

## Local Initiative in Organising Mass Literacy Campaign

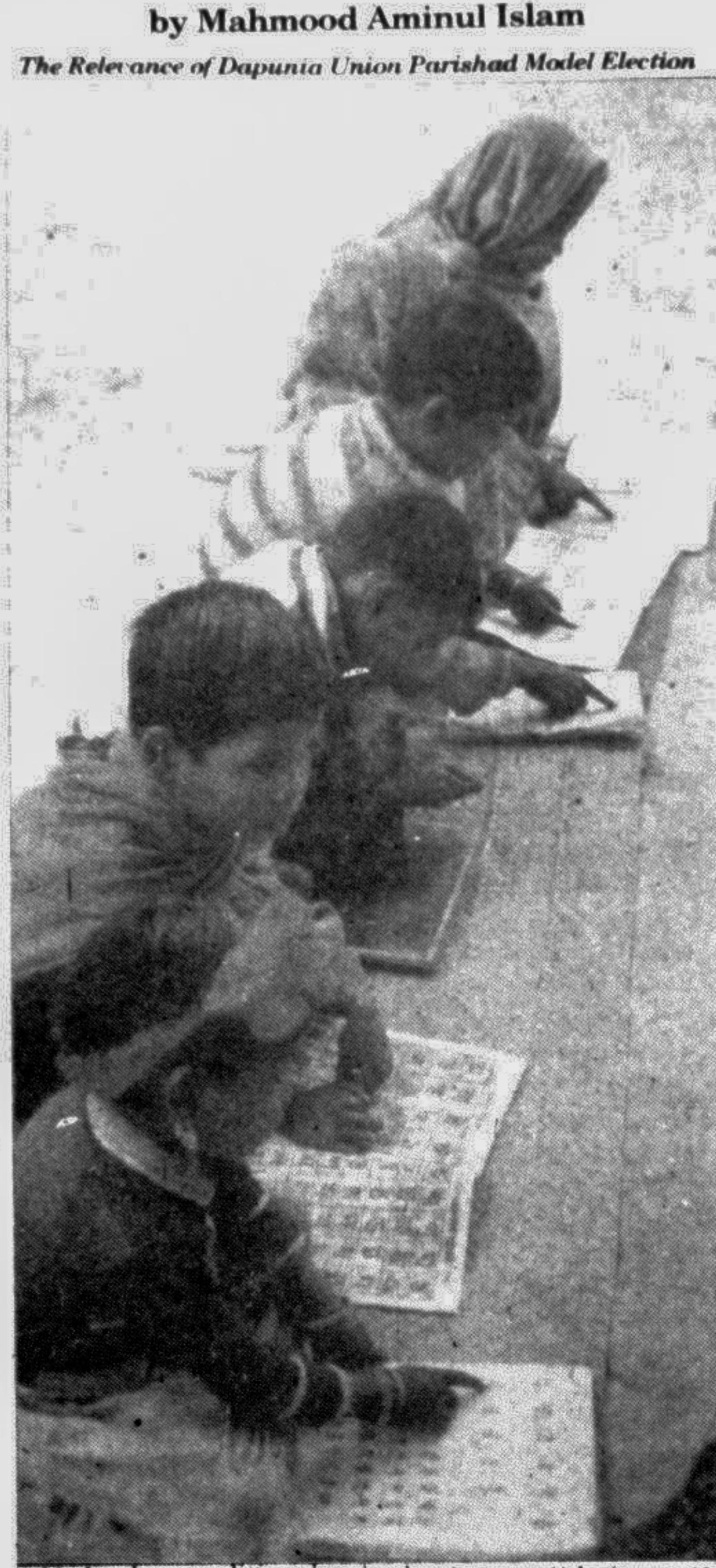
by Mahmood Aminul Islam

The Relevance of Dapunia Union Parishad Model Election

I am writing this article assuming that all the political parties in Bangladesh are united in their resolve to eradicate illiteracy from the country within the shortest possible time. A strong political will shared by all the parties is essential to make people in all walks of life aware of the grave problem created by the persisting high rate of illiteracy and motivate them to take determined action both individually and collectively for early solution of the problem.

