

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background of Bangladesh

Bangladesh lies in the north eastern part of South Asia. The country is bounded by India on the west and the Northeast, and Myanmar on the Southeast, and Bay of Bengal on the south. Except for the hilly regions in the North east and south east and some highlands in the north and north western part, the country is a low flat and fertile land. Bangladesh lies in the world's largest delta formed by the three great rivers - which meet in the southern half of the country. Through out the country there are about 230 rivers and streams with a total length of nearly 15,000 miles. The fertile land, warm temperatures and abundant rainfall make Bangladesh ideal for agriculture.

The earliest recorded impressions of Bangladesh are of fertility and abundance. The Moroccan adventurer Ibn Battuta, whose travels took him to Persia, China, Sumatra and Timbuktu, 600 years ago described Bengal as "a country of great extent, and one in which rice is extremely abundant. Indeed, I have seen no region of the earth in which provisions are so plentiful"(Hartman and Boyce, 1983). Even today Bangladesh is recognized as "one of the most fertile regions of the world". It is also felt that "the Bangladesh of the future can produce upto three times as much food as it does now"(Holzhausen, 1986). The monsoon rains and the abundant water resources available for irrigation even in the dry winter season give Bangladesh the potential to be grown twelve months a year. Rice is the staple food of the people, and about 80 per cent of the cultivated land are used for rice production. The country ranks fourth among the rice producing countries of the world. Tea is grown abundantly in the North east of Bangladesh, and 80 per cent of the world's supply of jute is produced by Bangladesh. There are huge, largely untapped reserves of natural gas in the Northeast. The rivers, ponds and rice

paddies produce an abundant supply of fish and according to a United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization Report, " Bangladesh is possibly the richest country in the world as far as inland fishery resources are concerned"(Hartman and Boyce, 1979).

Bangladesh has a small land mass of 147,570 square kilometres with over population, it has one of the large densities of 755 persons per square kilometre. In recent years the population has grown at a tremendous rate. From about 10 million inhabitants in 1960, it took over 200 years for the number to triple to 30 million by 1901 (Jennings, 1990). It tripled again by 1981 in only 80 years. With almost 57 per cent of the population aged below 15 years and an annual growth rate of 2.3 percent (B.B.S 1984), the population will continue to expand for the foreseeable future. Even if replacement fertility is reached by the turn of the century, the population is expected to reach 200 to 250 million by the year 2050, if that level is not reached until ten to twenty years later, the population may be around 300 million by mid twenty first century (Holze-laussen, 1986

Despite the large population in a small area, the vast majority of Bangladeshis continue to live in it's 68000 village, the majority of Bangladeshis today lives under the poverty line. Defined as those taking 2122 calories per day, Ray (1987) maintains that 80 percent of the people live below the poverty line and that at an " **alarming rate**" are being pushed below the "**destitution line**" each year. The life expectancy is only 47 years; the quarters of the children die before reaching the age of 5, and about 60 per cent of the people suffer from protein deficiency { Hartman and Boys, 1979 } .The average annual per capita income of US \$140 is one of the lowest in the world (S.Z.Rahman,1985).

One very important feature of the population of Bangladesh is its literacy scenario. Bangladesh is lagging far behind in literacy. The position of Bangladesh is very low even among the other underdeveloped countries in Asia and elsewhere in the world. The adult literacy rate (for 15 years old and over) was 44 per cent for men and 26 percent for women (B.B.S., 1991). In 1971 when Bangladesh emerged as an independent country about 80 per cent of the population was illiterate. The

newly formed government in 1971 did not have the capacity and adequate resources to combat social disasters, disorders and huge socio-economic problems.

1.1. Inadequacy of the Formal Education System

Education is consciously used as a tool for the realization of national aspirations. The educational goals to are related directly to the national problems. Education is the instrument of social change and relates to productivity, which is, in turn linked with economies and natural development. Gunnar Myrdal, in his 'Asian Drama' states, "Whenever education is considered from the point of view of development , its purpose must be to rationalise or modernise attitudes as well as impart knowledge and skills". Society demands the new ways of life, thought and work for the poor masses, who are still steeped in poverty and illiteracy. These are indicators of growing inequalities and the educational system, which is rigid and formal, is essentially centralised and elitist. No substantial progress can be made until the improvement of socio-economic conditions of the illiterate people gets place in learning and earning system of education.

Education needs a scientific look. It has to be admitted that today's ignorance is the result of today's education, which is merely classroom based, bookish and too formal, having lost the reality touch with the social milieu, in which the people are growing. These very characteristics of the present day education are responsible for the fact that a large segment of the population has remained illiterate.

The formal educational system has fixed timings, rigid curriculum and single point of entry. On the other hand the illiterate and poor masses are involved in economic activities that are more important than spending time and money in formal institutions which do not appear as a relevant activities. These illiterate adults are above the school going age and have never entered the formal educational institutions, and majority of their children who had enrolled in primary schools

dropped out even before completing elementary education and have already entered in family life. They are just trying to make both ends meet with some kind of work since they are solely/ partially dependent on others for their livelihood.

At the 'International Conference on the World Crisis in Education' held in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1967, five major 'crisis factors' in formal education were identified by Coombs (1968) to be:

- the student flood.
- acute resource scarcities
- rising costs
- unsuitability of the output of formal education
- inertia and inefficiency of school system

The alarm was sounded that the world's educational system were rapidly moving towards a crisis state. Since 1950's world wide primary enrolments had risen by more than 50 per cent and secondary higher education enrolments by over 100 per cent. The sheer numbers were pushing the financial resources of most developing countries to a breaking point. It was becoming clear that the society's social demand for education is not the same as the country's manpower requirement. Added to these factors was the fact that educational programmes were often very different from the actual needs of the society and yet the school systems were resistant to change the content or methods of education.

