International Seminar on Community Learning Centres

Report on Status of CLCs in Bangladesh

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Purpose, Objectives, Methodology

**Purpose:** A scoping of the country situation regarding CLCs as vehicle for lifelong learning

**Objectives:** Input for further research on CLCs’ role, operations and Potentials in region, examination of wider benefits from learning activities, and advocacy for CLCs

**Methodology:** Secondary sources -- relevant data from research reports, project documents and journal articles are relied upon.
History and development of CLCs in Bangladesh

- Community Learning Centers, known as CLCs, are local institutions of Non-formal education and life-long learning which existed since 1960s. EFA Jomtien declaration 1990 gave new momentum to adult literacy and NFE.
- UNESCO ACCU in Japan and UNESCO Asia-Pacific Programme for EFA (APPEAL) developed the idea of functional NFE centers at community level in mid-1990s.
- In a context of social exclusion of disadvantaged groups and women, educational and social potential of the CLC concept and its practical implications have a special significance in Bangladesh. DAM Started first CLCs in 1998 with UNESCO support.
Policy and Legislative Provision

**National Non-formal Education Policy 2006**: NFE policy framework to guide activities and priorities in non-formal education for out-of-school children and youth as well as adults in need of literacy and continuing education opportunities.

**The Non-formal Education Act 2014**. The Act made legal provision for conducting programs for literacy, lifelong learning, life and livelihood skills, training for self-employment and alternative education opportunities for out-of-school children and dropouts. It provides legal framework for Bureau of Non-Formal Education and a Non-formal Education Board. It defines CLC and LLL. But it remains to be given effect.

**National Education Policy 2010**: It is the policy framework for fulfilling the role of the educational system in nation’s human resource development. Non-formal education is seen in NEP “as a complementary stream to the formal primary education system.”

**National Skill Development Policy 2011**: It proposes a National Skill Development Council. And policy elements such as qualifications equivalence, competency based training; quality assurance; strengthened apprenticeships; recognition of prior learning; improved access for under-privileged groups; private training provision; industry-based training; TVET financing; skills development for overseas, and engagement of industry through Industry Skills Councils.

**Vision 2021/Perspective Plan 2011-21**: express broad policy priority and political commitment of government regarding education and enhancing capabilities of people.
Prevalence and spread of Community Learning Centres

A majority of NFE programs are for out-of-school children – non-formal ECCE, primary and adolescent education. Also adult literacy and skills development, parenting, quality-of-life improvement, reading centres/library, computer and Internet use.

A 2014 count:

- BRAC - 2,425 Gonokendro (People’s Center), 90 with computers, internet connection;
- Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) - 880 centres, supported by 42 community resource centers;
- Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) - 691 CLCs and 14 ICT centers. Together, the three NGOs operated some 4,050 centres.
- RDRs, TMSS, others have smaller numbers. Total NGO Run – c.5000.
- BNFE’s 7,000 donor project PLCE centers mostly disappeared after 2013

Not enough for 160 million people in 60,000 villages.

No public funding; some activity collaboration with govt. agencies.
Observations on Life skills and livelihood skills in an LLL perspective

- Skill development and adult literacy as programme activities perceived as separate activities with organizational responsibilities and leadership in both government and NGO efforts unconnected with each other.

- This situation parallels the separate articulation of goals and strategies of EFA 2015 goals 3 on skills and 4 on adult literacy.

- The National Skill Development Council, BNFE, NGOs and others reflect this separation between life skills, livelihood skills, and literacy skills.

- A major challenge in TVET sub-sector is to bring into its fold the informal sector in meaningful ways. One way is through recognition of prior learning (RPL).

  - A broad vision of skill development must embrace life skills (civic and citizenship functions and personal self-realization), livelihood skills and functional literacy must be reflected in overall skill development strategy.

  - A network of CLCs was foreseen broadly in NFE policy, but not implemented by BNFE so far.
Comments on functional literacy and adult education

✓ No major literacy programme in the public sector since 2003.
✓ Literacy Programme in the 1990s followed traditional campaign approach of enrolling targets in 6-month courses but sustainability of results was a problem.
✓ Debate about a simplistic approach to “eradicate” illiteracy with a time-bound campaign in contrast to a programme of lifelong learning with functional literacy as the foundation built through a permanent network of CLCs.

