SOCIAL INCLUSION:
GENDER AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION SWAPS
IN SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH CASE STUDY

Mahbuba Nasreen
Sean Tate
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Mahbuba Nasreen
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For further information and copies, please contact
Regional Education Advisor
UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA)
P.O. Box 5815, Lekhnath Marg
Kathmandu, Nepal
Email: rosa@unicef.org

Credits
Amanda Seel, Overall Study Coordinator
Barbara Shuey, Overall Researcher
Susan Durston, Regional Study Focal Point


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‘Changing the system is not only about putting policies in place, but about changing the culture within classrooms, schools, districts, and in society itself. It will therefore require support from all within the system to work towards this change and a concerted effort to raise awareness of the issues within the community.’

From: 
Access and Inclusive Education Framework 
PEDP-II, Bangladesh, p.11 
September 2005

‘When my child goes to school, we get inspired. We hope one day he will get rid of this situation [disability].’
Mother’s comments on her disabled child at SWID Bangladesh Kurigram 
as quoted in 
Assessment of Educational Needs of Disabled Children in Bangladesh 
Creative Associates/USAID 2005

‘Eliminating gender discrimination and empowering women are among the paramount challenges facing the world today. When women are healthy, educated and free to take the opportunities that life affords them, children thrive and countries flourish, reaping a double dividend for women and children.’

From: 
The State of the World’s Children 2007 
UNICEF
Foreword

Relatively little has been documented about the development of Sector-Wide Approaches in Education over time – for example, how equity issues are conceptualized, what partnership factors help to bring about attitudinal change, what are effective capacity development and institutional building strategies. In particular, the majority of the published literature does not go into detail on gender/equity issues and beyond into equity issues of disadvantaged groups. Hence, there are gaps in the current understanding of effective practices for the South Asia region with its unique socio-economic and cultural context.

To address some of the gaps, the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia has coordinated three country case studies in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka under the heading ‘Social Inclusion: Gender and Equity in Education SWAps in South Asia’ to explore how education SWAps are conceptualizing and addressing issues of social exclusion, gender and equity. This is the report of Bangladesh Case Study; a separate Synthesis Report will draw together the key findings and lessons learned from the three studies.

In the last decade, Bangladesh has been moving from a project-based approach to a programme-based approach as the sub-sector approach of the current Second Primary Education Development Programme illustrates. The move away from a project-based approach began with PEDP-I in 1995 and was followed by PEDP-II in 2004–09. In planning for PEDP-II, it was realized by both government and donors that a more integrated approach to support to education in Bangladesh was preferable to piecemeal projects that did not always enable the education system to develop in a coherent manner. This development, while it considerably preceded the Paris Declaration of 2005, was certainly in line with its basic principles of harmonization and alignment of aid delivery.

In the design of PEDP-II, issues of inclusion and equity are addressed under component four: improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling. A range of other strategies such as free education and stipends promote equal access. On quality, the Primary School Quality Levels (PSQLs) address some of the gender and equity issues. PEDP-II also developed an Access and Inclusive Education Framework and a number of strategies and action plans that address specific issues such as gender, children with special needs, and indigenous children. A dedicated cell has been established for the implementation of the framework and action plans. This process has been a rich learning experience and has the potential to improve the capacity to deliver education where it matters most – to schools and children.

The report acknowledges the commendable progress Bangladesh has made in improving access and gender parity in schooling and provides ample information for reflection on the status of those excluded from educational access and those that need equitable treatment in schools and in the curriculum. The study has provided a deep and careful analysis of the issues and the significant progress PEDP-II has made in the last three years in addressing social inclusion and increasing awareness and understanding of its importance.

The challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations presented here are not only useful for informing PEDP-II mid-term review discussions and action plans but are also contributions to the information base and the debate on issues of social inclusion, gender and disparities in the education system of Bangladesh.
To advance the knowledge base and to improve service delivery for children in schools and those whose basic right to education has yet to be realized, it is our hope that other research initiatives will follow and build on this commendable work on social inclusion and equity in the primary education system of Bangladesh.

Khondaker M. Asaduzzaman  
Director General, Directorate of Primary Education  
& Programme Director, PEDP-II  
Dhaka  
August 2007
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Mahbuba Nasreen
Sean Tate
Acronyms

ADD  Action on Disability and Development
ADB  Asian Development Bank
ADP  Annual Development Programme
AIEC  Access and Inclusive Education Cell
AIR  Apparent Intake Ratio
AMO  Assistant Monitoring Officer
ASER  Age-Specific Enrolment Ratio
ASF  Acid Survivors Foundation
AUEO  Assistant Upazila Education Officer
AUSAID  Australian Agency for International Development
BANBEIS  Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS  Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIDS  Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BISE  Bangladesh Institute of Special Education
BNFD  Bangladesh National Federation for the Deaf
BPF  Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation
BRAC  Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BRAC-IED  BRAC University Institute of Educational Development
CIDA  Canadian International Development Agency
C-in-Ed  Certificate in Education
CHT  Chittagong Hill Tracts
CHTRC  Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council
CHT-RDP  Chittagong Hill Tracts Rural Development Project
CBO  Community Based Organization
CDW  Child Domestic Workers
CEDAW  Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC  Convention on the Rights of the Child
CREATE  Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
CRP  Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed
CSID  Centre for Services and Information on Disability
CSIE  Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education
CWCS  Centre for Women and Children Studies
DANIDA  Danish International Development Agency
DEO  District Education Officer
DeCWAB  Deaf Children’s Welfare Association of Bangladesh
DG  Director General
DHSE  Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education
DoE  Department of the Environment
DPE  Directorate of Primary Education
DPEO  District Primary Education Officer
DPO  Disabled People’s Organization
DSS  Department of Social Services
EEC  European Economic Community
EENET  Enabling Education Network; Asia.
EFA  Education for All
EMIS  Educational Management Information System
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<tr>
<td>ESTEEM</td>
<td>Effective Schools Through Enhanced Education Management</td>
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<td>FTI</td>
<td>Fast Track Initiative</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Rate</td>
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<td>GIR</td>
<td>Gross Intake Ratio</td>
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<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
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<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<td>GoB</td>
<td>Government of Bangladesh</td>
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<td>GPS</td>
<td>Government Primary School</td>
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<td>HIES</td>
<td>Household Income and Expenditure Survey</td>
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<td>HSC</td>
<td>Higher Secondary Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICF</td>
<td>International Classification of Functioning and Disability</td>
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<td>ICIDH-2</td>
<td>International Classification of Functioning and Disability</td>
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<td>IDB</td>
<td>Islamic Development Bank</td>
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<td>IDEAL</td>
<td>Intensive District Approach to Education for All</td>
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<td>IE</td>
<td>Inclusive Education</td>
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<td>IGA</td>
<td>Income Generating Activity</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>ISCED</td>
<td>International Standard Classification of Education</td>
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<td>IWD</td>
<td>International Women’s Day</td>
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<td>JARM</td>
<td>Joint Annual Review Mission</td>
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<td>KPI</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicators</td>
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<td>LC</td>
<td>Learning Centre</td>
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<td>LGED</td>
<td>Local Government Engineering Department</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>MCHTA</td>
<td>Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MIS</td>
<td>Management Information System</td>
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<td>MLE</td>
<td>Mother-tongue-based Multilingual Education</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MoPME</td>
<td>Ministry of Primary and Mass Education</td>
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<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>MoWCA</td>
<td>Ministry of Women and Children Affairs</td>
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<td>MTR</td>
<td>Mid-Term Review</td>
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<td>MWTL</td>
<td>Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning</td>
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<td>NAPE</td>
<td>National Academy for Primary Education</td>
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<td>NCTB</td>
<td>National Curriculum and Textbook Board</td>
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<td>NER</td>
<td>Net Enrolment Ratio</td>
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<td>NFOWD</td>
<td>National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organization</td>
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<td>NIR</td>
<td>Net Intake Rate</td>
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<td>NPA</td>
<td>National Plan of Action</td>
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<td>NRNGPS</td>
<td>Non-Registered Non-Government Primary Schools</td>
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<td>NTRCA</td>
<td>National Teacher Registration and Certification Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWDC</td>
<td>National Women’s Development Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>PAM</td>
<td>Programme Administration Memorandum</td>
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<td>PCU</td>
<td>Programme Coordination Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEDP</td>
<td>Primary Education Development Programme</td>
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<td>PEDP-II</td>
<td>Second Primary Education Development Programme</td>
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<td>PIU</td>
<td>Programme Implementation Unit</td>
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<td>PLU</td>
<td>Programme Liaison Unit</td>
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<td>PMED</td>
<td>Primary and Mass Education Division</td>
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<td>PMU</td>
<td>Programme Management Unit</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Project Proforma</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>PSQL</td>
<td>Primary School Quality Level</td>
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<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parent Teacher Association</td>
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<td>PTI</td>
<td>Primary (Teacher) Training Institute</td>
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<td>PTR</td>
<td>Pupil-Teacher Ratio</td>
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<td>RNGPS</td>
<td>Registered Non-Government Primary School</td>
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<td>ROSC</td>
<td>Reaching Out-of-School Children Project</td>
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<td>SAHIC</td>
<td>Society for Assistance to Hearing Impaired Children</td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
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<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Education Needs</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>SLIP</td>
<td>School Level Improvement Plan</td>
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<td>State of the World’s Children (Report)</td>
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<td>SSC</td>
<td>Secondary School Certificate</td>
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<td>School Management Committee</td>
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<td>SWAp</td>
<td>Sector-Wide Approach</td>
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<td>SWID-B</td>
<td>Society for the Welfare of the Intellectually Disabled-Bangladesh</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
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<td>ToT</td>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
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<td>TQI</td>
<td>Total Quality Improvement Project</td>
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<td>Transition Rate</td>
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<td>Technical Support Team</td>
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<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>Upazilla Primary Education Plan</td>
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<td>Upazilla Resource Centre</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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Executive Summary

Introduction

This study, commissioned by the Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) of UNICEF, is part of a three-country research effort (Nepal and Sri Lanka are the other two countries) to understand in detail how gender and social disparity/exclusion are being addressed in a selection of education Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAs) in South Asia, in order to inform good practice within those countries and to learn lessons for other countries in the region and beyond. The three case studies will be synthesized into a major report that explores how educational programmes supported by SWAs are conceptualizing and addressing issues of social exclusion and gender disparity, and with what results. The education SWA considered in this study is PEDP-II (Primary Education Development Programme, Phase II). For the study, the researchers reviewed relevant documents and interviewed 60 persons from the government, donor partners, NGOs and other key organizations.

PEDP-II has evolved and built upon previous major efforts by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to improve primary education: the General Education Project (GEP) implemented from 1990–95, and the first Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-I) of 1997–2002, later extended until 2004.

The objectives of PEDP-I, like its predecessor, GEP, were to enhance educational planning and management capacity, increase equitable access to primary schooling, and improvement of the quality of primary education (GoB Baseline Survey PEDP-II, 2006, p.7). The total monetary size of PEDP-I was US$3100 million, including non-development expenditures.

PEDP-II was designed through a complex and participatory joint planning process involving international and national agencies, organizations and individuals during the years 2001–04. Eventually, after a convoluted three-year planning process, and a long approval period, PEDP-II began on July 1, 2004, and was officially launched on September 8, 2004. With a total budget envelope of $1815 million its overall goal is to provide quality education for all eligible children in Bangladesh, to be accomplished during the six-year period 2004–09.

There are 11 donor partners (DP) involved in PEDP-II, led by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and including the Government of Bangladesh. The other partners include the World Bank, CIDA, DFID, EC, IDA, Norway, The Netherlands, UNICEF/Australia and JICA.

Eight of the partners contribute to a pooled fund that is managed by the Asian Development Bank. The contributions of AUSAID and the Government of Japan are made through UNICEF, which, with JICA, supports PEDP-II through parallel funding.

PEDP-II component structure

There are five components in the PEDP-II structure. As recommended in the Macro Plan, these components are:

Component 1: Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building
Component 2: Quality improvement in schools and classrooms
Component 3: Quality improvement through infrastructure development
Component 4: Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling
Component 5: PEDP-II implementation, management and monitoring

PEDP-II is implemented through the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE). Within DPE, a small Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) is responsible for initiating efforts in social inclusion education although it is DPE’s responsibility to carry out such initiatives in the educational system.

Findings

PEDP-II has made important strides forward in terms of social inclusion during its first three years. It has brought to DPE and MoPME the language of social inclusion and a heightened awareness and understanding of its importance where it barely existed before. It has made a significant improvement in the gender ratio of new teachers. It has established an Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) in DPE. It has prepared an Inclusive Education Framework and a set of Action Plans covering gender, special needs, vulnerable and tribal children. It has begun to incorporate gender sessions in all short courses for headteachers, subject-based teachers’ training and SMC training. It has begun to take the first steps on the long road of bringing special needs children into schools. It has built thousands of new primary schools that incorporate ramps for use by children with disabilities. It has begun the task of supporting capacity development across DPE in terms of social inclusion issues and activities, including in monitoring and evaluation. PEDP-II has done all of this with a seriousness of intention supported by the donor partners and the government.

PEDP-II has made these strides in the face of considerable adversity. In retrospect, and given the magnitude of what needs to be done with social inclusion and education in Bangladesh as well as the realities of capacity needs within the education system, the objectives were and are overly ambitious. A review of the crucial planning phase of PEDP-II noted unrealistic expectations by donors, a failure to plan for adequate capacity building within DPE which has limited capacity to effectively manage all activities of the PEDP-II final plan, and the adoption and use of a rigid Project Proforma that allows for only one major revision for a programme with an evolving, developing vision.

The planning issues were transformed into implementation issues that have affected social inclusion and overall efforts, and which have been intensified by the complexity of the large programme, problems of recruitment and staffing, a delayed baseline survey, governance problems, and weaknesses of both inter-ministerial communication and coordination as well as of coordination between the government and the NGO community. This study has noted that institutional weaknesses (including civil service and promotion procedures) remain the crux and stumbling block of PEDP-II and a major impediment to work on social inclusion. There are severe capacity problems. In addition, planning during the first half of PEDP-II for social inclusion has been problematic as well. The Action Plans developed during the first half of PEDP-II were important steps forward but not truly action focused. An action plan, on vulnerable children, has already been approved. Donor coordination, despite a hard-working Education Local Consultative Group (ELCG), has also been complex, perhaps not unexpectedly with such a diverse group of donor partners of varying interests and sizes. Moving to a SWAp modality has brought benefits of funding and administrative coordination to a large and complicated educational effort but its
implementation and its impact to date have been seriously hampered. It is in fact difficult at this point to identify the actual impact of PEDP-II on social inclusion at the local and school levels. All of the issues noted above have profoundly affected, and slowed, the work on social inclusion within PEDP-II and are forcing a practical rethinking of the new realities and what can be done in the second half of the programme.

Recommendations on Ways Forward

The ways forward in the social inclusion initiatives of PEDP-II require a long-term vision and a rethinking of what can be accomplished in the remaining three years of the programme. It is clear from the conclusions and lessons learned in PEDP-II that practical steps need to be taken to reorient the social inclusion efforts. The Access and Inclusive Education Cell has already begun that process. Nevertheless, the recommendations that follow apply to higher policy and leadership levels as well.

1. The Project Proforma should be changed as soon as possible after the Mid-Term Review is completed to make it more flexible. There should be the capability to reassess and readjust the Proforma in each of the remaining years to meet the dynamic context of education and social inclusion in Bangladesh while also meeting realistic targets. The revised Project Proforma should provide realistic objectives for completion of PEDP-II tasks in the programme’s remaining years.

2. The original action plan on vulnerable children took a long time and was finally approved only in June 2007 as PEDP-II reached its halfway point. Given that the Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) must now readjust their entire plan of action for the remaining time in PEDP-II the need for policy guidance on what they may do related to vulnerable children becomes more and more urgent. Policymakers in charge of reviewing the plan on vulnerable children should return the plan to the AIEC with clear and concise guidance on what is allowed to be done, and if not allowed, then why not. The AIEC can then determine what can realistically be done in terms of their workload and overall schedule to affect the education of vulnerable children.

3. In terms of objectives and their timing related to social inclusion, the Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) should submit a new overall/combined action plan to the DPE and the donor partners that concisely outlines what can be done in each of the remaining three years. It is our understanding that this process, out of necessity, has already begun. Building on the previous action plans, it is necessary to prepare one overall action plan that encompasses, with realistic objectives, what can be accomplished in terms of gender, special needs, tribal and vulnerable children. In addition to revised objectives, this new plan should state the limitations of the plan in terms of current staffing capacity, the need to develop new staff capacity through appropriate training, time constraints, and funding. The new operational action plan should be clear in the actions to be taken and how they can realistically be measured.

4. Add staff to the AIEC to allow for appropriate professional development training of the new and current staff while continuing a realistic work programme.
5. DPE must hasten the implementation of the much-delayed ‘Innovative Grants’ programme, preferably so that it starts within 2007, in order to bring NGO creativity into the programme.

6. With DPE as initial host, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Social Inclusion should be established to bring together monthly, beginning in 2007, key personnel in the ministries that deal with children’s social inclusion issues (MoWCA, MoE, MoPME, Social Welfare, Food and Disaster Management) to identify how they will work together, what programmes can be worked on jointly and in a coordinated manner, and to share information. A newsletter on social inclusion, emanating from this Committee, should be published monthly to inform all professional personnel of the relevant ministries of the committee’s work and to share articles and research on social inclusion.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) staff must receive training, and further upgrading as necessary and feasible, on how to build gender and equity factors into their work, especially for qualitative use at the classroom level.

8. PEDP-II assessment and review teams, including JARMs and the end-of-project evaluation, should include personnel that specifically evaluate progress on gender and equity and who are identified as gender and equity specialists.

9. Elevate the status of ‘gender and equity’ in all documents and meetings of PEDP-II and in its PLU. The PLU should (again) have one person dealing with gender and equity.

10. Outside the immediate purview of PEDP-II, but key to its success, the following recommendations are deemed essential to overall progress on social inclusion in the programme during its second half:
   - National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE). Since NAPE is a key conduit for transferring knowledge and methodologies on social inclusion to the trainers of PTI instructors, changes in recruitment and promotion strategies at the Academy are necessary, preferably in 2007, to ensure that the highest quality instruction is provided on gender and equity issues.
   - Changes in Civil Service recruitment and promotion procedures are fundamental to the improvement of all gender and equity initiatives in the educational system, and with the creation of a vital education cadre.

These recommendations focus on some key priorities at this point, but more will need to come as the educational system and social inclusion is not static. The emerging problems of metropolitan areas and the future ramifications of this trend for gender and equity efforts is a case in point. The educational context for this SWAp, and any SWAp, is dynamic and changing. There needs to be a dynamic understanding of, and perspective on, education. The ways forward must therefore also be dynamic and flexible, but the rights to social inclusion in education, with security and dignity, with equality of opportunity, are fundamental to the future of a developing Bangladesh and its people. Bangladesh is a country that is rich – rich in creativity, rich in culture, rich in talented people. Social inclusion initiatives in an effective education SWAp modality have the potential to add much to that wealth.
1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

This report is one of three Case Studies (the others are from Nepal and Sri Lanka) that explore how education programmes supported through a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) are conceptualizing and addressing issues of social exclusion and gender inequality, and with what results. For Bangladesh, the focus has been on a large SWAp begun in 2003: PEDP-II (Primary Education Development Programme, Phase II).

The studies take as their starting point the assertion that good quality education is both a right of all children and a development imperative. In South Asia, a large number of girls and children from excluded and vulnerable groups are not enrolled, not attending, or not completing a cycle of (even) basic education. In addition, there are many children who, despite being in school, are not fully enjoying their rights to a good quality education, in a context of equal opportunities, protection and non-discrimination. In many countries in South Asia, complex conflict and natural disasters have compounded the challenges of achieving equity in educational access and outcomes.

Thus, a central understanding of the study has been that social exclusion and gender inequality are deeply intertwined with poverty in the South Asia context. If education is to reach all children and provide them with equal opportunities, planning for education needs to be based on a sound analysis and understanding of the complex dynamics of poverty and social exclusion and their impacts on children’s life situations.

The move towards SWAps, implying greater policy coherence, scope for evidence-based planning and more effective targeting of resources to where needs are greatest, has an obvious potential to strengthen equity and inclusion in quality education service provision. However, up until now, there has been only limited exploration, mainly in relation to gender issues, as to whether and how this potential is being realized in practice. Most of the published literature on education SWAps relates to the first programmes to be established, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa. This set of studies aims to add to our overall knowledge, by focusing on the South Asian context and the full range of social exclusion issues that are pertinent to the region. The initiative was catalysed by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, as a result of a Regional Education Meeting in February 2006, which had the theme of ‘SWAps and Disparities’, at which these gaps in understanding were identified and discussed.

At the country level, the studies have been a joint venture of the governments, Education ministries and development partners. While UNICEF has provided overall coordination, in each case a key principle of the research has been that it is seen as an activity ‘within the SWAp’. The studies were discussed, agreed upon, and approved through the normal SWAp forums and communication channels and designed to be of practical use and value to participating governments and DP groups, indeed, in Bangladesh (and also Nepal), it has proved possible to fully synergize the studies with preparations for a Mid-Term Review.
1.2 Developments in Commitments, Understanding and Practice

1.2.1 Commitments to equitable and inclusive education

**The MDGs**

The Millennium Development Goals, developed in 2000, constitute the set of international commitments that currently drive the ‘development agenda’, with ‘poverty reduction’ holding centre stage in the current dominant development discourse. In many countries, the MDGs act as the basis for poverty reduction strategies and sector-level plans. Meanwhile, many development agencies have revised their policies and priorities around the meeting of these goals.

**Goal 1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**

*Target 1.* Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

*Target 2.* Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

**Goal 2. Achieve Universal Primary Education**

*Target 3.* Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

**Goal 3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

*Target 4:* Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.

It can be noted that ‘social exclusion’ is directly addressed in the goals only with regard to gender inequality. With regard to education, there is a new emphasis on ‘completion’ (in contrast to earlier goals stressing enrolment). However, the gender goal refers only to numerical ‘parity’ of enrolment, not a wider concept of equality. While this target has been achieved in Bangladesh at the primary level, internationally it has been missed, with 40 countries off track to achieve even numerical parity by 2015.

**The EFA ‘Dakar’ goals**

The EFA goals were also developed in 2000, at the Dakar World Education Forum. They constitute a considerable strengthening and revision of the earlier EFA goals (developed in Jomtien, 1990):

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive **Early Childhood Care and Education** (ECCE), especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

2. Ensuring that **by 2015** all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete **free and compulsory primary education of good quality**.
INTRODUCTION

The EFA goals do not contradict the education-related MDGs, but do considerably expand on them. There is a stronger emphasis on the quality and relevance of education, an expanded concept of gender equality including the concept of ‘equity in quality’, and a more explicit mention of socially excluded groups (namely ‘vulnerable and disadvantaged children’, ‘children in difficult circumstances’ and ‘those belonging to ethnic minorities’).