The widening gap between curriculum and living experience, values, aims and practice has been the concern of Faure (1972) and Ronald Dove (1976) who draw the world's attention to the education system and its 'diploma disease'. Introducing a collection of articles focusing on formal education problems, 'The Education Dilemma', Simmons (1980) summarises some of the criticisms:

'The traditional school inputs, such as teacher training or expenditure per student, do not seem to be having the effect on student test scores that educators had anticipated. Graduates at all levels have had increasing difficulty finding the jobs they expected, whereas fifteen years ago planners predicted deficits in the number of school leavers needed to fill the expected job openings extending into 1980s. And finally, the rapid expansion of free

schooling has not narrowed the distribution of income between the rich and the poor as planner had intended.’

Paulo Freire criticised the formal system for its one way methods of teaching and what he termed the ‘banking system’. Rather than assisting the students to think about their environment and how to act rationally within it, he portrayed teachers as conveyors of information, which was then retrieved from the students at the examination time, leaving the students with little information and no skills for dealing with life.

Taking a stronger line of attack, Ivan Illich(1971) alleged that formal schooling bears no resemblance to true education. He claimed that its mass, institutional character actually dehumanises children. School, according to Illich, is ‘a vast enterprise of equipping man for disciplined consumption’(ibid). As the title of his most famous work, *Deschooling Society*, suggests his solution for the problem is to rid the world, developed and developing countries alike - of formal schools and to replace them with ‘true communication webs’(ibid)

Naik (1976) , while discussing “Alternative in Education”, has remarked that the formal system constitutes only a comparatively small portion of the total educational enterprise of a society and makes only a partial contribution to the total education, which an individual receives in his life time. Since it is mostly a system where the students are required to attend on whole time basis, it generally excludes all workers - the most important social group from its purview and as it usually operates on the basis of single point entry, it offers no help on second change to those unfortunate individual who miss it narrow portals of admissions or who compelled to step off it pre-maturely for social and economic reasons.

In summary it has become clear that formal education system, for a variety of reasons, has failed to spur Third World nations on to widespread economic development. Neither has it produced a reordering of society.

Non-formal education (NFE) is complementary to formal education as envisaged by the Commonwealth Conference on NFE for development -1979 and it

has recommended the setting up of NFE along with to formal education in each country's development .It does not suggest to do away with formal education. NFE helps formal education in minimising its dissociation with community needs and introducing an educated youth who could be employed in productive activities of social and economical situations. NFE can supplement formal measures by positively enriching education at all levels. Government should, therefore, ensure that different programme structures are integrated into total system of recurrent education.

The education therefore will have to be beyond the restricted domains of the literacy and numeracy. It will have to have development and economic base. The programme will have to be developed on the basis of the relationship of the age to life problems.

1.2. Ineffectiveness of Primary Education Programmes in Bangladesh

Education is the birth right of every person. It nourishes the inborn qualities of human being and thereby enriches his ability and efficiency to work. A minimum level of education is required for professional skill development , employment, and to equip persons to lead a decent life. Hence in a developing country like Bangladesh, it is essential to ensure primary education for all the children. It increases the awareness of humankind through raising the rate of literate population as well as develops a potential human resource for the country. The Bangladesh government is determined to ensure primary education for every child and has made it compulsory for all children with age group of 6-10 years.(Kamrunnesa Begum,1992).

High levels of illiteracy are one of the biggest hurdles of any present or future government of Bangladesh. Literacy in Bangladesh is among the lowest in the world. Illiteracy is both the cause and effect of low primary school enrolment.(Education of Women in Asia Project, Draft Country Programme Report:Bangladesh,1994).

In Bangladesh there are 49,964 primary schools both government and private; 90 per cent of primary schools are in rural areas. As per Karim's Report (1990) about 56 per cent of primary school age children were enrolled in government primary schools. Of those enrolled children 48 per cent left school before completing third grade and 62 per cent of the remaining dropped out before completing the fifth grade. (BANBEIS,1987)

The low enrolment rate and high drop out rate at the primary level were persistent and slowed down the desired increment in the literacy rate. The First Five Year Plan (1973-78) had as its one of the objectives to increase the gross enrolment rate from 58 to 90 percent and to reduce the drop out rate from 63 percent to 62 percent during the period. But in reality by the middle of the Third Five Year Plan (1985-90) it was found that the enrolment rate had increased from 58 per cent to only 61 per cent and the drop out rate had increased from 63 per cent to 66 percent (Table-I). According to an estimate of the Ministry of Education, the drop out rate at the primary level in 1988 was 65.5 per cent. Around three fifths of the children in the first grade dropped out after only two years of schooling and two fifths of them in the first year itself. Only one third of those enrolled in grade one completed the full five years of schooling in primary schools (Ministry of Education,1991).

One of the most recent comprehensive study on primary education, describes the present scenario to be as follows:

- Enrolment of only 50 per cent to 60 percent of the age group in primary education
- Attendance rate is limited to 50 per cent of those enrolled.
- Drop out rate is between 80 per cent to 90 per cent
- Repetition of classes range from 20 per cent to 50 per cent
- Repetition of Class I affecting nearly half of the students (Gustavsson,1990)

Considering these findings, it is estimated that no more than one out of five students becomes literate at the primary school(ibid).

