briefings received from the meetings and discussions with APON staff in the HO and field.
The Mission perceives APON as a fascinating approach to cater for awareness raising and skill requirements of young adolescent girls. It will be essential that the program succeeds in creating new forms of livelihood for girls both BEOC graduates and possibly SSC graduates.

The APON programme commenced in May 2000 and has not yet completed one cycle. With the follow up classes still on the impact of the programme is difficult to assess. The programme seems to be well designed and the decision to extend it to girls outside BEOC is encouraging. The extension of APON exclusively for boys may have to be delayed till an in-depth evaluation of APON for girls is done at the end of one cycle of APON.

One of the key objectives of the APON is to make the adolescent girl independent through life skill training. However the MTR was not provided with realistic training targets related to the different both traditional and non-traditional trades under considerations. Training plans and outlines could not be examined and no full insight could be obtained in the feasibility of journalism, computer training and photography as new areas for investment in training and for girls for investments through micro-credits. Need assessment followed by job market feasibility studies need to be undertaken. Given the utmost relevance of extending the job basis for girls in rural areas, those experiments including thorough pilots deserve full support.

PART III

RECOMMENDATIONS

8 Issues and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The MTR has identified a certain number of issues originating from its review. Sometimes these issues are macro issues but in most cases they relate to TOR specific components. These issues were related to skeleton recommendations discussed with BRAC during a mini-workshop on August 16 and an extensive discussion on the draft executive summary on August 18.
The Mission felt encouraged by the reactions of BRAC on several potential recommendations.
The issues are presented and linked to these recommendations. Prioritisation. elaboration and costing of these recommendations are not within the scope of the Mission. These may be done initially by BRAC in consultation with the DPs.

8.2 Issues and Recommendations

8.2.1 NFPE and BRAC Common Philosophy, Programs, Facilities and Resources: The Need for Sharing.

Issue

The MTR felt that it is difficult to properly review the NFPE BRAC program without considering its link with the overall BRAC mission as well as the link between NFPE and other BRAC programs such as BDP. In contrast to formal education, which perceives educational aims in general, the Mission sees BRAC NFPE objectives in a broader way. BRAC is aiming at civic society development especially for the poor segments of rural societies. Education of youth and adolescents might be seen as creating and socializing a new more educated generation and cadre within and shaping a rural economy capable of absorbing these. BRAC's "hidden agenda" transcending the different programs and its general mission may be to mobilize and further equip rural poor for processes of civic society development and social transformation.

The Mission later came to understand that a joint BRAC philosophy strongly guides all programs in terms of their institutional framework, recruitment and staff development, training provision through TARC and utilization of several common facilities (such as computer centre, external monitoring, research, TARC).

Recommendations

1. Organise high-level workshops on the BRAC Mission and the degree to which this Mission is translated in overall BRAC strategies (e.g. what kind of staff is required to fulfil this Mission, what kind of general approaches in different BRAC program.

2. Identify the degree to which common facilities (TARC, computer centre, RED, etc) are available and used by different programs. Aspects related to planning and budgeting might be considered as areas needing clarification. Also reflect on program specific mandates and requirements versus available human and physical resources. Outline responsibility and reporting lines.
3. Identify components in which BEP is benefiting from support of and cooperation with other programs such as BDP. In how far are approaches standardized and can they be mutually reinforcing.
4. Identify within BRAC through the Computer Department availability of suitable PMIS (Programme Management Information System) software to link to the present (E) MIS. (E) MIS plus PMIS plus financial /budgetary data will be capable of catering for requirements related to achievements versus targets based on budgetary allocations/disbursements combined with component specific planning and progress data. This could be combined with GIS type of software for school mapping purposes (e.g. map info)

8.2.2 The Need for an Expanded Planning Vision

Issue

BRAC has developed its own approach to planning. This approach is need-based but has a short time-span of between 3-6 months. The formal donor-driven planning approach consists of linking annual work plans and bi-annual progress reports to LFA targets and indicators. The LFA has not only been found alien in the field structure (which it does not cover anyway) but also BRAC HO staff indicated that the LFA in its present format is not providing guidelines for reviewing the status of project implementation.
Still, a complex program such as NFPE with its many components and its emphasis on service delivery through 32 regional offices, 287 team in charge out of 467 team offices to more than 30.000 schools may strongly benefit from bottom-up approaches linking to overall planning devices. Some aspects add to the complex planning scope. There seems to be a gradual shift from NFPE to BEOC with enrolment in NFPE gradually declining.
Considering the state of program implementation and less than 3 years to go revisiting of LFA and targets and whether and how to meet the targets, with what kind of training and quality related support may be required.

