

41 pc children deprived of primary education

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By A Staff Reporter

Inadequate number of schools, poor economic condition and lack of cooperative spirit on the part of guardians, compel 41 per cent children of the primary age group (6 to 10 years) to remain out of our education system, according to a UNICEF sponsored study.

Moreover, high rate of drop-out at the primary level (70 per cent) adds to the economically unproductive segment of the population endangering the future prosperity of the country.

The study on "the situation of children in Bangladesh" was conducted by the Foundation for Research for Educational Planning and Development.

According to the study, the

total enrolment at the primary level was 7.45 million in 1975 which covered 59 per cent of the primary age group population and the remaining 41 per cent never entered any school at all. Out of the total enrolment, 94 per cent were in rural schools and the remaining 6 per cent in urban schools. Government primary schools took on 90 per cent of the total enrolment.

The drop-out rate in 1974 was 56 per cent in Class II, 18 per cent in Class III and 10 per cent in Class IV. In rural areas these rates were 57 per cent, 19 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. In urban areas, however, the drop-out rate was 41 per cent in Class II, 9 per cent in Class III and

10 per cent in Class IV.

In 1975 this rate was 25 per cent in Class III and 24 per cent in Class IV and V. The attrition rate of girls exceeded that of boys by 3 to 4 per cent. The study noted that very meagre schooling facilities for children of the between 3 and 5 years (pre-primary level) contributed to high percentage of drop-out in Class II. The present level and nature of schooling facilities for children in this age group could not be ascertained due to non-availability of data. In 1967 there were only 56 pre-primary schools in the country with a total enrolment of 6,283. Besides, there were 64 missionary schools and some

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Primary education

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English medium schools situated mostly in urban areas.

In some primary schools, specially in rural areas there were infant classes attached to Class I. But no data is available regarding the number of primary schools with such infant classes or of the total number of children involved.

42,546 PRIMARY SCHOOLS

At present there are 42,546 primary schools in the country including 35,441 government and 3,838 non-government primary schools, 3,267 primary sections attached to junior high schools or high schools and 64 missionary schools. But recent estimate put the primary schools age group population at 13.5 million and that of pre-primary age group at 6.8 million.

The study said about 96 per cent of the primary schools were located in rural areas and only 4 per cent in urban areas, though about 8 per cent of the total population lived in the urban areas.

On the basis of distribution of population and that of primary schools, it was found that in 1975 there was one primary school to cater to the educational needs of 292 "primary school age" children in rural areas and one school for

students in the rural areas and about 54 per cent in urban areas could be provided with seats.

About 52 per cent of the schools in the country had almirahs. In urban areas the percentage of schools having almirahs is as high as 71, but in rural areas, the percentage is 50. So far as clocks are concerned the percentage of schools having them is 67 in urban areas and 28 per cent in rural areas. About 41 per cent of the rural schools had basic kit boxes as against 37 per cent of the urban schools.

Eightyone per cent students of government primary schools enjoyed the facilities of the school playground on a land of 4 decimals or more and the remaining number of students had a smaller playground in their schools. Fiftyeight per cent of the students in urban areas enjoyed the playground facility in their schools.

READING MATERIALS

Only about two per cent of the schools in the country possessed all text books for teachers' use, and about 21 per cent of the schools possessed some text books. About 77 per cent of the schools did not possess copies of text books for teachers' use, primary schools usually do not subscribe magazines and journals.

395 children in urban areas, on an average. Taking Bangladesh as a whole, each thana has 93 schools and each union about 9 schools.

The study revealed that the size of enrolment and the number of schools in each district do not necessarily mutually correspond. Dacca district has the highest enrolment with 0.69 million students in 3,271 schools and Chittagong Hill Tracts the lowest with 0.04 million students, the number of school being 851. However the number of schools in Hill Tracts, however, is not the lowest in the district-wise distribution.

As for the enrolment of girls in urban areas, Rajshahi district is on top of list with 47 per cent enrolment while Chittagong Hill Tracts is at the bottom with 37 per cent of girls.

Rural enrolment picture showed that Barisal district with 41 per cent girls in the total enrolment has the highest percentage of girls and Chittagong Hill Tracts has only 31 per cent girls in the total enrolment.

GROWTH IN ENROLMENT

The average rate of growth in enrolment at the primary level in Bangladesh was 3.1 per cent during 1950-51 to 1960-61, 5 per cent during 1960-61 to 1964-65, 7 per cent from 1964-65 to 1969-70 and 11 per cent from 1969-70 to 1973-74.

PHYSICAL AND OTHER FACILITIES

On an average only 95 students per school could be provided with seats in 1975, but the actual enrolment per school in the country was 189 in that year. About 50 per cent of the

On an average only one chalk-board was available in a primary school in the country, specially in the rural areas. However, an urban school was

found to have up to five chalk-boards. Three out of 1000 government schools and 10 out of 1000 non-government schools were provided with radio sets.

As for first-aid kits, the situation appeared to be more dismal because only about five per cent of the government schools and about three per cent of the non-government schools have these first-aid boxes.

HEALTH SERVICES

There is no provision for health services and feeding programmes in any school. Professional doctors, nurses, health agencies etc. in the community or area cater to the needs of the children. In remote rural areas, there is a great dearth of such professional people. Medical facilities for the mentally handicapped do not exist within the community or even on a thana basis.

Tubewell is the main source of drinking water for more than 85 per cent of rural and semi-rural and 32 per cent of the urban schools. Tap is the main source of water for urban schools. About seven per cent of the schools have no water supply at all.

In the country only two per cent of the government primary schools have sanitary latrines, while 20 per cent of the urban primary schools have sanitary latrines, only one per cent of the rural schools have this facility.