In Bangladesh about 80 per cent of the country lives below the poverty line. The under privileged parents of the society suffer from extreme poverty and they cannot

adequately feed their children and hence the question of providing them with education does not arise at all. Particularly, most of the poor illiterate families in rural areas cannot afford to send their children to school as regular student since their labour is needed in the fields or at home. Most rural parents consider that the school curriculum is not designed and oriented to the rural needs, environment and culture (Mohsin, 1992).

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees women's equality in education, but the national statistics show that the literacy rate of women is almost half (19 per cent) of the male literacy which is 35 per cent (National Report, Beijing, 1995). More over, in almost all the schools female participation is much lower than the males (Education of Women in Asia Project, Draft Country Programme Report: Bangladesh, 1991).

Saleha Begum (1994) has tried to study the relationship of parents' education and literacy rate of children. In cases where both the parents were literate, 98.68 per cent children were found enrolled, while where only fathers were literate 90.91 per cent of children were enrolled, whereas when only mothers were literate 96.13 per cent were enrolled. She also found that the enrolment of school aged children have a positive relationship with mother literacy.

A study of National Foundation for Research on Human Resource Development (NFRHRD) in 1978 shows that in Bangladesh 37 per cent of eligible girls for primary education in rural areas attend schools, while the rate is 50 per cent in the urban areas. Most of the poor families in rural areas do not feel the need of educating their daughters since it is the convention that the girls will ultimately leave their parental home after marriage. If the society is not free from prejudices and the new values are not established, the country can not achieve much from the universal primary education (NFRHRD, 1979). It is almost universally accepted that when a man in a developing country is educated, it is more or less only one person who is benefited. But education of one woman has an immense on the entire family.

Table - I-Primary Education: An Overview of Planned Development.

Target	FFYP	SFYP	TFYP	Actual Position	
	1973-1978	1980-1985	1985-1990	1973	1987
Universal Primary/Basic Education					
Gross Enrolment Ratio	To increase from				
	58% to 90%	60%-91%	61% - 70%	58%	61%
Drop out Reduction	To decrease from				
	63% to 72%	-	50%	63%	66%

Source: Ministry of Education (1991).

Education in Bangladesh, Dhaka, Planning cell, p.24.

1.3. Education and Development

The words education and development mean different things to different people. Development is not only about material things but also pertains to human beings. As Julius Nyerere said, 'to develop people is not like building roads or wells; people can not be developed by others, they must develop themselves. Development occurs when people understand the oppressive conditions in which they live and act to change them (Burnad Fatima,1985).Development is a process that encompasses all aspects of community life, draws on the specific contribution of all social groups and enables them to reap the fruits of national endeavour. It entails the general mobilization of the resources of each person's will power and creativity, the continuous deployment of capacity for mastering modern scientific and technological knowledge and the utilisation of all material resources at its disposal (Ali Imam,1990).

Development does not come to people, but the people move towards development through awareness and assertion. According to the Human Development report 1995, human development is erected on four essential pillars - productivity, equity, sustainability and power. It regards economic growth as

essential but emphasizes the need to pay attention to its quality and distribution, and analyses at length its link with human lives (UNDP,1995).

Development can be described as a widely participatory process of directed and social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement for the majority. It is well recognised now that the goals of development in any society are: increased productivity; reduction in social differences; people's participation; efficiency and capacity utilisation of resources. Improving the quality of life of the people is an endeavour of all government and non governmental interventions (Mridula Seth,1997).

Development refers to a relatively stable long range increase in real national income that is accompanied by a change in the attitudes of the people, their motivations, institutional set up, production techniques etc. Development from another angle, may refer to the production and utilisation of material resources or to the enrichment of human resources. The current indicators of development include both the economic and non economic factors (Mishra,1981).

The same is true of education. Education provides the instruments for liberation from ignorance and oppression. Education is a very important input of human resource development. Human development is development of the people for the people by the people. Development of the people means investing in human capabilities, whether in education or health or skills, so that they can work productively and creatively. Development for the people means ensuring that the economic growth they generate is distributed widely and fairly. Development by the people refers to giving everyone a chance to participate (UNDP,1993). According to a the report of UNDP(1993), a large number of people in the world are not participating in the process of development. The report identifies the poor, women, minorities, rural people and the disable as the categories excluded from the framework of participation. A point to be noted here is that a large majority of these above mentioned categories have been deprived of education for obvious reasons.

Education is the key of human resource development. It has functioned in several countries in the Asian region as an agent for socio-economic development. A recent review of poverty situation by the World Bank (1990) revealed that investment in education and training with special focus on education, training and skill development has resulted in accelerated development of some nations in the Third World. It indicates that the more educated the members of both sexes of a nation are, the greater is the country's development potential and the possibility of achieving progress in different spheres of life. Education is one important area that can help to address social cultural and traditional customs and attitudes in overcoming efforts for improving the situation of the disadvantaged sections of a society (Draft Country Programme Report: Bangladesh, 1994). Education is closely associated with purposeful and organised social intervention programmes in the broader spectrum of human resource development. Education is the basic importance in the planned development of a nation. Skills in education include: ability to process information; resources to think clearly; capability to communicate effectively; rational decision making; competencies to understand environment ; effective utilization of resource (human and material); personal competence(self esteem); information, technical skills of training for multiplier effect.