Rights commitments
A number of international rights conventions and declarations commit signatory countries to addressing social exclusion and inequality and ensuring each and every child accesses good quality, relevant education as a right. In Bangladesh, particularly important ones include:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the Government of Bangladesh, 1990)
- CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) 1979
- ILO Convention (No. 182) on Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999

1.2.2 Understanding poverty, gender inequality and social exclusion

International understanding of the interaction between poverty, gender and social exclusion has developed both through academic study and practical experience.

Poverty
Earlier models of ‘development’ often assumed that economic growth would reduce poverty. In the education sector, concern for national development and economic growth was the initial driver for the expansion of education systems from the 1950s through to the late 1980s, with this initial drive tending to focus on physical expansion (e.g. building schools in rural areas).

Gradually, it became apparent that this approach was not ‘trickling down’ to large numbers of poor people. ‘The poor’ are not only those without money or resources, but also those who experience a wide range of disadvantages related to access to resources and services, and to associated power, status and participation. Poverty is not only ‘absolute’, but also ‘relative’, in a particular context. The approach has shifted to one of a direct focus on poverty reduction, including attention to access of the poor to quality basic services. This is now very explicit in the MDGs and the emphasis on national poverty reduction strategies.

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3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.

4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to, and achievement in, basic education of good quality.

6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.
In the education sector, the sharpened focus on direct poverty reduction has catalysed a stronger focus on universalizing access to primary and basic education, in order to directly empower the poor. Since the mid-1990s, education efforts have shifted to a wider range of access strategies, such as reducing costs to poor parents, combined with policies to address the quality of education, often related to provision of trained teachers and basic educational resources. These approaches have certainly reaped some rewards, the initial dramatic results of the ‘UPE’ policies of Uganda and Malawi being oft-quoted examples.

Gender

Gender discrimination is perhaps the most universal form of social exclusion. Gender issues, and the interaction of gender discrimination and poverty, have attracted rigorous academic analysis and now benefit from a strong conceptual basis. An overall documented trend is the move from ‘Women in Development (WID)’ approaches, which implied special programmes for women and girls as a ‘disadvantaged’ group, to ‘Gender and Development (GAD)’ approaches, which imply analysis and addressing of the unequal power relationships between males and females. Central to a GAD approach is the concept of gender mainstreaming:

*Gender mainstreaming means the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects. In the education sector, this would include not only the activities of governments, but also those of schools, colleges, education institutions and, where appropriate, of NGOs and the private sectors as well … Rather than adding on a women’s component to existing policies, plans, programmes and projects, a gender perspective informs these at all stages, and in every aspect of the decision-making process. Gender mainstreaming may thus entail a fundamental transformation of the underlying paradigms that inform education.*

(Leo-Rhynie, 1999)

UN agencies, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of OECD and other international bodies have developed comprehensive guidelines for mainstreaming gender, at national, sector and institutional levels, and many governments and development agencies are – at least in theory – committed to such an approach.

This is no less the case in the education sector, where it has been gradually realized that not only were girls benefiting less than boys from the expansion of educational opportunities, but also that the education of girls and women is one of the essential strategies for making progress on poverty reduction and needs to be more highly prioritized. An understanding of gender discrimination implies that, whilst cost reduction strategies remain vital to reduce the pressure on poor parents to have to choose which children to educate, it is also necessary to directly address discriminatory attitudes and demonstrate the benefits to everyone of educating girls. Meanwhile, attention needs to be paid to ensuring gender equity in the school and classroom, so that girls are not held back due to poor self-esteem, discrimination, low expectations or harassment, or simply the lack of female teachers.

Social exclusion

Some countries have long recognized that other forms of social exclusion also need attention if progress is to be made in realizing rights and achieving development goals. India, for example, has well established mechanisms and policies for targeting its ‘scheduled castes’ and
‘scheduled tribes’. However, internationally, attention to forms of social exclusion other than on the basis of gender has been more recent and, as yet, there is a less coherent conceptual framework on which to base analysis and action. One example of a recent attempt to address this lack, which usefully summarizes the learning to date, comes from DFID’s publication *Addressing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion* (DFID, 2005). This draws on a range of earlier work, including an earlier DFID publication on *Disability, Poverty and Development* (DFID, 2000).

The paper defines ‘social exclusion’ as follows:

> ‘Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household, and in the community’. (DFID, 2005)

The paper notes that in all societies some groups are socially excluded. However, the groups affected and the degree of discrimination vary from one society to another, as do the forms that social exclusion takes. Discrimination can be ‘open and deliberate’, ‘unofficial’, or ‘subtle and unintended’. It can be based on ‘who you are’, but also on ‘where you live’. It is also explored in detail how social exclusion causes poverty and hampers poverty reduction and development efforts, as summarized in the box below.

**Social Exclusion Causes Poverty**

Social exclusion causes the poverty of particular people, leading to higher rates of poverty among affected groups

- It hurts them materially – making them poor in terms of income, health or education by causing them to be denied access to resources, markets and public services. It can also hurt them emotionally, by shutting them out of the life of their community.
- Socially excluded people are often denied the opportunities available to others to increase their income and escape from poverty by their own efforts. So, even though the economy may grow and general income levels may rise, excluded people are likely to be left behind, and make up an increasing proportion of those who remain in poverty.

Social exclusion reduces the productive capacity – and rate of poverty reduction – of a society as a whole

- It impedes the efficient operation of market forces and restrains economic growth. Some people with good ideas may not be able to raise the capital to start up a business. Discrimination in the labour market may make parents decide it is not worthwhile to invest in their children’s education.
- Socially excluded groups often do participate but on unequal terms. Labour markets illustrate this most clearly by exploiting the powerlessness of excluded groups and at the same time reinforcing their disadvantaged position.
- Social exclusion also increases the level of economic inequality in society, which reduces the poverty reducing impact of a given growth rate.
The growing focus on social exclusion is, again, reflected in the education sector. Both in Africa and South Asia, countries that have successfully expanded access to the majority of their populations are finding that the remaining minority (sometimes called the ‘last 10 per cent’, though it might be more or fewer), are a ‘hard to reach’ category, not responsive to general ‘pro-poor’ policies. Certainly, these children are poor, and a disproportionate number are girls. However, almost without exception, they are also affected by other forms of social exclusion, for example on the basis of caste, ethnicity, language, disability or citizenship status (e.g. being a migrant, IDP or refugee). These are the multiply-vulnerable children, perhaps living in isolated communities with languages and cultures that differ from the mainstream. Many do not benefit from a supportive family setting, but live in severely stressed families, in families constantly displaced or on the move, in refugee camps, as orphans in child-headed households, in other people’s families, in institutions, or alone on the street. They are almost certainly working for survival, but many are ‘hidden’ from public view: e.g. caring for sick relatives or younger siblings in an isolated rural home, working as unregistered migrants in the informal economy, working as bonded labourers, abused and exploited as child sex workers or domestic servants, or even trafficked across international borders. Others are disabled children, kept hidden away at home.

The barriers such children face in even accessing education can be formidable. Furthermore, the schools that can be accessed by such groups are often irrelevant to their needs and of inferior quality. They might not provide education in minority children’s languages, be able to provide good quality teachers who can respond to children’s specific needs, or support children with disabilities. It is also frequently the case that schools reproduce the discriminatory attitudes and practices of the wider society. Socially excluded groups are therefore at greater risk of dropout and non-completion of education, as well as learning less, and benefiting less from education.
It is therefore being learned that addressing ‘equity in access’ and ‘equity in quality’ are complex, requiring attention to the specific life situations in which girls and boys find themselves, to ‘demand’ as well as ‘supply’ factors, to attitudinal as well as economic barriers, to school–community relationships and to the ethos, teaching approaches and management of each school. Indeed, the whole education system needs to become flexible and inclusive, and a positive force for equality, inclusion and rights, if the complex dynamics of social exclusion and gender discrimination are to be addressed and reversed.

1.2.3 SWAps as effective modalities of ‘good practice’ for assistance to education sector development

The development of the SWAp concept

In tandem (but not necessarily explicitly linked) with developments in our understanding of social exclusion and how it can be addressed have been substantive changes over the past decade in the way in which educational development is conceptualized and how international assistance to the sector is managed. From the mid-1990s a trend away from traditional project approaches began. The new concept at that time was of a ‘Sector Investment Programme’ (SIP). These programmes aimed to support governments in planning coherently for the whole sector within the context of an over-arching, realistic and costed policy framework, backed by concurrent attention to macro-economic stabilization and public service reform. Funding was to be provided flexibly as a part of government budgets, with governments and ministries of education able to make choices about resource allocation. Financial procedures were to be harmonized and monitoring at sector and programme level integrated, to meet diverse reporting needs. Donors would give up their control over specific project interventions, but gain participation as ‘development partners’ in education policy dialogue and broader budget framework negotiations.

The criteria proposed in the earlier formal definitions were largely a construct of development agencies (not government providers of education systems) and generally go beyond the status of practice in all but a very small number of examples. As implementation has got underway, it has been realized that ‘one size does not fit all’ and that national and local realities are the starting point for any sector programme. Few countries have been able to meet the ‘ideal’ wider context of macro-economic stability, action on corruption, civil service reform and decentralization. Similarly, differences in procedures and agendas of development agencies have proved hard to overcome and created difficulties in negotiating a coherent policy approach.

Therefore, over time, the terms ‘Sector-Wide Approach’ (SWAp) and ‘Programme-Based Approach’ (PBA) have been adopted in preference to ‘SIP’, to describe what is more of a direction, process and ethos than a rigid blueprint or narrowly-defined funding mechanism. There has also been a clearer linking of SWAps in the social sectors to overall poverty reduction frameworks, resulting in a shift of focus – at least in principle – from mechanism to poverty reduction outcomes. A definition put forward by ODI (2000) is one that has become widely used, as a useful working definition that picks out some key characteristics and principles whilst allowing some flexibility of interpretation.

SWAps and social exclusion

SWAps were developed as a pragmatic mechanism for more effective development assistance. Whilst they are gradually being linked more explicitly to poverty reduction, they do not of themselves necessarily imply a rights-based or inclusive approach. Nevertheless, as it is becoming clearer that education systems need to address poverty reduction, gender equality
and social inclusion as interdependent factors, the question arises as to whether and how the move towards a SWAp modality can consciously assist with this process.

In 2006, UNICEF South Asia held a Regional Meeting on ‘SWAps and Disparities’. The background paper for this meeting, ‘Addressing Social and Gender Disparity Through Swaps and PBAs in Education: What Is The Evidence And The Way Forward? (Seel, 2006), summarizes much of the existing published literature1 that explores gender and equity within SWAps, as well as analysing the ‘equity content’ of the core SWAp documents of twelve countries.2 The study draws the following conclusions on the potential of SWAps to enhance attention to equity and inclusion, as well as achievements and problems in actual practice:

- A focus on sector-wide efficiency and national development objectives over individual rights can lead to a de-prioritizing of the hard to reach groups as ‘too expensive to reach’.
- The top-down, centralized and formal approach of many SWAps can lead to weak involvement from civil society, a lack of recognition of informal processes and the reinforcement of existing gender and social biases.
- The focus (over some years) in some SWAps on central-level capacity building and agreeing on mechanisms has diverted attention away from the present needs of poor communities, so that children have ‘slipped through the net’.
- There is variation in the quality and depth of analysis that takes place, of patterns of educational disparity, the key causal factors and of how these interact. Analyses often fail to be multidimensional and to relate one factor to another. There is still less attention to gender than to poverty, and to other forms of social exclusion than to gender.
- As a result, strategies that are identified can prove inappropriate or inadequate/insufficient. Strategies devised to address gender disparity or social exclusion tend to focus overly on physical access and enrolment. There is less attention to ‘equity in quality’, more nuanced approaches to address attitudinal barriers or addressing the specific life situations of multiply-vulnerable hard to reach children. Many countries, despite developing comprehensive education policy frameworks as a part of SWAp development, continue to lack clear policies related to minority languages in education, or modalities of provision for disabled children.

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1 A key study was DAC/ ODI/ DFID/ CEC (Norton, Sibbons, Seel, Gibbard, Poulsen, Smawfield) Case Studies on Mainstreaming Gender in Sector-Wide Approaches in Education (consists of India Case Study, Ghana Case Study, Uganda Case Study, Literature Review and Synthesis Report), 2000; as well as a range of papers undertaken by the UK Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

2 From South Asia, these included the three countries of this current research, plus India. Other countries included were Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Zambia, Yemen, Vietnam, Cambodia and Nicaragua.
SWAps are not necessarily founded on good consultative processes either with disadvantaged individuals and communities themselves or professionals with understanding of specific equity issues.

There has been limited use of the DAC guidelines for gender mainstreaming in SWAps in practice, and no guidance exists pertaining to other forms of social exclusion. The degree and approach to addressing gender and social exclusion issues is highly dependent on individuals and the overall ‘donor mix’ in a country (including the level of agreement and coordination in support of government efforts).

Some development partners perceive themselves to be losing the diversity and depth of experience, field-based understanding and relationships which project interventions provided, making them less able to provide quality assistance.

1.3 Study Purpose and Objectives

**Purpose**
To understand in detail how gender and social disparity/exclusion are being addressed in a selection of education SWAps in Nepal.

**Objectives**
To achieve this purpose, the Bangladesh and other case studies had the following objectives:

- Analyse the key dimensions of disparity and social exclusion that affect children and their implications for the education sector.
- Explore the political, policy, governance and institutional context for the SWAp, as well as ‘threats’ such as conflict or natural disaster.
- Assess the extent to which equity-related goals, objectives and indicators have been identified in the SWAp framework and plans.
- Identify the concepts, approaches and tools used in incorporating gender and equity considerations and the addressing of equity in different stages and processes of SWAp development and implementation.
- Identify development partner approaches, roles, influences and strategies related to addressing gender and social disparity within the SWAp.
- Assess the effectiveness of approaches taken and the influence of contextual factors.
- Identify lessons learned from good practice and identify gaps and weaknesses for further action.

The subsequent Synthesis Report will:

- Summarize, compare and contrast the key findings of the three country case studies.
- Identify general ‘good practice’ lessons, of relevance for wider application.
2. Study Approach and Methodology

2.1 Overall Approach

The overall approach of the study has been exploratory, aiming to ‘tell the story’ of the Education SWAPs in Bangladesh. It has attempted to tease out how the new modality has made a difference to whether, how, and how effectively, issues related to equity and social inclusion are identified and addressed. This necessitated an approach that ensured a degree of rigour and consistency across the three countries, whilst avoiding rigid preconceptions. Fortunately, there is a sufficient body of common understanding on good practice in educational equity for it to have been possible to identify common areas of enquiry across the three countries. These included:

- Comprehensiveness and depth of analysis of gender and social exclusion issues
- Reflection of gender and social equity goals in overall goals/strategic objectives
- Conceptualization of ‘cross-cutting issues’ (e.g. explicit use of the concept of mainstreaming or ‘cross–cutting’)
- Reflection of gender and social equity goals in the strategic framework for the sector
- Reflection of gender and social equity goals in the sector budget and financing allocation mechanisms (i.e. consistency with strategic framework)
- Institutional structuring and capacity for equity advocacy, analysis and mainstreaming
- Mechanisms for consultation and participation of primary stakeholders, especially the most disadvantaged
- Strategies to address ‘equity in access’ problems, as perceived, including addressing of cost, attitudinal and physical barriers and approach to non-formal/alternative provision.
- Strategies to address ‘equity in quality’ problems as perceived, including concepts of ‘inclusive’ and/or ‘child friendly’ practice
- Partnership process and mechanisms, including the role of the Education ministry and wider government, the role of development partners (including ‘donors’ to the SWAp and the wider range of agencies, national and international), NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector.

These broad areas of enquiry allowed for some structuring of the enquiry in Bangladesh, and for comparing and contrasting across the three countries. At the same time, efforts were made to ‘see what is there’, as the purpose was less to evaluate than to understand and to learn.

2.2 Methodology for the Country Case Studies

2.2.1 Research focus areas

Four focus areas were identified for the research, namely:

1. Patterns, causes and educational consequences of disparity, inequity and social exclusion. This was in order to set the context for the studies.
2. Analysis of the SWAp content, with regard to conceptualization and addressing of disparity and social exclusion.
3. Analysis of SWAp processes, mechanisms and development over time, with regard to the creation of a conducive context and environment for effectively understanding and addressing equity and social exclusion issues.
4. Analysis of SWAp impacts, including direct reduction of disparity and improved education outcomes for socially excluded groups; and impacts in terms of understanding, attitudes, capacity and mechanisms to analyse and address equity and inclusion issues in an ongoing way.

2.2.2 Research methods and tasks

Methods
These four focus areas were explored through two key methodologies, namely:

1. Analysis of secondary data and documentation

Secondary data and documentation was used for all areas of the study. Examples of this information include:

- Official disaggregated statistics: *Data on Basic Education Parameters, 2006* (M&E Division, Department of Primary Education), December 2006
- Data on disparities from other ministries or other bodies: *Social Protection for the Poor, Especially Disadvantaged Women and Children* (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs – MoWCA) 2004
- Analyses and research undertaken by development partners (including donors, UN, NGOs): *Gender Mainstreaming Strategy: Promotion of Confidence-Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts*, UNDP, April 2005
- Analyses undertaken for preparation of the SWAp, or to feed into education policy processes: *Baseline Survey of the Second Primary Education Programme – PEDP-II* (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education), June 2006
- Key plans/policy frameworks/strategic frameworks that guide the SWAp: *Final Plan: Second Primary Education Development Programme, 2003–2008*

2. Qualitative research with a range of informants

Qualitative research was mainly through ‘semi-structured’ interviews with individuals and small groups. Question guides were developed, to ensure consistency and coverage. Bangladesh has more than one major ministry dealing with education: the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), through which PEDP-II is being implemented; and the Ministry of Education (MoE, which covers Secondary and Tertiary Education). Table 2.1 summarizes the key groups of study informants in Bangladesh. A total of 60 persons were interviewed for the study. For a complete listing of persons met and interviewed in Bangladesh, including names, addresses and other contact information, see Annex 1.

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3 See References and Bibliography for a complete listing of documentation used in this study.
Research tasks

The exploration of the four focus areas, through the two methodologies, was broken down into six ‘research tasks’, namely:

A. Identification of sources, documents and study informants
B. Document-based analysis of key dimensions of educational disparity
C. Document-based analysis of SWAp content, processes and impacts
D. Qualitative research on SWAp processes and impacts
E. Analysis of findings
F. Writing up the case study.

### TABLE 2.1 Study informants

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<th>GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES</th>
<th>SWAP DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME)</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Secretary</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Assistant Chief</td>
<td>DFID (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directorate of Primary Education (DPE)</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) members</td>
<td>JICA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education (MoE)</td>
<td>Embassy of the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education (TQI)</td>
<td>Royal Norwegian Embassy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>CIDA (Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ministries and Divisions</td>
<td>SIDA (Sweden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (Directorate of</td>
<td>UNICEF (9 staff members; in units involved in Child Protection, Early Childhood Development, Hard to Reach Children, Education, and Communication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Affairs: DWA)</td>
<td>Other Multilateral Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Social Welfare (National Centre for Special</td>
<td>UNESCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Education)</td>
<td>UNHCR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools/Communities</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations, NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharenda Government Primary School, Savar</td>
<td>Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF) (Disabled and Special Needs Children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of a School Management Committee (SMC)</td>
<td>BRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headteacher</td>
<td>CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Centre for Women and Children Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Save the Children, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UCEP-Bangladesh (Underprivileged Children’s Educational Programme)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Experts

Ted Thomas, UNICEF Consultant on Governance re NAPE (National Academy for Primary Education)

Colette Chabbott, Consultant, Researcher

Jacqui Mattingly (former International Consultant in PEDP-II’s Access and Inclusive Education Cell): telephone interview to St. Vincent, Caribbean
2.2.3 Research advantages, limitations and constraints

The combination of desk-based review and semi-structured interviewing with identified informants enabled the gathering of much useful information and a range of perspectives within the limited time period available. Bangladesh has a rich resource base of dedicated individuals and thousands of NGOs and CBOs concerned with various aspects of social inclusion. The researchers appreciated the helpful openness of many of the respondents to their questions in the various interviews.

Several interrelated factors constrained the research process in the Bangladesh study: time, size and complexity of PEDP-II and the consequent number of other organizations and individuals important to the study, as well as the political crisis at the time of the study. A further significant factor, reported on as a relevant finding in itself, is that despite having reached the mid-point in a six-year programme, little except the most basic Monitoring and Evaluation information is available, and there is a particular dearth of qualitative information. This last factor led to the exploration of a wide range of other printed sources and studies, some of which, fortuitously, were published during the research period.

2.2.4 Linkage to PEDP-II Mid-Term Review

The data-gathering process for the PEDP-II Mid-Term Review (MTR) occurred during this research period, although the actual Review has been rescheduled for later in 2007. To complement the work of the MTR, which did not have consultants specifically addressing gender and equity issues, UNICEF agreed that this social inclusion research should also feed into the MTR. The social inclusion researchers provided a briefing to the MTR team leader and presented preliminary findings from their work.
3. PEDP-II Development in Context

3.1 The Education Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) in Bangladesh

3.1.1 Forerunners to PEDP-II

PEDP-II has evolved and built upon previous major efforts by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to improve primary education: the General Education Project (GEP) implemented from 1990–95, and the first Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-I) of 1997–2002, later extended until 2004.

The GEP was a multi-donor funded project with the largest donor being the World Bank. Many problems that were encountered during project implementation stemmed from the complexity of the project. The project included 17 different sub-components, often divided into items that were implemented separately. Nine external donors contributed to the project and many sub-components were financed by several donors. GoB capacity was limited by high staff turnover and complex procedures. The project was considered a success in many areas, particularly in the rapid increase in enrolment rates, including the proportionately greater gains for girls. During the GEP, however, tensions arose between the donors and the government as the donors attempted to plan for follow-up assistance through a SWAp mechanism. This was rejected by the government and the donors negotiated future funding bilaterally.

PEDP-I (1996–2002, extended to 2004) had an overall framework of programme components but each project was planned bilaterally and there was little coordination among the development partners during the planning process. It was an umbrella programme of 27 separate projects, eight of which were externally supported by 10 different donors. The scope of the programme was reduced by a resource gap of $500 million from the original $1.6 billion.

The objectives of PEDP-I, like its predecessor, GEP, were to enhance educational planning and management capacity, increase equitable access to primary schooling, and improve the quality of primary education (GoB: Baseline Survey PEDP-II, 2006, p.7). The total monetary size of PEDP-I was $3100 million, including non-development expenditures. Coordination of activities was a major problem amongst the various projects. The Final Evaluation concluded that the modality of implementation of PEDP projects did not lead to the depth and quality of systemic change needed in the primary education system.