Early this century, voluntary efforts were made in this sub-continent to spread literacy among a largely illiterate population without much success. But since the 1950s, with the end to colonial rule, the literacy drive has gained momentum, and now it is considered a priority programme linked to development. This has led many countries in the Asia-Pacific region like Bangladesh and India to take it upon themselves to plan and implement national literacy programmes which would produce quick results in eradicating illiteracy. But the tendency to central planning including target setting and prescribing implementation methods has not changed much, although the programme is best executed as a campaign through local initiative and with mass participation.

In Bangladesh, quite a few NGOs are associated in programme implementation to supplement government efforts. These NGOs are mostly based in Dhaka and other cities which leaves little scope to fully bring the local initiative into play. The present approach ignores the fact that each of the 68000 villages grouped together in 4451 Unions (the smallest administrative unit) has its own character with people well conversant with local conditions. The differences between villages, however small, should go into total planning and implementation of a national literacy programme. People in the same village have intimate knowledge of one another making it easier for them to identify the potential learners and the resources available locally in terms of physical facilities, literacy workers — or



Maktabs, traditional schools, in masjid (mosque)  
Courtesy — Unicef

canvassing for each candidate and keeping peace and order at the polling stations was carried out by a 15-member (10 men and 5 women) voters club formed in each village.

The club members selected one director and one asstt director for their respective clubs. All the clubs jointly elected one director general and one joint director general to coordinate the activities of 27 voters' clubs for efficient conduct of the election. The club members were given necessary training and guidance specially on the preparation of electoral rolls by the officials of the Election Commission from time to time since September 1992. On the election day, 19,826 voters (out of a total population of 38,515) exercised their rights of franchise to elect one chairman out of 11 candidates and 9 members out of 40 candidates.

Dapunia model election was a one time operation, but the concept of voters' clubs can be developed to encourage local initiative in planning and implementing all rural development programmes for which maximum community participation is necessary to achieve the best result.

In countries like Bangladesh where the majority population is illiterate, the literacy programme has to be approached as a movement or a campaign in which everybody has to take part according to his/her capacity. Drawing analogy with Dapunia model election all the Unions may be invited in phases to organise literacy campaign for a year in their own area (generally 15-25 villages) on a voluntary basis. Each village could form a literacy workers' club with a small executive committee and along with other clubs in the Union prepare a coordinated plan including resource mobilization to impart literacy to all those adults and adolescents who have remained illiterate. In executing the plan the club members have to receive training and guidance as was the case in Dapunia.

Each literacy workers' club (which may be renamed as community development workers' club after the campaign) could be given a small annual grant as recognition of its voluntary services to the

community and to meet its organisational expenses. If paid at the rate Tk 3000.00 an amount of Tk 20.4 crore would be required annually for 68000 clubs. The amount is insignificant compared to the enthusiasm it would create in the local youth for voluntary participation in literacy and other development work. The government is now spending a good amount as subvention to the NGOs engaged in executing a limited literacy programme in 63 thanas.

In the present literacy and non-formal education programme primers, teachers' manual and other educational materials are supplied centrally. This creates logistic problem and in a way discourages local initiative. Arrangements may be made with the selected printers and publishers to have unrestricted printing and sale of approved literacy materials throughout the country at a heavily subsidised price (say Tk 2.00 for primer, Tk 3.00 for teachers' manual). The low pricing and easy availability will enable the clubs to procure the materials for the learners. The clubs will need help to train their literacy workers. The identified resource persons from each locality may be trained as trainers for training of hundreds of teachers and supervisors. Special arrangements will have to be made with the Open University for regular broadcast of the trainers' training programmes. The district and thana resource centres are recommended by the government appointed high powered Task Force can play a significant role in providing training and other technical support services to the clubs.

It is estimated that about 20 million adults will have to be made literate to attain a modest target of 62 per cent literacy rate by the year 2000. Apart from resource constraints, it is unthinkable that even this target could be reached by following the usual programme approach. The only alternative is to launch a campaign with the blessings of all the political parties for mass awakening to the urgent need of universal literacy, and generating spontaneous and enthusiastic response in people to execute the action plan in their villages drawing support from their respective Union coordinating committees.