The goals for the United Nations Second Development with far reaching transformation of the social and economic structures, institutions, relationships and processes in rural areas. Most rural areas in developing countries are characterized by poverty in both their educational and economic resources (Coombs and Ahmed,1979). The vast majority of the people live in poverty and the socio economic structures mitigate against their development in all spheres of life. If truly national development is to take place then this large group must be brought into the process. Moreover, the problems must be attacked at all levels, not just at the economic(JamesJennings,1990). At the 'International Conference on Adult Education and Development' held in Dar-Es-Salaam in 1976, it was agreed that "participation of the total society is crucial for development", and it was further argued: "The objective of integrated, balanced development is to achieve social

economic and political justice that leads to the liberation of mankind and in so doing eradicates such scourges as mass poverty and mass illiteracy (Hall and Kidd,1978).

Illiteracy is a barrier of development.. It is withholding the development of the individual, the society and the nation. It is true that agricultural development can not be possible by illiterate farmers because the illiterate farmers do not know how to increase the out put of food crops without acquiring the necessary skills. The experiences of the agricultural development in Zilan province in Iran, is a standing example of this fact. Researches show that the illiterate farmers apply 14,000 metric tons excess paddy seeds for planting in only Zilan province every year for lack of proper measuring abilities. The value of the paddy seeds was 21 crore Royal in Iranian currency. Illiterate farmers may not be able to decide the appropriate amount and therefore the result of their effects would not be satisfactory. The low output of crops is the result of ignorance. If the farmer was literate, he would be able to read the instructions regarding the use of fertilizers and there by increase the production.

Many countries have realized that the potential value of literacy, and they have started to organize literacy programmes on the basis of approaches which will eventually foster the realisation of socio-economic and political objectives of their country (S.F.Nkivisia,1989:30).

International organisations and other interested agencies have taken cognizance of the importance of literacy for social economic development. Various conferences at Alexandra(1976), Geneva(1977), and Abu Dhabi(1977) suggested the adoption of an interdisciplinary intersectoral approach to eradicate illiteracy and sought to expand basic education and free all citizens from illiteracy.

The enrolment rates in primary schools and literacy rate (Table -1) has increased over the years, yet the absolute number of illiterates is increasing with rapid acceleration in population growth.

Non formal education is extremely necessary to fight illiteracy. It can provide learning opportunities for many, which the formal system is unable to do. A

primary education system in a country provides basic literacy to children. But it is not enough to eradicate illiteracy prevailing among the large number of adults and out of school children. A country cannot depend on primary education alone to eradicate illiteracy within a short span of time. (Kabir,1994)

In Teheran Conference(1965) it was indicated that the maps of illiteracy and poverty are congruent within and across nations. Literacy was necessary for learning new skills for increased productivity both on the farm and in the factory and they are the essential tools in alleviating poverty. The Bangladesh government's stated position has clearly been on the side of those who see illiteracy as a barrier to national development. All the nation's five year plans have echoed the theme:

“...the ability to read write is an important asset of men in modern life.....removing illiteracy from the country is an important strategy for social and economic development of masses”.(SFYP,1983).

“Literacy is an important prerequisite for development.....”(TFYP,1985:343).

The official view of the government can be summed up with the words from one of the first proposals for a national mass education drive presented by one of the government departments soon after Liberation in 1972.

“An illiterate man can neither be aware of his rights or conscious of his duties. Literacy is an essential input for the emancipation of the society and development of the nation. Our national objectives to achieve a reasonable standard of living with adequate provision for food, shelter and clothing for everybody will always remain a mirage in the distance, unless the individual man whose welfare is the end product of all our endeavour is built up, made conscious of his needs and aware of the immense possibilities that are open before him. The only means to achieve this end is the mass education programme for the people. Only then other and responsible environment. The mass education programme, therefore could be conceived as basic to all other development plans”.(Rural Development and Co-operative Division,1972).

Among the general public, particularly those who themselves have some formal education, illiteracy is often cited as a major cause for the nation's poverty(Maloney,1986:31). Stating a more moderate position, Haque(1982) maintains, “ Rural people are individuals with dignity and intelligence. But basic

literacy and numeracy are necessary to fortify and make use of their naturally gained knowledge and experience”.

Table - 2. Comparative Literacy Rates by Sex, Age and Location (1961, 1974, 1981, 1991)

Region & Age group		1961	1974	1981	1991
All Ages					
Bangladesh	Male	26	28	26	30
	Female	9	12	13	19
	Total	17	20	20	25
Urban	Male	48	45	42	51
	Female	26	28	26	38
	Total	39	38	35	45
Rural	Male	25	26	23	26
	Female	8	11	11	14
	Total	17	19	17	20
Age 5 & above					
Bangladesh	Male	31	33	31	35
	Female	11	15	16	20
	Total	22	24	24	28
Urban	Male	55	52	49	58
	Female	32	33	30	44
	Total	46	44	41	51
Rural	Male	30	31	27	31
	Female	15	13	14	17
	Total	20	22	21	24
Age 15 & above					
Bangladesh	Male	NA	37	40	44
	Female	NA	13	18	23
	Total	NA	26	29	34
Urban	Male	NA	63	58	72
	Female	NA	33	34	51
	Total	NA	48	48	62
Rural	Male	NA	35	35	40
	Female	NA	12	15	19
	Total	NA	23	25	30

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

NA: Data Not Available, p.185.

