Equivalence Education in Bangladesh
A Country Review Report
for
Regional Workshop on Equivalency Programs and Alternative Certified Learning for Achieving EFA and Promoting Lifelong Learning
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Part-A

1. Background: In the context of Bangladesh, equivalency program means alternative education programs which are equivalent to the formal education system applicable both for general education as well as technical and vocational education. Despite Bangladesh has not developed a systematic equivalency program, some equivalency activities are being implementing in education. Since independence (1971) the government of Bangladesh has invested significant efforts in terms of financial and technical inputs but due to absence of equivalency programs in education system, especially in non-formal education (NFE), many literacy, post literacy and continuing education programs and their beneficiaries remain out of formal education and they are not counted as literate statistically. The target groups of equivalency programs are adults and out-of-school children, including working children.

Over the past two year, the Government of Bangladesh has made considerable progress in attaining the EFA goals and MDGs, such as primary school gross enrollment rate increased to more than 97%, and attainment of gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment. Despite the mentioned achievements, there is much work left to be done. For instance the primary education completion rate is just around 50% and for national and international education goals to be achieved, all children and adolescents must not only enroll in school, but also complete the required years of schooling.

It is to be mentioned that recently Bangladesh has taken initiatives to establish Equivalence Education Framework.

2. Literacy status in Bangladesh: Illiteracy and poverty are the main hindrances to all sorts of development and progress in Bangladesh. Though the government enacted the Compulsory Primary Education Act (1990), but about half of the population of the country is illiterate due to high rate of drop outs and never enrolled children. As per the report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)-2008, the adult literacy rate is 48.8 %. The NFE Report-2009 reveals that there are 37.33 million illiterate adolescents and adults of 11-45 age group in the country.

3. Constitutional obligations and commitments of government: The Constitution of Bangladesh articulated that (a) establishing a uniform, mass- oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law; (b) relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs and (c) removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law”.

Moreover, Bangladesh is committed to the international forums for achieving the EFA goals. In the backdrop of the World Conference on EFA at Jomtein 1990 and Dakar conference at Senegal 2000, there is a growing consensus among the education planners, researchers and administrators that non-formal education should be viewed from a different perspective, specially in the context of government’s commitment for achieving 100 percent literacy by 2014.
4. National Policy, Plan of Action and Programs for EFA:
In pursuance of the constitutional obligations and commitments made in the international forums like EFA, MDG, UNLD, and ESD, the Government set targets to achieve the EFA goals through its national plans and programs like National Plan of Action-I (1995), National Plan of Action-II (2003-2015) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. NPA-II set target to increase literacy rate up to 90% and PRSP set target to increase literacy rate up to 100% by 2015.

Non-Formal Education Policy was formulated in 2006 to contribute to in achieving EFA goals by creating a community-based network of learning centers, aimed at reducing illiteracy, extending opportunities for basic literacy, effective skill training, continuing education, equivalence education, and creating lifelong learning opportunities.

5. Importance of Non-Formal Education:

To achieve the goals of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Literacy, concerted efforts must be made to encourage, develop and expand basic education opportunities through non-formal channels and approaches as a necessary complement to the formal system. Exclusive reliance on full time primary education cannot help overcome the problem of illiteracy in seeable future. The formal primary education system is not affordable to the existing huge number of illiterate adolescents and adults.

So, to cover this huge number of illiterate adolescents and adults in literacy, basic education and continuing education program, non-formal education system is essential as an alternative channel of education to achieve the EFA goals. It is imperative that programs on literacy, basic education and continuing education including life skill and livelihood training for adolescents, youth and adults must be initiated through non-formal delivery system.


In convergence with the importance of NFE and the NFE policy directives, Government established the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) in 2005 for management and governance of NFE sub-sector at the national level. The government looks upon NFE as a key element of the efforts to offer lifelong learning opportunities and create a learning society in order to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

7. NFE Programs in Bangladesh:

The Government of Bangladesh implemented various NFE programs in large scale like “Integrated Non-Formal Education Program (INFEP)” and NFE Project -1, 2, 3, & 4 under the Directorate of Non-Formal Education. Through these NFE programs, the literacy situation was improved significantly in Bangladesh and during the last two decades about 18 millions of NFE learners completed basic literacy courses and engaged in income generating activities. Beside Government initiatives, NGOs are involved in implementing NFE programs in the country.