Recommendations

1. Feedback MIS tables to provide regional aggregated team office data to the 32 Regional Offices. Develop approaches for annual work planning at Regional Office level to be assembled and monitored through HO into Annual Work Plans. These plans should be equally based on training plans (initial teacher training, upgrading training, village surveying, school opening, resource requirements (textbooks, learning materials etc). HO BEP divisional plans including service inputs by other programs should relate to these service plans. Gradually proceed from the notebook culture to the format approach facilitated by manuals. Adjust approach to

monitoring related to planning at different levels for the different components specified.
2. Revisit the LFA and assess whether it meets the actual NFPE reality at field and HO level. Organise (soonest) workshops involving both HO and field staff aimed at revising LFA. This will enable recommendation 1 and 2 to be linked in due time
3. Adopt approaches including adopting village surveys and school mapping to facilitate longer term planning.

8.2.3 Learners have become Secondary Education Students: Need for Continuing Support?

Issue

The target group for basic education especially NFPE may gradually decrease and be complemented by secondary education students and students having completed primary education who need support provisions. As a consequence the livelihood type of training programs may meet less demands and not relate effectively to the requirements and expectations of the new generation. Primary education in itself when not properly followed up through value based approaches for adolescents including relevant skill training for those having completed primary or secondary education do not have a long lasting effect given constraints in the rural economy and the rigidity of the existing value system in society.

Recommendations

1. Consider ways and means of continuous support to young adolescents especially girls in secondary education. One possibility would be to develop a tutoring and counselling scheme for former BRAC poor and ultra poor secondary education students using the union library.
2. Evaluate provisions available through BDP linked to the RCs . Try to obtain more insight into the Ministry of Youth and Culture for skill and livelihood training combined with provisions through micro credit schemes within the framework of ULs especially aiming at young unemployed.
3. Start thinking on BRAC talented poor female secondary education fellowship scheme including tutoring and counselling.

8.2.4 Strengthening Capacity for Utilisation and Interpretation of MIS and Monitoring data: The Need for Policy Analysis

Issue

A wealth of data is available through MIS. Quarterly standard tables are generated but dissemination of these tables is restricted. It is not used as a basis for research agenda setting and no interpretation of data in MIS reports was noticed by the MTR. Monitoring reports equally seem to be data collection centered. Analysis is restricted often to meaningless calculations of averages hiding variations, which could support interventions.
In this way an extremely useful system is under utilized for both research, planning and policy analysis purposes. BRAC NFPE collects data and records but needs to start focusing now on its proper utilization for improved policy and practice.

Recommendations

1. Disseminate quarterly MIS reports to broader groups within BRAC and BEP as well as among DPs.
2. From the next quarterly report start capacity building for data interpretation by distilling trends and providing useful interpretations to the tables produced (among others based on regional and gender differences. Look at possibilities of extending range of standard tables given raw data input.
3. Start training two staff members, one from MIS and the other from EDU in policy analysis
4. Identify simple approaches to capacity building on data processing and interpretation for QMs and other BEP managers.

8.2.5 Chorus Method of Teaching/Learning and Child-centred Learning

Issue:

Chorus learning is a common pattern of teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Even though BRAC favours child-centred learning, it is for the time difficult to escape from this pattern. During classroom observation the team however observed joyful child friendly learning and based on sample checks and correction learning achievement. It was however found that also in BRAC classes the major teaching-learning methods consists of chorus, rote learning and memorization.
Chorus, memorization and rote learning restrict child- approaches. As such this approach is focusing on average learning and does not allow differential attention to slow learners. This method creates "conformism" rather than creativity. In the present assessment system assignments may call upon memorization skills rather than problem solving ones. Learning is information, so rote learning is prevailing, which is influencing assessment tools also. Chorus and rote learning is also the dominant pattern

within foundation teacher training at TARC of BRAC teachers training is used in TARC.

Recommendations:

1. Reduction of chorus, rote learning and memorization methods and replacing this by individual attention to the weaker children should be given priority.
2. Remedial teaching should be designed focusing learning difficulties of every weak child.
3. TARC teacher training may be redesigned giving focus on child- T learning methods.
4. Detailing out of terminal competencies into information behaviour and practice would direct teaching-learning pattern and assessment techniques.

8.2.6 Pilots towards Mainstreaming: Filling the Gap

Issue

Some pilots have been mainstreamed during NFPE Phase III such as CLIP. Others are still on going such as a pilot involving the use of mobile vans as part of an outreach of the Union Libraries to rural women readers.
It did not become clear to the MTR how pilots are evaluated as a basis for broader implementation.

Recommendation

1. Prepare designs of pilots including criteria for mainstreaming
2. Pilots should be evaluate and positive results may be transferred into a list of implement able activities which may be incorporated into TARC training and others teacher trainings.