1.4. Background of Rural Development

The majority of the rural people in Bangladesh remain unemployed for at least some months of the year and as many as 40 per cent of the people most of the time. More than half of the rural people are land less or nearly so and another 25 per cent finds it difficult to ensure subsistence from their cultivable land and need to seek

supplementary sources of income. Economic and social conditions for most of the people are extremely difficult. Agriculture remains the largest sector of the economy occupying three fifths of the employed labour force and producing nearly half of the economy's output. Land is the main productive asset in rural areas and it represents both economic and social status.

In the backdrop of the prevailing rural scenario, the prime needs for rural development in Bangladesh are productive employment and income generating programmes in both farm and non-farm sectors along with the development of agriculture and basic infrastructure in the rural areas.

1.5. Strategy of Rural Development

The government's rural development programme, which has its origin in the early 1960s, was conceptualized essentially as an instrument for providing support for increasing agricultural production. The rural development model known as the 'Comilla Model' emphasized the formation of co-operatives and the integration of support services provided by the government departments. The government of Bangladesh formulated and adopted a strategy for rural Development (RD) Projects in January 1984. The RD strategy contains the following three components:

- Development of physical infrastructure including roads, storage and markets;
- Irrigated agriculture, minor drainage and food control works;
- Production and employment programmes (PEP) for the rural poor.

The strategy provides that the RD projects may be taken up with any of the above components or in combination of the above components. Such projects would cover a minimum of one full administrative district (Akanda,1996).

For implementation at the field level of the three components of the RD projects, the agencies will be generally as follows:

- For development of physical infrastructure - Local Government Bodies with a support from the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED);
- For development of irrigated agriculture etc. - Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) and the Ministry of Agriculture in association with the Local Government Bodies;

- For production and employment programmes - BRDB in collaboration with the Local Government Bodies and other concerned agencies.

[The strategy has been followed for rural development during the Third Five Year Plan(TFYP:1985-90) and the Fourth Five Year Plan (FFYP:1990-95) of the government]

In 1971 Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) of Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) came into being as a nation-wide development programme for a phased coverage of the country till 1982 when the government decided to create BRDB through an ordinance, the programme was operating in 250 thanas of the country.

BRDB is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of 21 members, representing the Ministries and institutions including National Co-operative Federation and National Co-operative Union, Presently, BRDB Headquarters consists of five divisions i.e., (1)Field Service, (2) Planning , Evaluation and Monitoring, (3) Administration, (4) Training and (5) Finance, Accounts and Audit. Each division is headed by a Director. The Directors with the supporting officers and staff perform the functions of the Board under the overall supervision and direction of the Director General. The Deputy Directors and Thana Rural Development officers a perform the functions of BRDB at district and Thana level respectively with the help of other supporting staff (Annual Reports, BRDB, 1995-96).

BRDB has two components - the main scheme and the rural development and poverty alleviation programme that is being implemented through a number of projects. The Functional Education (FE) Component is the programme for educating the rural adults for their development and alleviation of their poverty. So, this dimension of RDP-9's activity has been named as **Functional Education Component** . In this study the term 'Component' has been interchangeably used with the term 'programme'.

1.6. Implementation of Rural Development by Government of Bangladesh

BRDB the biggest government agency for rural development and poverty alleviation . It basically aims at organising the rural people through co-operatives and informal groups. It provides an institutional frame work for development activities for farmers, women, artisans and the poor living in the rural areas.

BY the end of the second five year plan (SFYP) almost the whole country was covered by the programme with 62,000 Krishak Samabhay Samiti (Farmers Co-operatives Societies), with over two million members (TFPY, 1985). There are few formal village level institutions in Bangladesh other than the primary societies following the comilla model (Anisuzzam et al, 1986).

During the third five year plan the government questioned the effectiveness of the scheme to reducing poverty, as the government felt that the scheme neglected the small and many it farmers, women and landless disadvantage folks, bypassed many small and marginal farmers, let alone the landless and the disadvantaged women folk, “concluding that, “These societies were largely dominated by relatively well to do farmers who used the organisations to their advantage” (TFYP, 1985)

The government tried to develop appropriate rural institutions for the landless and for disadvantaged women ‘Bitayaheen’,(asset less people), Samabaya Samiti (BSS) and Mohila Samabhaya Samiti (MSS). These organisations ‘were developed to provide support in terms of skill development, credit and input supplies to the numbers in farm and non farm activities’(ibid) .Starting from July, 1983, the target was to form 1,25,000 BSS and MSS in ten years.(Eusufzai,1984).

BRDB has completed 21st year of its operation. It was until the early 1980s largely confined to agriculture co-operatives. The spread of irrigated agriculture and expansion of High Yielding Variety (HYV) acreage through the co-operatives has made significant contribution to food production. Though initially the focus was on developing agriculture co-operatives to increase agricultural productivity, BRDB included as its objective to contribute to the generation of employment and earning capacity of the rural poor via the provision of credit, training and technical

assistance to those specialised co-operatives. Side by side production and employment programmes were started to tackle the problem of poverty and unemployment by organising the asset less people in informal co-operative groups or unions.

As the income of group members increase they become more aware about the quality of life. Primary health care, nutrition, family planning, literacy become desirable goals. The demand for various social services like education, health, family planning, sanitation can be generated through co-operatives both directly and indirectly. These can be made part of the over all programme of co-operatives or provided through government and non government agencies on the basis of demand created through improvement of standard of living.

