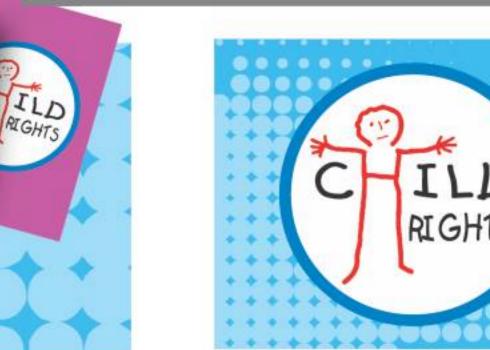
# CHILD Promoting Child Rights



# Promoting Child Rights



# Poverty continues to push children out of schools

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

ULTAN Ahmed, 13, collects plastic bottles littered on the streets. His earning at the end of the day stands at Tk 70-80. Sultan can write some names including his parents' both in Bengali and English and has a little knowledge of counting as he studied up to class four in a primary school.

"I went to school regularly. When I was in Class IV, my father (who was a rickshaw puller) died in a road accident. I'm the eldest son of my mother who works as a domestic help. Now, I don't find any importance of going to school. If I go to school, my little brother and sisters will have to starve," Sultan said.

He then disappeared with other scavengers

in search of 'goods.' Primary school dropout rates in Bangladesh though have come down, a significant proportion of children still remains out of school.

According to Bangladesh Primary Education Sector Performance Report (ASPR-2012) over 18 million student are enrolled in all types of formal school 89,712 schools. About 2.6 million children are still being deprived of the light of education who are aged between 6 and 10. (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006)

The Net Enrollment Rate (NER) for boys is 10 percent less than girls, while the Net Attendance Rate (NAR) for six year olds is 15 percent below than national average at 81 percent. The NAR, however, varies from one region to another of the country. (MICS 2009)

Rakhi Aktar Swarna lives in a slum at the Kathalpotti of capital's Jatrabari area with her parents. She went to the Jatrabari Primary School until last year. "I am 13 years old now. My father asked my

mother not to let me go to school," she added. Swarna's father Boshir Ahmed, who works in a rice warehouse, told that his daughter is grown-up. "Now, if I continue to send her to school, she may become target of local goons who would harass her. That would be humiliating for us. Besides, my wife is pregnant and

badly needs her attendance". There is no single cause of dropout rather children leave school for multifaceted reasons. Experts opine that poverty influences the decision. Poor parents find it more beneficial sending children to work rather than school.

Dr Siddiqur Rahman, consultant at National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), blamed unattractive learning method as one of the prime causes for the dropout of children

"Children learn their lessons without understanding it. As a result, they don't find interest in school", he said.

Distance is another factor; experts believe it is a strong ground for dropping out of female children from primary education. Poor facilities, overloaded classrooms, inappropriate

language of instruction and security are other

common causes for school dropout.

According to Dr. Rahman, the high propor tion of dropout of children from school is not only causing huge resource loss but also hindering the progress in achieving educational goal or MDG.

RTM (Research Training and Management International) conducted a study "Participatory Evaluation: Causes of Primary School Dropout' in 2009 on behalf of Directorate of Primary Education where some recommendations were

ing of SMC on role and responsibilities, strengthening of monitoring and supervision, award to meritorious students and improved teacher-parent-community relationship can also contribute a great deal in preventing drop-

It also recommended for the improvement of infrastructure, and road communication supply materials for children for games and sports, timely distribution of text books, and

Children programme in high dropout areas, ings and prioritise establishment of school buildings, external evaluation to assess the quality of teachers' training, upgradation of participation of local government, ensuring vision and building school-community-family

identifying poor infrastructure of school buildteachers' qualification at entry level, ensuring regular and timely attendance and departure of teachers, strengthening monitoring and super-

through to Grade V of primary education. The PEDP III will give special attention to support equitable outcomes for all school children irrespective of gender and physical and