8. Needs for Equivalence Education Program:

Through the above NFE programs, huge number of adolescents and adults are provided with literacy skills, but the NFE learners have no institutional or social recognition. After completion of non-formal education program, these learners are interested either to join formal stream of education or furtherance of their learning through a system of continuing education. But, currently, Bangladesh has no equivalency system for non-formal education graduates. If equivalency exists, then it would allow primary and secondary school drop-outs and working children to back in to the formal system. It would also create opportunities for adolescents, youths and adults who may wish to get recognition of the acquired literacy and vocational skills.

So equivalence in formal and non-formal education in Bangladesh is a cherished demand to face the global challenges.

Equivalence in formal & non-formal education including Vocational and Madrasa education in Bangladesh for the benefit of disadvantaged group and to improve the...
quality of life, needs a new approach in order to establish an authority that will have broad based support by all concerned stakeholders of GO and NGOs. This is considered as a crucial condition for sustainability and for achieving long term and lasting development in the field of education which will establish equivalence between formal and non-formal education in Bangladesh through an institutional accreditation.

9. Feasibility studies for EE: A joint study was conducted by UNESCO & UNICEF in 2003, concerning equivalency of formal & non-formal primary education. Again, in 2004, the feasibility of NFE equivalency in Bangladesh was explored and examined with the support of World Bank under the MOPME.

In 2007 another study was conducted as part of UNESCO regional study of equivalency program by UNESCO-DAM formulating recommendation for possible equivalency framework in Bangladesh.

All the study reports concluded that it is possible to implement EE in formal and non formal primary education in Bangladesh. The above studies reveals the justification of the possibility of implementing EE as supportive education management to acquire equivalent competence to existing formal general or vocational education through non-formal or distance education mode.

Moreover, there are various ongoing NFE programs in Bangladesh having potential for introducing equivalence education. Thus NFE is being implemented by the GO and NGOs as complementary of the formal education system. It makes the basic/primary education available to the disadvantaged children and adolescent especially those who are dropped out and never been in school. It is a second chance education for most of them.

10. Some NFE programs having Equivalency with Formal Education: Some NFE programs with significant potential for introducing EE are: (a) BEHTRUC project of BNFE developed own materials having competence level comparable to NCTB primary education curriculum (b) ROSC project of DPE use formal education curriculum in non-formal setting; (c) DAM, GSS use formal education curriculum and materials in non-formal education, along with a number of life-skill focused supplementary materials; (d) BRAC, DAM, FIVDB have developed non-formal primary education materials for their NFE programs, having competence level comparable to NCTB curriculum; e) CMES, UCEP use formal education curriculum with necessary adjustment incorporating skill components; f) DAM follow equivalency approach in basic education projects by developing a matrix establishing link with formal education system; g) Bangladesh Open University(BOU)-NGO junior secondary education project covers with formal education system; BOU-NGO junior secondary education project covers class-VI-VIII in ODL mode; and h) BOU-SSC and HSC programs through distance learning.

11. Initiatives taken for EEP in Bangladesh: Thus, after exploring and examining the feasibility, it was concluded that with present status of formal and non formal education, there is a possibility to implement equivalence education in the country. In convergence with this point of view, the following initiatives have been taken to formulate an Equivalence Framework in Bangladesh:

1) The first National workshop on equivalence education was organized on 02-03, September 2009 at BNFE to formulate an equivalence framework in Bangladesh. The important outputs of the workshop are :

a) The workshop workout on seven themes of equivalence education. These are (i) Policy and legal framework, (ii) Target Group & Coverage, (iii) Curriculum & Material development, (iv) Equivalence Education Program Implementation

b) As per the recommendation of the workshop, four levels of education (Grade-V, Grade-VIII, Grade-X and Grade-XII) were identified for establishing equivalence education between formal and non-formal education.

c) As per the recommendation of the workshop, four consultants were engaged to develop draft EE core competencies for grade-V & VII through review the existing curriculum.

d) A 4 members’ expert group was formed to contribute in developing EE framework in Bangladesh. The expert group was assigned to analyze, examine, validate and finalize the proposed EE core competencies by the consultants.