Beside the co-operative movement the government has introduced many other programmes for the improvement of the general situation of the country through Local Government Engineering Development (LGED).[see Table -3]

Table - 3
Rural Development Projects
(Under BRDB, LGED)

Name of the project	Type of programme	Duration	Location	Sources of Fund
RDP-1 (BRDB)	Poverty alleviation	1976-1984	3 Thanas of old Mymensing district and 4 thanas of old Bogra district	IDA
RDP-2 (BRDB)	Poverty alleviation & Income Generating Activities(IGA)	1983-1990	All thanas of greater 13 districts(Dinajpur,Rangpur, Bogra,Khulna,Barisal, Patuakhali,Tangail,Jamalpur Comilla,Sylhet,Dhaka, Chittagong and Mymensing	IDA,SIDA,UNDP
RDP-3 (LGED)	Infrastructure	1993-2000	Greater Sylhet district	IDB
RDP-4 (LGED)	Infrastructure	1997-2000	Faridpur,Madaripur&Rajbari	SIDA
RDP-5 (BRDB)	IGA	1996-2000	Faridpur district	BRDB, Sweden
RDP-6 (LGED)	Infrastructure	1989-1997	Manikgonj district	SDC
RDP-7 (LGED)	Infrastructure	1989-1997	Greater Rajshahi, Pabna & Bogra districts	IDA,SDC & KFW
RDP-8 (LGED)	Infrastructure	1989-1997	Greater Rangpur district	EC & Netherlands
RDP-9 (BRDB)	Poverty alleviation & IGA	1983-2000	Gaibandha ,Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari & Rangpur	BRDB & EC

Source BRDB / Annual Report,1996.
LGED Annual Booklet, 1996.

1.7. Rural Development Project (RDP) - 9

RDP -9 is a rural infrastructure development and poverty alleviation endeavour of the BRDB. BRDB is the principal agency of the government responsible for developing the socio- economic status of the rural poor in Bangladesh. Rangpur Rural development Programme is limited to 20 thanas of four districts namely, Gaibandha , Lalmonirhat, Nilphamasi and Rangpur.

The aim of the projects is to facilitate and support the development necessary for upgrading the socio, economic and technical skills of the people. The social organisation consists of 1500 existing project groups. It is envisaged that ultimately these social organisations will help the people raise their voice to make them assertive and effective in society.

RDP-9 has been operating a Functional Education (FE) component since July 1993. The main objective of this programme is to improve the level of literacy of RDP-9 group members, so that they can manage simple reading, writing and counting. The project introduced a six months long FE course for their illiterate group members (GMs) from 27th October, 1996. Each FE centre consists of 20 learners. FE components are taken care of by the Training and Communication Section of the RDP-9. The unit is also responsible for staff capacity assessment and development along with monitoring and evaluation with support from its grass root level staff. The Functional Education Trainer(FE-Trainer) of Training and Communication Section is playing the role of FE co-ordinator of the project. Trainer is the key person of the programme. The FE -trainer has prepared almost all the relevant documents, designed the field operation plans and budget for the selection of centres, places, learners and shevoks/shevikas etc. and maintained a liaison with Project Implementation Unit(P.I.U) for the FE- progress.

Target Beneficiaries: The group members of RDP-9 and their families are the beneficiaries of FE project. Each FE centre consists of 20 learners and it forms members of one to two RDP-9 groups which reside near or in the same neighbourhood. The authorities fill the gaps created by literate group members and

continuous absentees group members with member of the family. A set of criteria was used for selecting the FE learners from the girls and their families . According to this learners must be:

- illiterate men and women;
- within the age group of 18-45 (those who have enthusiasm but have crossed the age bar may be included in the FE group);
- group members or their members of families;
- those persons who are enthusiastic towards education.

Phases of FE Component: FE component of RDP-9 are two phased activities. They are: 1. Basic literacy; and 2. Follow up education.

1. Basic Literacy Phase: The duration of basic literacy phase is 240 hours. The aim of this phase is to make the learners literate. According to the content analysis o, the first primer contains 57 words, 2nd primer contains 135 words and the 3rd primer contains 162 words. The learners should be able to identify 354 words contained in the sixty lessons of the primers, read and write simple sentence by themselves. They also learn simple and basic arithmetic such as simple addition and subtraction. A centre based approach is adopted for implementing this course. Functional literacy - 1,2,3 primers have been developed by the Friends in Village Development in Bangladesh(FIVDB).

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian exponent of the programme of Androgogy, proposed the utilization of “generative themes” fundamentally rooted in the life of the adult learners. The basic premise of his thesis was that the pedagogy to be used for adult illiterate learners has to be different from what is being adopted for children, even though the adult may be on the same level as that of the primary level children with regard to literacy. In order to make learning meaningful and relevant, instructional materials have to be related to themes with which the adults are daily involved in. The lesson have to be based on such topics or themes and the language learning have to be centred around them. This way , the adult learners will be not

only develop language skills but they would also gain meaningful knowledge for their day to day life issues. Paulo Freire called this as the 'generative themes' which should form the content of the lessons in a programme of andragogy. The conventional method of teaching language is through the alphabets identification, forming of words phonetically sequenced culminating in sentence formation. This conventional style of teaching language is known as the 'synthetic approach'.

The experts involved in the production of the Functional Literacy Primers 1,2 and 3 have been influenced by the philosophy of Paulo Freire and hence employed this method in their booklets. They believed that this approach has the promise of being effective instruments for adult learning and functional literacy in Bangladesh. As mentioned earlier, these primers have been developed by FIVDB. The RDP-9 has used these primers for their FE component. Each lesson of the primer is divided into four units for reading, writing, numeracy and understanding. 'Look and Say' method was adopted for these primers. The sentences selected in the primer reflected the local milieu. These sentences are very closely attached to the rural people's common problems and their daily life.

