

Bangladesh needs more efforts to attain goal in female edn

1.5 m girl children still out of school,says Unicef's 'State of World's Children 2004' report

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh needs to strengthen its efforts in female education to attain the goal of gender equality by 2005 as about 1.5 million girl children still remained out of school, says a UNICEF report.

It says about three million children, half of them girls, are considered 'hard to reach group' who could not yet be enrolled in the primary education in addition to high rate of dropout despite efforts by the government and NGOs.

The report, titled 'The State of the World's Children 2004', revealed here simultaneously as elsewhere across the world yesterday.

Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque attended the programme as chief guest and received the report that focused on girls, education and development.

Eminent female educationists who have great contributions in female education, NGO leaders, development partners, members of the diplomatic corps and a good number of girl children were present at the report launching ceremony.

The report says Bangladesh is one of the 25 countries that fulfilled one or more of five criteria, including low enrolment rates for girls, gender gap of more than 10 per cent in primary education, and the countries with more than one million girls out of school.

It also says these countries are hard hit by a range of crises that affect school opportunities for girls such as HIV/AIDS and conflict.

Other countries include Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bolivia, Central African Republic, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Yemen, Nepal, Malawi and Sudan.

As success stories, the report shows, Bangladesh managed to raise the enrolment of female students both at primary and secondary levels more than boys. The ratio of boys and girls at the primary level is 88 and 90 in 2000. But the ratio went down at the secondary level as it stood at 45 of male and 47 of female.

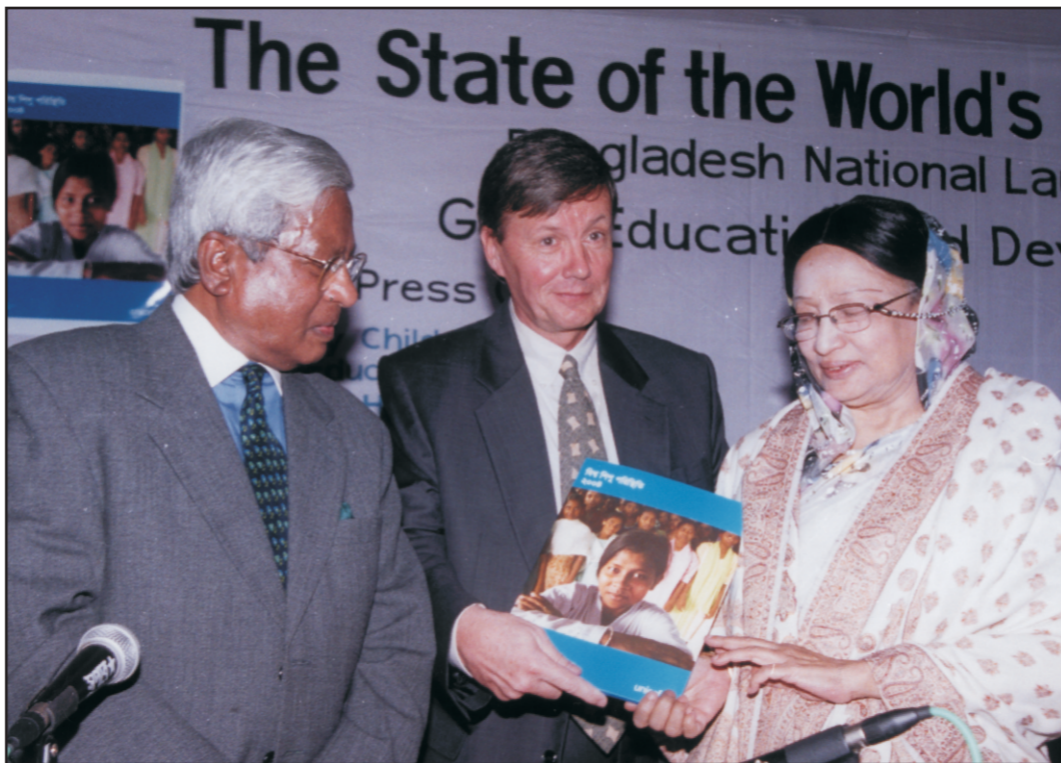
In adult literacy rate, only 30 per cent adult female had been literate in 2000 against 24 per cent in 1990. This dismal rate is also the same in the case of adult male with 44 per cent in 1990 and 49 per cent in 2000.

In her address, the minister said educating all members of a family could be ensured only through the expansion of education of girls.

She said only education could help girls acquire balance in society and ensure a sustainable development by removing curses like early marriage and polygamy.

"An educated woman ensures education to her children and proper care of their health, and empowers her through making financially solvent," the minister said.

