

## RECOMMENDATION

### On the level of progress and the challenges in achieving the 6<sup>th</sup> EFA goal

#### Purpose

Policy Research Center Bangladesh (PRC.bd), a civil society think tank, arranged a dialogue on the level of progress and the challenges in achieving the 6<sup>th</sup> EFA goal in CIRDAP Conference Hall on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2013. Multi sectoral stake holders attended the dialogue and contributed to the informed and unbiased discussion. The dialogue was graced by the attendance of Chief Guest, Dr. S A Samad (Minister), Executive Chairman, Board of Investment (BoI), Government of Bangladesh and Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, Senior Adviser, Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. The Dialogue was moderated by Prof. Dr. Akbaruddin Ahmad.

This document will try to rationalize the justification of the dialogue and will strive provide recommendation to the concern duty bearers and development partners into the level of progress and the challenges that are faced in achieving the 6<sup>th</sup> EFA goal.

#### Rationale for dialogue

We find that the status of Bangladesh in achieving the *Education for All* goals is quite satisfactory. Still it seems that we are lagging behind in the matters of quality education. It is very natural that ‘**quality**’ should be the final goal of any endeavor. The 6<sup>th</sup> EFA goal is targeted for quality education, especially in three basic skills that is literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. We are committed to make all our citizens, that is children, adults and hard to reach persons equipped with these three skills. So we should be vigilant regarding our status.

We, as a civil society think tank maintain that exchange of understanding of the problem and identification of possible solutions through multi sectoral dialogue would be of much help in reducing gaps in 6<sup>th</sup> FEA goal achievement. PRC.bd also believes that through informed and unbiased participatory dialogue multi sectoral stakeholders can make immense contribution to Bangladesh’s endeavor to achieve EFA goals.

## **Executive Summary of the paper presented**

### **The Background**

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, adopted in 1972, acknowledged education as a basic right of the people and enjoined on the State to ensure the provision of universal and compulsory free primary education to all children, relating education to the needs of the society and removing illiteracy. From then on, through several Acts and initiatives, Bangladesh, with the assistance of the donor and NGO partners, have achieved a lot in the primary education sector. But still we did not get the total success, we could not reach the goal that is, the complete irradiation of illiteracy.

### **The EFA**

When the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), meeting in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990, adopted the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA): Meeting Basic Learning Needs, with an "expanded vision" of basic education, Bangladesh also became a willful signatory to it. The signatory countries to EFA declaration are committed to achieving six specific education goals. In order to set the context for discussion the house went through the goals once again.

### **Current Status of EFA achievement in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is trying with sincerity and hardship to achieve the EFA goals as they are quite in line with Bangladesh aspirations.

- 1. Gender Disparity:** One of the important points of the Dakar Framework was to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005. We have achieved this goal. Sometimes we find the enrolment ratio is higher in the case of girl-child. We hope that we shall be able to achieve retention rate target also by 2015.
- 2. Enrollment:** Regarding GER (Gross Enrollment Rate), we have almost achieved the target. But regarding NER (Net Enrollment Rate) we have not reached the target yet. Considering initiative of the government and the trend of our people we hope that we shall be able to achieve the target by 2015.
- 3. Early Childhood Care and Education:** We had a system of ECE (early childhood education) through 2-3 year Kindergartens though in a limited scale and mostly in English medium systems. However, recently the government has included one year extra course as ECE with the primary level. So, very soon this will also be a systematic affair for the whole target group.



4. **Adult Education:** Regarding adult education we could not reach our desired target. The Government is trying hard. A number of NGO's are also working in this field. We are hoping to reach this target by 2015.
5. **Equitable Access:** The third EFA goal is to ensure that equitable access to the learning needs of all young people and adults are met. Bangladesh is always careful about this. But we are still facing problems regarding dropouts and the completion of the primary education cycle.
6. **Quality of Education:** The 6<sup>th</sup> EFA goal is to improve all aspects of quality education. This improvement will aim at the excellence of all students of all levels. This will again ensure the learning outcomes in such a way that they are recognized and measurable, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life-skills. Through different initiatives and measures our Government is trying to achieve this goal also. Different NGOs are also trying to share the task.

## **Rationale for Dialogue on 6<sup>th</sup> EFA Goal**

We know that assessment of the progress in quality school education is a very difficult task. But as we know that the 'quality education' should be the ultimate end of all our initiatives, all the stakeholders are trying to do that. We would like to know where the students stand regarding the six-point scale that has been set to assess the quality basic/primary education. However, research on outcome indicators is driving home the point that there is a gap between the expectations and the achievements.