2. Follow up Education Phase: The duration of this phase is 52 hours excluding weekly holidays. The aim of this phase is to draw the learner's attention to literacy skills and to share social awareness message on selected themes. The RDP-9 has used a practice book developed by FIVDB for their follow up education phase. It consists of 20 lessons on health, hygiene, nutrition, financial and family planning, legal issues, economic development and social organisation building written in simple language. Each lesson contains a specific page for learners' writing and numeracy practice. This is used to increase the learners' reading, writing and numeracy skills. A self learning approach is used in this phase.

1.8. Need of the Study of Functional Education Component of RDP-9

Functional education means a process of organised and structured learning which is related to day to day life situations. FE is an international mechanism, guided by predetermined goals which seek to bring about changes in knowledge,

attitudes, values and skills of both literacy and communication (Draper, 1989). It is thus, a matter of knowing how to read, write and calculate in daily life. At the same time through this education one can the nature of problems they face. Here, the essence of functional education is adult learning. Thus, originally literacy and minimum education have become synonymous and literacy has been broadened to embrace the various shades of meaning in order to cover the activities that are undertaken by an individual in his/her every day life. Education has rather taken the place of literacy in its broader concept (Mohanty, 1993). Functional education aims at enabling an individual to read and write short sentences and work out simple counting. It helps the adult learners to improve his/her standard of living through participation in various development programmes.

Functional education is envisaged as an indispensable input in all sectors of development, particularly in the rural areas where participation of the beneficiaries is crucial to the fulfilment of the development objectives. It recognises that illiteracy is a serious impediment to the individual growth and country's socio-economic process. While the removal of illiteracy is being emphasized as one of the essential constituents of functional education, stress, therefore, is to be laid on programmes of functional upgradation and creation of awareness among the illiterates and poor regarding constraints to their development. Functional education, therefore cannot be a mere literacy programme, but it has to be correlated with the social, health, hygiene and working conditions of the people.

In 1970 the government realised that, while determined efforts must be made to universalize elementary education up to the age of 14 years the problems of illiteracy among adult population also need to be addressed to urgently.. The functional educational facilities must be extended to the adult population to remedy their educational deprivation and to enable them to develop their personality. If and only when the adults become literates, will they realize the importance of education. This realisation will result in their sending the children to school to get primary education. The nation-wide National programme is emphasizing that learning , working and learning are inseparable. The narrow concept of adult education, which

emphasises the imparting of literacy skills only, has not only undergone a change but has been widened to include a good deal besides the traditional “3R’s” and provide the knowledge, skills and attitudes to individuals, which will help to work better and increase their productivity to improve their standard of living, participating intelligently in civic life, and have a better understanding of the nature and society for the persons belonging to the economically and socially deprived section of the society. It also includes general and civic education, health education, basic education in science and technology. It will also enable the people to know about one’s rights and will free them from being exploited. There by, it will bring about the radical social transformation and will create an egalitarian and just society. The objectives of the FE programme can be stated in short, as the adult education should include not only the ‘3Rs’ but also bring a change in the socio economic status of the individual and prepare them for better life . It will create among them the sensitivity towards nation and contribution to human welfare.

RDP-9 has been operating a six month Functional Education programme for the illiterates group members from October 20, 1996 with a view to improve the level of literacy. This programme is limited to 20 thanas in the 4 districts of Rangpur, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari, covering 9,500 square kilometres and with a total population 8.0 million , of which 90 per cent is rural (as per 1991 census); and this region is one of the poorest regions in Bangladesh. Crop failures compounded food insecurities and indebtedness of the rural poor resulting in a growing landlessness About two thirds of the rural households are classified as landless or marginal farmers. The programme widely covered rural area, because of higher illiteracy and poverty there.

The duration of FE course is six months.,RDP-9 used the learning materials developed by Friends in Village Development in Bangladesh (FIVDB) , a well known non-government organisation of Bangladesh. FIVDB’s package consists of 5 kinds of materials. These are 3 primers, 3 sets of flash cards, a flip chart, a teacher’s guide and workbook. This study proposes to find out how much the

acquired knowledge, skill and awareness are helping hem in their day to day life and how their living standards are improved after FE programme. The present study has been conducted in the rural area of four districts in Bangladesh with a view to find out the significance of FE programme in the development of rural communities and may represent the rural way of life.

1.9. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

UNESCO has been interested in the promotion of adult literacy both as a human right as well as an instrument of liberation and development. According to the UNDP's Human Development (HD) Report(1995), the Human Development Index of Bangladesh is 146, out of 174. As a developing nation, this has to be evaluated.. One of the important factors of elevating HD index is adult literacy This can remove deficiencies which are obstacles to development of skill, communication skills and attitude. However, in practice, adult literacy is indispensably for alleviation of poverty. Various studies conducted by Saleha Begum and Shirin Banu(1988), James Jennings(1990), Guidrum Cedarblad (1992), Haq and Islam (1991),etc. have pointed out the relevance of adult literacy and national development.

Mali (1976), BrahmaPrakash (1976), P.Gopinathan Pillai (1990), C.A.S.E (1982), Kundu (1985), Imam(1990), Rao G(1992), Kanta and Dutt(1984), Mohanty,N(1988), Ganguli, Pathak and Mirza(1983) revealed that there was very little impact of Adult Education Programme on adult learners in improving the standard of living. Muthayya and Hemlatha (1982), Singh(1982), Parikh (1985), Chhugani (1987), Tawisuban (1985), Haddon and Lance(1987) and Mlekwa Victor(1990) found a lack of awareness concerning the developmental schemes, inadequate training, lack of learning materials as per learners needs, lack of community participation in programmes implementation, and lack of significant mobilization effort in this regard, and they suggest ways of improving operational efforts.