Dapunia Union Parishad model election has shown that through proper organisation and support, and by placing trust in people's ability it is possible to successfully plan and implement a complex operation like election through local voluntary efforts.

I end this article with an appeal that we should not lose sight of Dapunia success story. Let us develop and refine the voters' club concept for a total literacy campaign, and bottom-up planning and implementation of development programmes which are being advocated by the present government.

(Mahmood Aminul Islam is a retired Addl Secretary, Ministry of Education, and served as the national coordinator of mass education programme in 1980-1982.)

## Ensuring Secondary School Girls Education Through Scholarship Project

by Afifa Raihana

Friendship Group (NFG) initiated, in 1990, a five-year project entitled "Secondary School Girls Scholarship Project" (SSGSP) in 10 secondary schools of Kharole Thana of Dinajpur District. From 1991 this project (SSGSP) covers all 11 recognized girls and co-educational secondary schools of Kharole.

## OBJECTIVES

The SSGSP has seven objectives: (a) increase girl students' enrollment in the secondary schools; (b) decrease the number of girls who drop out from the secondary schools; (c) increase girl students' attendance at the school; (d) encourage girl students to continue their formal education to the highest possible levels; (e) increase employment opportunities for the women; (f) delay age at marriage by keeping the girls at school; (g) increase the status of women in the family and the community; (h) encourage girl students in undertaking income-generation activities; and (i) involve girl students in eradication of illiteracy in the vicinity.

In line with the above objectives of the Project, this formative evaluation addresses the following: (a) how far have the project objectives been achieved so far? (b) what steps are proposed for further improvement? (c) what are the motivational aspects of the project on local female students, parents, and community? (d) how do the evaluation data compare with the baseline data? and (e) how do the evaluation data compare with data from the 3 control schools?

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major findings and

recommendations emerging from the present evaluation are summarized as follows:

(i) Kharole Thana is relatively disadvantaged thana compared to the control thana (Boghaganj) with respect to such educational variables as literacy rate, population per secondary school, and percentage of households without at least one literate person.

(ii) In terms of economic and educational variables, the SSGSP awardees are more disadvantaged than their comparison group. The average annual household income of the awardee

community and to meet its organisational expenses. If paid at the rate Tk 3000.00 an amount of Tk 20.4 crore would be required annually for 68000 clubs. The amount is insignificant compared to the enthusiasm it would create in the local youth for voluntary participation in literacy and other development work. The government is now spending a good amount as subvention to the NGOs engaged in executing a limited literacy programme in 63 thanas.

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One result of the university famine is that there are more expatriate scholars, scientists and consultants in Africa than ever before. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) points out in its recently-published *World Science Report* that this effectively returns \$2.3 billion of development aid to the North every year.

It also means, according to Thomas Odhiambo, president of the African Academy of Sciences, that African states have become increasingly 'addicted to external solutions.'

Despite severe economic constraints, students often regard privileges as a right. Makerere students, for example, used to receive travel allowances and pocket money, known as "boom," in addition to stationary and all education costs. With austerity the perks have gone, but the idea that government owes them an education and a living is still strong.

This approach is rejected by Professor Golora Moses, Vice-Chancellor of the proposed Bugema Adventist University in Uganda: "People should throw off the colonial mentality that university education should be free. People have to build their own institutions and support them."

Bugema is drawing financial support from Uganda's estimated 500,000 Adventists, a Christian denomination. It also has dairy and poultry farms, a carpentry workshop and 420 acres of farmland. These activities will be used to subsidise fees, which will amount to 300,000 Uganda shillings a quarter, less than half the fee required by a Bachelor of Commerce student at Makerere.

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girls is about four times less compared to their comparison group.

(iii) Although the SSGSP intended to increase enrollment of secondary school girls, it also has positive indirect effect on the enrollment of girls at the primary level. Due to the SSGSP, female-male parity in enrollment in Grades 6-8 has been achieved by 1992. However, at this stage of formative evaluation, it is difficult to predict whether the parity achieved would be sustained in the future.