2) The second workshop on equivalence education was organized at BNFE on 2-4 March 2010. The main objectives of the workshop were (i) to identify the attainable competencies of the four levels of education, (ii) to develop draft terminal competencies of primary, secondary and higher secondary level of education, and (iii) develop a draft framework for equivalence education.

3) The list of core competencies of primary education level and the list of core competencies of 10 selected vocational training courses were prepared for the equivalence education framework through considering the socio-economic status of the target population.

4) A draft organizational structure and implementation strategy were prepared for equivalence framework. These are (i) how the NFE implementing organizations and vocational training providing organizations would implement their programs under the proposed national standards of equivalence education, (ii) how assessment and accreditation system would be developed for equivalence education, (iii) what type of organizational structure and roles & responsibilities of implementing organizations would be appropriate for providing equivalence education.

5) Two committees were established under BNFE with representatives from relevant government departments, NGOs and other international agencies. One committee will finalized the organizational structure of EE and the other will finalized the proposed core competencies (general and vocational education) through validation at filed level.

6) The expert group proposed to establish an Equivalence Education Wing at BNFE under the guidance of the Director General. Through this wing, a pilot scheme for equivalence in formal and non-formal including vocational and madrasha education will be introduced in Bangladesh.
Part- B

Country Review Report on EPs and ACL: as per the report guidelines

1. Policy support mechanism

1.1) National Education law related to Formal and Non-Formal Education :

   i) Constitutional Obligation:
   The Constitution Bangladesh recognizes:
   • Education as a fundamental right to every citizen.
   • “Establishing a uniform mass-oriented universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law;
   • Relating education to the needs of the society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve these needs; and
   • Removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law;”
   ii) The Primary Schools (Taking Over) Act, 1974, nationalized primary education, made it free, placed it under a centralized administration and made the teachers state employees.
   iii) The Government enacted the Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1990 after the commitment made in the World Conference on Education For All in Jomtien, Thailand.
   iv) Non-Formal Education Policy Framework was formulated in 2006 to contribute to achieving EFA goals by creating a community-based network of learning centers, aimed at reducing illiteracy up to 100% by 2014, extending opportunities for basic literacy, effective skill training, continuing education, equivalence education, and creating lifelong learning opportunities.

1.2) National development plans related to EPs and ACL :

To meet the goals of EFA, the Government has already set target in the National Strategy for Accelerating Poverty Reduction-2 (NSAPR-2), National Plan of Action-II (NPA-II) for 2002-2015, and Mid-term Budget Framework (2008-09 to 2010-11) which are given below:

i) NSAPR-2: The National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction-2 (NSAPR-2), popularly referred to as the PRSP of Bangladesh, has given priority on Human Resource Development and set targets for adult literacy, such as the rate of adult literacy (15 + age group) will be increased up to 100% by 2015.

ii) NPA-II: The National Plan of Action-II (NPA-II) set targets to achieve the goals of EFA and especially it set target to increase the rate of adult literacy up to 90% by 2015.

iii) The present Government is committed to ensure 100% Literacy in the country by 2014.

1.3) Key ministries involved in the design and implementation of EPs and ACL :

(i) Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, and (ii) Ministry of Education.

1.4) Inter-ministerial collaboration to support EPs and ACL and needs for additional inter-ministerial support:

(i) Inter-ministerial collaboration for EPs and ACL is under process through developing of Equivalence Education Framework.
(ii) About 19 ministries are involved directly or indirectly in Non-Formal Education. So, collaboration among the ministries is to be established for EPs and ACL.
1.5) Policy support for EPs and ACL:

(i) Non-Formal Education Policy Framework was formulated in 2006 to contribute to achieving EFA goals by creating a community-based network of learning centers, aimed at reducing illiteracy up to 100% by 2014, extending opportunities for basic literacy, effective skill training, continuing education, equivalence education, and creating lifelong learning opportunities.