The PRC.bd, as a civil society think tank, like other organizations, is very much concerned regarding this fact. We arranged the dialogue session so that we may understand the problem and try to come up with some solutions. Some of the questions which were raised to exchange the views upon were:

1. Where do we stand at present, regarding the achievement of the 6<sup>th</sup> EFA goal?
2. Do all children acquire grade-wise and subject-wise expected learning outcomes or competencies in the classroom?
3. To be specific: (a) Can they write independently and with creativity? (b) Have they become independent reader? (c) Have they acquired reading habit properly? (d) Are they growing up with a scientific attitude?
4. If not, then what could be the reasons?
5. Are the measures that have been taken to assess the level of mastery of the 50 competencies determined by the curriculum good enough?



6. Is the grade-V completion examination assesses the competencies and learning outcomes properly?
7. What could be the way outs of the short falls?

It was sought that through the discussion we shall be immensely benefited in our endeavor to contribute in the national cause.

## **Recommendations**

The dialogue found through the exchange of experience that there is a gap between the expectations and the reality regarding the achievement of 6<sup>th</sup> EFA goal. Having that realization a number of recommendations were put forward by the multi-sectoral representatives. We may group them into the following:

### **A. Students' learning area**

1. Basic mathematics, problem solving and reading abilities must be focused and improved.
2. Care must be given on the excellence of schooling and classroom learning environment.
3. Primary completion examination is not a necessity. It might hinder creativity and lead students to memorization of materials. So this examination system can be reevaluated.
4. Measures and initiatives must be taken to make the students independent learners. And they should be encouraged in different co-curricular activities.
5. In every village there should be at least one primary school.
6. Contact hour should be at Least six.
7. There must be a short and long term plan for developing the quality of education.
8. Expansion and improvement of early childhood care and education should be done.

### **B. Teaching area**

1. Teacher-student ratio should be brought to 1:25 immediately in primary and 1:35 in accordingly school level.

2. Vacant posts should be filled up in an urgent basis.
3. Teachers should not be ordered to do extra-teaching duties.
4. Teachers should be well-trained; they should be trained in subject matters, methodology, skills and also in attitude.
5. Four year under graduate education courses may be introduced in general colleges. The teachers may be recruited from among these graduates.
6. Teachers should be encouraged and trained to focus on students' creativity, competency, critical thinking and overall language efficiency.
7. Efficient and trained teaching staffs must be recruited to ensure more rigorous and measurable standards of student performance and conduct.

### **C. Secondary and higher education**

1. Vocational and technology based education should be given more priority as it can play a significant role in reducing poverty and creating more job opportunities.
3. Knowledge, specialization and market value of the disciplines must be incorporated.
4. Degree collages under national university should be reassessed.
5. Private university education must be monitored to assure quality and excellence.
6. Focus should be given on market demand and employers need.
7. Good governance and clarity in education must be maintained.
8. Market demand must be taken into consideration before starting to design or redesign the curriculums.
9. Engage traditional disciplines in a Trans -disciplinary Framework.
10. Have to develop specific policies and encourage seminars, dialogues, discussions, and conference etc for creating awareness.



## **D. Financing for education**

1. The budget that goes to the education sectors must be reexamined as about 80 % of the budget is spent just for giving salary.
2. Assurance should be there for financial support for material resources for implementing the program.
3. Importance can be given on PPP to raise funds, develop infrastructure and conduct educational research.
4. The sense of investment, in case of spending money in education, must be developed in every levels of the society to ensure the achievement of quality education



## Annexure

### Deliberation from the Delegates:

#### Dr. Syed Abdus Samad, Executive Chairman (minister) Board of Investment,

In his deliberation stated that Education is the backbone of a nation and the absolute way of acquiring knowledge and key to sustainable development. He also stated that the desire of human to be educated was apparent in human civilization and every soul cherished it in their heart. He pointed that though Government was trying with sincerity and hardship to ensure standard education for all of its citizens, the quality was still very poor and unsatisfactory. In his speech he emphasized the recruitment of efficient and trained teaching staffs avoiding the political domination and nepotism to ensure more rigorous and measurable standards of student performance and conduct. He also stated that this goal, to achieve quality education, could never be successful unless the government took initiatives to recruit efficient, energetic, creative, and innovative minded teachers. He suggested introducing “Pre Teachers Training” institution for fresher who were eager to take teaching as their profession so that the new teachers could easily find a way to make themselves efficient and trained before starting teaching. He also mentioned that achieving EFA goal was a big challenge for Bangladesh and it was really a difficult task. ‘Poor socio-economic condition, lack of efficient teachers, political instability and lack of social awareness are the major obstacles in this achievement’ he added. He argued that spending money for education is a great investment and suggested to create an enlightened awareness within the educational community and the public that reorienting education to achieve sustainability is essential.

#### Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, Senior Advisor Institute of Educational Development

BRAC University in his speech mentioned that Bangladesh has made a remarkable progress in education by adopting compulsory education for all of its citizens. But he expressed his concern on the quality of education as it is not improving. He said that the education of Bangladesh is not high in standard to fulfill the demands of the international employers. He further said that the curriculum and the materials for education were not updated so that they could not supply the efficient and skilled manpower in the international job markets fulfilling the demands of the international employers. He also said that it was shocking to hear that many GPA 5 holders often could not pass in the university admission test. He suggested that Efficient and trained teaching staffs must be recruited to ensure more rigorous and measurable standards of student performance and conduct otherwise the program will never be successful. He emphasized curriculum selection and said that before setting curriculums market demands and job opportunities must be taken into consideration. He suggested that here must have research projects to develop and ensure the quality of education. And also stated that the Knowledge, specialization and marketing value of the disciplines must be incorporated according to the demands of the age. He further suggested that the vacancies of the



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positions in the educational institutions must be filled up very soon with efficient and skilled teachers. He encouraged to involve expert and efficient manpower in education for getting better exposure and excellence. He mentioned that there must have a short and long term plan for developing the quality of education and suggested to make an institution to control the quality of the education. He further suggested reassessing the Degree colleges under National University. And emphasized that quality education must be supplied for each and every members of the society. 'Care must be given on the excellence of schooling and classroom learning environment' he added. He commented that Primary completion examination was not necessary. According to Dr. Manzoor It might hinder creativity and lead students to memorization of scripts without understanding the texts. 'So this examination can be reevaluated' he added. 'Basic Primary Education must be ensured for all. Equality and equity must be maintained across the country and the gap between the classes must be filled especially in primary level education' he commented. He again suggested taking measures and initiatives to make the students independent learners. He emphasized that they should be encouraged in different extra- curricular activities. He recommended that there should have at least one primary school in every villages of the country.

**Dr Akbaruddin Ahmed, Chairman, PRC.bd** in his deliberation stated that apparently every year we see the literacy rate to increase, the quality of education is really going down. He mentioned that comparatively to the world standards Bangladesh is lagging behind day by day. He pointed that many students do not have expected reading and writing fluency and basic communication skills. 'Many of them also cannot think and connect critically even after the completion of their graduation' he added. 'Many teachers also lack these basic communication skills' he further said. He mentioned that in Middle Eastern countries many Bangladeshi workers do not get good jobs because of their lack of communication skills. 'Often they are engaged in work of lowest level categories where Indian, Shinghaliz, Pakistani and Nepalese workers are in good position just for their communication skills' he added. He stated that importance should be given from the first grade of learning on the development of students' communication skills, language efficiency and creativity. Raising standards in literacy, numeracy, communication skills, and competency in creative thinking and writing. He further argued that teachers must be qualified as they are responsible for building a future generation and on their shoulder nation progresses. He suggested that there must have research projects to develop and ensure the quality of education. He also mentioned that there has a significant connectivity and relations of education with economic development, foreign relations, foreign remittance, tourism business and with information technology so an awareness of these relations and their utility must be developed in national, social, cultural and family levels. He suggested to give Importance on public private partnership (PPP) to raise funds, develop infrastructure, conduct education research and improve the quality of education.

**Prof. Nusrat Sultana, Senior Research Fellow, PRC.bd** in her Keynote Speech gave a historical overview of Bangladeshes position on education. She mentioned that Bangladesh holds a long history of rich cultural heritage though it is geographically small and troubled with large population. She also mentioned that the constitution of Bangladesh acknowledged education as a basic principle of the people and enjoined on the state to ensure the provision of universal and compulsory free primary education to all children, relating education to the needs of the society and removing illiteracy. In her speech she described the genesis of EFA and presented its six specific education



goals. She analyzed the current status of EFA achievement in Bangladesh and hoped that Bangladesh shall be able to achieve these six specific goals by 2015 as she has already made a significant progress in education especially in primary and female education. However, emphasizing quality of education and giving rationale for dialogue on 6<sup>th</sup> goal of EFA she concluded her speech.

**Dr. Kazuaki Hashimoto, Primary Education Advisor, JAICA** in his speech said that Bangladesh has made a remarkable progress in education by adopting compulsory education for all of its citizens. He praised the success of Bangladesh in female education. He said that many girls are entering in education with boys and in many places they are more in number than boys. And he also noticed that every year the literacy rate is going up. He said that Since 2004 JAICA has been implementing many programs in Bangladesh to improve curriculum to spread the awareness and to uphold the education. He also assured to continue their programs and to work in improving Bangladesh's education.