The expanded vision of literacy advocated by the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD, 2002-12) urged a rethinking of conventional literacy concepts and practices; so does the Sixth World Conference on Adult Learning and Education (Belem, 2009).
Empirical evidence on CLC concept and practice

Definition of CLC tasks/objectives are broadly similar for NGOs, in line with CLC concept promoted by UNESCO Asia-Pacific— with some differences in objectives, targets and some operational features.

Empowerment of Women and adolescent girls. Women’s empowerment goes together with community empowerment. The three NGOs have special strategies for women and adolescent girls.

Adult Literacy. FIVDB follows a systematic approach by targeting from the outset illiterate women, and then leading neo-literate women towards skills training and empowerment – less visible in BRAC and DAM.

Reading, writing and creating a literate environment. All CLCs focus on the habit of regular reading, from school-going kids to neo-literates supporting a literate environment.

Livelihood skills. The three NGOs have strategies for adolescents to enhance limited technical knowledge, collaborating with Union Parishad (Councils).

Access to information and ICT. Many CLCs focus on access to current and reliable information, through meetings, reading material; some offering computer lessons.

Children’s education. The three NGOs harness the learning potential of school children and adolescents, contributing towards better quality of learning in near-by schools.
The Principal CLC Actors

✓ **The facilitator.** She/he is the key person in any CLC. Almost everything depends on his/her capacity to enable learning and create learning environment. Facilitators are multi-task operators: they teach, manage library, organize life-skills and other learning sessions, in close co-operation with community. Women facilitators have an easier access to women.

✓ **CLC Management Committee and Supervisors.** Facilitator, Centre management committee, and supervisor working in harmony, are the foundation and essential condition for effective functioning and sustainability of any CLC.

✓ **Library and Librarian.** A reading facility and a mobile library, as operated by BRAC, (a rickshaw van touring several villages) target readers, encourages literacy and learning, and promotes reading habit.

✓ **A delivery platform and a social meeting place.** Learning centers have often become social centers (real Gonokendro or people’s centre !) allowing locals to learn but also to meet informally, exchange, debate, and network.
# 7FYP goals for NFE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Input Indicators</th>
<th>Output Indicators</th>
<th>Impact Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elimination of illiteracy/ Providing Basic Literacy.</td>
<td>32.5 million adolescent and adult illiterates</td>
<td>Allocation of fund and development &amp; printing of learning materials</td>
<td>32.5 million adolescent and adult illiterate became literate.</td>
<td>Socio-economic condition and lifestyle changed, zeal for education arose among people.</td>
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<td>Establishing a CLC network to create scope for ICT based continuing and lifelong learning.</td>
<td>5025 (Minimum one in each union + in certain urban areas).</td>
<td>Financial allocation from Government, community contribution.</td>
<td>5025 learning centres established.</td>
<td>Awareness for education enhanced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extending opportunities for effective skill training</td>
<td>5 million graduates of Basic Literacy Project</td>
<td>Financial allocation, Development of Training Materials, Guides etc.</td>
<td>5 million graduates of Basic Literacy Project skilled in different trades/occupations</td>
<td>Improvement in life-style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of Non-Formal Education Board</td>
<td>1 (One)</td>
<td>Financial allocation, Making rules etc</td>
<td>One NFE Board established.</td>
<td>Scope created for attaining higher education and skill through establishment of Equivalence between Formal and Non-Formal Education</td>
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Conclusion and Recommendations

Without a strategic government plan for CLCs, NGOs are struggling to keep their centres running. Bangladesh could use several times the number of CLCs now in existence to bring more than 60,000 of the villages within reach of a functioning CLC.

Critical actions:
✓ Recognize challenge of promoting LLL through NFE for youth, adults and out-of-school children, as foreseen in policy and plans, through a functioning network of CLC.
✓ CLCs must be designed to serve priority learning agenda -- life-skills, livelihood skills and functional literacy for youth and adults, and skills for informal economy and disadvantaged children.
✓ An upazila (sub-district), union and village level assessment, planning and management needed through NGOs and local government bodies with BNFE playing a promotional and facilitative role.
✓ Aim for a CLC in all of 5,000 Unions and city wards – expanding this network gradually to bring each village/city ward (60,000+) within easy reach of CLC as a permanent and sustainable institution.
✓ A modality must be built for cooperation/partnership with main actors (NGOs, communities, local government, government development agencies, private sector).
✓ The 5,000 CLCs run by NGOs can be the starting point for demonstrating models of management, sustainability, pedagogy and meeting learning needs supported by BNFE, creating a nation-wide network.
✓ MoPME and development partners need to promote and support lifelong learning and empowerment of the disadvantaged by allocating public resources, supplemented by donors.