PEDP-II 2004–09 was designed through a complex and participatory joint planning process involving international and national agencies, organizations and individuals during the years 2001–04. Much of the discussion focused on reaching consensus on the need for a ‘SWAp’ modality, and what this would imply in practice. Eventually, after a three-year planning process and a long approval process, agreements were reached to begin the SWAp: PEDP-II. The overall guiding document for PEDP-II is the PEDP-II Macro Plan.

3.1.2 Key features of PEDP-II

The programme began on July 1, 2004, and was officially launched on September 8, 2004. With a total budget envelope of $1815 million, its overall goal is to provide quality education for all.
**eligible children in Bangladesh**, to be accomplished during the six-year period 2004–09. The core document for the programme is the *PEDP-II Macro Plan*.

The Government of Bangladesh takes the lead in PEDP-II and is the major provider of funds. The relevant bodies are the Bangladesh Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) and the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE).

In addition, there are ten development partners:
- Asian Development Bank (in a ‘lead’ role)
- World Bank
- CIDA
- DFID
- EC
- SIDA
- Norway
- The Netherlands
- UNICEF/Australia
- JICA

Eight of the partners contribute to a pooled fund that is managed by the Asian Development Bank. The contributions of AUSAID and the Government of Japan are made through UNICEF, which, with JICA, supports PEDP-II through parallel funding.

The financing total for PEDP-II is $1815 million over six years (2004–09), with 64 per cent ($1.161 million equivalent) of this amount coming from the Government of Bangladesh and 36 per cent or $654 million coming from the DPs (see Table 3.1).

### TABLE 3.1 PEDP-II financial commitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF FINANCING</th>
<th>FINANCIAL COMMITMENT (US DOLLARS MILLIONS)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COMMITMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government of Bangladesh</td>
<td>1161</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Development Agency (WB)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID (UK)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDA (Sweden)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDA (Canada)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JICA/Japan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF and AUSAID</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1815</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are five components in the PEDP-II structure. The last component, Component 5, is different from the other four in that it is meant to ‘ensure the effective delivery of inputs by the other components through well-coordinated and transparent management decisions’ (Final Plan: p.47). Component 3, on infrastructure development, has been given for implementation to the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED). The Draft Investment Plan in the Macro/ Final Plan for PEDP-II gives a breakdown of planned costs of the programme by component (see Table 3.2). Most of the explicit strategies and activities related to equity and inclusion fall under Component 2, Quality Improvement in Schools and Classrooms and Component 4, Improved Access to Quality Schooling.

**TABLE 3.2 Summary Investment Plan, PEDP-II by component by year in US$ ’000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component 1: Quality Improvement through Organizational Development</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Component 2: Quality Improvement in Schools and Classrooms</td>
<td>32,509</td>
<td>21,801.4</td>
<td>25,273.1</td>
<td>22,993.4</td>
<td>23,389.9</td>
<td>126,048</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Learning Environment</td>
<td>25,135.0</td>
<td>46,895.9</td>
<td>42,995.9</td>
<td>25,245.9</td>
<td>25,245.9</td>
<td>165,518.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Teachers and Teaching</td>
<td>53,176.8</td>
<td>78,828.5</td>
<td>69,019.6</td>
<td>84,907.4</td>
<td>85,662.4</td>
<td>371,594.7</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Community Awareness and Support</td>
<td>18,239.8</td>
<td>19,073.2</td>
<td>19,030.0</td>
<td>19,030.0</td>
<td>19,030.0</td>
<td>94,403.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component 2 Sub-total</td>
<td>96,551.6</td>
<td>144,797.6</td>
<td>131,045.5</td>
<td>129,183.3</td>
<td>129,183.3</td>
<td>631,516.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component 3: Quality Improvement Through Infrastructure Development</td>
<td>88,000.0</td>
<td>153,300.0</td>
<td>153,300.0</td>
<td>153,000.0</td>
<td>153,000.0</td>
<td>700,600.0</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component 4: Improved Access to Quality Schooling</td>
<td>129,761.6</td>
<td>134,062.1</td>
<td>134,062.1</td>
<td>134,062.1</td>
<td>133,935.5</td>
<td>665,883.6</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PEDP-II DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT

3.2 The Context for Progress in Equity and Inclusion

3.2.1 General progress in human development

When the Macro Plan of PEDP-II was completed in January 2003, the population of Bangladesh was 129 million and the per capita gross national product was $350. In September 2006, the population was 141.8 million (World Bank) and the Gross National Income (GNI) stood at $470. The Macro Plan notes that in the 2001 school year there were 17.7 million students enrolled in 78,000 primary institutions taught by 320,000 teachers. The gross primary enrolment (percentage of the school age population) reported in 2006 (World Bank) was 109 (107 for males; 111 for females). Gender inequality was evidenced by a literacy rate of 29 per cent for women and 52.3 per cent for men in the age group of 15 years and above.\(^4\)

3.2.2 Political and policy commitments to equity and inclusion

*Rights conventions*

Bangladesh is a signatory to many of the international conventions and initiatives to promote equity and equality in educational opportunity, including the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and both the Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) Declarations on Education for All. Other relevant conventions and declarations include the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, the E-9 Declaration (Recife) in 2000, and the South Asia Islamabad Declaration on EFA (2003). A separate Ministry of Women’s Affairs was established in 1978 and a Women and Children Repression Act was passed in 2000. There is also now a National Policy on the Advancement of Women (2006), which sets out 14 key areas for action. The Constitution of Bangladesh, the Children’s Act of 1974, the National Children Policy (1994), and National Plan for Action for Children (NPA) 2004–09 are all cited by the government as safeguarding the rights and interest of the country’s children. International conventions related to other aspects of social inclusion – on refugees, child labour, disabilities, and indigenous peoples – are also highly relevant to the Bangladesh context. These agreements and conventions, with key articles and statements relevant to Bangladesh, are summarized in the box below.

\(^4\) UN Gender Development Index, 2003.
Despite this progress on signing many important international conventions and agreements regarding social inclusion, Bangladesh has not signed or ratified other relevant treaties related to refugees, indigenous peoples, and child labour, or parts of them, including some key rights of women, such as equal rights within marriage.

**Selected International Rights and Conventions Relevant to Social Inclusion in Bangladesh**

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the Government of Bangladesh, 1990)
  - Article 2: All children have the right to be protected from discrimination.
  - Article 28: All children have equal rights and equal opportunities to education: Primary education must be compulsory and free of charges
- The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Adopted by the UN General Assembly, 20 December 1993)
  - Section 3 emphasizes that parent groups and organizations of persons with disabilities should be involved in the educational process at all levels.
- Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action 1994
  - introduced the term ‘children with special educational needs’ to refer to children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties
- Dakar EFA Declaration (signed by the Government of Bangladesh) 2000
  - Article 8: All governments pledged themselves to ‘create safe, healthy, inclusive and equally resourced educational environments’
  - Para 19: ‘The key challenge is to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All as an inclusive concept is reflected in national government and agency funding policies’
  - One of the main goals: ‘...include all children with special needs in mainstream education’
- South Asian Islamabad Declaration on EFA (2003)
  - Responded to critical questions of:
    - the provision of free, inclusive, gender responsive, quality education
    - special focus on Goal 5 of the Dakar Declaration: Gender Equality
- CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) 1979. Ratified by the Government of Bangladesh (but see reservations outlined below)

**Bangladesh National Strategy for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction**

In 2002, the Government of Bangladesh drafted a National Strategy for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction. Various studies commissioned for this Strategy paper were considered in combination with future targets for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and those set by the Partnership Agreement on Poverty Reduction (PAPR) with the Asian Development Bank. The report noted, in a review of the state of poverty in Bangladesh, the contribution made (to poverty) by poor quality education. In addition to the stated need to raise primary school enrolment rates to 100 per cent by 2015, it was noted too that the targets could not be met through economic growth alone and pro-active public actions must play a significant role in attaining MDG targets, including increasing human development of the poor through a

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*It should be noted that, in terms of Child Labour, UNICEF along with ILO and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding to help children being retrenched from the garment industry into schools, and with a small stipend.*
range of interventions, including improved education (PEDP-II Final Plan, p.5). A range of the proposed initiatives, strategies and priorities for government, private and donor contributions were included in the Final Plan for PEDP-II.6

The box below summarizes some of the coverage of a range of equity and inclusion issues in the PRSP. Other areas covered include disability and juvenile justice.

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**Equity and Inclusion in the PRSP**

**Gender equality**

The PRSP observes that women in Bangladesh have won important early victories in terms of visibility and mobility against great odds in a patriarchal society. These early victories have encompassed female gains in primary and secondary education as well as access to birth control measures and micro-credit. Almost universally positive attitudes exist on women’s economic participation, largely the result of women’s participation in garments and other income-generating activities. The PRSP also notes the progress in the area of gender governance and that there is ‘an increasing awareness of the need to integrate gender concerns into the sector activities.’

**Indigenous people**

The PRSP states that the *Adibashis* have experienced social, political and economic exclusion, lack of recognition, fear and insecurity, loss of cultural identity and social oppression. Mainstream development efforts have either ignored their concerns and/or had a negative impact on them. Often issues and actions that affect them are not discussed with the *Adibashis*. Thus they are subjected to socio-economic deprivation. Mass relocation of non-Adibashi people in the traditional Adibashi areas has led to loss of livelihoods. The *Adibashis* are losing their own heritage, which threatens their sustainability. They are slowly and steadily losing their language, culture, customs and music. *Adibashis* are unable to influence national decisions that affect them. This prevents them from influencing institutional changes that are necessary for reducing discrimination against them. They are unable to protect themselves against social, political and economic injustices. They face a real threat in exercising their basic rights and surviving as a community. Because of their minority status they often lack self-confidence to articulate their performance on direction in terms of both their personal and community lives. Consequently they feel vulnerable and disempowered.

However, it is noted that the PRSP document lacks clear indications on how to address such tensions. There is no mention of the participation of *Adibashis* in implementing and monitoring the PRSP.

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3.2.3 The governance and institutional context for progressing on equity and inclusion

The political context in Bangladesh, as the first PEDP (1996–2002, with an extension until 2004) came to an end and planning for PEDP-II began, can best be described as frequently unstable and often confrontational. This situation has continued through the first half of the PEDP-II operations, from 2004 to 2007. Although there have been many political parties in Bangladesh, there has basically been a two-party system in the country during the period of both PEDPs.

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6 The development of major educational policy has continued during PEDP-II with the publication of a National Plan of Action for Children: 2005–2010 (July 2006); the third National Plan of Action for Children.
The two parties, both headed by women, are the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), led by Khaleda Zia (the widow of former ruler Zia ur-Rahman), and the Awami League (AL), led by Hasina Wazed (daughter of Bangladesh's first Prime Minister).

The two parties have alternated in control of the government during these years. In 1996 the then opposition party Awami League came to power under a caretaker government. In 2001, as planning for PEDP-II began, the BNP won a landslide electoral victory. In 2003, the Awami League began a series of rallies and occasional strikes. Attacks on these rallies occurred in August 2004 and in January 2005, leading to nationwide and local strikes (hartals) called by the Awami League. After a series of bomb attacks in August 2005, the government began arresting members of Islamic extremist groups. During 2006, tensions rose again as the Awami League organized a ‘blockage’ of the capital city, Dhaka. In October 2006, the BNP government resigned in preparation for the January 2007 elections but the question of who should head the caretaker government in the intervening years became acrimonious, with violent demonstrations. In January 2007, a 14 party alliance, including the Awami League, announced it would boycott the January elections. The caretaker president resigned as Chief Adviser, appointed a former central bank governor to the post, and the elections were postponed. A new caretaker government began to attack political corruption during the first half of 2007.

Political governance in Bangladesh is centralized, chiefly in the head of government and in the cabinet. In terms of civil administration, including education, these two entities exercise almost total authority, with local governments being weak. The legislature and the judiciary are also relatively quite weak. The military exercises significant influence on politics and decision making. Overall, governance is highly bureaucratic. An Asian Development Bank Institute report on the dimensions of governance in Bangladesh (Roy, 2006, p.13) concludes that ‘institutional problems associated with public service delivery are severe. Poor political governance impacts badly on the institutions and vice versa. The worsening institutions affect negatively the government delivery programs and generate corruption and slower economic growth.’

Despite the long-time presence of powerful women as the heads of the two major political parties, women still have a limited role in parliament. UNFPA reported in 2005 that women occupied only 2 per cent of the seats in the 2001 parliament and that there were only 10 per cent of women in government below the secretarial level. In terms of mainstreaming gender and equity concerns across government, it should be positively noted that there is a Ministry of Women and Children Affairs but communications between this ministry and the two education ministries (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education) are limited. The PRSP (2005, p.xix) observes that ‘the governance agenda has suffered from being insufficiently grounded in an understanding of where the governance “needs” of the poor and vulnerable groups, including women, lie and of the real-life constraints impinging on the initiative potential of political actors on governance issues.’ In this regard the PRSP also notes a ‘mind-set’ challenge in which the governance agenda is often formulated in terms of ‘big solutions’ rather than more easy-to-implement ‘small solutions’.

Positive steps towards decentralization in general have been taken including cycles of elections for the two existing forms of local government (union parishads in rural areas and pourashavas in urban areas). The union elections were held in 2003 and pourashava elections in 2004. Orientation trainings for union parishad members were held in 2003 and job descriptions for women members elected to reserved seats were developed. Despite this, according to the
PRSP document (2005, p.165), what has not occurred has been a substantially increased resource flow to the local bodies. Indicative of the governance situation, the PRSP calls for a reformulation of the decentralization agenda towards an agenda of local governance. In terms of education, the PRSP, citing PEDP-II, notes that a key focus of the programme is to strengthen management practices in the schools and devolve education planning and administration to district levels and link school education financing to school performance. Progress in this area appears to be slow and the Joint Annual Review Mission report (JARM, 2006), noted that the government had agreed to develop a governance strategy for primary education.

A key element in Bangladesh’s institutional, civil society context is its large, vibrant and sophisticated network of NGOs. The Ministry of Social Welfare has registered approximately 45,000 NGOs ranging from tiny groups to a small number of organizations whose size places them among the largest NGOs in the world. The number of active ‘development NGOs’ has been estimated to be about 2000 (World Bank, 2006, p.2). The same World Bank report also estimates that ‘16 million mainly poor women are now reached through micro-finance programs, some 8 per cent of primary enrolment is provided by NGO schools, and there are nationwide health and sanitation programs that involve NGOs.’ The very large organizations in the NGO sector give it a distinctive character. BRAC, Grameen and ASA (Association for Social Advancement) have thousands of employees and multi-million dollar budgets. BRAC and ASA have programmes in all districts of Bangladesh. BRAC itself is a special case as it skews the NGO education sector. It receives three-fourths of donor resources, and accounts for a similar share of primary enrolment in NGO schools. It also franchises some programmes to smaller NGOs.

3.2.4 Education system development to 2004

Prior to the independence of Bangladesh (1971) two Acts laid the legal foundation for formal primary education in the country. The Primary Education Act of 1919 established the responsibility of the provincial government in primary education and noted that the goal for the future was universal primary education. In 1930, the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act also sought to establish universal primary education and gave the first details of how primary education could be managed locally. The Primary Schools (Taking Over) Act of 1974 affirmed schools being taken over by the national government and the status of primary school teachers as government employees. A 1981 Primary Education Act sought to bring back a degree of decentralization in the management of education. In 1990, the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act made primary education compulsory in terms of enrolment and attendance. Much of the current policy and practice on primary education is based on this Act.

Out of the formal legal framework for education in Bangladesh has come a series of major national policies that form the supporting foundation of PEDP-II.

Following the Jomtien EFA conference in 1990, Bangladesh developed its first National Plan of Action (NPA) on Education for All. In general, access was perceived in this Plan, and other Acts, as equivalent to enrolment; the gross enrolment ratio target for 2000 was to raise it by 20 percentage points from 75.6 per cent in 1990. Since the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), there has been a major intensification of efforts to provide basic education for all Bangladeshi children. It was revealed in the 1991 Census that 75 per cent of the female population and 70 per cent of the male population were illiterate, a factor seriously impeding
national, community and personal development. To address this situation as a matter of urgency, primary education was made compulsory, as previously noted, by an act of Parliament in 1990, and a separate division with ministerial status was set up in 1992 with full responsibility to deal with matters concerning primary and mass education (MoPME). Impressive progress has been achieved in expanding basic and elementary education in the nineties, at least judged by the pace of quantitative expansion. Underlying the progress in basic education is the rapid expansion of school enrolment at the primary level. Thus, the gross enrolment in primary schools increased from 59 per cent in 1982 to 96 per cent in 1999. Government programmes to recruit women teachers and to introduce stipend programmes have also played positive roles in increasing enrolment and attendance of girls in schools.

The NPA-EFA 2002–15 (2000) encourages girls to participate, is pro-poor, and looks towards targets on enrolment, dropouts, completion and literacy. It also encourages early childhood care and education.

The National Education Policy (2000) also included many policies towards progress on EFA. Major recommendations for primary education included ensuring total enrolment of primary entry age (6+) children, introduction of pre-primary education, participation of communities and civil society in the development of schools, reducing pupil : teacher ratios to 40 : 1, and reforming and improving teacher recruitment and promotion; all with minimum standards of quality education.

Of particular note have been the efforts throughout the 1990s to ensure access to the poorest children and girls. In 2002, the Government of Bangladesh replaced its Food for Education (FFE) Programme (introduced in 1993) with the Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP). The purpose of this programme was to increase the participation of primary school-aged children from poor families by providing cash payments to targeted households (Ahmed et al., 2007). The programme actually began in 2003 and forty per cent of students at Government Primary Schools (GPS) and Registered Non-Government Primary Schools (RNGPS), plus some madrassas, are eligible to receive a 100 taka stipend per month, to be disbursed via selected national banks to the authorized parents/guardians (with preference given to mothers). Student eligibility is contingent upon the students having an 85 per cent attendance rate and 40 per cent marks in examinations. The goal is to support 5 million students in Bangladesh. An Education Watch 2003–04 household survey in 10 upazillas suggested that targeting was a problem, with over two-thirds of the children from the poorest category not selected. Other finds showed that average recipients did not receive the full amount of the stipend, that students at Government Primary Schools received more than students from other eligible schools, and that boys received more than girls. A second programme, the Nationwide Female Stipend Programme, begun in 1994 through four separate sectoral projects (funded, respectively, by the Government of Bangladesh, The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and NORAD), aims to increase participation of rural girls in secondary education. Monthly stipends of 25 to 60 taka are awarded depending on grades and attendance.

The educational structure through which the government responds to educational needs is diverse, with 11 categories of primary schools. Two of these categories, Government Primary Schools (GPS) and Registered Non-Government Primary Schools (RNGPS), together serve approximately 84 per cent of enrolled children. The primary level currently comprises Classes 1–5. Since 1995, first the Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) and then MoPME (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education) through its (now disbanded) Directorate of Non-Formal
Education (DNFE), has also run a range of non-formal primary education programmes, with NGOs as implementing partners.\(^7\)

The formal primary education system is centralized, planned, managed and implemented through two bodies: the aforementioned Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), and the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE). (Secondary and tertiary education is administered through a separate Ministry of Education – MoE.) For primary education, MoPME focuses on policy development and general overview of primary education, while DPE is the operational body concerned with day-to-day management and implementation through its five divisions. The devolution of authority to the schools, Upazillas and districts remains limited.

3.2.5 NGO education programmes and madrassas

NGOs

Bangladesh is certainly not alone in South Asia in having diverse education providers in addition to the government, including NGOs and madrassas. However, Bangladesh is unique in having one NGO, BRAC, that runs many thousands of schools and even its own university (in addition to large-scale projects in other sectors). BRAC operates activities in pre-primary, primary, secondary and continuing education. The pre-primary programme now operates 21,000 schools with 588,000 students, about 65 per cent of whom are girls. By the end of 2005, BRAC was operating 31,877 primary schools providing access to education for more than 1.4 million children of the rural poor (65 per cent of whom are girls). Its education programme is so extensive that donors fund through a donor consortium via a modality that resembles a 'mini SWAp'.

BRAC has made particular achievements in targeting disadvantaged and excluded groups. It operates an Education for Indigenous Children (EIC) unit, with schools in Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban in the Chittagong Hill Districts. In this programme, with funding by a consortium of donors, BRAC operates 1861 schools (included in the overall number of schools it operates) plus in early 2006 it began operating 300 additional schools. Together the schools have a total of 52,149 students and 2947 teachers. In schools that have students with more than one mother tongue, BRAC employs two teachers, one from each community (Ahmed et al., 2007, p.56). BRAC began its programme on Children with Disabilities in 2003 and focuses on building awareness amongst BRAC staff and communities. 14,471 children with special needs were enrolled in more than 8000 BRAC schools by the end of 2005.

There are numerous other NGO efforts at assisting education. To give just a few examples: SUCCEED (Early Learning for School Success Programme) is implemented through FIVDB (Friends in Village Development Bangladesh) in Sylhet Sadar, Sakigonj and Sunamgonj Sasadar with funding from USAID. SUCCEED has five components: Early Childhood Development, Early Primary Education, Communication and Advocacy, Monitoring and Research, and Educational Equity. UCEP (Underprivileged Children’s Education Programme) operates over 100 centres in urban slums, combining a full primary and secondary education with practical skills training. Others focus on a single target group. For example, Shoishab focuses on educational and other support to girl domestic servants, while a range of NGOs focus on children with specific disabilities (deaf, blind, autistic, physically disabled).\(^8\)

\(^7\) For example, UNICEF-supported Basic Education For Hard-To-Reach Urban Working Children.

\(^8\) CRP (Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed) is one such player, and includes in its programmes children with cerebral palsy. The Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF) works with intellectually disabled and the multiply disabled. The Society for the Welfare of the Intellectually Disabled Bangladesh (SWID-B), HI-CARE and the Society for Assistance to Hearing Impaired Children (SAHIC) work with the hearing impaired. The Baptist Sangha School for Blind Girls (BSSBG) works with their specialty. The Autism Welfare Foundation (AWF) works with children with autism spectrum disorders (Ackerman et al., 2005).
Educational indicators for NGO schools have been positive. The completion rate for NGO schools ‘tends to be higher than the average of 68 per cent in formal schools with BRAC at 93 per cent’ and ‘exposure to an NGO school in a village has a greater impact on girls’ enrolment than boys’ (World Bank, 2006, p.32). A key concern, however, is the weakness of coordination between the NGO and government education programmes.

**CAMPE and Education Watch**

The *Campaign for Popular Education* (CAMPE) is the outcome of collaborative efforts by NGOs working in the education sector of Bangladesh to mount a popular education movement. It was established within a year of the Jomtien WCEFA, with 15 major NGOs as member organizations. Today CAMPE has more than 700 NGOs as partners. One major initiative catalysed by CAMPE, *Education Watch*, was developed in 1998 and has since produced an annual report on progress of primary and basic education in Bangladesh. Education Watch Reports are designed to supplement – as well as spur on – the efforts of the government, by commissioning studies and conducting research on policy issues. This approach has proved successful in influencing policy making.