(ii) Incorporation of additional policy or review of existing NFE Policy for effective implementation of EPs and ACL is under process.

(iii) There is a proposal for establishing an Advisory Council for EEP. The advisory Council will be headed by the honorable Minister of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) as Chairman and the honorable Minister of the Ministry of Education (MoE) will be advisor of the Council. The advisory Council will be represented by Govt. Officials, including Secretary of MoPME, Director Generals of BNFE and DPE, Chairman/CEO of Professional bodies, NGOs, Corporate sector, University and Research institution, stakeholders institutions and related others organizations. Roles of the council are:

- To prescribe polices and plans for the promotions of non-formal, continuing and equivalence education.
- To provide guidelines and polices for promote and regulate equivalence education.
- To promote and support coordination with GO-NGO NFE providers, corporate agencies in implementation EEP.
- Monitoring the function of EEP.
- Act as Appentent Authority of Accreditation Committee.

2. Curriculum and materials development:

(i) Curriculum and materials development for EPs and ACL is under process. A curriculum development experts group has been working since December 2009 and already a draft curriculum is prepared for EPs.

(ii) The experts group has made several studies and analysis of existing curriculum of both formal and non-formal education at different levels in convergence of local contents for developing EP curriculum.

(iii) The EEP Core committee is established under Bureau of Non-Formal Education with support from Ministry of Primary and Mass Education for developing materials and textbooks for EPs, and implementation of EE pilot scheme.

(iv) Two changes to enhance curricula:

(a) A separate unit is established under Bureau of Non-Formal Education to develop curricula other than the existing National Curriculum Textbook Board (for formal education). Because, to develop curriculum for the NFE learners, it is important to consider the needs of the learners who lack formal education due to rigid system of formal education and or poor socio-economic condition of learners.

(b) Competencies should be achievable to the learners according to their life style, needs, age and socio-economic condition.

(v) Existing curriculum: Bangladesh has developed a large scale NFE program, both in the public and NGO sector. NFE programs expanded rapidly. The programs cover the drop out and unenrolled children of 7+ age, illiterate adolescents and adults. But, there is no common curriculum framework for NFE. Some NGOs follow the curriculum which is comparable to grade V of formal education (BRAC, DAM UCEP). Others follow modified NFE curriculum, which is comparable with formal but not parallel. The cliental group in NFE usually fall under three heads (Group-1, Group-2, and Group-3). Group-1 covers children up to grade 3; Group-2 up to grade-5 and group-3 up to grade 8 of junior secondary level.
Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) of the government and large number of NGOs run Non-Formal Basic Education and Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) learning centers. Children of 7+ years of age, not enrolled in formal primary schools are enrolled in these learning centers. Timing and duration of classes are decided to suit the convenience of the children and their parents, keeping in view the spread of course contents. BNFE has its own curriculum and some big NGOs (BRAC, DAM, UCEP) have their own. In addition to this, they used to conduct their own teachers training program and use their own relevant teaching materials. The core competencies of these curriculum is based on ‘National curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB)’ prepared for formal primary schools (Except KGs who follow a variety of foreign curriculum and text books). The NFE Primers are supplied with additional materials and the learning centers are provided with other abridged reading materials.

3. Modes of Delivery

3.1) EPs and ACL should be delivered through establishing Community Learning Centers (CLC), existing CLCs, schools, open and distance learning system in which it will be applicable.

3.2) Bangla language will be commonly used for instructions.

3.3) In general Bangla language will be adapted in materials and in particular mother tongue/local language will be used in materials for indigenous/ethnic minority groups.

3.4) Flexible delivery mechanism (in terms of time and place according to the choice of learners) will be adapted for reaching the marginalized groups.

3.5) Two changes for enhancing program delivery are:

(a) Flexible delivery Approach; learners have to attend classes two days in a week.
(b) To attend six days in a week in CLC, should not be mandatory for learners, but they (learners) could attend any day any time in CLC as per their interest for informal learning, self learning or recreational purpose.

