

## One female teacher per seven rural primary schools

By A Staff Reporter

In Bangladesh, on an average, there is only one female teacher per seven government rural primary school.

There are 33,931 government rural primary schools in the country, of which only 3,417 (10.06 per cent) have female teachers. The total number of female teachers in these schools was 4,788 last year.

Assuming the number of government rural primary school to be constant, it would require recruitment of 30,514 female teachers if each of the remaining primary schools are to be provided with at least one female teacher.

The problem of shortage of female teachers and its effects have been highlighted in a study entitled "women's education in Bangladesh: needs and issues". The study, sponsored by the Foundation for Research on Educational Planning and Development (FREPD), has been prepared by Shamima Islam.

Quoting Institute of Educational Research (IER) statistics (1977), Shamima Islam shows that the position in regard to trained female

Contd. on page 8 col. 1

Contd. from page 1

teachers is still worse, there being one trained female teacher per 21 government rural primary school.

She points out that many attribute this slow progress in the availability, and consequent recruitment, of female teachers in government rural primary schools to the existence of a "vicious circle that cuts across the boundaries of purdah (seclusion) and conservatism on the part of rural women."

Shamima Islam gives a diagrammatic representation of the "vicious circle," which shows that lesser number of village girls attend primary schools because of a lack of women teachers, which accounts for a lesser number of educated women, causing in turn, existence of fewer girls' schools. Lack of girls' schools in rural areas means obvious lack of female teachers, which again happens to be the reason for lesser number of village girls' attending primary schools.

"This clearly exhibits lack of appreciation for the government's role in undertaking a substantial amount of direct action. Steps taken in the past to increase the number of trained female teachers were both inadequate and half-hearted; no priority was fixed, and the strategies undertaken could not be clearly identified or proven to be adequate", the study says.

The author, however, seriously questions the assumption that there is a correlation between presence of female teachers in schools and enrolment or attendance by village girls.

Although the First Five-Year Plan of the country had said, "there seems to be a direct correlation between the employment of women teachers and enrolment and attendance of girls in schools", the author points out that this was an assumption which was not based on an study whatsoever.

Poverty, on the contrary, is a more decisive factor, according to her.

### DROPOUTS

The FREPD sponsored study indicates that majority of the cases of non-enrolment or dropouts are attributable to the inability of parents to bear incidental and opportunity costs.

The author refers to common experience (adding, "although it cannot be substantiated by enough empirical data") which suggest that there are children, especially girls outside the primary schools in villages in which both female teachers and primary schools can be found. She says that the IRDP Benchmark Survey data substantiated this experience, and observes, "all this points out that the issue is neither the female teacher, nor the primary schools, but factors beyond both of these".

150