> According to PEDP III, Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) and the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE), under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, will share the responsibility of reaching out to the out-of-school-children with alternative or second chance education of quality through partnership with NGOs for gradual reduction in

children aged 10-14 years which is approxidistrict and six divisional cities of the country. NGOs are also playing important roles in especially among the poor. NGOs such as BRAC, Save the Children, Plan Bangladesh, Phulki, Jagoroni Chakra, Dhaka Ahsania

primary schools covering 1.2 million students. It is expanding its intervention to urban areas

Under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education's (MoPME) leadership Reaching out of School Children (ROSC) project is providing non-formal primary education to out of school children in rural areas while the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project is providing non-formal primary education to out of school children in urban areas.

UNICEF is providing technical support to the government in its different programmes on reducing out of school children in urban areas. From 2004-2012, UNICEF gave non-formal education for 3.4 year to 166,000 children aged between 10 and 14 years under the BEHTRUWC

Several programmes are currently going on to address the problem of dropout. The programmes include continuing pre-primary education course, following-up the attendance, continuing involvement and participation of school management committee and providing

If the quality of education could be enriched, students will show interest in schooling, said Siddigur Rahman.

He, however, observed that quality could not be changed overnight.

address the dropout problem' pation and disparity reduction, decentralisa-Shyamal Kanti Ghosh, Director General, Directorate of tion and effectiveness and sector planning and

The above components are exposed to address the objective of an efficient, inclusive and equitable primary education system delivering effective and relevant child-friendly learning to all children from pre-primary

mental ability, socio-economic conditions, geographical location and ethnicity.

BNFE, as a part of PEDP III, is planning to cover 93 percent of the total urban out of school mately 1.5 million children in urban areas of 64 delivering pre-primary and primary education,

Mission are providing pre-primary education. BRAC operates more than 38,000 non-formal

this factor is counted. Stressing the necessity of primary education, the DPE DG said that primary education is a rudimentary stage which creates skill among children. "It is the stage where a child learns

how to count or how to write or sign. It helps them to become self-dependent in their next stage of life", Shyamal Kanti maintained. He said the problem of dropout is

O ensure primary education for

form well from their respective posi-

Directorate of Primary Education (DPE)

"The government alone cannot be

many factors which propel school drop-

able to reduce the number of dropout

children", he said adding, there are

The child dropout rate was 45.1

by about 20 percent in the last three

years. I hope it will be reduced more in

the coming days", Shyamal Kanti said.

"Whenever a student leaves school,

it is counted as dropout. But that boy or

type of school. This possibility remains

out of our consideration", he said claim-

ing, the dropout rate would be lesser if

girl may join a madrassa or any other

percent in 2008. The rate stood at 29.7

"The dropout rate has been reduced

tions, said Director General of

Shvamal Kanti Ghosh.

percent in 2011.

every child and prevent dropout

all the stakeholders should per-

common in remote, inaccessible and poverty prone areas. The DPE DG also held lack of con-

sciousness, parents' immediate expectation for financial gain and nonavailability of books responsible for

ANY SLUM children in

urban areas are deprived

from education due to

between formal and non-formal

Currently around 41.7 million

people are living in urban areas, 28

Bangladesh, said a report titled 'The

Around 18 percent of children in

slums attended secondary school in

Bangladesh. But no data were avail-

10th UKFIET (UK Forum for

International Education and

on Education and Development

2009, showed that the net primary

enrolment rate was around 70 per-

able about the slum children's enrol-

Training) International Conference

ment at primary level, said the report.

However, a paper prepared for the

percent of the total population of

State of the World's Children-2012'

by UNICEF.

poverty, lack of coordination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

children's inclination for dropping out to another question.

'Initiatives have been taken to

from school.

Several initiatives including

Parents, especially mothers, are

encouraged to send their children to

school through motivating rallies for

mothers, the DPE DG said in response

problem, he said.