**Madrassas**

The old scheme of madrassa education was introduced in the subcontinent in 1780 with the establishment of the Calcutta madrassa. In madrassa education, Islamic religious education is complemented by general education. The madrassa education system has continued with some modifications according to the demands of the time, and many madrassas grew up on this subcontinent. The Bangladesh government has been providing government grants to the teachers and employees of the non-government madrassas, as it does for other non-government education institutions (schools and colleges). There are five levels in the madrassa education system: *Ebtedayee, Dakhil, Alim, Fazil* and *Kamil*.

*Ebtedayee* madrassas provide primary level education to the children and are basically equivalent to the primary level of general education. The first level of madrassa education is comprised of 5 grades of schooling (6–11 years). Ebtedayee education is imparted in independent ebtedayee madrassas and ebtedayee sections of the dhakhil, alim, fazil and kamil madrassas. It is also imparted in some of the private *quami-kharizi* madrassas (MoE, GoB). Both boys and girls are enrolled in madrassas. Coeducation, however, is discouraged in most cases, especially at the secondary level. The curricula of *ebtedayee* madrassas are similar to that of regular schools but with the additional element of religious education. Table 3.3 shows that the number of students in the madrassa education system is increasing at a high rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NO. OF MADRASSAS</th>
<th>NO. OF TEACHERS</th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4505</td>
<td>18850</td>
<td>1124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5297</td>
<td>24889</td>
<td>1252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>6723</td>
<td>28119</td>
<td>2972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Bangladesh Educational Statistics (2006), BANBEIS*
There are many factors related to the increased enrolment in madrassas: overall costs are often less than in state education, proximity to homes, parents’ wish to provide religious education and general education simultaneously, and a perception of greater security. In many cases dropout children from the general education system also re-enrol in madrassas. Children from very poor families are enrolled to *quami-kharizi* madrassas, which are not approved by the government and no data is available about them at any level. These madrassas are operated by donations received from various private sources.9

**Challenges for PEDP-II in a context of diverse providers of education**

This diversity of educational activity outside direct government control presents both opportunities and challenges with regard to addressing equity and inclusion through PEDP-II. On the one hand, it means that there is a great deal of learning and experience in Bangladesh related to strategies for reaching specific excluded groups with quality education. There is also additional capacity in implementing education programmes, offering the potential for NGOs to support the achievement of quality UPE and gradual development of a better-integrated system. However, there are also considerable difficulties. Neither government nor any other single institution had a proper overview of all of the primary-level education activity going on in Bangladesh at the outset of PEDP-II. There were no structures for overall quality control and monitoring, learning from best practice and integrating lessons into policy and formal system. DNFE programmes had run aground owing to poor capacity and transparency of some of the partner NGOs. Furthermore, an unhelpful perception had arisen of certain management and methodological approaches being inherently ‘NGO’ or ‘non-formal’ approaches, impeding the development of a shared professional understanding of ‘what works’ in education in the Bangladesh context.

### 3.2.6 The media

Bangladesh has a lively and relatively open set of media, particularly newspapers and magazines. These media play an important facilitative role in the public’s knowledge of a range of development issues, including education and progress on inclusivity and societal disparities. Editorials, ‘Op-Ed’ columns, and Letters to the Editors of print media are rich resources for discussion and debate and there are frequent articles highlighting progress and problems relating to education, gender, refugees, poverty, the disadvantaged, legal initiatives on disparities, and initiatives by the government, donors, NGOs and CBOs. On the other hand, one survey shows that educational issues are considered of lesser importance in both electronic and print media (see the box below for this and other selected brief media reports). Television and radio

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**Disparity and the Media: Making Visible the Invisible**

**Selected Reports**

- *Banglar Kantha* (Bhola, 4 October 2006) reported 1500 children of Masher Char in Bhola district facing educational disparity in terms of location. This *char* is 4 kilometres away from the district headquarters but is separated from the town by the Meghna River.

- A report published in the *Daily Amader Shomoy* (1 August 2006) is entitled ‘Only about 37 per cent of women are employed in primary level educational institutions’. The report showed that the recruitment process of women teachers in primary education was very slow. The process will not allow the government to achieve its commitment towards the reservation of a sixty per cent quota of new women teachers, especially in rural areas.

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9 Source: personal discussion with an expert on madrassa education, parents of madrassa children, teachers and a donor.
programmes such as the Meena series and Sisimpur, the Bangladesh adaptation of Sesame Street, also play important educative roles in awareness raising on aspects of disparities and discrimination.

For the most part, the media reports tend to emphasize the negative aspects of disparity problems but in doing so play an important role in exposing and raising public awareness of inequities and disparities.

3.2.7 A parallel Health SWAp

One further point to note about the wider context for PEDP-II is that the early negotiations were concurrent with the introduction of a SWAp in the health sector: the Bangladesh Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP). This multi-donor programme was implemented from July 1998 to June 2003 with a budget of $2.9 billion. The lead agency was the World Bank, and the Bank and four bilaterals pooled their funds under the Bank’s management; UN agencies and others provided parallel funding.

At first, the education partners involved in the planning of PEDP-II saw the health sector effort as a model of a successful SWAp, and the Project Proforma was highlighted for its flexibility. Over time, however, HPSP came to be viewed differently. There were problems with complexity and over-ambitious goals, and weak management capacity in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. More importantly, this health effort was seen as having too much donor control and not enough government ownership. Because of this parallel SWAp in health, the planning of PEDP-II began in a context of considerable caution about SWAps on the part of government agencies. The education donors, rather than using HPSP as a model of success, began to see that they had to make a convincing case that there were benefits to be gained from adopting a SWAp modality in the education sector.
4. The Challenges of Equity and Social Exclusion

4.1 Exploring the Challenge

The PEDP-II Baseline Survey notes that there are regional and other disparities in educational achievements, results, repetition and survival rates. The survival rate is low among the children of under-served areas. The performance is poor among the children of under-served, *monga,* or poverty-prone and indigenous communities. It has also been found that although there is a gender balance in primary education and often girls outnumber boys in general, fewer numbers of girls in indigenous communities are enrolled.

In this section an overview of children who are at risk of being excluded from quality education opportunities is presented. The aim of the section is to understand the harsh reality a child can face in life in Bangladesh because of his/her gender, class or ethnicity. It is emphasized in the following analysis how the different dimensions of poverty and social inclusion are interrelated and create a range of barriers to ‘equity in access’ and ‘equity in quality’, creating a challenge for the duty bearers within the education system. The barriers faced by different categories of children are of many varieties, each different in character and often unrecognized.

4.2 Children Affected by Gender Discrimination, Poverty and Social Exclusion

4.2.1 Poverty

Bangladesh has a per capita income of US$417 (UNDP, 2005). Access to food, sanitation, pure drinking water, healthcare, education and social security are inadequate in both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh. It is evident that urban poverty is increasing at an alarming rate. The burden of urban poverty is mainly due to the migration from rural areas to urban areas. It is the extension of the vast mass of the rural poverty (Nasreen *et al.*, 2006b). The growth of the poverty situation in Bangladesh is related to factors such as: (i) insufficient level of economic growth; (ii) low resource endowment and land productivity; (iii) high rate of illiteracy; (iv) bad governance; and (v) natural calamities such as cyclones, floods and river erosion, which occur very frequently in the country.

Considerable district-level variations are found in terms of incidence of poverty and social deprivation such as illiteracy and child mortality. There are also variations in the extent of poverty among the major cities of Bangladesh. The regional and spatial disparities of poverty and social deprivation are a very important dimension for undertaking poverty-alleviating interventions in different parts of Bangladesh.

*Poverty and education*

Despite primary education being free of direct fees, there are still a number of related costs to be borne by parents and families. Studies suggest that this is a significant cause of non-enrolment or dropout. For example, the *National Child Labour Survey, 2002–03* finds that the most important reason for not going to school is the inability to pay education expenses, which is true
GENDER AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION SWAPS IN SOUTH ASIA

4.2.2 Gender discrimination

Women in Bangladesh are continuously fighting against two odds: poverty and patriarchy, along with malnutrition, high maternal mortality rate, lack of access to resources, environmental degradation, lack of access to health, lack of paid employment, discriminatory wage rates, strict gender division of labour, and lack of scope to exercise political rights. Poor women suffer more than men (and than better-off women) from poverty, hunger, malnutrition, economic crises, illiteracy, environmental degradation and disaster-related problems and become victims of violence and political instability. They are also exposed to exploitation and gender-based violence, excluded from decision making and education and deprived of their right to adequate health and nutrition.

The patriarchal structure of the society makes girls, from early childhood, fully conscious that they are liabilities and their brothers are the assets for the family. As they grow up, girls are taught the two principal virtues: patience and sacrifice, the ‘ideals’ of Bengali womanhood. Girls and women spend most of their lives within the boundary of the homestead and its kin-based extensions. Laws of inheritance do not provide a sister with a share of property equal to that of her brother. The gendered social construction, the social basis of power relations, the interrelations between gender and education, and many other issues are not addressed properly due to the male dominated structure of the society. Young girls who have to look after their younger siblings and share the domestic responsibilities with mothers are still a common phenomenon, especially in the poor families.

Some statistical evidence of gender inequality is presented here. Life expectancy of women is 68.1 years and for men 68 years. Child (<5) mortality ratio is 85 for boys and 90 for girls, suggestive of a lower priority given to girl children. Fourteen per cent of maternal deaths are due to gender-based violence during pregnancy (UNFPA, 2005). Seventy per cent of women and

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12 Other things being equal, women would be expected to have a higher life expectancy by 2–3 years.
children are suffering from nutritional deficiencies and 30 per cent suffer from calorie deficits (pregnant and lactating women). Gender inequality is also prevalent in the context of literacy rates, which is 29 per cent for women and 52.3 per cent for men in the age group of 15 years and above (UN Gender Development Index, 2003).

Though some success has been made in poverty reduction, significant gender disparity still exists in income-poverty. First, there is the general incidence of extreme poverty for women-headed, women-managed and women-supported households. Second, women workers earn considerably less than men workers. Third, lower average consumption for women is also evident from persistent gender inequality in severe malnutrition, mortality and morbidity. In Bangladesh 20–30 per cent of households are headed by women, and 95 per cent of these are considered to fall below the poverty line.

**Gender and education**

Bangladesh has enjoyed success in achieving gender parity and significantly increasing enrolment. The gender gap in primary education in terms of access is closing at an impressive pace, which is also noted in the draft baseline survey in PEDP-II (DPE, MoPME, 2007). It is evident from the baseline survey that the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) is higher for girls than for boys (NER is 87.2 per cent, which is higher for girls in 49 districts and boys in 15 districts). The Gross Intake Ratio (GIR) is also higher for girls than for boys all over the country with the exception of few districts. The gender gap is in favour of girls by 5.1 per cent at the national level. This is prevalent in the baseline survey data, which revealed an overall Gross Intake Ratio (GIR) of 108.4 per cent (girls 111.0 per cent and boys 105.9 per cent) (Baseline Survey on PEDP II, DPE, MoPME, June 2006). As with the GIR, the Net Intake Ratio (NIR) is higher for girls than for boys countrywide with the exception of a few districts. The NIR was in favour of girls by 2.8 per cent (girls 96.1 per cent and boys 93.3 per cent). It is also evident that girls’ survival rate is also higher than that of boys all over the country. Making education free of cost, provision of stipends, food for education, building schools within two kilometres of a community, non-formal education, and other initiatives have contributed to equity in access. There is, however, a considerable gender gap in dropout rates and achieving quality. It has been shown that at least 37 per cent of enrolled girls are dropouts in Classes 1, 3 and 4. Early marriage, dowry, performing domestic responsibilities, insecurity, eve-teasing, lack of girl friendly environments in schools, and other socio-cultural factors affect equity in quality education. Classroom practices, teachers' behaviour and attitudes also influence girls' quality education.

A number of ‘in-school’ and ‘out-of-school’ factors contribute to the gender gap in achieving equity in quality education. These factors include extreme poverty, lower socio-cultural status of girls than boys, early marriage, insecurity, lack of transport or communication facilities, lack of toilets and drinking water facilities (a study conducted by DPHE and UNICEF shows that a large number of school sanitation facilities are non-functioning, unclean, or inaccessible to students), insufficient number of female teachers and others. All of these factors are related to girls’ gender identity, which also contributes to the dropout of girls from the education system.

Although Bangladesh has made well-acclaimed progress in achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education enrolments, full parity is still to be achieved, while wider gender equality in education is still far off. Retention, dropout and other challenges are still faced by girls more than boys. There are many in- and out-of-school factors contributing to gender disparity such as insufficient number of women teachers, insecurity, performance of domestic

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13 DPHE and UNICEF (July 2004). An Assessment of the School Sanitation and Hygiene Education Strategy: with a particular focus on technology design, the needs of adolescent girls and adequate water and sanitation facilities in school.
activities, lack of toilet facilities, and girls’ lower social status relative to boys. These are also related to the poorer performance of girls relative to boys.

**Indigenous communities**

In Bangladesh, indigenous (Adibashi) people constitute about 1.13 per cent (roughly 1.2 million) of the total population (BBS, 2005, p.139–40). They live particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, but also in other areas of the north and northwest. The majority of the indigenous population lives in rural areas. They differ in their languages, social organization, marriage customs, birth and death rites, food and other social customs from the people of the rest of the country. In comparison with the majority Bengali-speaking, Muslim population, indigenous peoples have benefited less from economic development and the labour market, and have less access to services such as health and sanitation. They are also excluded from political institutions and proper political representation.

**Education of children in indigenous communities**

In the CHT (the major indigenous area), students have lower access to education compared with other regions. A study shows that only one in five villages had a primary school, compared with two schools for three villages in the rest of the country. The government policy of having a school within two kilometres is a long way for the CHT children as they have to climb up the hills, or use a boat to reach the school (UNDP, July 2006). Conditions of ‘plain land’ schools cannot be applied here – most of the schools are accessible only through waterways. Out of 10 Upazillas, 4 Upazillas have access by road (Kaptai, Rajostholi, Rangamati Sadar and Kaukhali). Of these, Rangamati sadar has only partial access by road. It is expensive to visit a school as a boat can charge about 600 taka (going and coming).

**Issues which have not yet been addressed by the policies for indigenous communities include:**

- The need for flexibility in the yearly calendar, and in the daily and weekly timetable.
- The fact that the national curriculum textbooks would have to be used and the need for curriculum content to better reflect the CHT context and the use of indigenous languages in education for improved achievement of the children.
- The issue of equivalency based on some form of placement tests for a child completing Class 5 at an unregistered school to enrol in a secondary school.

An exploratory research study (Nasreen, 2005) to explore the access to and quality of education has shown that the students of indigenous communities were involved in different activities such as agricultural or domestic activities. Most of the students in the ethnic communities are working to support their families, either for their own households or for others in exchange of wages. The majority of the students were involved in agricultural tasks and fishing. The percentage of those working in the agricultural sector is higher for ethnic minority boys (48 per cent) and girls (41 per cent) than the majority Bengali population – boys (31 per cent) and girls (18 per cent).

Some of the students offered the opinion that they had a difficult time trying to understand the Bangla language of some of the teachers. Also the use of standard Bangla became difficult for them to follow and understand clearly. The students felt that the language also at times became a barrier for them to follow the lessons taught in the class.

The following issues, very applicable to the situation in CHT, have been identified as barriers of equity and quality education from both the demand and supply sides:
The students in the ethnic communities tend to be shy and under-confident, hesitant to request teachers to clarify lessons that were not understood.

The weak learners of the ethnic communities come from poor households and most of them are engaged in income-generating activities. According to one of the teachers 30 per cent of the ethnic boys and girls work in the agricultural fields and attendance is irregular.

The educational environment of the ethnic communities is comparatively disadvantageous. Parents, guardians and other household members, as well as neighbours, of these students have no or little education. The literacy rate of ethnic communities is very low.

Low quality of teaching is provided at the primary level in indigenous areas, including lack of skilled teachers to provide special teaching to the ethnic students, lack of attention to language-learning issues, lack of teaching–learning aids and other facilities, insufficient instructional time and general lack of congruence between school and home.

‘Low caste’ and ‘Dalit’ groups

In Bangladesh there are diverse kinds of occupational castes who continue to be socially excluded. While the religious and ethnic communities have brought their marginalization to the forefront of the national debate, occupation castes have remained merely opportunities for state services. As the state does not even recognize the distinct diversity of their identities, it has done little to redress the causes of their poverty and deprivation. It is generally assumed that the caste system is practised in the Hindu community only, but in reality some occupational castes, such as pig raisers, cobblers, sweepers, palanquin bearers and snake charmers are treated as social outcasts by other communities, including Muslim majority communities in Bangladesh. These people are known by derogatory Bengali names such as muehis, methoys, beharas, napits, jolas and pals, and are subjected to social customs that restrict intermixing, intermarriage, access to opportunities for education, health or employment, and right to participation.

The literacy rate of the Dalit community was found to be only 30 per cent – half the national literacy rate. Development interventions by both GOs and NGOs were found to be extremely inadequate, except for some credit programmes by a few NGOs. Social exclusion has debarred them from participation in the community. Within their own community, women suffered from the consequences of early marriage and dowry.

There are also Horijons, who traditionally occupy the lower rungs in the Hindu caste system and who are sub-divided into seven sects scattered throughout the country. Their caste occupations of sweeping, hair cutting, cremation, leather and bamboo work are looked down upon. Even so, some of these occupations are solely being taken over by poor members of other communities, which further limit their opportunities. Children of this community had little or no education.

The Beday community in Bangladesh is regarded as nomadic by the dominant communities. According to their own estimates, in 1987, 1.5 million Bedays were scattered throughout the country. They are engaged in small businesses, snake charming, selling of talismans, traditional healing services, magic shows and dancing. They are itinerants and move around in boats.

Some of the Bedays are educated and have become politically conscious. In the last Union Parishad election (2003) one Beday was elected as a member of the Union Parishad in Louhaganj upazilla, Munshiganj district. In many places, however, they are deprived of their right to vote.
The Beday community has started organizing mobile schools for their children. A teacher accompanies the Bedays in a separate boat so that children can take advantage of learning from him. When the Bedays stay on land, the school is continued.

The Kawra community in Jessore is ostracized by Muslim communities because their livelihood of pig rearing is considered to be impure or polluting. Because of this religious or social bias, they have no access to services provided by the public livestock agencies, nor does the National Livestock Board include pigs in the livestock programme.

Children of all these communities are usually excluded from mainstream education due to the socio-cultural positions of their families. They require special attention to update their socio-economic conditions.

The children from these families not only face difficulties of poverty and stigmatization, but also language problems, since for most of them their mother tongue is not Bangla but dialects of Telegu and Hindi (Assessment of Inclusive Education, UNESCO, 2005). In addition, some sweepers use Urdu as their mother tongue. On a spot visit with the Harijon sweeper and cobbler communities in Rajshahi, October, 2005, it was found that they had lived in Laksipur Ramkrisna Pally for a long time. The total population there is about 1400 and, of the 150 primary school-aged children, only 50 are enrolled in a government school. The leader of the sweeper and cobbler Harijon community was of the opinion that children could not attend school because schools are too far way from their village (PEDP-II, Draft Action Plan for Vulnerable Groups).

### 4.3 Disabled Children

To try to find the current status of disabled children in Bangladesh is an exercise in frustration. The existing statistics are ‘only an approximation of the configuration of types of disabilities’ (Ackerman et al., 2005, p.iv). This is acknowledged in the PEDP-II Action Plan (2005) where it is noted that ‘in Bangladesh disability is not included in any routine data collection or surveillance system in the health sector, but it has been included in the national census in 1982, 1986 and 1991.’ However the reported prevalence rates between 7 per cent and 4.7 per cent are far below the international and national estimates. A survey on prevalence of disability in 1994 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics shows a rate of only 1.62 per cent. This figure is also considerably lower than the commonly used international estimates. Between 1995 and 1997, Action Aid Bangladesh carried out baseline surveys first in four, and then in five, locations covering 46,874 and 94,260 people respectively. The corresponding overall prevalence rates of disability were 14.4 per cent and 13.34 per cent. It is mentioned in the PEDP Baseline Survey that a total of 45,680 children with mild disabilities are enrolled in primary schools, of whom 25,833 are boys and 19,847 are girls. Only a small number of schools (less than 1 per cent) were reported to have toilets accessible to physically disabled children.

There is great variation in the statistics on the numbers and types of disabilities in Bangladesh, and in part this may be due to the social stigmatization of the disabled in the country, as well as issues over classification. They are often just not ‘recognized’. Heeding the caution just given, it is useful to understand the kinds and relative ranking of disabilities among children ages 6–11, as reported in the PEDP-II Action Plan on Special Needs Children’s Education. The numbers and percentages of children with special needs are much larger in the Action Plan estimates (see box below) than are presented in the Baseline Study of PEDP-II.

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As pointed out in a study on BRAC’s approaches to children with disabilities (CSID, 2004), traditionally disability has been seen as a medical concern. However, there is a growing realization that the greatest problems facing children with disabilities are prejudice, social isolation and discrimination in society. Most children with disabilities are silent and invisible members of many communities. They are taken advantage of, and are at risk of abuse, exploitation, and harassment. Most never attend schools, and if they do attend they meet unfriendly attitudes that lead to dropouts.

The BRAC study also notes that ‘women with disabilities are at high risk of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Fear of such abuse often dissuades parents from sending their daughters to school’ (CSID, 2004, p.4) The Esteem II study (as reported in the 2005 PEDP-II Action Plan), conducted by the Directorate of Primary Education in 2001–02, with support from DFID and technical support from the Cambridge Consortium, found that more boys with disabilities enrolled than girls, and also confirmed that girls who did enrol were subject to physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

**Educational barriers for disabled children**

The ‘major players’ to date in education for children with disabilities, often with international donor support, are the NGOs. Out of 40,000 NGOs in Bangladesh approximately 400 state that they are working in the field of disabilities. One estimate is that out of the approximately 2.6 million children with disabilities in Bangladesh, ‘fewer than 1500 have access to an education in special schools sponsored by the Government of Bangladesh’ and ‘only those with selected disabilities (hearing, vision, and intellectual disabilities) are served’ (Ackerman et al., 2005, p.v).

Meanwhile, as yet, inclusive education for children with disabilities is in its infancy and only a minority of children with relatively mild disabilities are accessing mainstream schools. Some barriers, such as those relating to making schools physically accessible, are relatively straightforward to identify and overcome. Meanwhile, in addition to addressing the more complex socio-cultural barriers and prejudices (in communities and within schools and the education system), there are implications for improving teachers’ capacities and competences to use methodologies and approaches that cater for children of differing abilities and with special needs.