As per the experiences from the previous adult literacy/education program, it was found that the adults are not interested to attend six days in a week in CLC. Because, the adults have to engage in many income earning activities due to their needs of living/due to poverty. So they have unwillingness to attend regular in CLC. Moreover, it could be mentioned that the learners who once were dropped out or never enrolled due to the rigid system of formal education which was not affordable to them due to poverty and daily involvement in income earning activities. In this regard, an NFE Delivery Framework is going to be established in Bangladesh in cooperation with UNESCO and JICA.

4. Capacity building and Training

4.1) For basic literacy and primary education course, the qualification of teachers/facilitators is at least SSC passed for female and HSC passed for male. Through open competition, teachers are being recruited in NFE programs. On the other hand, for secondary level of education, qualification of teachers/facilitators will be bachelor degree. But, it is to be mention that there is no standard of teachers/facilitators qualification in NFE sub-sector. In this regard, developing a national standard of teachers/facilitators qualification is under process. Moreover teachers/facilitators Capacity Development Framework is going to be established with the support from UNESCO.

4.2) Pre-service training and in-service training of teachers and facilitators are existing in NFE programs as foundation training and refreshers training. But in EPs and ACL program, type of training yet to be developed. Also, the Capacity Development Framework for teachers/facilitators will cover the standard of training.

4.3) At present, there is no NFE Teachers/Facilitators Training Academy in Bangladesh. But BNFE has an intention to establish a national NFE Academy for
Training, Research and Material Development. At present, the implementing agencies are providing training to the teachers/facilitators of NFE programs in various forms as per the project designs which have no unified standard.

4.4) Two changes for enhancing capacity building training: (i) The Equivalence Education Framework which is under process will set national standard for teachers/facilitators training, and (ii) The standard will include pre-service and in-service training/capacity building systems for teachers/facilitators and other NFE implementers.

5. Financing and resource mobilization:

- Education in Bangladesh is basically state financed. Government allocations to the education sector are made from the Revenue (recurring) and Development (one time/ investment) Budgets. The sources of fund are government’s own and external aid from development partners. External assistance can be in the form of loan and grant in Taka (Bangladesh currency), cash foreign exchange, Project Aid, etc.
- Fund requirements are determined by programme/project and its activities for the target groups. MOPME implements both formal and non-formal basic education. Resources needed come from different sources; basically, financial, material and human. Bangladesh has a large basic education population including children, adolescents, youth and adults but limited resources. To meet the EFA goals by 2015, the country has to mobilize large amounts of financial resource, materials for operation of the programmes and human resources to manage and operate the programmes.
- The Government of Bangladesh has been implementing NFE programs since the Independence (1971) in collaboration with international donors like UNESCO, UNICEF, ADB, IDA, SDC, Sida, NORAD, USAID, DFID, World Bank etc. GOB has given priority to increase public fund to promote literacy/ NFE programs.
- In accordance with the EFA goals and MDG, the Government of Bangladesh has set target in the National Strategy for Accelerating Poverty Reduction-2 (NSAPR2), National Plan of Action-II (NPA-II) for 2002-2015, Mid-term Budget Framework (2008-09 to 2010-11) and NFE Policy Framework.
- Government has an intention to provide funds for Equivalence Education Programs and ACL
- Government also has an intention to seek funds from donors
- Resources will be mobilized through Local Government Institutions and community contribution
- Usually government and donors bear the cost of NFE programs in Bangladesh
- At present, NFE sub-sector has given priority to establish Public Private Partnership to build up sustainable NFE programs.
- Two changes to increase financing and resources for NFE/EPs/ACL are (i) to establish Public Private Partnership, involvement of local government institutions and communities, and (ii) NFE sub-sector is engaged in policy advocacy to increase government allocation in NFE/EPs/ACL.

6. Networking and partnership:

- MOPME has worked with relevant Government Ministries, Departments, NGOs and civil society in developing the NFE Policy Framework, Pre-Primary Program Framework and maintains contact with them. About 19 Ministries are involved in EFA related activities in some forms such as Ministry of Education, Health and Family Welfare, Social Welfare, Women and Children Affairs, Youth development etc. However, MOPME, as the lead Ministry for EFA, needs to maintain regular networking with all relevant ministries, NGOs and civil society;
it would facilitate collaboration and coordination of program activities to get the benefit of services of the other ministries for the children, youth and adult learners of its programs. The Council of Primary and Mass Education, headed by the Prime Minister, could provide the forum for starting the network for regular and closer cooperation.