Primary Education, talks to The Daily Star

"To draw and retain children's He said that the government is comattraction, new books are supplied to every child from class I to V. Teachers mitted to ensure the rights of basic education for the children. are given training so that they can make lesson attractive to the children as a "To fulfil this commitment the DPE is implementing a sector-wide part of the PEDP-III", said Shyamal approach -- Primary Education

Development Programme (PEDP-III) Mentioning that earlier only handful of students got scholarship, the DPE DG for the purpose of improving the quality of primary education in the country", said about 50-90 percent student at primary level are now being given scholarship considering their family improvement of education quality and

teaching quality have been taken under People should consider it as their EDP- III to address the child dropout moral responsibility to send children to school, he observed. "A neighbour or "When a student remains absent relative should push a child if he stops from school at a stretch for three days, going to school. They should try to find teachers are sent to the respective out the reasons why the child stops child's resident to bring him/her back going to school and solve that. In the to school", said Shyamal Kanti. process, the dropout problem will be

> resolved", said Shyamal Kanti. "I will be the happiest man on the day the dropout rate drops to zero", he

Rasheda K Choudhury, Executive Director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), talks to The Daily Star

for the underprivileged children'

The exceptional four groups include children from hardcore poor primary school will not allow any families, children with disabilities children of some special commun ties like gipsy, fisherman or sex workers and last one group is children of remote geographical locations or hard-to-reach areas.

'Government should increase stipend

"Around one-third of the total children, who enrolled in class one, opped out before they completed their primary education

ANGLADESH has achieved "We do not know that in which class -- two or three or four -- they significant progress in term of enrolment in primary dropped out, but we cannot find them in the final stage of primar schools, but retaining them in schools to complete the primary education," said Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of cycle remains a major challenge said child education rights activi Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), the coalition of more Rasheda K Choudhury. than a thousand education NGOs Apart from four exceptional researchers and educators.

Several initiatives includ-

ing improvement of edu-

ing quality have been

taken under PEDP- III

to address the child

dropout problem

Enrolment rate of children is lower in different special geograp ical areas compared to national enrolment rate. The special areas include char and haor areas, tea gardens and hill districts, she said. Due to long distance of schools

children and their parents often not get interested to enroll in schools "In many areas, children have to

cation quality and teachreach school after walking around two hours. How can the parents become interested to send their little ones to school," argued Choudhury

So, it is very important to increase the proximity of schools, she said adding, "There are still around 2,000 villages in the country without

The rate of enrolment in slun areas is also lower compared to national average. There are many floating children in urban areas. They move from one slum to another causing a major hindrance to their receiving basic education,

tion system, Rasheda said, "It is the government's responsibility to provide basic education for all

children. Whenever the government cent enrolment of children has been fails to do it properly, it is necessary ensured in Bangladesh currently, she to have non-formal education."

Citing examples, she said, suppose a government-run formal child, who has become eight or nine years old, to enroll in class one. Then, how the child will get education? That's why non-formal education is so important, she said

She also stressed the need for better coordination and effective equivalency framework between formal and non-formal education

Talking about the policy gaps of the government, she said, "The primary education system is very much centralized in Bangladesh. The whole system is governed from Dhaka. I would like to request the government to decentralise education management and use the local government division for better functioning of the system.

policy targeting the really underprivileged children and should increase facilities like stipend for them. She also urged on commitment of

The government should formulate

all political parties for improvement of primary education.

"There is a culture in Bangladesh that a political government abandon different initiatives of the previous

government. We want the culture be avoided in the education sector for the development of basic education," she said.

Asked about the role of civil society members, she said they also can play important role to ensure cent percent enrolment, attendance and retention of children in schools. They can act a pressure group for ensuring effective measures and community participation in devel-

Rasheda K Choudhury also recommended ensuring child-friendly classrooms, developmentally appro Talking about non-formal educa- priate reading contents, and childfriendly teachers for raising and retaining interest among the children to attend schools.

# T'S PROFITABLE TO WORK IN FIELD

The PEDP III will give special attention to support equitable outcomes for all school children irrespective of gender and physical and mental ability, socioeconomic conditions, geographical location and ethnicity.