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**Types of Disability for Children Ages 6–11 by Number and Per Cent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Disability</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Handicap (PH)</td>
<td>720,076</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairments (VI)</td>
<td>341,819</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech/Hearing Impairments (HI)</td>
<td>340,084</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disabilities (ID)</td>
<td>128,398</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral Palsy (CP)</td>
<td>121,458</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Disabilities (MD)</td>
<td>58,994</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness (MI)</td>
<td>24,292</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,735,121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances

Poverty, gender discrimination and other forms of social exclusion interact in Bangladesh, causing some children to be ‘multiply vulnerable’, living in extremely difficult circumstances. These children might have no family support at all, or might live in families that are extremely poor, vulnerable or exploited. Some of the categories of these children are described below. They include working children, children living in urban slums, child domestic workers, orphan and refugee children, children of socially vulnerable groups (children of sex workers), children of special occupation groups, children living in remote and disaster prone areas, children in conflict with the law, trafficked children, and many more. In educational terms, they constitute a ‘hard-to-reach’ category, who, in the short term, are unlikely to benefit from broad ‘pro-poor’ policies alone, unless there is also specific consideration of their particular life situations and needs.

4.4.1 Working children

Child labour is a concrete manifestation of violations of a range of rights of children and is recognized as a serious and enormously complex social problem in Bangladesh. Working children are denied their right to survival and development, education, leisure and play, an adequate standard of living, opportunity for developing personalities, talents, mental and physical abilities, and protection from abuse and neglect. Due to poverty, landlessness and declining employment in rural areas it has become a common feature that the surplus (under-employed and unemployed) labour thrown up from the primary sector is increasingly and inevitably joining the so-called informal sectors of manufacturing and services in urban areas.

Most of the children in the poorer segments of the society are deprived of their rights. Children are forced to shoulder the burden of poverty through their hard toil. Thus, the incidence of child labour is directly related to poverty levels of the population.

Children in domestic and subsistence work

In rural Bangladesh, very many children, especially girls, work in the domestic and subsistence spheres, within their own homes and communities. Many of these combine work with school, but such children are more likely to be late, to attend irregularly or to drop out before completion. There are also those who do not enrol at all, due to their heavy work responsibilities within the home.

Children from the tea gardens

A number of children in the tea gardens of Sylhet, CHT and Moulvibasar districts are vulnerable and deprived of education. The Bangladesh Tea Board commissioned the Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC to undertake research in 2004 and identified 6785 children, ranging from 6–15 years of age from 6006 households in 136 clusters (tea gardens/villages/paras). Of these children, 3456 were boys and 3329 were girls; 3716 from tea garden families and 3069 from ethnic minority communities. Two-thirds of the households in the tea gardens depended on the tea gardens and the others had some other choices for income. A quarter (25 per cent) of the population in the tea gardens was Bengali. About 37.8 per cent of ethnic and 33.5 per cent of Bengali children of the tea gardens are involved in work (Out Of School Children in the Tea Gardens and Ethnic Minority Communities, Campe, 2005).

It was found that a number of remote villages had a high percentage of out-of-school children, and in some areas over 90 per cent of the children were out of school. Overall, 60.4 per cent of children in the tea gardens are unschooled. In addition it was found that children in the study
population did not enrol in school at the correct age. They were late in school enrolment for many reasons, including lack of awareness of the parents and their consideration of children aged 6–8 years as ‘too young to enrol in school’. The school authority also refused enrolment to some children (Out of School Children in the Tea Gardens and Ethnic Minority Communities, Campe, 2005).

**Urban slum dwellers and street children**

The huge increase in numbers of people moving to the city from the villages has resulted in the growth of urban slums. Most of the slums in the cities lack proper drainage and sewerage systems, have no electricity or gas supply, and no system for garbage disposal. According to a 1996 survey there were 3007 slums in Dhaka alone. Slum dwellers in other divisional cities – Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet and district towns – are increasing daily (PEDP-II, Draft Action Plan for Vulnerable Groups).

Slum dwellers work as day labourers and live from hand to mouth. A baseline survey conducted in Dhaka City by Mitra and Associates with the support of UNICEF (2004) found that about 84 per cent of children aged 8–14 never attended or enrolled in school. Poverty was cited as the major reason for children not being enrolled, followed by the child’s inattentiveness to study and the need for their engagement in household chores.

**Child domestic workers**

Domestic work is one of the most hazardous and exploitative forms of work since it entails long hours in a risky and unhealthy environment, and deprives children of health, nutrition and education. Their oppression surfaces only when cases of fatal or egregious violence surface in the media. There is no accurate survey of child domestic workers, though the BBS in 2003 quoted a figure of 125,000, which appears to be a gross underestimate. A micro-survey by Shoishe Bangladesh in 1997 found 300,000 children working in Dhaka city alone. There is no legal protection for child domestic workers.

**Child sex workers, and the children of sex workers**

According to a survey conducted by TDH-Italy, with the support of the European Commission (EC) in March 2005, there are 14 acknowledged brothels outside Dhaka with 4192 sex workers. In addition, there are four more brothels in Dhaka city.

The children of sex workers are the most excluded group of Bangladesh. The limited services provided by the NGOs to the sex workers have only marginally addressed the needs of children. Children of sex workers are deprived of their right to education. Few of them are enrolled at government schools, mainly because they are born without any acknowledged father. Furthermore, they are discriminated against because of their mother’s profession. More than 49 per cent of the children of these sex workers do not go to school. Generally, on average 67 per cent of the children of sex workers study at NGO schools (TDH-Italy and EC, 2005). The Capacity Building for Disadvantaged Mothers and Children project has been implementing non-formal education in seven brothels of the country, but this covers only 750 children. Save the Children (Australia), Care-Bangladesh, and Concern-Bangladesh are working in Goalondoghat/Daulatdia brothel in the Rajbari district, Tangail town and Fulbari in the Khulna district brothel. According to Save the Children (Australia), there are 408 children below 18 years of age in the Daulatdia brothel, but only 178 children are enrolled in the NGO-run school (PEDP-II, Draft Action Plan on Vulnerable Groups). The Government of Bangladesh for the first time has included the need to bring children of sex workers into school, according to its Action Plan for Vulnerable Children (which is yet to be

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16 Gita Chakraborty, ASK, 2005.
approved by MoPME) in PEDP-II. Below is the extract from a study that highlights some of the findings of the situation of children of sex workers of the Faridpur district.

**Services Provided to Children of Sex Workers**

A study conducted in a brothel in Madaripur district indicates that among 30 sex workers, four of them had children and were living in the brothel. Another three sex workers also had children and have been living in the shelter home of a local NGO called Shapla. Shapla provides food, shelter, medical care, education and recreation facilities. Although Shapla is situated outside the brothel, still sex workers were satisfied with the services. Two sex workers mentioned the name of World Vision that was providing educational facilities to their children. However, sex workers are not satisfied with the services because teachers were not regular and punctual. Some also mentioned that other children of the community never see their children as friends. Some complained about the discriminatory behaviour of the teachers towards their children (Shamim and Nasreen, CWCS, 2005).

Another example of services for children of sex workers is the shelter home for girls situated beside the boys' orphanage in Baitul Aman, Faridpur. The shelter home is maintained by the government for girl sex workers, daughters of sex workers, and girls who had been sexually harassed. However, all 40 girls present at the shelter home were daughters of sex workers who worked in different brothels. The girls have been provided with accommodation, food, education, vocational training and health services. It was learned at the beginning that it was difficult to enrol/collect girls for the shelter home by the Department of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Welfare of GoB. However, with the support of NGOs it was possible to collect girls from the brothels. Later, floating sex workers also brought their daughters to the shelter home. Apparently there is a good government attempt to isolate the daughters of sex workers from their mothers' profession. It was, however, learned that there were discriminatory attitudes towards the girls and they had been neglected in many respects. It was evident that a girl was beaten mercilessly due to conflict with one of her peers. As a consequence she swallowed Savlon (liquid antiseptic). She was taken to hospital and had her stomach washed. It was also learned that some of the care takers/wardens behaved roughly with the girls, using abusive/harsh language (e.g. always referring them as notir meye – daughters of prostitutes). Girls were also neglected in respect to getting vocational training and education, and did not have any right to leave/visit home. Mothers could visit them only for a few hours on special occasions.

**Children affected by trafficking**

Trafficking in women and children has emerged in recent times as a serious problem in less developed countries. Available information and data would suggest that this is a problem of global proportions. A 2001 study by the Centre for Health and Population Research, Dhaka, estimates that 2000–3000 women and children (separate statistics are unavailable) are trafficked each year mainly for domestic work and prostitution in neighbouring countries. The trafficking of very young Bangladeshi boys as ‘jockeys’ in the Middle East is an issue that has recently had international media attention. Whilst data is inevitably sketchy due to the illegal nature of the activities, it can be concluded that there are some Bangladeshi children denied their education rights because they have already been trafficked, as well as others whose dire poverty and exclusion from education puts them at risk of even further rights abuses.
4.4.2 Children affected by HIV/AIDS

Bangladesh is at a critical moment in the course of its AIDS epidemic. On the one hand, official figures suggest the epidemic is not widespread. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (February, 2005) estimates that there are 13,000 HIV-positive people in the country and that HIV prevalence in the adult population is less than a tenth of one per cent. However, inevitably, the urban poor, especially migrants and sex workers, are the most vulnerable. Where illness or death occurs, it is often young girls who are expected to take up the role of caring for sick relatives or for younger children who are without adult carers. Thus HIV/AIDS further compounds ‘multiple-vulnerability’ and is another factor working against children’s access to education.

4.4.3 Orphans and children living in institutions

The international definition of an orphan is a child (under 18 years) that has lost both parents. However, in Bangladesh, in accordance with Muslim tradition, it is the presence or absence of the father that determines the social status of the child. Therefore if the father dies or abandons the child, he or she is considered to be an orphan (etim), and is passed into the guardianship of another elder man, such as an older brother. Other members of the extended family normally also assume responsibility for the care and upbringing of the child. On the other hand, if the mother dies, the child may stay with the father and a new stepmother or with grandparents, maternal aunt and uncle or paternal uncles. However, this child is not considered to be an orphan. If both parents die or abandon the child, the Court may appoint a legal guardian under the Powers of the Children Act 1974. Normally he or she would come under the care of the maternal grandparents or uncles when possible.

In Bangla, the term for orphanage is etim khana. As policies and management structures of the institutions have changed, so has the language used: during the 1980s institutions were renamed from shishu sadan (children’s home) to shishu paribar (literally meaning ‘children’s family’).

From 1988, 73 state-run shishu sadan underwent a conversion to shishu paribar in a government initiative to reorganize children’s homes. Young boys and girls were to be placed together in the same institution and grouped in ‘families’ of 15 children headed by a Khala-Amma (Aunt). Boys and girls older than ten were allocated separate institutions and were in 25-strong ‘family’ groups under the care of Bara Apa (elder sister) and Bara Bhai (elder brother), who had responsibility for the children’s health and education.

Children are entitled to stay in government-run institutions until the age of 18. Those in private institutions may stay longer depending on their educational and personal circumstances. Guardians can withdraw children from institutions with relevant permission. Children generally attend the first two or three years of primary education in the institution and subsequently they tend to go to external secondary schools. Many institutions also provide vocational training such as in sewing for girls and carpentry or electrical engineering for boys. They might also endeavour to provide support for children on discharge, such as money, equipment or arranging opportunities for marriage or employment.

4.4.4 Refugee children

There are two groups of refugees in Bangladesh: the Biharis and the Rohingya. The origins of these communities are different. Biharis have been living in the country since the Pakistan
period. They migrated from Bihar in India after the partition of India and Pakistan. Biharis are Muslim Indians who are seeking Pakistani nationality and their nationality is not recognized. However, during the Independence war of Bangladesh, Biharis acted as collaborators of Pakistan. The community lost integrity with both the countries, and having their own culture and without having citizen rights in Bangladesh, they became refugees. The children of the community are deprived of many rights, including right to education.

Biharis, with their difficult identity situation and their transitional status, are confined to 70 camps in Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Narayangong and Dinajpur districts. A survey by Al Falah (a Bihari community-based NGO) in October 2005 indicated that the population of the camps is more than 300,000, of whom 120,000 are school-aged children. Refugee children are largely deprived of access to education. Only 20–25 per cent of the total children were enrolled in different government and NGO schools but they are discriminated against because of their nationality (cited in Final Draft of PEDP-II Situational Analysis, Strategies and Action Plan for Mainstreaming Vulnerable Children’s Education). In some camps, the community runs its own primary school, but most of the children need to work to live off their daily wages. Because of discrimination they face in society, it is difficult to find work even though they are willing to work for half wages. Bihari children also face difficulties in getting admission to college and universities (State of Child Rights in Bangladesh, BSAF, 2002). To gain admission in schools around their camps, they are forced to change their nationality. There is currently no clear policy for the education of refugee children (Final Plan of PEDP-II, January 2005).

The other category of refugee community is the Rohinga. They migrated to Bangladesh in the early 1990s from the Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar due to political, social and economic factors. There are more than 250,000 people, mostly Muslim, in the Rohinga minority community. As the refugees entered into adjoining Bangladesh territory, the Government of Bangladesh immediately responded by offering shelter and emergency relief in as many as 20 camps in and around the southern parts of Cox’s Bazaar district in the South Eastern part of Bangladesh.

From 1991 until the end of 2002, more than 90 per cent of the 250,000 Myanmar refugees have been repatriated under the bilateral repatriation programme between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar. While the number represents a remarkable achievement on the part of all concerned parties, the status on repatriation of the remaining refugees has now remained stagnant for more than four years.

Initial findings of a recent survey by UNHCR (2007) revealed that more than 26,100 refugees were living in the two camps. Among them, some 4900 persons do not have a valid registration status and are thus deprived of any assistance directly linked to holding a valid registration (family book). Thus there is a hidden population of about 5000 refugees in the two camps, which has adversely affected the living conditions of the registered refugees.

The actual number of Rohinga school age children of 5–12 years in the camps was 6377 and the number of school-age children enrolled in the schools was 5236, which is 80 per cent of all school-age children. However, there were another 49 unregistered school-age children enrolled in the schools out of an estimated total of 175 unregistered children of school age and another 736 students enrolled in the schools who are over the age of 12 years. It has been noted in the report that the schools do not have quality teachers and lack of capacity produces overcrowded classrooms. Recruitment of teachers is limited to the refugee population in the two camps and trainers are not all adequately trained in their respective subjects and the techniques of training.
The existing education programme is limited to only three subjects: English, mathematics and Myanmar and up to primary level (Class 5) only.\textsuperscript{17}

4.4.5 Children affected by natural disasters and cyclical events

Disasters are annual events in Bangladesh. These disasters range from ravaging tornadoes to devastating floods. Among all the disasters, floods have attracted widest attention and are well documented by researchers because of their severity and frequent occurrence (Nasreen, 2004). Children of the river islands, coastal and haor (a bowl-shaped tectonic depression that receives runoff surface water) areas are extremely vulnerable and insecure, with no guarantee for their basic needs and livelihood. Many of the children are malnourished and suffer from ill health. Whilst the enrolment rate of children in primary schools in these areas is 75 per cent, their attendance rate is low and the dropout rate is as high as 65 per cent (UEO Office, Jamalganj and Derai Upazillas, Sunamgang district, April 2005; and Need Assessment Report, Shaba, a UK based NGO, May 2005).

In the haor areas, most of the people are economically and socially deprived, with 55 per cent being hard-core poor, and 65 per cent unemployed (Education Watch, 2003/04). The children and teachers find it difficult to go to school during the flood and monsoon season because they cannot cross the canals, rivers and haors, and as a result attendance from both is erratic. Another difficulty is that the children of these areas are needed to work during the harvesting season (April to June and October to December) and it is found that only 20–25 per cent of the children attend schools during this time. As a result of these difficulties, in these areas the dropout rate is high at approximately 67 per cent and the completion rate is only 33 per cent. The numbers of out-of-school children, combined with those that have dropped out and those non-enrolled, is 87 per cent (Shaba, 2005).

In addition, in many of these areas there are insufficient schools. For example, it is estimated by the Barisal Primary Divisional Education Office that there is currently a shortfall of schools in 884 villages in that division alone.

Disasters affect women and children more than others, especially those who are living in the hazardous areas. It is evident that during floods many schools remain closed for several months and those are used as shelters and relief camps. No alternative has been offered for children’s education to be continued during this period.

4.4.6 Children in conflict with law\textsuperscript{18}

Criminalizing children has been a longstanding practice in the justice system. While it is explicitly prohibited in the municipal law of Bangladesh, the Vagrancy Act of 1943 lays down no limit to the period of detention of ‘vagrants’, including children. According to the NPA for children, ‘Although the Children Act 1974, and the Children’s Rules 1976, have been enacted for the protection of children who come into contact with the law, they are ineffectively enforced.’ Indeed there have been allegations that homeless and street children, instead of being protected, are rounded up by the police, often without cause, and jailed with adult criminals, without protection. Their detention sometimes involves torture and degrading treatment. This practice of taking vagrant and street children into custody criminalizes some of the most impoverished and vulnerable children in Bangladesh and denies their basic rights.


\textsuperscript{18} Shabnam, S., ASK, 2005.
There are some signs of change. The age of criminal responsibility has been increased (in 2004) from seven to nine years – a slight improvement, but this is still a very low age and, furthermore, in practice children below nine years are still often arrested. The government has also attempted to reduce stigma and discrimination surrounding children in conflict with the law. The recent change of the name ‘Juvenile Correction Institutes’ to Kishor Unnayan Kendra or ‘Child Development Centres’ is a reflection of such a change. However, conditions in the Kishor Unnayan Kendra centres, especially reports of abuse and misbehaviour by staff, remain a concern.

A number of NGOs are providing legal aid and other assistance including education to children. There is also an informal Juvenile Justice Network, comprised mostly of NGOs, to share learning and jointly press for rights of children in conflict with the law. The Inter-Ministerial committee chaired by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister has been working as a National Task Force to monitor the situation of children in conflict with the law. This committee formed District- and Upazilla-level task forces to expedite release of children from jails and assist them in the social rehabilitation process. In 2004, the Task Force and NGOs nationwide facilitated the release of 2986 children.

There is no systematic information available regarding the access to education of children in prison and detention centres. However, it is almost certain that many children are denied any education at all, whilst the provision for others falls far short of good quality provision that meets the holistic and complex needs of these vulnerable children.

4.5 Summary: Challenges for the Education System

The preceding discussions have introduced the range of factors that can lead to social exclusion in Bangladesh, exploring how these also link to exclusion from, and unequal opportunities within, education. It has also been noted how factors within the system itself can be excluding. These include the indirect costs of education. In their most recent review Access to Education in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2007), the authors cite statistics from the year 2000 (Education Watch, 2001) on mean private expenditure of primary schooling for eight months. The eight-month figures show that the mean private expenditure (in taka) for primary-level schooling came to an average of Tk 614 for Government Primary Schools (GPS), Tk 484 for non-government primary schools, Tk 290 for non-formal education, and Tk 823 for madrassa education. The poorest children are the most affected by these charges and poverty remains the highest cause of dropout.

Other factors relate to the quality of the education provision itself. One category of children have come to be known as the ‘virtual’ or ‘silent’ dropouts: the children who are physically in class but not psychologically and intellectually engaged in learning. There are no clear estimates on the numbers of such children but ‘best guesses’ are that the numbers are large. The analysis of the preceding pages suggests that there is, firstly, a general quality problem, for example ineffective teaching methods, a poor environment for learning and lack of suitable resources, and secondly, a problem of ‘equity in quality’. The poorest communities often are served by the poorest schools and social exclusion is reproduced in the classroom in the form of active or unintentional discrimination, stereotyping, low expectations and lack of adaptation to culture, context and language.

The system also incrementally excludes the poor through a series of competitive examinations (the SSC exam at the 10th grade level, and HSC at the 12th grade level), for which private coaching, an important parental expense if it can be afforded, is highly desired. At the primary
level, the ‘Primary Scholarship Exam’ in Class 5 allows schools to put up/select 20 per cent of that class to sit (qualify) for the exam. In an interesting perspective on the system, one practitioner has observed that, for purposes of analysis, if one class is assumed to begin with 100 students in Class One, dropouts for various reasons would weed this class/cohort down to 60 students by Class 4 and perhaps 50 children by Class 5. Then comes the Primary Scholarship Exam, for which 20 per cent of the Class 5 class would sit or qualify. That means that 10 students out of the original 50 Class 5 students would qualify for the exam, and presumably proceed to high school. The other 40 students in Class 5 are the ‘virtual dropouts’.

Table 4.1 concludes the analysis by bringing together and summarizing the barriers to ‘equity in access’ and ‘equity in quality’ that affect children from poor and socially excluded groups. In so doing, it also summarizes the scope and scale of the ‘social inclusion’ challenge which PEDP-II seeks to address. How PEDP-II has responded to this vast challenge, both in terms of its conceptualization and design, and in actual practice, is the subject of the following chapters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity in access, attendance and completion</th>
<th>BEYOND THE EDUCATION SECTOR</th>
<th>WITHIN THE EDUCATION SECTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty leads to child work within the family unit (with gender bias).</td>
<td>Insufficient provision in indigenous areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty leads to periodic famine, poor nutrition and health, keeping children (especially girls in their perceived ‘caring role’), out of school.</td>
<td>Lack of effective provision for refugees, children in institutions or detention and other ‘segregated’ groups.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor, excluded communities and families less likely to be familiar with (or convinced by) the benefits of education.</td>
<td>Inadequate water and sanitation provision for children, especially girls (and different caste groups).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminatory attitudes against girls and women, including early marriage, so that girls are less prioritized for education and more likely to drop out early.</td>
<td>Facilities don’t facilitate access of children with physical or sensory disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discriminatory attitudes against Dalits and indigenous groups, so that their education is not valued.</td>
<td>Provision and teaching approaches are insufficiently flexible to meet needs of ‘multiply vulnerable’ / ‘hard to reach’.</td>
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<td>Poor families that are under stress are less able to provide a supportive environment for their children.</td>
<td>Lack of an inclusive ethos, or active discrimination.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BEYOND THE EDUCATION SECTOR</strong></td>
<td><strong>WITHIN THE EDUCATION SECTOR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty and discrimination create categories of ‘hard to reach’ children – including labourers, street children, children in institutions etc., who cannot easily access.</td>
<td>Lack of teachers, or teachers from same ethnic/language group as the children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The poorest people are those living in the ‘chars’ and ‘haors’ – their precarious livelihoods are particularly vulnerable to the effects of annual flooding.</td>
<td>Education not of sufficient quality and relevance to give any benefits (see below), with the schools serving the most disadvantaged communities often providing the most substandard provision.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The assumption that disabled children are a ‘punishment’ and are unable to learn are widespread.</td>
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**Equity in quality of opportunity and learning outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BEYOND THE EDUCATION SECTOR</strong></th>
<th><strong>WITHIN THE EDUCATION SECTOR</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty leads to poor nutrition and poor health, so that poor children are less able to learn.</td>
<td>Quality is generally poor, especially in the schools (and some of the NFE programmes) serving the poorest children and communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults of poor and excluded groups are less educated, so at a disadvantage in supporting their children’s learning.</td>
<td>Discriminatory practices are reproduced within the school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discriminatory attitudes create children – and whole communities – with lower levels of confidence and self-esteem.</td>
<td>Language policy and practice disadvantages indigenous groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers lack skills for inclusive and child friendly approaches (e.g. to respond to range of needs and abilities, and to children with disabilities, or those affected by traumatic life events).</td>
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5. Equity and Social Inclusion In PEDP-II: Concepts, Approaches and Strategies

5.1 The Scope and Nature of PEDP-II

The Macro Plan (Final Plan) for PEDP-II, covering the period 2003–08, was submitted in January 2003. The Macro Plan stresses that, at the systemic level, the focus of PEDP-II will be on the formal primary sector ‘where the vast majority (more than 90 per cent) are enrolled.’ It notes too the diversity of formal educational delivery systems that exist in Bangladesh and states that the PEDP-II approach ‘is based on the view that the Government is responsible for providing for the best education for all and that by doing so through the formal system – especially the GPS (Government Primary Schools) and the RNGPS (Registered Non-Government Primary Schools) – should in the long-term, reduce the need for such a diversity of systems to provide educational opportunities for children of primary school age.’