- In view of decentralization and as the work will be at the ground levels like district and sub-district level offices, will establish network with relevant Government offices, NGOs, CBOs, civil society, others local bodies on NFE programs and work on developing measures for identifying and reaching the unenrolled and ensure their participation/enrolment and arrange other necessary support.
- There exists partnership amongst Go-NGO and donors at national level to support the implementation of NFE in the country which will be turned to promote EPs and ACL
- Beside Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) of the government, a large number of NGOs run Non-Formal Basic Education and Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) learning centers. Children of 7+ years of age, not enrolled in formal primary schools are enrolled in these learning centers. The big NGOs (BRAC, DAM, UCEP) have their own NFE programs. These NFE centres follow a three years course with a group of 25-30 children entering in grade-I level, successfully reaching grade III and passing out. Experience shows that these NFE centres generate more or less the same learning skills.

As part of continuing education program, both BNFE and some big NGOs operate libraries, with facilities of indoor games, listening to radio broadcasts and training in skills for wage and self employment. BRAC (NGO) also runs an interactive radio program on NFE and also provides financial and technical support to other NGOs to undertake and operate BRAC model of NFPE.

Approximately more than 35 thousand non-formal schools are providing education to about 13.83 million disadvantaged children and adolescents by NGOs, especially for those who are dropped out and never been in schools. On behalf of the GoB, BNFE and a large number of NGOs (More than 450) run non-formal basic education and NFPE learning centres.

- In both BNFE (Govt.) and NGO programs, there are remarkable community contributions like providing lands and houses for establishing learning centers, center management and rarely monitoring & assessment.
- Two changes to enhance the role of partnership are: (i) mobilize local government for effective involvement in NFE programs, and (ii) establish strong linkage among the service providing agencies.

7. Assessment, accreditation and quality assurance:

- **Policies support and guidelines for accreditation and quality assurance:**

It is proposed that all non-formal learning center engaged in primary and junior secondary education and offering courses for grades (1-5) in primary level and grades (6-8) in junior secondary level dealing with unenrolled children, out of school adolescents and young adults who have not had opportunity to be enrolled or completed schooling may be brought under accreditation.

The norms relating to the procedure for submitting and considering proposal for grand accreditation to the NFE providers should be as follows:

- The organization who have a vision for providing non-formal education both general and vocational or any of the two, ensuring quality, credibility and sustenance are eligible to submit application.
In case of non governmental organization must be registered from the authority, as prescribe by the govt. in case of government department they must be authorized by the concerned ministry for offering such course.

Any govt. or private industrial training institute, who provides vocational training may apply to have proper affiliation from competent authority, prescribed by the government. The application for acceptance from government institutions shall be sent through the concerned Ministry.

- **Examination and Certification**
  EEP wings of BNFE will arrange public examination and only qualified learners will get certification through the following guidelines.
  - EEP wing will arrange examination one or twice a year depend upon the course duration.
  - Examination will be held in Accredited Organizations’ authorized EE centers only.
  - Logistic support will be provided by the accredited organization, Local Administration and BNFE.
  - Standard and quality control of question paper will be dealt by EEP wing of BNFE
  - Only registered learners will appear in the examination
  - Answer scripts will be checked by third party EE agencies as assigned by EEP wing
  - Certification would be jointly by EEP wing and implementing agency.

- **Officials processes exist for accreditation and quality assurance of programs :**
  - In Government sector, accreditation and quality assurance system yet to be developed but some big NGOs (BRAC, DAM, and UCEP) and Open University have Officials processes for accreditation and quality assurance of EE programs.
  - They have linkage with formal education system for certification.

- **Existing processes to integrate learners into formal education system :**
  In the foregoing analysis, it is seen that both Government and NGOs are engaged in the implementation of NFE (particularly NFPE) programs as a complementary to the formal system of Education. During the last one decade a number of NGOs and the number of non-formal schools expanded heavily. In the absence of any operational guidelines for accreditation of institutions, no correct statistics is available in this connection. Most of the non-formal institutions, excepting a few (which are run by BRAC, DAM, PROSHIKA, GSS, VERC, FIVDB, RDRS, UCEF etc.) are not found in good shape.