The recommendations include 100 percent stipend, sensitization of parents about the need for education and criteria of stipend, introduction of tiffin, supply of free stationery, stopping of child labour, social mobilization, increased number of trained teachers, and effective home visits by teachers.

The study recommended that the participation of local government, proactive SMC, train-

teachers residing in or near the catchments. On the above recommendations, suggested actions include gradual increase in coverage of stipend especially increasing the proportion in poverty-prone areas, undertaking social mobilization programmes to increase awareness of parents in remote and hard to reach areas,

enhance inter-ministerial cooperation to minimise child labour by enforcing child labour laws, extending the Reaching Out-of-School

To address the situation, the government

with the help of development partners including UNICEF adopted Primary Education Development Programme- PEDP III for five years from July 2011.

PEDP III encompasses all interventions and funding that support pre-primary and primary education up to Grade-5. It has four components -- quality learning and teaching, partici-

Policy gaps of the governmen

acts as another hindrance for

the same policy for all the chil-

dren of the country. But the

enrolment of children in schools

The government formulates

# Primary education still plagued by problems

## PANKAJ KARMAKAR

ESPITE different government and nonenroll all the primary age children into school, approximately three million of them currently remain out of school due to a number of barriers and chal-

The barriers mainly include regional disparities, poor quality education, limited opportunities, government's low budget on education (Bangladesh allocated 2.6 percent of GDP while other South Asian countries up to 6 percent), family's economic need, policy gaps, lack of flexible time for schooling and lack of programmes addressing the real

(NAR) varies by 12.8 percent

between the six divisions, 16

percent between slums and

needs of children. Due to poor communication system and geographical remoteness, retention rate of children in interested to attend classroom primary schools is lower in haor whenever they find amusement. and char areas by 8 percent, in hilly areas by 3 percent and

indigenous-dominated areas by 2 percent than the national average of 81 percent, according to UNICEF statistics. Regional disparity and communication disadvantages cause a wide variety in children's attenexperts believe. dance in schools among different regions. Net Attendance Rate

non-formal education to regional average and 21 percent

among the 64 districts, according Executive Director, CAMPE. Poor quality of education (often considered not appropriate by experts) acts as a major

hindrance to children's enrol-

ment and retention in schools

want to learn though a fun learn-

ing method. They want to learn

around 2.2 percent of total GDP Curriculum has been designed in such a way that children have to (gross domestic product) for the education sector, experts suggest learn only through memorising Children very often lose interget expected results. est in learning due to the boring method of memorising. They

sports and other sorts of amuse-Moreover, the teachers in many cases give lessons in such a way that it seems boring to children. They lose interest in attending classroom. Children will be

Teachers should be trained up properly so that their method of teaching and delivering lecture are more lively and amusing. Different sorts of amusing topics should be included in the textbooks so that the children get interest in reading the topics,

There should be a linking mechanism between formal and enhance opportunities for children to get enrolled in schools.

The government's budgetary

allocation for education is also very poor. Due to lack of financial support, the quality of education cannot be improved as per expectation and logistic support for children cannot be provided properly. While the government spends

for allocating at least 6 percent to In many schools, there is scarcity of classrooms, seating other logistic support. These

arrangements, teachers and crises cannot be addressed without increasing budgetary alloca-People who live below the

poverty line think it would be a more mature and wise decision if they could engage their male child in profitmaking activities instead of sending him to school.

However, to address the constraints, a project titled 'The Primary Education Developmen Programme-PEDP III ' has been launched on July last year to be continued till June 2016. Ministry of Primary and Mass Education coordinating, while ten donors including Unicef are providing

PEDP III encompasses all interventions and funding that

mary education up to class five. The project has four components -- Quality learning and teachers, participation and disparity reduction, decentralisation and effectiveness and sec-

When many of the country men live below the poverty line,

tor/programme planning and

But the people, who live below

the poverty line, think that it would be more mature and a wise decision if they could engage their male child in profitmaking activities instead of sending him to schools.

that he can support his family In case of female children, the situation seems to be worse

because they are married off at an early age. Parents think that educating girl child is a wastage

That is why, community par-So, as soon as the male child ticipation is very much important to ensure enrolment, attenstarts growing, parents engage dance and retention of children him in farming lands, fishing or other sorts of informal jobs so in schools.

children of remote area, ultrapoor families and other underprivileged sections need to get more focus compared to the children of privileged sections and urban area.

