

## Spend more on primary schools, be more efficient

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh needs to revise its goal of reaching basic education to 80 per cent children by the turn of the century because of slow progress, a study by a coalition of NGOs said.

The study on the state of primary education in the country, titled "Education Watch 1999", was launched in the city yesterday.

Education Minister A H S K Sadique, who attended the

launching ceremony in the city as chief guest, said he knew of nothing that spoke of such a target. The minister said the government's definition of primary education also differed with that of NGOs.

"Many countries have done it (achieved the literacy goal) in a relatively short period and we can do it too with right policies and firm commitments, and active participation of all stakeholders," said the report sponsored by the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), a coalition of NGOs working in the education sector.

The study covered 3,360 students of 11-12 age group, 885 schools and 42,548 households in 312 villages in all the 64 districts of the country. The data were collected during October-November last year.

Six different types of primary schools were identified for the survey -- government primary, non-government primary (registered and non-registered), non-formal primary,

ebtedayee and other madrasahs, English-medium kindergarten and primary schools attached to secondary schools.

The report contained information on internal efficiency of primary education and covered areas like enrollment, dropout, attendance and learning achievement of students, physical facilities of the schools, teachers' training, community participation, supervision and supply of books.

The report suggested that investments in primary education needed to be increased, and much of this extra resource should be channeled to improve the efficiency of the system through improved supervision, effective training and appropriate curriculum development.

It found improvements in various internal efficiency indicators of primary education in the recent past. "Gross enrollment ratio has increased from 92 per cent in early 1990's to 107 per cent in 1998. Enroll-

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ment among children 11-12 years of age increased from 77 per cent in 1993 to 81 per cent in 1998, less than one per cent per year.

Primary cycle dropout rate has been reduced to about 30 per cent but repeater rates are still high (38%), the study said, adding attendance rate is still low at less than 62 per cent.

"Achievement level has improved since 1993 (from 27% to 30%) but at a slow speed (less than one per cent per year)... the gains have mostly been experienced by girls alone... There are variations among different divisions and between urban and rural areas."

The report found that parental background continued to play an important role in enrollment and achievement and poor and socially backward families tend to send their children to school more than their counterparts. The children who are not who drop out or who who poorly belong mostly economically disadvantaged groups.

Improved performance, internal participation by higher receipt of text-books of teachers and students. However, it considerable participation in the by participatory systems.

achievements, girls do not achieve as much as boys do

: Less than a third of children leave primary school age with some meaningful learning

: The rural children lagged behind their urban counterparts by one academic year

: Over 90 per cent schools have their safe drinking water facilities within their premises or in nearby accessible places

: Women's representation in SMC was the highest in NGO schools and the lowest in madrasahs

Chaired by Fazle Hasan Abed, CAMPE chairperson and Executive Director of BRAC, the launching ceremony was also addressed by Chairman of Education Watch Advisory Board ANM Eusuf, former adviser to Caretaker Government Kazi Fazlur Rahman, UNICEF country representative Shahida Azfar, UPL Managing Director Mohiuddin Ahmed and CAMPE Director Rasheda K Choudhury.

Minister Sadique contradicted with some of the primary education data used in the report. He said that there was no government goal, as stated in the report, of enrolling 80 per cent of all children by the year 2000.

The education minister quoted the National Plan of Action for Education for All by 2000 to say that the gross enrollment target was 95 per cent, completion 70 per cent and literacy 62 per cent.

He also pointed out that the study gave same weightage to

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1. PROGRAM  
2. DATE  
3. SYSTEM  
4. SHEET OF SHEETS

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