(iv) With the introduction of scholarships for the

## Education

## CROSS AND CRESCENT MOVE INTO THE LECTURE HALL

by Crespo Sebunya in Kampala and John Gambanga in Mutare

More than 200,000 African students, about 10 per cent of the continent's total student population, are studying abroad — a far higher proportion than for any other region of the world. Part of the reason for this brain drain is the lack of universities at home. Now there are signs, reports Gemini News Service, that the Churches are moving into the higher education gap left by the state.

CHURCHES are repeating the key role they played in the provision of pre-independence primary and secondary schooling in Africa by setting up universities.

The trend challenges the widespread assumption on the continent that university education should be provided by governments. The trouble is that governments do not have the money to do the job.

Salaries are so poor at Uganda's Makerere University, once a world class institution, that lecturers usually give only three lectures a week, early in the morning, so that they can hold other fulltime jobs. The main attraction of a staff job there is cheap housing.

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In addition, initially only courses relatively cheap to run are offered, including education, business, nursing and religious studies.

The Adventists are following in the footsteps of the Muslims, who have established a university with the support of the international Islamic Conference, and the Protestants and Catholics, which each started a university.

However welcome the new institutions may be, they are small. Bugema will have only 100 students, and its library 8,000 books. Makerere, with 7,000 admissions a year, still accounts for 95 per cent of total university enrolment out of the 250,000 students who sit the entrance exams.

In Zimbabwe, too, the Church is changing the picture. The newly-opened third

— and first private — university is funded by the United States-based Methodist Church.

It can be a troublesome business. The Pakistani rector of the Islamic University, Professor Hug, collided with senior government officials when he insisted that the Board members should have high academic qualifications.

Ministers disagreed. The Protestant University was nearly stillborn when Anglican Church officials threatened to pull out as a result of an administrative row over ownership. It has also been stalled by financial scandals.

A fifth university is also in the offing, under consideration

problem of unemployed graduates.

Said a report by the UN Development Programme in Uganda: "New graduates of arts and social sciences are finding it difficult to secure employment in the tight labour market, which shows preference for highly skilled workers."

That is why Isa Sengooba did not even bother to look for a job when he completed his arts degree at Makerere. Instead, he returned home to help his mother raise chickens.