> The government should fornulate policy targeting the geographically disadvantaged people, providing more stipend to the ultra-poor family children, addressing the language gap of ndigenous children and other sorts of disparities.

Another major problem is inflexible time of schools. In rural areas, most of the male children have to help their fathers in land farming or other jobs, while the girl children have to help mothers in household chores.

The school timing and sched-

ule of these household activities

cent in Dhaka city's slums. appear to be conflicting because The prior problem of ensuring both have to be done at the same basic education for slum children is time. If the children get flexible that slum populations are simply not time, then their enrolment, recognised in the formation of policy attendance and retention in or educational planning. For schools will surely be increased. So, it seems that only educainstance, there are no realistic estimates of how many school-aged tion interventions are not

children live in these areas, although enough to address the issue of OoSC (out of school children) the number is increasing rapidly. rather it needs to be addressed The government may be reluctant with many other co-related to recognise slums fully because this factors.

tion to provide services including education, and providing more services could draw more people to the

Education for Urban Working Children' that was updated in education, insufficient opportunities September, 2008 said, most working and lack of government's cordialness children cannot afford the time to attend regular schooling. Because these girls and boys do not have access to education, they become trapped in low-skilled, low income jobs, which further push them into the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty.

> Inter-city and internal migration is common among people living in urban slums, home to most of Bangladesh's urban working children Landlords often have no legal right to the slum land where they build houses, so evictions are common. Civic unrest and employment insta bility also force families to migrate both within the city and across the country. These patterns make for high drop-out rates among those urban working children who manage to

enroll in school, the report said. Rasheda K Choudhury, Executive Director of CAMPE said, "There are many floating children in urban areas. They move from one slum to another slum which causes a major hindrance in their receiving basic education, and increases dropout rate."

Although a section of slum children get enrolled in schools, the attendance rate is lower than the would mean recognising its obliganational average attendance rate.

The Net Attendance Rate (NAR) varies by 16 percent between the slums and national average, according to a UNICEF statistics. Another UNICEF report titled 'Basic

Slum children largely left out of schools

Visiting slums and analysing data, it becomes clear that many children living in urban poverty are clearly disadvantaged and excluded from

For most slum children,

education isn't in the schools.

it's outside, in the form of

making a living. basic education. Talking to this correspondent, an 8-year-old child Shipon, who lives in Rayerbazar slum, said he wants to go to school, but his family does not

allow him. "My mother sells daily meal to working people like rickshaw pullers, truck drivers, day labourers and others. I have to accompany my mother in her business. For example, I have to bring water, wash plates and glasses, clean the wastes after taking food. That is why, I can not go

to school," said Shipon. Shipon's mother Reshma Akhter said, "If my son does not help me in my business, I will have to appoint another boy with the cost of Tk 100 or Tk 150 daily. I cannot spend such extra money because I have to run my

family with my income." Another child Alamgir aged around 10, who was seen gossiping with

Kamalapur railway station, said his family came to Dhaka around six months ago from Barguna rendered destitute by river-erosion.

"We have no accommodation for staying at night in the city. How I will go to school," asked Alamgir.

t Shipon or Alamgir are not the only around a dozen of kids of his age at ones faced with such circumstances but hundreds of slum children are deprived of education like them.

Mariam, Director of Institute of Educational Development of BRAC

schools in slum area in Dhaka and the demand."



Chittagong is not sufficient against More government schools and Talking to The Daily Star, Dr. Erum non-formal schools by NGOs should be set up in the slum areas to ensure access to basic education for all the University, said "The number of slum children, she said.