It is recognized in the plan that in the short and medium term this approach (focusing on GPS and RNGPS schools) could ‘deny many children access to quality interventions and to better schooling’ and that to minimize that effect ‘most interventions would apply to all schools, all teachers and children, irrespective of school type.’ The exceptions would be the provision of new classrooms and additional new teachers. In summary, then, PEDP-II does not cover the whole of primary-level education, but coverage – and the rationale for it – is well-defined. It is also institutionally coherent, in the sense of covering the remit of the DPE (but not the full remit of MoPME, which also includes non-formal primary level and adult education). It is thus not strictly speaking ‘sector-wide’, but does have some features and intentions of the ‘SWAp modality’.

PEDP-II was clearly envisaged as the programme of the government for the formal primary education sector, to be implemented by DPE, with coordinated (including pooled) support from development partners. In this sense, it has some of the expected features of a SWAp. However, it was also designed with a ‘Project Liaison Unit’, supported by ADB as a lead donor and is based on a Macro Plan and a rigid Project Proforma, as opposed to a more flexible strategic framework. In these respects, it has some of the features of a ‘giant project’ and does not reflect the full aspirations of the SWAp modality.

The nature, form and scope of PEDP-II is the result of a combination of factors. One of these was the uniquely complex diversity of educational provision in Bangladesh (and hence lack of availability of useful ideas from other contexts as to how to address this diversity within a SWAp). There was the sense of a need to ‘test out’ the SWAp modality first within the parts of the sector directly under government control (especially given the mixed experiences with the already-operational SWAp in the health sector). There was also the need to take account of the centralized nature of government in Bangladesh. Furthermore, there was a desire of both government and development partners to ‘get moving’ after the rather drawn-out planning process. A ‘hybrid’ SWAp for the formal primary sub-sector, but taking some account of the sub-sector as a whole, represented what was perceived as possible and appropriate at the time.

There are clear implications for the addressing of equity and inclusion in the very design of PEDP-II. On the one hand, the move to a more coordinated approach presented the potential for implementing more effective and coherent approaches to improve accessibility, quality and
flexibility of the formal sector. On the other hand, the limitation to the formal sector created the potential risk of decreased attention (and donor funding) for existing programmes meeting the immediate needs of some of the most excluded and vulnerable children.

Three years into PEDP-II, some of the major design faults of PEDP-II have become apparent and it is anticipated that the Mid-Term Review (MTR) will be a time for addressing these. As explored further presently, the ‘giant project’ approach and rigid Project Proforma has made for unwieldy implementation and a lack of linkage of educational reform to institutional development. The conceptualization of PEDP-II as an ‘extra layer’ of responsibility for DPE personnel on top of their ‘normal’ jobs has led to huge issues of work overload and matching of capacity to required functions and roles. These two factors are particularly pertinent to addressing equity and social inclusion, as these are cross-cutting issues requiring a clear framework and defined roles and responsibilities for a range of actors at different levels.

The leaving out of non-formal education has already led to an interesting set of consequences. The recognition of the urgent needs of the many out-of-school children who were unlikely to access formal education within the timescale of PEDP-II (according to PEDP-II’s own targets and forecasts) led to the development of a new, separate project. The Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) Project will function through a new NFE cell within DPE that has replaced the former DNFE. This was a controversial decision, which is discussed further in a subsequent chapter as an example of challenges and complexities of donor coordination. On the one hand, ROSC is seemingly meeting an urgent need and might prove to be a starting point for the DPE to synergize planning for formal education expansion and non-formal primary level interventions. However, ROSC also represents yet another demand on DPE over and above the huge demands of PEDP-II (to which donors had promised not to add). This might act as yet another constraint on achieving the long term systemic change that might reduce the need for NFE in the longer term.

5.2 Equity and Inclusion In Objectives, Components and Action Plans

5.2.1 Objectives

The government views education as a vital ‘tool for poverty alleviation, employment generation, production and development, and for building a dignified and self-reliant nation.’ The PEDP-II Macro Plan incorporates the relevant EFA goals and thus also serves as the implementation strategy for the more generic and broad-reaching EFA National Plan of Action II (MoPME, May 2003).

The key objectives of PEDP-II, as stated in the Macro-Plan (Final Plan, 2003) are to:
1. Increase primary school access, participation, and completion in accordance with the government’s EFA and other policy commitments.
2. Improve the quality of student learning and performance outcomes (i.e. achievement).

The purposes of PEDP-II, as stated (2003), were and are to:
1. Improve the quality of the education provision to all children. Although at present it is planned that the most direct interventions will be introduced in GPS and RNGPS schools, there will be interventions that will impact all children in all schools.
2. Improve educational opportunities for all children of primary school age, including the opportunities of children with special needs (italics added).
3. Promulgate and advance key educational reforms, especially:

- definition and implementation of a minimum standard of educational services for Primary School Quality Level (PSQL) that focuses on access to educational services and the quality of education provided;
- the designation and the formation of a primary school cadre;
- providing an appropriate career and promotion structure for primary teachers and others with primary education expertise and experience;
- organizational capacity building and systematic change, consistent with a policy of increased devolution of authority and responsibility, to ensure improved management and monitoring, and the institutionalization and sustainability of interventions made under PEDP-I and PEDP-II.

For the purposes of the PEDP-II baseline survey (GoB Baseline Survey, 2006), more detailed objectives were stated, namely:

1. To improve the quality of primary education in Bangladesh through the introduction of Primary School Quality Level (PSQL) standards.
2. To make primary education accessible for all children in Bangladesh.
3. To increase enrolment, attendance and the rate of completion of the primary education cycle.
4. To adopt a child-centred approach in the classroom.
5. To fully integrate the PEDP-II activities within the organizational and operational systems of Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) and the DPE.
6. To undertake institutional reforms in education management, and its effective decentralization and the devolution of decision making.
7. To strengthen and build the capacity of the school management system at all levels.
8. To ensure accountability and transparency at all levels.
9. To supply textbooks and teaching and learning materials free of cost.
10. To strengthen the roles of the community, and especially parents, in the running and support of their schools.

5.2.2 Components

The components of PEDP-II are:
- Component 1: Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building.
- Component 2: Quality improvement in schools and classrooms.
- Component 3: Quality improvement through infrastructure development.
- Component 4: Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling.
- Component 5: PEDP-II implementation, management and monitoring.

5.2.3 Sector performance indicators

PEDP-II has a list of 24 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (see Annex 3). Many of these indicators concern gender and equity indirectly, while several do so directly:

- The number of disabled children out of school reduced by 30 per cent by 2010.
- Student absenteeism reduced to 20 per cent by 2010, with no discrepancy between boys and girls.
- Education achievement of girls improved to at least the same level as boys by 2010.
- The transition rate from Class 5 to Class 6 increased to 40 per cent, with gender parity, by 2010.
Table 5.1 lists a set of Primary School Quality Level (PSQL) indicators and benchmarks prepared for PEDP-II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSQL INDICATOR</th>
<th>BENCHMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Children attending school.</td>
<td>Increasing numbers of children enrolled in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Children with special needs attending school.</td>
<td>Increasing numbers of children with special needs attending school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Numbers of pupils in each class reduced.</td>
<td>Maximum number of pupils in a class is 40.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 New classrooms constructed.</td>
<td>30,000 new classrooms constructed during PEDP-II.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6 Properly constructed classrooms. | Classrooms are:  
- properly constructed with durable materials  
- of sufficient size (at least 26’ x 19’ 6”)  
- well-lighted  
- properly ventilated  
- accessible by physically disabled students. |
| 7 Suitably furnished classrooms. | Classrooms are:  
- furnished to suit the age and size of the children  
- have a chalkboard (12’ x 4’); and  
- have secure storage. |
| 8 School toilets provided. | Schools have proper hygienic latrines, separately for both girls and boys, accessible by the physically disabled. |
| 9 School water supply provided. | Schools have a potable water supply for both male and female staff and students. |
| 10 Good health and hygiene standards promoted. | Schools provide and promote ideals of good health and hygiene for all students. |
| 11 Increased school contact hours. | 900 contact hours per annum for students at each grade level. |
| 12 Textbook availability. | Textbooks available from the first day of the new school year. |
Overall, it is noted that there are clear objectives and performance indicators related to reaching equity in access to quality education. However, there are no explicit objectives for reducing specific types of disparity (although this is implied). Furthermore, while there is the concept of ‘equity in quality’ in relation to equitable access to basic facilities and resources, there are no objectives or indicators related directly to teachers’ general teaching skills and competencies, let alone their skills in promoting equity and non-discrimination in the classroom.

5.2.4 The access and inclusion framework

PEDP-II was not designed from the beginning with a clear framework for mainstreaming gender and equity concerns across all components and strategies, although there were some attempts to reflect these concerns in the Macro Plan. However, as the need became clear, the PEDP-II Access and Inclusive Education Framework was developed through a series of workshops and consultations between 2003 and 2005. It articulates an approach that focuses on equitable inclusion of all children (i.e. going well beyond inclusion of children with disabilities and special educational needs, as the
term is often used elsewhere). It identifies how gender, equity and inclusion can be mainstreamed in and through the components of PEDP-II, focusing particularly on Components 2 and 4. There is also a stronger emphasis on school-level change and community participation: ‘implementing the principles of inclusion education will require everyone in the system to pro-actively create equal opportunities in school and support teachers to meet the needs of children in the classroom.’

The box below summarizes the main approach and strategies.

**PEDP-II Access and Inclusive Education Framework Sept 2005**

**What is Inclusive Education?**

Inclusive education has evolved from the idea that education is a basic human right for all children. In keeping with the Education for All aims, it is based on the principle that all learners have a right to education irrespective of their individual characteristics or differences. An inclusive policy does not only mean the right to access to school, but the right to be included on an equal basis within the mainstream classroom, whenever possible. Inclusive education must therefore be developed as a total approach to overall school development. It not only requires teacher development, but also requires support and awareness from within the entire education system and the wider community in which the school exists.

Inclusive education is an approach to improve the education system by limiting and removing barriers to learning and acknowledging individual children’s needs and potential. The goal of this approach is to make a significant impact on the educational opportunities of those (1) who attend school but who for different reasons do not achieve adequately and (2) those who are not attending school but who could attend if families, communities, schools and the education system were more responsive to their requirements.

**Developing a more inclusive educational system through PEDP-II**

- Ensure that the needs of marginalized groups are taken into account and incorporated into mainstream education.
- Develop approaches, policies and strategies to address diversity in education.
- Influence government policy and develop system management to support inclusive practices.
- Ensure indicators for monitoring to reflect inclusive practices.
- Support teachers to deliver needs-based teaching.
- Develop curriculum and materials.
- Support local-based planning that reflects local needs.
- Create learner friendly classrooms which encourage all children’s participation.

**Mainstreaming inclusion in PEDP-II components**

**Component 2** is divided into a number of sub-components designed to provide interventions and inputs that will improve the quality of educational provision for all children in primary schools in Bangladesh. One of the main thrusts in the primary school quality levels strategy is that classroom teaching and learning in all schools will be improved to well defined quality levels through a well coordinated combination of interventions involving quality improvement inputs such as enhanced teacher knowledge, skills and understandings, training, materials, and support systems.

**Component 4** focuses on promoting and facilitating access to quality schooling for those children who have never attended formal primary schooling, or who have dropped out before
Another intervention under PEDP II to reach those currently excluded from mainstream education will be the introduction of **innovative grants to support programmes based on collaboration between communities, government and civil society**. A flexible fund of money to provide innovative grants will be created to support practical and creative ways to enhance the quality of education for disadvantaged children and those living in poverty, especially those in urban areas and for children from minority communities.

The development of this framework represents a major step forward. Previously, although Bangladesh had already implemented targeted programmes on increasing enrolment, reducing the gender gap, reducing dropouts, improving basic learning competencies, and other initiatives, there had been no overall attempt at a cross-cutting approach with the defined goal of inclusive education for all children.

### 5.2.5 Action plans for access and inclusion

The Access and Inclusive Education Primary Education Framework highlights four areas in which actions need to be taken in order to make primary education more inclusive: Gender, Children with Special Needs, Indigenous Children, and Vulnerable Groups. Action Plans have been developed around these thematic areas (some before and some after the completion of the overall framework), as summarized below.

**Gender**

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) of PEDP-II was prepared by a Task Force and was approved in June 2005. The overall objective of the Gender Action Plan of PEDP-II is to fulfil the commitments of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh towards achieving gender parity in education. It is based on some of the actions set out in the Macro Plan. The box below summarizes key elements of the plan:

**The Gender Action Plan**

*Actions set out in the PEDP-II Macro Plan*

- Building gender awareness and sensitivity in the organizational culture of DPE and MoPME, and mainstreaming gender equity principles into policies, strategies and institutional practices to ensure girls and boys, women and men, are accorded equal opportunity and treatment.
- Providing specialist training on gender issues to staff at DPE, PTIs and to AUEOs, in support of the broader quality improvement agenda.
- Advising primary specialists at NCTB, NAPE, the PTIs and at other levels in the system, of the need to ensure gender equality in curriculum content, textbooks and teaching-learning materials.
- Developing gender related modules for use by PTIs and AUEOs in the training for headteachers, SMCs (School Management Committees), teachers and community groups.
- Advising communities and SMCs on the importance of building and supporting a strong and equal role for girls and women in the development of Bangladesh, and especially of the need to ensure that schools have, and implement, policies and practices that provide girls with the facilities and security they require to be equal participants in schooling.
Advising DPE on how best to overcome the barriers that prevent suitably qualified women from becoming primary school teachers and/or from continuing as primary school teachers.

**GAP strategies**
The overall strategy proposed in the Gender Action Plan is *gender mainstreaming*, defined as ‘making the concerns and experiences of women as well as men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres’ (p.12).

**Examples proposed in the plan of mainstreaming actions that need to be taken include:**

- Locating responsibility for gender within the DPE.
- Mainstreaming gender into the training proposed for PEDP-II, requiring a series of training-of-trainers courses to build gender awareness and capacity to design and deliver gender mainstreamed training courses.¹⁹,²⁰
- Addressing gender equality at the field level, where an understanding of how disparity and discrimination within the system can lead to unequal educational experiences and outcomes based on gender, capacity building and pedagogical training for supervisory and advisory personnel as well as for classroom needs.
- Providing gender support to the NCTB to rebuild its capacity to develop and monitor gender equality guidelines in the development of materials and texts for the revised quality curriculum.
- Developing gender research capacity to undertake qualitative studies with a gender focus. For example, studies need to be undertaken to determine the barriers to meeting the 60% quota for female primary teachers; the gender implications for the education of tribal, ethnic and vulnerable communities; and to ascertain the gender implications of inclusive education for girls as well as boys. Currently the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Planning and Operations Divisions do not have the gender capacity to design and analyse such studies from a gender perspective.
- Providing training and advisory support to M&E to monitor the gender mainstreaming process and to prepare and conduct evaluations that provide analyses of disparity within the primary education system.
- Providing a gender perspective to policy development and revamped recruitment procedures.
- Building gender capacity among all persons within the primary education system as an essential and integral part of the capacity building focus of PEDP-II.

**Sub-strategies**

**Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building:**

- Revise the recruitment processes to ensure gender equality, including considering increasing the entry qualification for women to HSC level.
- Design professional development training with a gender equality perspective to raise awareness and build understanding of responsibilities for gender equality and inclusive education.

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¹⁹ The gender capacity is to be assessed in the questionnaire and studies undertaken in the implementation phase of PEDP-II.

²⁰ MWCA (1997). The National Development Plan for Women declared by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in 1997 states that the education curriculum and textbooks should be gender neutral. It is also stated that training in every sphere is necessary to develop the skills of women. p.14.
Reduce barriers to women’s full participation in all training, ensuring that all eligible women have equal opportunity for training, including overseas training, with the long-term target of equal participation of both males and females in all training.

**Improved quality in schools and classrooms:**
- Improve the learning environment for girls by developing tools for classroom management that raise awareness of the interactive patterns of teachers and students. Applying this knowledge should enable teachers to improve the classroom interaction to include all children in the educational process.
- Create textbooks and materials that reflect a gender balance and do not present stereotypes in content, in voice, and in illustrations. Portray boys as well as girls in non-traditional situations. Provide positive and changing role models for boys and girls.
- Expand the number of women on SMCs with a long term target of increasing further representation. Build the capacity of SMC members to promote the full participation of all members in the decision making process.

**Quality improvement through infrastructure development:**
- Provide separate, clean and an adequate number of sanitary facilities that ensure privacy for women and girls.
- Ensure that women working on the construction sites funded by PEDP-II earn equal pay for work of equal value.
- Provide suitable transport facilities for women to reach their workplaces.

**Improved access to quality education:**
- Ensure that stipends reach the poorest girls and boys to promote their access, attendance and participation in primary education.
- Mobilize families to encourage their girls to participate in education.
- Address the barriers faced by children who drop out of primary school.
- Lobby for routine registration of children at birth, ensuring that children have a birth certificate indicating both parents’ names, so they will not be denied access to school.
- When children are registered for school, ensure that mothers’ and fathers’ names are on the registration form so that both parents can actively participate on school committees.
- Continue and expand efforts to raise awareness of the importance of education for all children, girls as well as boys, including the UNICEF Meena campaign and the better health for better education initiatives.

**Mainstreaming of gender into co-ordination, management, monitoring and evaluation (Component 5):**
- Provide strong leadership on issues of gender equality.
- Augment gender human and financial resources to support the gender mainstreaming strategy.
- Include gender monitoring indicators in all studies, including the baseline study.
- Recruit both male and female advisors, with responsibility for gender equality and mainstreaming clearly stated among the responsibilities in their ToRs.
- Gender-disaggregate all statistics collected, including personnel statistics, within the primary education system.
Evaluate PEDP-II on its performance in providing gender equality across the programme.

**Target groups**
The target groups in the Gender Action Plan range from staff members of MoPME and DPE, including those involved in M&E and MIS, policy and training, to teachers, members of SMCs and PTAs, and local education officers.

**Recommendations**

*Responsibility for gender within DPE*
- Strengthen the Policy and Operations Division in the DPE as the locus for providing an overview of the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.
- Mobilize as many as possible of the ten personnel who attended the Gender Training programme at the University of London under the ESTEEM project to be used within the primary education system to build gender capacity in various locations.

*Gender and research*
- Address gender issues in all studies undertaken by PEDP-II, ensuring that gender indicators are included and statistics are sex-disaggregated where appropriate.
- Undertake a gender study to determine the impact of gender on the education of Tribal children.
- Undertake a study to determine the barriers faced by children with disabilities in attending Government Primary Schools, addressing gender differences, and making recommendations that will better accommodate the needs of these children so that they are able, and encouraged, to attend their local primary school.
- Provide suitable latrines for girls and women in primary schools and other educational offices.
- Undertake a study that will explore the social, cultural, educational and financial considerations parents must weigh in sending their girls and boys to school and to determine at what point these decisions converge and lead to the child dropping out of school, and whether these factors vary significantly in the dropout rates of boys and girls.

*Recruitment, transfers and conditions of service*
- Undertake studies that determine what barriers prevent women from fully accessing the 60 per cent quota for the recruitment of women into vacant positions and explore the gender implications in the recruitment process, including the transfer mechanism as well as the conditions of service within the primary education system. Suggest strategies for overcoming institutional barriers to women’s full participation in the primary education system.
- Continue affirmative action in the recruiting of female teachers.

*School Management Committees (SMCs)*
- Review the procedures for appointment to SMCs to provide additional protected places (30 per cent) for women.21
- In designing the training for SMCs, continue to support capacity building for women, as well as men, to facilitate women’s full participation in school management.

*Policy*
- Ensure that the following are incorporated into the Human Resource Development (HRD) Plan and Management Strategy to be prepared under PEDP-II: an employment equity

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policy as part of the proposed Primary Education Cadre to ensure that persons are not
denied employment, advancement or training for reasons unrelated to their ability to do
their job; a ‘Standards of Conduct’ statement that promotes gender equality and
inclusion and prohibits discrimination and harassment in the primary education system;
a designated percentage requirement for women teachers in the regulations for non-
government schools to become registered government schools.

**Capacity building**

Provide additional gender support to the appropriate line divisions in the DPE and the NCTB
to build gender capacity to meet the requirements of the Gender Action Plan.

Overall, it is observed that this constitutes a very comprehensive set of actions based around a
strong commitment to a mainstreaming approach. It is noted, however, that there is only now
movement on implementation.

**Indigenous children**

Most of Bangladesh’s indigenous children are situated within the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT),
for whom there was already a separate development plan at the outset of PEDP-II (‘Chittagong
Hill Tracts Region Development Plan’ of GoB supported by ADB). As some of the responsibilities
for primary education have been transferred to the Chittagong Hill tracts Zilla Parisad, the policy
for primary education is different in CHT. For example, the local authority is liable for
appointment of teachers including transfer and posting. They are also given the responsibility for
their welfare. For this reason, the action plan under the IE framework was limited explicitly to
children outside the CHT. The draft Action Plan for ‘Mainstreaming Indigenous Children’s
Education Outside the Chittagong Hill Tracts’ was finalized in January 2006. This was revised
and finalized under the different name of ‘Primary Education Situational Analysis, Strategies and
Action Plan for Mainstreaming Tribal Children’ in November 2006. It should be noted that a major
change occurs in the plan in its use of the word ‘tribal’ instead of the term ‘indigenous’. In
Bangladesh different terms are used for indigenous people such as ‘ethnic minorities’, ‘tribal’,
‘native’ people, ‘aborigines’, and ‘cultural minorities’. The term ‘indigenous’ is used by most of
the researchers, the UN reports, as well as by the ADB and other development partners. Most
importantly, the people of the indigenous community prefer the term ‘indigenous’. It is not made
clear in the Action Plan document of CHT why the term ‘tribal’ is used instead of ‘indigenous’,
which is used in the strategic framework and in the other documents of PEDP-II.