- Two changes could be made to enhance assessment, accreditation and quality assurance are :
  (i) To establish EEP wings in BNFE under Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
  (ii) To set national standards of assessment and accreditation under the EEP wing and to develop core competencies for different grades of EEP.

- **ILO-Urban Informal Economy Project on Alternative Certified Learning for Working Children in Bangladesh : as a case study**

Provision of non-formal education (NFE) and mainstreaming to formal schools are basic interventions of the ILO-executed Urban Informal Economy (UIE) Project to prevent, withdraw and remove children from the worst forms of child labour. The NFE intents to be a bridging point for removing children prior to mainstream into formal education.
formal schools, thereby children are prepared to cope with academic setting and skill development training for a decent employment at later stage.

NFE is made accessible to thousands of targeted working children, aged less than 14 year through 42 Multi Purpose Centers (MPCs) in 4 Zones of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). The MPCs are located in central slum communities (bastis) for easy access of children, guardians and parents, and other community members as well as where informal economy based workplaces are available. MPCs are run by DCC partner NGOs and are functioning as focal point for services delivery including NFE, social mobilization, and other supplementary services of other strategic partners, such as basic health check and hygiene education, birth registration and legal assistance.

The NFE classes are normally 3 hours per shift and are scheduled in three shifts per MPC. Subjects taught are literacy, numeracy, life skills, child labour and child rights. Children attending NFE classes are from 8 – 13 year old, and thereby multi-grading teaching system is used. MPC wise children’s Individual Development Plan (IDP) is also used for determining learner’s capacity, aspirations and possibility of prolong for another year. Most of working children were dropped out or never enrolled in schools. The government’s National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB) developed reading materials and text book along with the NGO developed supplementary reading materials have been used for NFE classes. Normally children complete the NFE class for one year period after which they are assessed if they are ready for mainstreaming to appropriate grade in formal primary or secondary schools. Also formative evaluation after 3 or 4 months children can also be mainstreamed any time, if their academic performances are satisfactory. Support and regular follow up for one year by the NGOs to monitor the status and progress of the integrated children.

Older children, aged 14 years and above, generally do not want to go back to formal schools. For this circumstance, those children are selected based on a set of criteria and are enrolled in skills development training program provides by another specialized NGO which is running Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) in each of the four Zones of DCC.

8. Monitoring and evaluation:

Learners Evaluation Unit and Program Monitoring Unit under Equivalence Education Wing of BNFE will do monitoring and evaluation at initial stage of EEP to ensure national standards of NFE curriculum and competency framework, to conduct exam, issue certificates; updating quality of teacher education/training of NFE; preparing guidelines and standards for learners evaluation and program monitoring for all Govt. and Non-Government Institutions and to ensure quality control in NFE system. The District BNFE and sub-district level EE Committee will do monitoring and evaluation regularly.

9. Issues and Challenges:

Though the Government of Bangladesh has been implementing NFE Programs since its Independence (1971), but there are around half of the population of the country is still illiterate. During the last two decades, about 18 million illiterates were provided with literacy/NFE, but they have no social recognition and no chance for furtherance of their education due to absence of equivalence education system.

More over the following issues and challenges are remaining in the NFE sub-sector in Bangladesh:

- Weak intersectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation
- Absence of developing or improving structures and mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of all forms of learning, by establishing
equivalency frameworks such as frameworks for qualifications that encompass informal and non-formal learning.