Bangladesh like other countries in the world will have to attain the



Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque receives the report titled 'The State of the World's Children 2004' from Unicef representative in Bangladesh Morten Giersing at the launching ceremony at the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

goal of gender equality in education by 2005, a goal set 10 years ago to achieve the universal goal.

The United Nations considers

the goals of universal education, gender equality and empowering women hard to meet by 2015 by most of the nations. For this rea-

son, '2005 goals' have been taken as the first test of the world's commitment.

This year, the Unicef annual

report-2004 also presents data of world on girls' education considering it as one of the most crucial issues for the development community.

Launching the report, UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh Morten Giersing said despite success in enrolment only 8 per cent girls can complete secondary education.

He said to attain the millenium goals of 2015 set by the UN member countries, efforts should be made to reduce the dropout rate and improve the quality of education.

Begum Anwara Mansur, founder of Agrani Balika Bidyaloy, Noorjahan Begum, Editor of weekly Begum and Ismat Banu, headmistress of Anandamoyee Girls' School, the city's oldest girls school, shared their experiences on women education and empowerment at the function.

Recalling the contributions of Begum Rokeya in women emancipation, they emphasised the need for improving the standard of education at all stages, particularly the elementary level.

They said thousands of schools have sprung up across the country, but most of them have no qualified teachers.

Chief of Communication and Information of Unicef Naseem-ur-Rahman, BRAC Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed and President of Jatiya Press Club Rezauddin Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.



Congratulations

Dr Iqbal Hasan Mahmood, a medicine and chest disease specialist, has obtained Ph.D. from the World University of the USA recently, says a press release.

The topic of his thesis was cancer of lungs.

Presently, he is the chairman of World Association of Integrated Medicine (BC) and a visiting professor.

'One in 3 Asians has no access to safe water'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One out of every three people in Asia lacks access to safe drinking water and sanitation- two major conditions to prevent spreading of diarrhoeal diseases," said Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain at an international conference in the city yesterday.

Quoting a statistics, he said most tragic scenario is that children bear the burnt of the health consequences resulting from the deprivation of safe drinking water and children under five are the worst victims.

The health minister under-

scored the need for united efforts of the countries situated in the Asia-Pacific rim to strengthen the public health infrastructure to detect, respond and prevent the outbreak of infectious diseases.

The two-day conference on 'Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Pacific Rim' is being held under the sponsorship of the US-Japan Cooperative Medical Science Programme. The government in association with the ICDDR,B is hosting the conference.

Chaired by Health Secretary AFM Sarwer Kamal, the inaugural session was also addressed by US Ambassador in Dhaka Harry K Thomas, Japanese Ambassador

Matsushiro Horiguchi, and Chairperson Prof Dr Yoshifumi Takeda and Programme Director Dr John R La Montagner of the US-Japan Cooperative Medical Science Programme

Harry K Thomas said HIV/AIDS and cholera not only affect the individual but also the society as a whole.

He said although HIV prevalence is still under one percent in majority countries of the region, there are warning signs that several countries are under the threat of serious outbreak.

The spread of the epidemic could be slowed down only by applying scientific knowledge

developed by the researchers at the grassroots level, he added.

Matsushiro Horiguchi said effective cooperation among medical experts is essential for the success of global fight against infectious diseases.

Scientific sessions with special emphasis on cholera and HIV/AIDS will be held during the conference, organisers said.

At the end of the conference, the working groups comprising experts from the USA, Japan and other regions will make recommendations on prevention strategies regarding two infectious diseases.

Women urged to unite against sexual harassment at workplace

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called on the women to unite against sexual harassment at workplaces.

Workplace harassment is one of the main obstacles to ensuring women rights and their participation in the country's development activities, the discussants observed.

The South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers (Sangat) organised the discussion at the BETS centre in Dhanmondi to mark the South Asian Women's Day.

"We have to create such an environment both at home and workplace so that women could raise their voice against any kind of violence," said Shaheen Anam, team leader of Manusher Jonno.

Termining sexual harassment at workplace a major hurdle, she said the number of working women would decline if they feel insecure at their workplaces, which will eventually hinder the country's development.

Journalist and filmmaker Shamim Akther said ensuring women's rights is the precondition for safeguarding human rights and democracy.

She called for greater participation of women in the development activities.

Filmmaker Shabnam Ferdousi said many women at home and workplace face physical harassment that creates a tremendous mental pressure on them.

Tapati Shah, a member of Sangat, and coordinator Fauzia Khondakar also spoke.

Three films highlighting the violation of women's rights were also screened after the discussion.



PHOTO: STAR

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addresses the party's Central Working Committee meeting at its Dhanmondi office in the city yesterday.

4 Colour

4 Colour