The plan provides a list of indigenous communities spread throughout the country, drawing
much-needed attention to communities outside CHT. Lack of information on such diverse
communities had been a barrier to developing effective inclusive education policies. Some of the
main targets and strategies are summarized in the box below.

**Strategies for Indigenous Children**

- Recruit indigenous headteachers and teachers, and relax the teacher qualifications for
  indigenous teachers.
- Allow the use of local languages and supplementary materials in local languages in
  classroom. Revise textbooks to reflect cultural diversity.
- Revise and provide in-service training for teachers to work with indigenous children.
- Provide awareness raising training/seminars for staff at different levels in DPE and
  MoPME.
It should be noted that the timeframes for most of the activities mentioned in the CHT Action Plan are mentioned as ‘short term’ or ‘medium term’, which does not indicate the actual timing for the implementation. The indicators of success mentioned in the plan depend on the actors’ initiatives to implement the plans for children of CHT.

Children with disabilities and special needs
The draft of the Action Plan, *Situational Analysis, Strategic and Action Plan for Mainstreaming Special Needs Children’s Education*, was finalized following a sharing meeting with the development partners in December 2005.

The overall objective of this PEDP-II action plan is to provide education for all children with disabilities and special needs in Bangladesh. It is noted in the strategy and action plan that including children in the mainstream system needs to be seen in terms of overall *school reform*, whose goal is the creation of schools providing for all according to need within a single coherent curriculum framework. It is noted that the vast majority (75 per cent to 85 per cent) of children with special needs could be helped by quite simple arrangements within the regular school system and by ordinary teachers who have received some training in inclusive practices and understand the needs of their learners. This suggests that the regular school classroom is the first option of education for these children. The educational provision should of course be commensurate with the child’s actual need. In this way, expensive and scarce expert services would be reserved for those who really need them.

More specific strategies focus on creation of a climate of teaching–learning where at the very least no child feels that he/she is superior/inferior to any other. The Action Plan outlines the following elements to implement this overall approach.

**Strategies for Including Disabled Children In Education**

**Policies**

- Educational policies for special needs children to be moved from current placement under Ministry of Social Welfare, to be under the regular mainstream education system that is the responsibility of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME). This stresses that disabled children are entitled to education services as a right, rather than being objects of charity.
**Accessibility**
- Quality of school buildings; easy to enter and accommodate, in particular for children with physical impairment. This not only means structural adjustments in classroom arrangements, stairs or steps, toilet facilities, but simple adjustments such as seating being made available near the blackboard or the teacher to minimize children’s difficulties.
- Overall welcoming nature of the school.

**Raising awareness**
- Awareness should be raised that each child is unique and different, and that special needs children have the same rights, needs and aspirations as all other children.
- Awareness-raising work is important at all levels in society, including that of the child, family, school, community and at a policy level to counteract fear, misunderstanding and negative attitudes.
- Large-scale awareness-raising programmes involving special needs children and their right to education can be initiated through mass media and civil society.
- The teacher training institutions, school administrators, and all staff in the system need to be updated with the positive aspects of inclusion through short courses, seminars and workshops.

**Teacher training**
- Teachers in the primary schools need to be trained on mainstreaming principles and the basics of special needs, to ensure that their attitudes and approaches do not prevent special needs children from gaining equal access to education.
- While it is important to develop training programmes to cater for children with different needs, training need not be too specialized.
- Inclusive education should be addressed in both pre-service and in-service training for teachers and headteachers.
- Problem-based, practical on-the-job training though teacher networking and peer support will be more effective than theoretical pre-service training.

**Incentives to encourage teachers’ responsibility**
- Teachers of the primary schools need to understand, and accept, that they need to take the responsibility to teach all children, since all children have the right to education. Motivating teachers to take on this responsibility could be the key to success.
- A reward system could be useful to sustain the commitment of teachers who show additional skills, but this should be through the existing system of promotion and grading. Being recognized as a creative teacher, and seeing special needs children achieve good results, would in itself be rewarding to teachers.

**Teaching methodology**
- Changes in teaching methods could include rearranging the classroom so that children can work in small groups, encourage a ‘buddy’ system where older, or more academically able, children are assigned to work with those experiencing difficulties, introducing locally available materials for play activities or teaching mathematics and new vocabulary.
- Introduce supplementary reading materials reflecting inclusive issues, such as disability and gender.
GENDER AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION SWAPS IN SOUTH ASIA

Identification and assessment

- Procedures have to be developed for early identification and assessment of children with special needs.
- Early detection is critical as late identification and poor teaching in the early years might make a child's difficulties more severe. Many children whose difficulties are not identified will fall behind, lose interest, and eventually drop out.

Flexibility

- As a system, inclusive education should be flexible. Its principles lie in education in the regular classroom. This need for flexibility must be reflected in the methods and materials used to give all children the best possible access to quality education.
- Curriculum flexibility for children with special needs should take into account that modification is sometimes needed in the teaching content, the method of display, the type of teaching material used, the response expected from the child, and the method of assessment or evaluation.
- Children with learning difficulties should be educated with their peers and have access to the core curriculum to the maximum extent possible. A number of methods can be used singly or in combination to help make regular classroom an effective learning environment for all children, including adapting curricular materials, increasing the frequency of student participation during instruction, ensuring mastery of learning, and employing class-wide peer tutoring programmes.

Again, it is noted that this constitutes an ambitious and coherent approach. As with the other plans introduced above, whilst some ideas have already been taken on board, there is no more detailed, timed or costed, plan for implementation.

Vulnerable children

It was identified in the PEDP-II situational analysis that many children, and especially girls, from vulnerable groups such as the poorest families, children in disaster prone areas (such as coastal islands, river erosion and drought areas) and urban slums are not attending school (Project Appraisal Document of PEDP-II, 2004). In setting up PEDP-II, it was recognized that there was a need to address these issues. The Situational Analysis, Strategic and Action Plan for Mainstreaming Vulnerable Children’s Education was developed in January 2006 but has not yet been finalized.

The draft document identifies the following groups of vulnerable children, whilst recognizing that this list is not exhaustive:

- Street children
- Children from very poor families
- Working children and child labourers / Worst Form of Child Labour (WFCL)
- Child sex workers and children of sex workers
- Children from refugee and Bihari communities
- Children from disaster prone, remote river/island/char, haor and coastal areas
- Children living in urban slums
- Children of special occupation groups (gypsy, sweeper, cobbler, etc.)
- Children with HIV/AIDS
- Trafficked children
- Orphaned children
Children from the tea gardens
Children from the fishing community
Imprisoned children

As for indigenous and disabled children, a central principle is that vulnerable children should be included *on an equal basis within the mainstream classroom, wherever possible*. Some general actions relevant to the range of vulnerable groups identified are given in the box below.

### Strategies for Vulnerable Children

- Mass awareness-raising of the importance of education within the various communities, with encouragement and provision of incentives for parents to enrol their children in mainstream schools.
- Mass awareness-raising campaigns to change the mind-set of the majority population to reduce the social discrimination faced by vulnerable groups.
- Provision of Early Childhood Education as preparation for formal schooling, the early identification of difficulties and enhanced early development.
- Linkage of primary schools with secondary schools, vocational training and other institutions or organizations to assist children on completion of primary school in their chances of employment or continued education.
- School flexibility, to respond to the specific difficulties of the local community, in particular schools’ timing, contact hours, holidays, students’ evaluation system, teachers’ appointments, transfer, posting, students’ stipends and food support programme in disaster prone and poverty areas, reconstruction of damaged schools.
- Inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation to improve health, sanitation, education, security, financial support and relief in times of disaster and food crisis.

*The Action Plans: summary*

In summary, there has been important conceptual development in relation to gender and equity, with the development of a concept of ‘inclusive education’ that makes sense in the Bangladesh context. The concept of ‘mainstreaming’ is taking root, and there are the beginnings of frameworks to help this to happen in practice, particularly with regard to gender. That said, some confusions and contradictions remain. While there is an understanding of the desirability of a mainstreaming approach focused on inclusive, flexible and effective schools, the very fact of four separate Action Plans might mitigate against the achievement of this in practice. The names of the plans are somewhat confusing, and the use of the word ‘tribal’ against the preferences of indigenous communities seems to be against the spirit of the aim of inclusion and respect. Furthermore, the Action Plans are not yet in fact ‘actionable’, as they are not integrated into the normal workplans and responsibilities of relevant staff and there has been little thought to prioritization, sequencing and costing. Many of the ‘actions’ outlines for the moment remain no more than ‘aspirations’.

### 5.3 Analysis of Equity and Inclusion Issues for Policy and Strategy Development

In the Macro Plan, issues related to social exclusion are discussed under the ‘Issues of Equity and Inclusive Education’. It is noted that ‘poor and working children, girls, tribal and
religious minorities, disabled children, children in different geographic and educational environments, and refugee children are at particular risk of being marginalized in the formal education system and required targeted strategies if equitable enrolment, completion and attainment are to be achieved’ (Final Plan, PEDP-II, GoB, 18 January 2003, p.11). There is also a considerably detailed analysis of the specific dimensions of disparity and exclusion. For example, on gender, it is observed that while there is ‘evidence of women’s growing awareness and assertiveness of their rights, educational advancement, and increased participation in the economy and the public arena’ there was at the same time ‘continuing domination of patriarchal values and traditions reflected in son preference, seclusion of women, and restriction of their mobility among others’ (p.13). On indigenous peoples, it is noted that the number of CHT children in the 6–11 age group ranged from 240,000 to 270,000 with only two-thirds of them enrolled in any form of schooling. On disabled children, the number of children with some sort of disability was estimated to be 1.6 million, with key barriers including social stigma, lack of social awareness, and negative attitudes. Refugee children in Bangladesh were broadly identified as the Rohinga (about 22,000), living in two camps in Cox’s Bazaar, and Bihari, living in camps in Dhaka and Dinajpur districts. Refugee children ‘are largely deprived of access to education’, the Plan noted, and ‘there is currently no policy for their education’ (p.15).

While there is considerable analysis presented in the Macro Plan, it is also noted that this was based on available data, which was far from complete. For example, there are no accurate survey figures on the number of children with disabilities – and special needs – in Bangladesh, and even the word ‘disabilities’ becomes muddled in the process, with a lack of clearly articulated definitions for types and level of severity. Furthermore, government data tends to be on the optimistic side – a problem prevalent in many countries stemming from the systemic ‘incentives’ for over-reporting enrolments and progress at each level. A recent analysis on dropouts in a study by BRAC University, for example, found higher levels of dropout than official government data.

Further analyses have been undertaken since the Macro Plan in the development of the various Action Plans and the Access and Inclusive Education Framework. Overall, these analyses are found to be more detailed and nuanced that that for the Macro Plan, though again the same challenges of incomplete data were faced.

As will be seen again in the next sections, it is less clear that there has yet been the development of an effective mechanism for ongoing analysis of gender and equity issues, based on data generated through monitoring systems and/or linking to evidence-based policy development and revision.

5.4 Mechanisms for Communication and Participation

The PEDP-II planning stage included a series of consultation workshops, culminating in a national seminar in 2003, attended by various experts, government, non-governmental organizations, and donor agencies. These workshops were run in a participatory manner and thus allowed for some degree of participation at the design stage. PEDP-II also took account of the PRSP, which in turn involved a Participatory Poverty Assessment. Likewise, in the development of the Access and Inclusive Education Framework and the various Action Plans, a range of stakeholders had opportunity to participate.
However, what appears to be missing as yet is a mechanism for ongoing two-way communication with, and participation of, the ‘primary’ stakeholders, namely children (in school and out-of-school), parents and communities, especially those currently marginalized. This need is noted in the Access and Inclusive Education Framework, in which it is recognized that decentralization under PEDP-II should progressively allow for greater community involvement.

5.5 Review and Monitoring

5.5.1 Monitoring systems and indicators

The PEDP-II Macro Plan presents a ‘Provisional List of Monitoring Indicators’ as ‘initial and tentative’ as a ‘starting point’ and indicates that the figures (and indicators) would be ‘finalized when the Baseline Survey has been completed.’ The Provisional List of Monitoring Indicators, however, does identify certain indicators (extracted here from the main list) that relate to equity and inclusion. These include:

- Proportion of female headteachers to increase from an estimated 25 per cent in 2001 to 40 per cent by 2008.
- Female members of SMCs will have increased from an average of 1 per SMC in 2001 to at least 4 per SMC by 2008.
- The proportion of female AUEOs (Assistant Upazilla Education Officers), estimated at 12 per cent in 2001, will have risen to at least 30 per cent by 2008.
- A complete gender audit of curriculum and textbooks of Classes 3 to 5 will be carried out by 2006.
- A positive representation of children with disabilities, tribal children, and children of other disadvantaged groups will be integrated into the curriculum and textbooks for all primary classes by 2008.
- A gender module will be included in the ongoing training programmes for the SMCs, headteachers, teachers, trainers, educational administrative officers and all other relevant officials by 2005.
- At least 20 per cent of schools will have adopted explicit strategies to improve educational opportunities for disabled children by 2005, and 30 per cent by 2008.
- Interventions financed by ‘Innovation Grants’ will be replicated in other sites by government, donors, communities, and other organizations.

Whilst these appear promising, they are clearly incomplete, and there is also no differentiation of implementation indicators from outcome indicators. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that the Baseline Study for PEDP-II was presented in Draft Report form only in June 2006, about two years after the programme began. It has still not yet been formally approved. With the focus up until now on the prolonged baseline development, there has as yet been little attention to the task of strengthening DPE’s systems for data collection and monitoring. While there has been good progress in the collection of gender-disaggregated data, there is still work to be done in terms of definitions and classifications (e.g. of disabled children) and in building capacity for data analysis and use.

5.5.2 Sector review processes

PEDP-II contains a number of processes for sector review. Chief among these are the Joint Annual Review Missions (JARM) and the Mid-Term Review. Two JARM meetings have
Gender, equity and access were given attention in both JARM meetings. JARM I, in 2005, was divided into three discussion sub-groups, one of which was **access/equity**. This sub-group, and the two others, had joint participation by members of the government and the donor partners. The JARM I Aide Memoire, however, noted that a series of key documents, including the gender action plan, were not made available on time for review and therefore not taken into account in that Mission’s recommendations. Also noted was: (i) omission in the Project Proforma for staffing of special needs education in DPE; (ii) the lack of a logical institutional location with DPE to administer, manage and monitor inclusive education; and (iii) delays in fielding appropriate consultants, which in turn led to delays in preparing action plans and strategies related to education for vulnerable, special needs and tribal children. The Mission stated that the access component required serious actions to address the delays and gaps.

The second JARM (2006) was divided into six focus groups, including **equitable access** and **quality improvement in schools and classrooms**, with joint participation in each group by the government and the donor partners, and each group chaired by a senior official of the DPE. JARM members from the government included officials from MoPME, DPE, the national Academy for Primary Education (NAPE), the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED). The review of PEDP-II was covered through presentations, group consultations, field visits to schools, and a Primary Training Institute (PTI). The report of this JARM stated that there was an urgent need to expedite the approval process for the relevant strategies and plans. The JARM devoted one section of its report to equitable access, noting ‘good progress’ including the establishment of an Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) in DPE, and efforts to include disabled children in schools as per a government circular distributed at the end of 2005.

In summary, then, so far the JARMs have raised relevant issues, but in the absence of even baseline date, let alone year-on-year progress data, the JARMs have not been able to act as a forum for assessing sector-wide progress. Hence, there has been no direct linkage between the JARMs and policy review as yet.

The formal Mid-Term Review of PEDP-II has not yet occurred. (Originally scheduled for April/May 2007, the Review has been postponed until the fourth quarter of 2007.) However, the external MTR consultants were completing the process of gathering data and submitting reports at the time of this writing. The authors of this report were asked to provide information that would ‘feed into’ the MTR and they subsequently briefed the MTR Team Leader on their research. However, it should be noted that there was not an official consultant team for gender/equity/inclusion within the Mid-Term Review exercise nor did the briefing materials presented to the MTR external consultant team mention gender or equity. This rather haphazard coverage suggests that there is still insufficient priority being given to these areas and a limited understanding of the importance of addressing them as cross-cutting issues at a strategic level.
5.6 Institutional and Capacity Development for Addressing Equity In PEDP-II

PEDP-II has a specific component (Component 1) related to management and organizational development, which recognizes the importance of ‘governance’. It stresses capacity development for the implementation of PEDP-II. Implicitly this includes implementation of strategies to address equity. However, perhaps because of the separation of MoPME from DPE, there is seemingly less attention to long-term analytical and policy development capacity, either generally or in relation to analysing and addressing equity issues.

Likewise, there has so far been limited scope for adjusting institutional structures to reflect the intended ‘mainstreaming’ approach. The main initiative has been the setting up of an Access and Inclusive Education Cell within DPE, with some international TA support. This cell is taking overall leadership on implementation of the Access and Inclusive Education Framework and its related action plans. It has also commenced the task of supporting capacity development across DPE; for example, Monitoring and Evaluation staff will have a training programme on gender and equity – a positive step, although late. However, it is not clear the extent to which this cell is embedded institutionally or how far shared responsibilities for ‘mainstreaming’ are written into job descriptions and performance management mechanisms across DPE. For the time being, the achievements of the Cell appear to depend on the energy, commitment and persuasive powers of its team members.

Meanwhile, existing relevant expertise is seemingly being under-utilized by PEDP-II. Just one example is the National Centre for Special Needs Education, set up 20 years ago with donor support. It is linked institutionally with the Ministry of Social Welfare, rather than Education, reflecting a now outmoded approach. While it is not appropriate for this study to make judgments on whether this particular institution has a potential role in PEDP-II or not, it is worth noting that there has apparently been little systematic identification of possible sources of professional expertise to support educational inclusion through PEDP-II.

The National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) is another key organization in the overall development of primary education. It has an important role in training teacher trainers in the Primary Training Institutes (PTIs) and as such also can serve as a focal conduit of information and methodologies related to gender and equity in primary schools. The second JARM report in 2006 notes that NAPE has been conducting the newly developed/adapted PEDP-II training courses on behalf of the DPE Training Division for school management training for headteachers and the academic supervision course for Assistant Upazilla Education Officers (AUEOs) and Upazilla Education Officers (UEOs). It has also piloted the development of teaching packages for science and mathematics. The second JARM report also mentions that in accordance with its responsibility to undertake the revision of the Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed) curriculum in modular form for primary education teachers, NAPE sent a proposal to MoPME for approval to form a steering committee to guide the process. Given these crucial education development activities and NAPE’s potential to affect gender and equity in the education system, that 17 of 46 ‘sanctioned’ positions in NAPE remain vacant (associated with the need for civil service reform and a primary education cadre) is of considerable concern. The second JARM has emphasized the need for NAPE to have a strategic plan to guide its institutional development under PEDP-II.
5.7 Summary: Equity and Inclusion in PEDP-II

In summary, an exploration of the scope, content and approach of PEDP-II suggests seriousness in the intention to better address equity and inclusion, but also considerable challenges in doing this in practice. Ambitious objectives have been set, many of these directly relating to improving equitable access and completion for vulnerable and excluded children. There has been some good analysis of key disparity issues, albeit based on patchy data, located in different documents and not available as a coherent whole. Some strategies for equitable access and ‘equity in quality’ have been identified in the Macro Plan, and more detailed strategies have now been identified for implementing Bangladesh’s vision of ‘inclusive, quality education’ as it pertains to gender inequality, indigenous children, disabled children and other vulnerable children. The action plans under the Access and Inclusive Education Framework contain a comprehensive range of strategies that include attention to the demand and supply side of ‘equity in access’, as well as the equally important dimensions of ‘equity in quality’. However, these are not yet translated into actionable plans with clear milestones and, furthermore, are not fully integrated but represent an ‘additional layer’.

The conceptualization of PEDP-II as a giant project with rigid proforma and inflexible budget lines has constrained the possibility of fully integrating the strategies identified in the ‘action plans’ into a coherent, costed, strategic framework for the sub-sector as a whole. For the time being, also, there is a less-than-ideal situation of a ‘SWAp’ for the formal primary sub-sector running alongside a separate large project in non-formal primary education. There has also been considerable under-estimation of the capacity and institutional constraints for implementation. This, again, links to some of the weaknesses in conceptualization: DPE staff perceive PEDP-II and ROSC as additional to their general work and pressure to implement a wide range of strategies and action plans, rather than perceiving a single coherent and sequenced plan that would make it possible to focus on clear priorities.

The next chapter explores further some of the ‘partnership processes’ of PEDP-II, after which attention is turned to analysing its equity- and inclusion-related impacts to date.
6. SWAp Partnership Processes and Mechanisms and the Implications for Equity and Social Inclusion

Progress on addressing equity and inclusion in PEDP-II has been closely bound up with its wider partnership processes. This chapter focuses on ‘teasing out’ the ways in which different SWAp partners have influenced the initial development and subsequent evolution of PEDP-II.

6.1 Coordination Mechanisms

6.1.1 Inter-ministerial collaboration

‘Cross-sectoral relations’ are given general attention in the PEDP-II Access and Inclusive Education Framework document, noting the need to ‘involve collaboration between Ministries, for example MoPME and the Ministry of Social Welfare, community-based organizations, including both local and INGOs, and civil society, to find out what expertise and activities already exist, and to build on good practice.’

In practice, there appears to be much work to be done in terms of coordination and collaboration. While gender focal points and groups have been set up within DPE line divisions through the efforts of middle-level staff, inter-ministerial relations on gender and equity topics are at a nascent stage. There has been little coordination between the ministry concerned with secondary education (MoE) and the ministry focusing on primary education (MoPME), even though the need to do so regarding gender and equity, and other topics, is great. The Ministry of Social Welfare, which officially administers programmes for children with special needs, has had minimal collaboration and communication with MoPME. It is difficult to pinpoint one reason why inter-ministerial communication and collaboration does not occur to a greater extent. More likely the reasons lie in a complex of issues involving governance, civil service reform, and a large and unwieldy bureaucracy. There are, however, periodic collaborative efforts that bring together talents from across the government on behalf of education, gender and equity. The preparation of the National Plan of Action for Children: 2005–2010 (July 2006), led by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) is one such example. There is also an Inter-Ministerial CRC Committee, comprised of government ministries with children’s portfolios and other organizations, which meets regularly to focus on issues related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6.1.2 The LCG and ELCG

PEDP-II is a collaborative effort of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and a group of development partners. There are several mechanisms through which that collaboration takes place. The Local Consultative Group (LCG) and the Education Local Consultative Group (ELCG) are the key formal mechanisms.

