

BRAC UNIVERSITY
Institute of Educational Development (BU-IED)

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Half of enrolled students do not complete Primary education

About half of the children (48 percent in 2004) enrolled in grade 1 did not complete grade 5, a research report on access to education in Bangladesh has concluded.

The study conducted by BRAC University Institute of Educational Development (BU-IED) was launched on Tuesday at BRAC Center Auditorium. Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury, Vice Chancellor of BRAC University presided.

The report revealed that a large proportion of those who continued in school were “virtually excluded” because they learned little. Moreover, about 17 percent completing grade 5 did not continue on to grade 6 in the lower secondary level. Over ten percent of children did not enroll at all in primary school.

Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, Former Adviser to Caretaker Government, said that sacrifices poor parents make to send their children, including girls, to school show that the demand for education is high, but the state is failing to respond to the demand with adequate supply of quality education. Bangladesh is doing well on demand indicators reflected in high enrollment, but poorly on supply indicators revealed by high dropout and poor learning achievement of students. Both demand and supply factors must be addressed together to achieve access with equity and quality, said Professor Mahmud.

Rasheda K. Chowdury, Executive Director of CAMPE, said that the MDG goal is to have all children complete primary education by 2015. This means all children should be in primary school by January 2000 and they all must continue till the end. Are we ready to face this challenge, She asked. ...

Ms Elizabeth Carriere, Acting Head of DFID Bangladesh, observed that poverty-related factors are the major obstacles to participation in education. DFID is continuing to work in Bangladesh and would increase assistance to address poverty-related obstacles to education.

Presenting the report, Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, Director of BU-IED, said that the overarching problems regarding access with quality and equity were threefold. First, very high dropout at primary and secondary schools made enrollment statistics virtually meaningless. Secondly, virtual or silent exclusion of those who remained enrolled but learned little was as serious a problem as open exclusion. Thirdly, spectacular progress has been made in eliminating gender disparity in enrollment; but both boys and girls were still affected by dropout and virtual exclusion.

Dr. Ahmed led the research team which put together the report, and included Prof Kazi Saleh Ahmed, Nurul Islam Khan and Romij Ahmed as senior researchers. The research was conducted under the auspices of the international Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) that includes 7 institutions from Bangladesh, India, Ghana, South Africa and U.K. Parallel studies have been undertaken in India, Ghana and South Africa.

Contact: Altaf Hossain, 988 1265, ext. 2130; Dr. Sudhir Chandra Sarker 988 1265, ext. 2123, Mobile 0171 3060613