8.2.7 Need for Focus within Education Quality Drive

Issue

EDU's activities have gradually been expanded far beyond curriculum development and textbook writing, they now also include the research function which must allow the EDU to steer all those activities in a purposeful way, as explained earlier, liaison with the field structures through Quality Managers, and the piloting and development of new initiatives.
On the one hand, the progress achieved by this highly motivated team is considerable, but on the other hand the tasks still remaining are difficult. The BEP curriculum group has developed materials for grades 1 to 3, and they have started work on materials for grades 4 and 5. This has required considerable investments in staff development as well as research and high-level consultancy services.

Although work on new mathematics textbooks for grades 4 and 5 has already been completed, the MTR mission is concerned about the magnitude of the proliferation of tasks by this young and dynamic unit, and about the human resources required for developing new grade 4 and 5 science and social science textbooks and additional materials for Bangla and English in order to help teachers adopt new child teaching methods. An option may be to use existing GoB textbooks instead of developing more textbooks. This might lead to substantial cost savings, which for example, could be spent in extra training for teachers and field staff to help them overcome the difficulties they face in using those textbooks. Another option is to seek partnership with specialized curriculum development institutions or pedagogic consultants. The MTR mission is concerned about the proliferation of the tasks undertaken by EDU.

Recommendations:

1. EDU to prepare an analysis of its present tasks/mandate against its available human resources, existing market trends and demands and EDU's areas of strength and weaknesses. (using also market inventories and SWOT analysis)

2. This should cover EDU's present activity fields;

- Curriculum design, development, formative evaluation and revision
- Test item construction and learner assessment
- Textbook design, trailing, development and revision
- Supplementary material, teacher guides, workbook development
- Teaching methodologies
- Training of supervisory staff
- Monitoring and Research

3. The analysis is to come to conclusions related to areas to focus on (the realistic scope), where external expertise (including partnerships with specialized institutions) should be called upon and where and when EDU can build upon existing materials, textbooks and so on.
4. The Mission would welcome external advise on the degree to which the present textbook development policy is feasible and sustainable from a cost and quality perspective considering also the results of the analysis as proposed in recommendation 1 and 2.

8.2.8 Need for Staff Development for Supervisory Structure

Issue

Quality Managers (QMs) are responsible for the training of Master Trainers but they equally are strongly in need of further competency development and confidence building. The speed of implementation of the quality improvement drive has not fully been matched by a corresponding capacity building process of QMs. This, according to the MTR mission, puts a pressure on a system capable of meeting the specified targets according to project document requirements but being faced with problems in meeting the requirements of

effectively building a critical mass for effectively developing and sustaining the quality drive.

Recommendation:

Prepare a systematic staff development plan for supervisory staff from RM, QM to RTs starting from tasks, proceeding into job descriptions, training specification and linking training plan with implementation plan (including involvement of consultants or sub-contracting during training periods).

8.2.9 Research Expertise Available within BRAC and Need for Consultancy Inputs or Collaboration with Other Specialized Institutions

Issue

The drive for quality education generated the need for formative evaluation to enable management takes informed decisions. The Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) was developed in collaboration with the Institute of Education Research of Dhaka University as a testing tool to study the level of learners who completed the grade 1 to 3 cycles in BRAC schools.
The RED is hoping to further develop the SAT with the intention to hand it over to the BEP for monitoring the quality of its education programme through measuring the 53 competencies required of a primary school graduate. The complexity of developing such an educational assessment tool covering grades 1 to 5 and the high level of specialized educational expertise required should not be underestimated. While appreciating the dedication of the researchers and their experience in activities such as sample surveys, tracer studies and conducting tests, the MTR mission wonders whether the RED's own resources will be sufficient for the development of an instrument such as the SAT to cover adequately all the terminal competencies for entire primary education level.
On the other hand, expertise is readily available at present within BRAC, for conducting an extensive and gender specific tracer study of BRAC graduates and their progression in formal secondary schools or other continued education, and the wealth of data are available in the follow-up registers in the BEP Team Offices.

Recommendation:

The development of a tool for assessing learner achievement is of vital importance to the NFPE programme. It would be safe for BRAC to collaborate with a specialized institution or consultant for the development of a sophisticated evaluation instrument such as the SAT, covering all terminal competencies for grades 1 to 5. Development partners can be invited to support such collaboration.
With the existing expertise available at BRAC, an extensive and gender specific research should be conducted on the progression of BRAC graduates in secondary education using the data recorded and updated annually in the follow-up registers in the BEP field offices. Such a study would be useful for the BEP management to appraise the relevance of NFPE schools and to plan possible support to secondary school students.

8.2.10 Copying

Issue:

It was observed that groups of children wrote same sentences with the same mistakes. Copying practice may emerge from peer learning.

Recommendation:

Copying practice is a national problem from which govt. or non-govt. including BRAC are not free. So individual attention to slow and weak learners through appropriate remedial teaching possibly has no alternative to ensure learning achievement.