- Lack of improving training, capacity-building and professionalization of adult educators, including through partnership with higher education institutions;
- Absence of permanent physical infrastructure of Community Learning Centers at village/union/sub-district level
- Absence of long-term and sustainable planning in NFE programs
- Absence of NFE Training Institute/Academy at national or district level
- Lack of permanent NFE officials/staffs at upazila (sub-district) level
- Poor salary/honorarium for NFE teachers and supervisors
- Lack of community based action plan in Community Learning Centers
- Lack of flexible NFE delivery mechanism.
- Lack of decentralized management and planning in NFE sub-sector.
- No prior-recognition of learning system for working children’s education (general and technical education) to match with formal education.
- Non availability of National Equivalency Policy/Act.
- Non availability of Equivalency Regulatory institute/Board.
- Lack of common curriculum and guidelines for unified mode of programme delivery (infrastructure, teacher’s quality, duration etc.) among NFE implementers.
- Lack of self assessment system of NFE implementers.
Annexure

Proposed Organizational structure of EEP in Bangladesh:

1. Equivalence Education Wing (EEW)
Under the control and guidance of DG, BNFE, a small wing will be formed at initial stage for Equivalence in formal and non-formal education including Vocational and Madrasa Education. This wing can conduct a pilot scheme for Equivalence Education.

Figure-1: Shows the proposed organogram of EEW for Phase-I

2. Advisory Council:
There will be a Advisory Council. This council will prescribe policy, plans and guidance for running pilot program of Equivalence Education.

Category of Member of Advisory Council:

a. Representative from Ministry
b. Representative from Concerned Govt. Dept.
c. Representative from University research institution
d. Representative from corporate bodies and NFE provider
e. Expert in NFE and vocational sector.

Phase-II

3. Equivalence Education Unit (EEU)
In phase-II size of Equivalence Education wing will be bigger and it will work separately from BNFE, directly under the supervision and guidance of MOPME. Then it may called Equivalence Education Unit (EEU).

Role of MOPME: MOPE will directly guide and supervise the work of Equivalence Education Unit. One joint secretary of MOPME, may be joint secretary (Dev) may assigned for this purpose. Director (EEU) will directly reportable to the joint secretary of the ministry.

Phase-III

4. Equivalence Education Board (EEB)
It will be the last and final phase for establishing the Equivalence Education between formal and non-formal education in Bangladesh. It also will include the vocational and madrasa education. In this phase a separate, autonomous Equivalence Education Board will be establish. MOPME will be its line Ministry.

Figure-3 shows the proposal organogram of Equivalence Education Board (EEB)

4.1. Functions of Accreditation & Partnership Wing (2 Sections)

a. Accord accreditation to the NFE Agencies as EE providing Institutions
b. Check their competencies, curriculum, learning materials, capacity etc.
c. Promote partnership and linkage with stakeholders
d. Assess the needs of stakeholders, job providers and the world of work

4.2. Functions of Standard setting & technical support wing (3 Sections)

a. Develop core competencies for NFE in the light of FE
b. Establish a National Slandered of NFE equivalent to FE in respective level
c. Prepare exemplar/generic curriculum and learning materials on the basis of developed core competencies

4.5. Functions of Examination & Certification Wing (2 sections)

a. Conduct Examination
b. Do all the needful for conducting examination
c. Publish Result
d. Student registration services
e. Maintain student database
f. Issue certificate for different levels.
Figure-1

Organogram for EE Wing (Phase- I)

DG BNFE

Director
(Equivalence Education)

Deputy Director
(Accreditation, Partnership and Tech. Support)

Deputy Director
(Std. setting examination and certification)

Assistant Director
(Accreditation & Partnership)

Assistant Director
(Technical Support)

Assistant Director
(Std. Setting)

Assistant Director
(Examination & Certification)

Manpower

Director - 01
Deputy Director - 02
Assistant Director - 04
Total = - 07
Figure-2:

Organogram for EE Unit (Phase-II)

Director
Equivalence Education Unit

Deputy Director
(Accreditation, Partnership and Tech. Support)

Assistant Director
(Admin & Finance)

Assistant Director
(Accreditation)

Assistant Director
(Partnership)

Deputy Director
(Std. setting Technical Support)

Assistant Director
(General)

Assistant Director
(Vocational)

Assistant Director
(Technical Support)

Deputy Director
(Examination and Certification)

Assistant Director
(Examination)

Assistant Director
(Certification)

Assistant Director
(Certification)

Manpower

Director - 01
Deputy Director - 03
Assistant Director - 08
Total = 11
Proposed Organogram of EE Board

Manpower

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DG</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dy.Dire/Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you

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