— GEMINI NEWS

## Chasing degrees



Source: Unesco, 1993

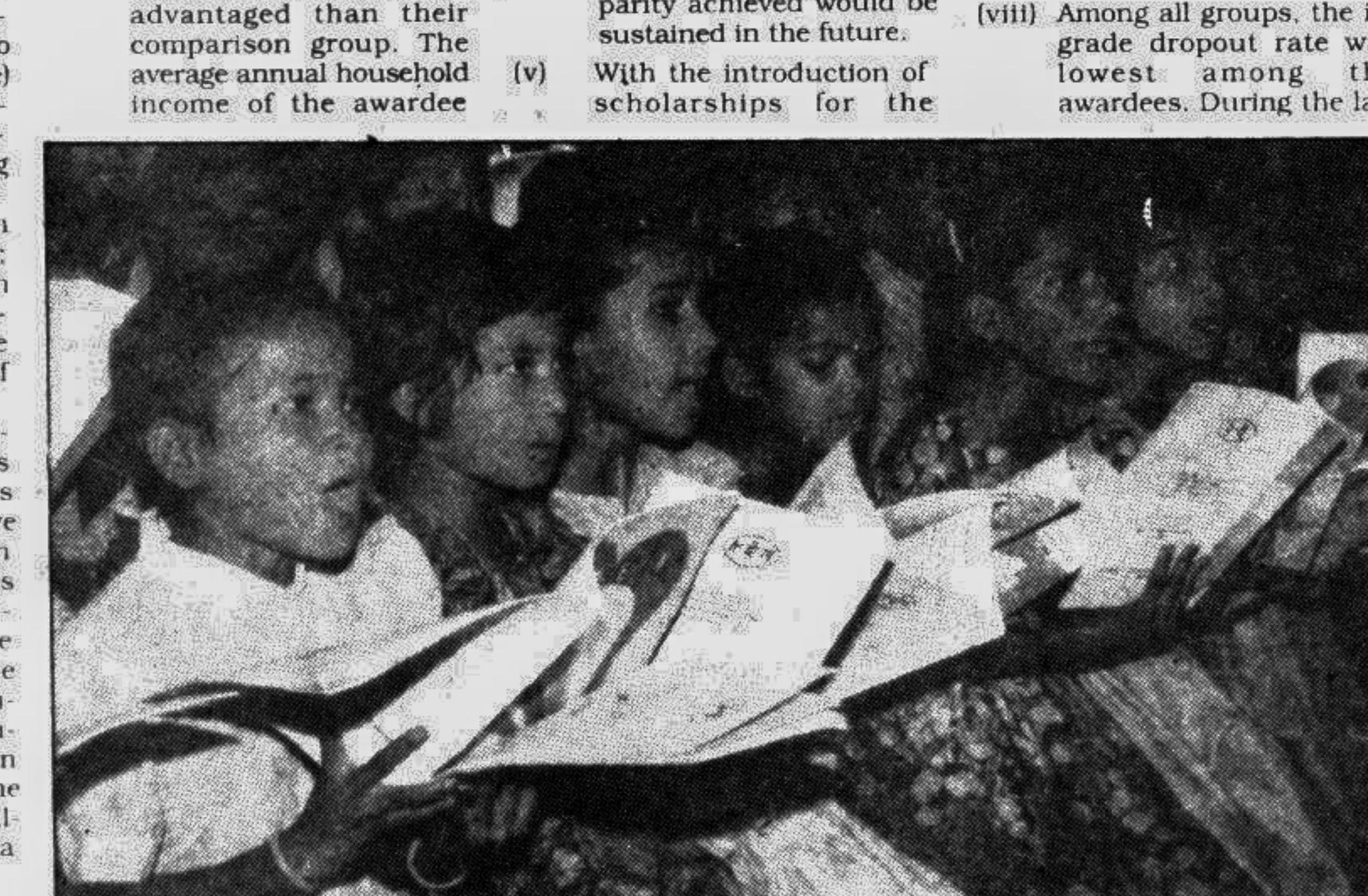
	Total students	Studying abroad
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.7m	14%
North Africa	1.4m	7%
East & Southeast Asia	2m	5%
Latin America	7m	1%
India	5m	0.7%

Upon the permission from the Ministry of Education, Govt of Bangladesh; Dr Dilip Kumar Sen, Associate Professor of Accounting, Govt Jagannath University College, Dhaka obtained the Doctor of Literature (D Lit) degree (which is considered the highest research degree in social sciences of the universities in Indo-Pak-Bangladesh sub-continent). He obtained the degree from Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta, India in 1993-94 on the basis of his thesis — "Anatomy of Human Resource Measurement and Accounting: An Inquiry into its Applicability to Decision-Making and External Financial Reporting".

awardees are happy that their daughters are getting scholarships. More than four-fifths of them felt that their status in the community has gone up as a result of sending their daughters to schools. One-third of awardees' parents said that it would not have been possible on their part to send their daughters to schools in the absence of the SSGSP. Almost all the parents of the awardees felt that their daughters will get better rooms after completion of their education.

(xvii) According to the community leaders, between 40 and 80 per cent of the present awardees would not have been enrolled, had there been no SSGSP. Among the suggestions put forward by the community leaders for further improvement of the SSGSP, the important ones include their greater involvement in project activities, parent/guardian associations (unionwise/schoolwise), recruitment of more Supervising Teachers to ensure more frequent visits to the households, etc.

(xviii) The current organizational chart for SSGSP does not adequately reflect the existing organizational structure. Thus, BACE HQ should possess an organizational chart for SSGSP, comprising an organogram (proposed in this evaluation study) roster of executive titles, position descriptions, and a well-drafted organizational manual.



If school could be made attractive to these students then their attendance would automatically increase.

Courtesy — Unicef