**Golam Gaus Al quaderi, Associate Professor of English, DU** in his deliberation focused on the definition and scope of the term 'Education for All'. He raised question whether it is really possible for each and every students to take education in English. He said people to comprehend the reality and requested them to think upon limit and leave utopian aspirations.

**Mahbubur rahman, retired employee in worldbank** analyzed education from employers point of view and said that employers usually looked for those candidates who were expert, efficient and were ready to take challenges. He criticized present educational curriculums saying that 'they really do not match with marketing needs'. He emphasized the utility of learning and interpreted education from Utilitarian point of views. To him bookish knowledge would not come in work always so focus to be given on competency and communication skills. He focused on knowledge, skills, efficiency, expatriation on specific disciplines and communication skills. He mentioned that teachers had a very strong role to play in making learners skilled and efficient.

**Mr. Abrar uddin ahmad, Executive director, RIM** suggested that from the first grade, importance must be given on the development of students' communication skills, language efficiency and creativity.

**Sharifa khatun, Professor, IR DU** in her speech said that we need to focus on total implementation of the EFA goals. She also said that Bangladesh is progressing day by day and showed examples of her achievement in gender equality and enrollment and suggested authorities to take action to achieve that six specific EFA goals focusing the 6<sup>th</sup> one.

**Mr. Ramizuddin Ahmed, Rtd Associate Prof. T.T. College** said that when we talked to ensure the education for all, the world went beyond that level. He suggested educationists and researchers to take initiatives to make highly competent professionals for fulfilling the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Dr. anwarul islam, VC, BIU** in his deliberation mentioned that education is a burning issue and it is a must for any kind of development. He emphasized childhood caring and their quality education.



He suggested authority to make students fluent in English giving examples of India and Srilanka where children can speak English fluently.

**Jalaluddin , research fellow of a NGO,** in his speech mentioned that there are three types of educational systems are active in the country and in many extent they are widening educational gaps among the social classes. He suggested authority to reduce these gaps between urban and rural institutions and give special care to poverty stricken underprivileged children. He also suggested that for maintaining equality and equity , the restriction imposed upon Madrasha students must be removed and they should be given equal opportunity to access in higher education.

**Dr. Mohammad shah alam ,Deputy Managing Director, Phoenix** in his deliberation mentioned that EFA is a very important program of UNESCO and World Bank .He said that we have to work harder to ensure excellence and quality in education because it would never happen at a fortnight .He emphasized skill based education and suggested to ensure higher standard for getting global opportunity and accessing in their job markets.

**Benjammin bin hasim, a participant in the dialogue** in his speech mentioned that the assurance of quality education is a difficult task but now it's time to ensure the quality education for all. He also said that to uphold the dignity and prestige of our country we must work for ensuring quality education for all.

**Abul basher, PHD fellow of Jahangir Nagar University** gave emphasis on the incorporation of curriculum to fulfill the present demand of job markets. He said that clarity, accessibility, adaptability and acceptability should be maintained for achieving this EFA goals.

**Faridul Islam, Rtd Associate Prof. T.T. College** defined the term 'Education for All' saying that it (EFA) means ensuring primary education for all of the members of the society. He emphasized the role of teacher in building a developed and cultured nation. However, describing present conditions of the schools that they lack different essential facilities and academic environment he suggested that remote and poorest areas of the country must be brought under special care to materialize the program education for all for .

**Salma rahman ,a participant in the dialogue** said that the teaching quality in our country is not good and regretfully the teachers are not skilled and efficient enough to improve the quality of their pupils. And very often they teach privately for money ignoring their responsibilities in schools. She also mentioned that students are becoming dependent day by day on their tutors and coaching centers and thus losing their originalities. She further said that the condition of private university was horrible and they (the private universities) were just running business in the name of education. 'And there they do not care of excellence and quality of education' she added.

**Suraiya Huda, professor, Eastern University** in her deliberation mentioned that two third of our students in the university level cannot communicate properly .She said that though so many



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programs were available there for developing their quality o ,unfortunately they hardly took those opportunity.

**Dr. Sotto Broto Roy, Rtd Associate Prof. T.T. College** in his speech said that the movement called ‘Universal Primary Education for All’ started from Pakistan period and it was recognized in 1959 by the then government. And the law named ‘Education Rights’ passed in 1989 .He also mentioned that In 1993 government took a plan to declare the country 100% literate by 2020. He analyzed the difference between literacy and education saying that they are not same. He expressed his aspiration that digital technology would bring about a new revolution in our country.