Vivan. Lynette(1988), Clark Roger(1982), Kirsten(1993) found that effectiveness of the instructors depended upon their own basic abilities, competencies and the training they had undergone. The instructors are found to be more effective if they are aware of adult learners' needs.

G.Vidya Sagar Reddy and Subbi Reddy's study showed that there is a stupendous impact on learner's day to day activities and also awareness about health and sanitation, economic, children education, adoption of family cleaning etc. Line(1989) reports that due to lack of easy access to reading and writing materials women are prone to regress into illiteracy.

Drop outs is one of the most significant factor in the functional education programme of adult learners. Manjeet Ahluwalia and Anuradha Sharma identified the two most important psychological factors that have been found to influence learning are the achievement motive and self concept of adult learner. Comings Shrestha and Smith (1992) observed among the Nepal's teachers that absenteeism was found to be an important reason for learners' drop out.

The field of functional education, the whole focus is on finding out solutions to real problems of adult people, and the whole process of education is life centred. It is a time bound programme and FE is not an alternative to formal education, but it is a necessity. Ignorance and poverty are two fundamental problems. Ignorance is directly related to illiteracy and illiteracy breeds poverty. There is a correlation between illiteracy and poverty. It is in this context of the economic, political and social goals of development that the vital role of functional education lies.

Keeping in view the above situations and the programme in operation, certain question arise that need to be considered. They are:

1. Whether the FE programme executed are well planned and properly run?
2. How are the learning materials being utilized?
3. How are the activities of the FEP affected in the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of the rural people?
4. What are the causes of learners drop out?
5. Are the rural people aware of various social issues of health, hygiene, sanitation, family planning, dowry etc.?
6. Are the rural people developed in skills for learning and decision making?

7. How have they applied their acquired knowledge, skill and awareness from the programme for improving their quality of life?
8. Do they send their children/wards to schools?
9. If the programme is not effective what strategy can be adopted to make it effective?

The present study is an attempt to understand and find answers to a few of these above raised questions pertaining to FE programme of Bangladesh, and also find out the knowledge, skill and awareness gained by learners using the learning materials created by FIVDB. The investigator also wishes to find out how much of the acquired knowledge, skill and awareness are helping the rural people in their day to day life, and to what extent their living standards are improving. Overall development of Bangladesh can take place only when the knowledge, skill and awareness of the common people is used productively. These questions need to be critically studied. It is with this view that the present study has been undertaken by the investigator.

1.10. Statement of the Problem

“ A Study of the Functional Education Component of Rural Development Project (RDP)-9 in 4 Districts of Bangladesh”.

1.11. General Objectives of the Study

- 1.To examine the functional education activities of RDP-9 to fulfil the literacy goal;
- 2.To examine the effects of the functional education activities on the group members of RDP-9 in the selected districts of Gaibandha,Lalmonirhat Nilphamari and Rangpur.
- 3.To assess whether the lessons imparted have fulfilled the literacy needs of the learners;
- 4.To study the attitude of the local people towards FE activities at the functional education centre.

1.12. Specific Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the following areas of Functional Education programme run by RDP-9 in terms of :
 - operational strategy of FE programme;
 - staff capacity for programme implementation;
 - management and monitoring of centres' activities;
 - training of personnel at different levels;
 - learning materials and their relevance in the national context;
 - teaching learning process, and
 - selection of learners.
2. To examine the ability of learners on reading, writing, numeracy and general awareness.
3. To identify the major factors affecting the poor of satisfactory performance of the learners.
4. To investigate into the reasons for drop out
5. To analyse the effects of FE programme on learners in their daily life.
6. To examine the views of the functionaries regarding the FE programme.
7. To study the local people's attitude towards FE activities.

1.13. Operationalization of Terms Used

Functional Education: Functional Education means a process of organised and structured learning which is related to the different categories of population who are highly motivated and who need literacy for their own and their country's benefit. FE does not only refer to imparting reading and writing, but also professional and technical knowledge , thereby leading to fuller participation of adults in economic and civic life. It is an integral part of over all education plan and educational system in each developing country.

The conducting of the **functional education programme** of the FE Centres was the FE component of RDP-9. Therefore, in this study, the investigator has used the term '**FE programme**' to denote the educational activities organized in the centres.

The term '**operational strategy**' refers to the planning and implementation of the FE component of RDP-9. The focus in this study has been on the **structure** of that section of RDP-9 that was involved in the implementation of the FE Component. So, in the analysis, the term '**structure**' has been used while discussing the operational strategy.

1.14. Delimitation of the Study

1. RDP-9 is a rural infrastructure development and poverty alleviation project of Bangladesh government, implemented only in four districts in the northern part of the country which is extremely vulnerable to natural calamities and grinding poverty. The investigator selected the above four districts which are Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, and Rangpur; two male and two female centres were selected in one thana in each of these four districts. The selected centres are situated in the rural areas; shevok and shevikas and learners are also from rural areas. So, the study focuses only on rural areas as the nomenclature indicates.
2. This study is delimited to the adult education programmes of Bangladesh in the four districts of Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, and Rangpur from October 27, and functioned up to May 15, 1997.