The Local Consultative Group (LG) is a group of donors and various UN agencies. It is comprised of the Heads of Agencies and it relates to the government at the highest levels. It particularly works with the government’s Planning Commission and its External Relations Division (ERD). Sub-groups of the LCG relate to specific sectors or through cross-cutting themes. The LCG was until recently chaired by a member of the World Bank but now the Chair is elected by the members.
The sub-group on Education is the Education Local Consultative Group (ELCG). It was established in 1993 and is made up not only of donors and UN agencies but also several NGOs that have coordinating roles among Bangladesh’s large NGO community. The ELCG meets every two months. The Chairperson is elected for a maximum of two years on a rotating basis (the Netherlands provided its Embassy’s First Secretary as the first Chairperson; other chairpersons have come from UNICEF, CIDA, SDC and DFID). ELCG also organizes periodic meetings and workshops on specific topics. (Two workshops were organized on the SWAp modality and how to engage with the Government of Bangladesh on this issue during the preparation period for PEDP-II.) The PEDP-II Forum is a regular event that offers the opportunity for sharing information and knowledge with development practitioners in the various agencies and NGOs.

The stated purposes of the ELCG are:

- To provide a forum for exchange of information with the Government of Bangladesh related to progress and constraints in the achievement of goals set by the Government of Bangladesh in the education sector.
- To provide a forum for exchange of information and discussions of issues among development partners supporting education programmes, and to identify issues of common concern to raise with the main Local Consultative Group and/or the Government of Bangladesh, as appropriate.
- To facilitate common understandings and integration of policies, approaches and efforts of development partners in the education sector.

With the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) as the principal implementing agency of PEDP-II, in terms of more overall day-to-day coordination, the Programme Liaison Unit (PLU) plays the key role, and is chaired by a representative of the lead agency in the SWAp, the Asian Development Bank. In terms of financial management and procurement, the Second JARM report noted the progress being made in the context of the complex financial system needed in PEDP-II. The mechanisms include the use of multiple accounts, multiple disbursement locations, and a complex ‘fund flow with cost sharing mechanism’. Identified areas for further harmonization in financial management include the adoption of a simplified review process by the PLU of the ADB for procurement.

These are the formal mechanisms through which donor coordination takes place in PEDP-II. Interviews with DPE/AIEC personnel, however, revealed a ‘non-formal’ mechanism or forum on inclusive education. This forum was initiated, not from the top, but from the middle ranks of DPE as they strived to bring together the previously mentioned ‘focal points’ around inclusive education in the various line divisions of DPE. This group now meets regularly.

6.2 Coordination in Practice

6.2.1 The PEDP-II planning process

The planning process of PEDP-II presented major challenges to both government and DPs in terms of not only establishing formal mechanisms and a Code of Conduct, but also putting this into practice in the Bangladesh context. The following lessons are taken from an unpublished research document as well as from the personal communications to the authors.
The positive lessons learned in the PEDP-II planning process, taking place over a three-year period beginning in 2001, include (i) cooperative working relationship with the government, (ii) government leadership, (iii) taking time to agree on the way forward, (iv) involving the government at various levels, (v) working cooperatively as development partners, (vi) dialogue that is open and transparent, (vii) commitment to keep all parties on board, (viii) projects from the earlier programme being allowed to overlap, and (ix) ownership by the government. The existence of the ELCG has been cited as an important advantage in the early planning stages of PEDP-II (Jennings, 2006), in order to bring about these positive changes.

The negative lessons on the planning and design of PEDP-II are telling in terms of development partner processes and for the whole programme, including the overall approaches and strategies being attempted in terms of addressing equity and inclusion. In shortened form, these negative lessons are:

- **Inadequacy of the project document.** The Project Proforma is not adequate as a procedural guide for a SWAp. Activities and budgets are fixed for the six-year programme period, and the document can reportedly only be revised once during the life of the programme. This type of document is much too rigid for a programme of this type. Many of the problems of the so-called ‘SWAp’ have resulted from the fact that it has been conceived of as a giant ‘project’, including many of the features that the SWAp modality was developed to eliminate or overcome.

- **Unrealistic donor expectations.** Some of the conditions agreed to by the donor partners as well as monitoring indicators were not realistic. One result of this is that the government often has to explain the reasons for unmet targets. It also causes problems for the donor partners when they attempt to monitor programme progress according to the agreed-upon indicators.

- **Inadequate planning for capacity building.** There was a failure to plan for adequate capacity building within DPE, as well as to consider how this could be sensibly sequenced to reflect the new demands of PEDP-II. There are a number of activities that are crucial for improvement of the system that needed to be initiated from the outset of the programme but there is insufficient capacity to initiate and manage the activities. Although there was a plan for considerable technical assistance, much of this has not occurred and the absorptive capacity of DPE to effectively use such assistance is a major question. The complexity of implementing a massive programme to expand outreach and improve effectiveness while at the same time managing the routine functions of the primary education system was not recognized. Nor was the fact that most DPE staff do not come with a background in primary education, and with frequent transfers there is often inadequate time for staff to build the required competencies to effectively manage primary education. Change is needed at a far deeper level if DPE is to become the dynamic organization it needs to be.

- **Quality in the classroom given insufficient attention.** Improving classroom quality is one of the stated goals of PEDP-II but it is difficult to introduce the required rapid changes given the constraints previously noted.

6.2.2 The ROSC example

With a diverse set of development partners, of varying interests and sizes, it is not unexpected to find that the dynamics of the coordination process can become very complex. In part too, the complexities of coordination may also result from the overall complexity of PEDP-II itself, reflecting in turn the size and complexity of the educational challenges facing Bangladesh.
One interesting example of the coordination complexities in the Bangladesh SWAp context has been the debate surrounding the Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) project. The processes surrounding the preparation of ROSC are revealing of the dynamics and pressures that surround PEDP-II. The preparation of ROSC, funded by the World Bank and Swiss Development Corporation (SDC), began in 2004 after PEDP-II had already begun implementation. The rationale was the urgent need to reach out-of-school children with non-formal education, given that it was already known that PEDP-II would take time before making any significant impact on formal school enrolments. The project began on a limited scale in 20 upazillas in 2005, and by early 2006 had expanded to all 60 targeted upazillas, and established 7909 ‘Ananda’ schools. The project aims to reduce the number of out-of-school children by 0.5 million. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) is responsible for ROSC at the national level and the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) is the implementing agency (though its newly-established Bureau for NFE).

The partner dialogue that occurred prior to ROSC centred around two issues: (1) whether the preparation and implementation of ROSC was at odds with the Donor Partners’ Code of Conduct (see Annex 2), principally because ROSC was to be implemented through the same MoPME Directorate (Directorate of Primary Education: DPE) as PEDP-II, thus exacerbating a capacity problem in that Directorate; and (2) whether the design of ROSC, which involved financing of activities for out-of-school children through communities and NGOs, was poorly conceived and might lead to corruption problems. In the background of this second issue was the abolition of the Directorate of Non-formal Education (DNFE), related in part to just such problems.

In the end, ROSC was agreed upon, and now in its implementation stage appears to be fulfilling a need. The problems created were perhaps an inevitable consequence of being unable to include NFE within the PEDP framework at the outset. Despite the concerns at the time, there appears now to be a determination amongst DPs to now see ROSC as a strategic opportunity for testing out how NFE, with NGOs as implementing partners, might be brought under a SWAp umbrella in the future.

6.2.3 DP support to strengthening approaches to gender and equity

There are a number of examples of DPs working in coordination and using the ELCG mechanism to encourage and make progress on addressing equity and inclusion. One example is the TA support given by the Netherlands Government (in agreement with other DPs) to gender mainstreaming in the PRSP, as a strategic way to support gender mainstreaming across education and other key line ministries.

At around the same time as the development of ROSC, the LCGs for Health and Education jointly financed a study to explore possible strategic mechanisms by which DPs could jointly finance service delivery through NGOs. It was hoped that this would be a way of improving coverage and quality, by enabling competent NGOs to continue to implement programmes, whilst enabling government to have overall oversight, coordination and quality control. A number of ideas were put forward, but so far it seems to have proved impossible to agree on a workable mechanism.

While the need for preparing action plans covering tribal children’s education, special needs, and vulnerable children was broadly supported in the first JARM, it was the international inclusive
education specialist at the PLU who was designated, in conjunction with the DPE and UNICEF, to outline a plan for the development of those strategy and action plans. Moving to the DPE, and with continuing support, it was the same specialist who was instrumental in facilitating the process of establishing the Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) within DPE.

The World Bank has been conducting a Country Gender Assessment (CGA) in Bangladesh and the survey, data collection activities and in-country consultations are scheduled for completion in 2007.

6.2.4 Inter-ministerial / inter-sectoral communication

Despite the recognition of the need for inter-sectoral collaboration, as yet there is little evidence that PEDP-II has been able to facilitate its improvement in practice. The lack of communication that continues to exist between ministries, except at very formal and high levels, has had and has now a profound effect on inclusive education efforts. There is, for example, a great need for better and frequent communication between middle-level personnel of MoPME, MoE, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and the Ministry of Social Welfare. The Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education also need to communicate and collaborate more frequently.
7. Policies and Strategies for Promoting Equity and Inclusion: What was the Impact of Moving to a SWAp Modality?

7.1 Direct and Wider Impacts on Equitable Access, Inclusion and Educational Outcomes

PEDP-II began in July 2004 and has now been in operation for approximately three years of its six-year commitment. As noted, two Joint Annual Review Missions have been completed. The official Mid-Term Review (MTR) has been postponed until the last quarter of 2007 but external consultants for the review gathered information for it during March and April. At this stage, it is difficult to make judgments on the overall ‘equity impacts’ of PEDP-II. However, it is possible to consider evidence of changes so far, not only in terms of outcomes but also in terms of understanding, attitudes and practice.

General achievements have included ‘the transfer of more than 11,000 staff (including 9000 teachers) from PEDP-I to the government revenue budget, implementation of a large-scale infrastructure programme, recruitment of 14,200 new teachers (out of a target of 35,000), reported printing and distribution of over 65 million textbooks to primary schools, and providing “C-in-Ed” training to over 17,000 existing primary teachers who had not received any formal training before they were appointed as classroom teachers’ (JARM, 2006, p.2). Another sign of progress noted in the second JARM report, particularly relevant to gender, is that there has been ‘a significant improvement in the gender ratio of new teachers; i.e. in the last recruitment of 14,000 primary teachers, some 60 per cent were female compared to the current 40 per cent share in the teacher force.’

In its findings on ‘Equitable Access’, the second JARM observed that ‘in the past year good progress has been made under this component. Most notable is the establishment of an Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) in DPE in June 2005. An Inclusive Education (IE) Framework, Strategies and Action Plans, and an Innovation Grants Manual have been developed’ (p.5). A Gender Action Plan was approved on 1 January 2006. It also reported that there are efforts underway to include disabled children in schools as per a GoB Circular issued at the end of 2005, and that this has ‘generated interest among parents and people concerned and resulted in improved access and inclusion among the target groups.’

A quarterly newsletter (June 2006) of the Bangladesh Resident Mission of the Asian Development Bank reiterated, summarized and added to these general findings of the second JARM under the headline ‘Bangladesh Improves Primary Education’ (see box below).

**Bangladesh Improves Primary Education**

‘The Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) of Bangladesh made significant progress in implementation in the past year, according to a joint annual review of the programme held from 25 April to 8 May. The programme confirmed 14,200 new teachers during fiscal year (FY) 2005–2006 (ending 30 June). About 314,877 teachers and officers received training. Over 65.4 million books were distributed free of charge to students in early 2006. In addition, 14,200 classrooms, 209 Upazilla Resource Centres and 6613 toilets were
Some of the achievements of the Gender Action Plan, as of November 2006, are listed as in the box below.

**Progress on the Gender Action Plan**

- Each task on the GAP has been assigned to the appropriate line division of the directorate of primary education. DPE is to implement.
- To assist with coordination, a gender focal point in each line division and at NAPE and NCTB have been nominated.
- Recommendations regarding recruitment qualification criteria for teachers have been made to MoPME.
- A proposal has been submitted that SMCs constitute 9 people, including 2 male and 2 female guardians (minimum 30 per cent female membership).
- A study has been proposed to identify the barriers that women teachers face in recruitment and in the workplace.
- Gender sessions in all short courses – headteachers, subject-based teachers’ training and SMC training.
- Female teachers can apply for a transfer when they marry, to their in-laws’ Upazilla or to their husband’s place of work.
- Men can apply for a transfer to their wife’s place of work.
- All data collected in the baseline survey are gender disaggregated, as will be the school census data.
- Training modules have been developed on gender. One-day gender module has been developed for long courses. ToT module on gender has been prepared.
- Gender issues were incorporated into the interactive popular theatre training.
- A study on gender balance in textbooks has been completed.
- International and national consultants on gender have been identified to take the plan further forward.
- 40 per cent target poorest group (both boys and girls) has been achieved with respect to stipend program.
- Mother’s name is also included in the registration form so parents are actively participating in school committees.

A Bangladesh newspaper article (*The Daily Star, 5 February 2007*) entitled ‘Stemming the Rot in Education’ by a highly-regarded international and Bangladeshi educator, Mansoor Ahmed, reviewed the problems of the Bangladesh educational system. Among Dr Ahmed’s comments was a pointed critique of PEDP-II: ‘Already approaching mid point of its life, it can best be described as limping along without demonstrable progress in key areas of quality improvement and making schools responsible and accountable for improved learning performance by students.’ Dr. Ahmed also noted that ‘there has been a closing of the gender gap at the primary and secondary levels, which is commendable; however, both boys and girls now suffer equally...’
from the poor quality of education and fail to complete the primary and secondary stages.' An even more recent article by Dr Ahmed (The Daily Star, 24 March 2007) extends the critique.

Overall, it can be concluded that progress has been made on a range of inputs and strategies which, according to past experience in Bangladesh and elsewhere, have the potential to improve equitable access and inclusion and ‘equity in quality’. Some of these, such as the successful recruitment of many female teachers, have probably been facilitated (or made more efficient) by the coordinated approach of PEDP-II. Very positively, access to education has improved overall in terms of gender, though this has been a trend that began before PEDP-II. It can also be said that the ‘extreme poor’ are still not being reached, except in limited fashion by NGOs.

In terms of wider changes in terms of understanding, capacity and practice, positive changes have begun, as noted by practitioners within the system during the past several years. The concept of inclusive education is becoming more widely, if not totally, understood. The Access to Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) is in operation within DPE and is now mostly, if not totally, staffed as planned. Inclusive education has moved forward and changes are happening within DPE and the educational system. Action Plans exist, although not in really operational form, and the process of their development allowed for dialogue and learning. Social inclusion activities are planned and are now moving forward, according to strategies based on more realistic estimates about what can be done.

### 7.2 Affective Factors: A Summary

The impact of PEDP-II on social inclusion, as has been noted above, can only be described in terms of inputs, processes and some outputs. However, many of the facilitating and constraining factors are apparent. In ‘SWOT Analysis’ terms, there are some Strengths, a lot of Weaknesses and Threats, and a multitude of Opportunities.

**The facilitative factors**

- **Passionate, dedicated individuals, within the government, NGOs and donor agencies** who remain true to themselves and to goals in which they intensely believe. These are individuals who persist, in spite of many institutional obstacles, in working for recognition, justice, rights, and education for the disadvantaged and excluded in society.

- **Communication and collaboration at the mid- and lower levels of the various bureaucracies**, through hard effort to overcome or work around bureaucratic blockages.

- **Funding being channelled more effectively to where it is needed.** For example, this has helped to build new schools with ramps for the disabled and to recruit new teachers. Sixty per cent of the new recruits are now female. Money may help with Innovative Grants through which NGOs may bring their skills and experience in working with the excluded.

**The constraining factors**

- **Complexity.** PEDP-II is a massive programme with multiple donors and its complexity stems in large part from its efforts to implement the expansion of outreach and improve educational effectiveness while at the same time managing the everyday functions of a primary education system.

- **Barriers that range far beyond the educational system.** Many barriers, such as deep-seated discrimination, cannot be addressed by the education system alone and require change across the whole society. Attitudes and practice towards gender, disabilities, refugee
children, ethnic minorities and languages of instruction require concerted efforts on many fronts and through a variety of organizations and government agencies to be effective.

- **Funding.** Funding has required a complex financial system involving the use of multiple accounts, multiple disbursement locations, and funding flows with a cost-sharing mechanism.

- **Rigid Project Proforma, unrealistic goal-setting and other design faults.** A principal fault of the Project Proforma, a document intended for smaller scale and less complex projects rather than SWAs, is that activities and budgets are fixed for the six-year life of PEDP-II, with only one opportunity to make changes. This is in contrast to the original vision of PEDP-II as a programme that would develop, change and improve during its span of activities. As PEDP-II has developed, original goals that proved to be unrealistic could not be changed, causing problems for the government and the donor partners when goals could not be met.

- **Inadequate capacity and capacity building to tackle the complexity and the magnitude of the work.** The overall human capacity for analysing and addressing social inclusion in education needs to be increased, both in terms of numbers and level of skills required for a range of specific roles at different level. Whilst a certain amount of training has been undertaken, there has been inadequate consideration of the long term mentoring support that is needed in order to bring about the depth of change in attitudes, understanding and practice that is required.

- **Institutional weaknesses (including Civil Service recruitment and promotion procedures).** Educational Governance. This remains the crux and stumbling block of PEDP-II, and an impediment to work on social inclusion. The institutions involved in implementation of PEDP-II require development, as already observed, in order that they can effectively handle the challenges of the education system. PEDP-II has barely addressed these institutional challenges and that is severely constraining the overall efforts and those focusing on social inclusion. Current practices do not encourage, unleash or reward creativity, risk-taking or commitment. Links among ministries are weak or missing on disabilities and special needs, gender, and on concerns of key disadvantaged groups. Areas of fundamental weakness include:
  - Recruitment of key educational system personnel (education cadres vs. administrative cadres)
  - Promotions and transfers
  - NAPE (National Academy for Primary Education): 17 of 46 ‘sanctioned’ positions in NAPE remain vacant. NAPE has a key role in training teacher trainers in Primary Training Institutes (PTIs).

- **Major communication and coordination gaps, between key ministries, donors and government, NGOs and government.** Communication and coordination gaps between key ministries involved in children’s education, especially MoPME, MoE, the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, have added to the complexity of communication and implementation in an already complex programme. The coordination between government and NGO education programmes remains weak.

- **Inadequate Monitoring and Evaluation procedures that recognize and record aspects of educational quality and inclusive education.** Aside from the results of the Baseline Survey being delayed well into the programme, monitoring and evaluation efforts, especially qualitative assessments at the classroom level, remain weak, and a recognition that gender and equity factors must be incorporated into these evaluative efforts has only just begun.
8. Conclusions, Lessons Learned, Ways Forward

It is a long road to social inclusion in Bangladesh and it has been a long road of learning to begin to see all of the complexities involved in social inclusion efforts within this SWAp, PEDP-II. As reviewed in this study, the road to social inclusion runs through a challenging social context and a political landscape that, during the planning and implementation of PEDP-II to date, has been frequently tempestuous and confrontational.

8.1 Conclusions

PEDP-II has made important strides forward in terms of social inclusion during its first three years. It has brought to DPE and MoPME the language of social inclusion and a heightened awareness and understanding of its importance where it barely existed before. It has made a significant improvement in the gender ratio of new teachers. It has established an Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) in DPE. It has prepared an Inclusive Education Framework and a set of Action Plans covering gender, and special needs and tribal children. It has begun to incorporate gender sessions in all short courses for headteachers, subject-based teachers’ training, and SMC training. It has begun to take the first steps on the long road of bringing special needs children into schools. It has built thousands of new primary schools that incorporate ramps for use by children with disabilities. It has begun the task of supporting capacity development across DPE in terms of social inclusion issues and activities, including in monitoring and evaluation. PEDP-II has done all of this with a seriousness of intention supported by the donor partners and the government.

PEDP-II has made these strides in the face of considerable adversity. In retrospect, and given the magnitude of what needs to be done with social inclusion and education in Bangladesh as well as the realities of capacity needs within the education system, the objectives were and are overly ambitious. A review of the crucial planning phase of PEDP-II noted unrealistic expectations by donors, a failure to plan for adequate capacity building within DPE, a failure to plan for the effective management of activities, and the adoption and use of a rigid Project Proforma that allows for only one major revision for a programme with an evolving, developing vision.

The planning issues were transformed into implementation issues that have affected social inclusion and overall efforts, and which have been intensified by the complexity of the large programme, problems of recruitment and staffing, a delayed baseline survey, governance problems, and weaknesses of both inter-ministerial communication and coordination as well as coordination between the government and the NGO community. This study has noted that institutional weaknesses (including civil service and promotion procedures) remain the crux and stumbling block of PEDP-II and a major impediment to work on social inclusion. There are severe capacity problems. In addition, planning during the first half of PEDP-II for social inclusion has been problematic as well. The Action Plans developed during the first half of PEDP-II were important steps forward but not truly action focused. One action plan, on vulnerable children, has yet to be approved. Donor coordination, despite a hard-working Education Local Consultative Group (ELCG), has also been complex, perhaps not unexpectedly with such a diverse group of donor partners of varying interests and sizes. Moving to a SWAp modality has brought benefits of funding and administrative coordination to a large and complicated educational effort but its implementation and its impact to date has been seriously hampered. It is in fact difficult at this point to identify the actual impact of PEDP-II on social inclusion at the local and school levels. All of the issues noted above have profoundly affected,
and slowed, the work on social inclusion within PEDP-II and are forcing a practical rethinking of the new realities and what can be done in the second half of the programme.

8.2 Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from the PEDP-II efforts on social inclusion to date flow from the conclusions just presented. They involve planning and implementation, good intentions and ambitious goals, context, time and timing, governance, capacity, and coordination and communication.

- A rigid Project Proforma, as adopted by a SWAp such as PEDP-II, can have serious implications and effects on implementation of social inclusion programmes, particularly in terms of limiting the flexibility to adapt or change objectives and activities when programme realities and contexts also change.

- Goals and objectives that are unrealistic lead to expectations that cannot be met in implementation. In terms of the efforts on social inclusion as well as other aspects of PEDP-II, this leads to frustration, confusion and disappointment as benchmarks and time schedules are not met.

- Institutional weaknesses, in this case in the form of civil service and promotion procedures, can subvert even the best planning and implementation of social inclusion efforts in a SWAp.

- Capacity issues have had a profound effect on implementing social inclusion programme activities, as inadequate capacity in terms of numbers of active and available staff as well as staff who do not have the requisite skills takes a toll on providing efficient and effective outputs and on overall impact. Initiating a large and complex programme without planning for how to effectively manage routine activities while at the same time developing the capacity of staff to take on new ones is major dilemma; a dilemma that requires careful preparation and a long-term approach.

- Without strong attention to inter-ministerial communication, coordination and collaboration, particularly, as in Bangladesh, when social inclusion issues for children are spread over many ministries, social inclusion messages and efforts will be diluted.

- When there is a vibrant NGO community available with which to work on social inclusion issues, it hurts programme effectiveness if the coordination necessary to involve these creative organizations (e.g. Innovative Grants) does not occur.

- Action plans need to be prepared with care, especially in terms of making sure that the objectives and the actions are clearly stated and are measurable. Action plans are very important and delays in official approval (e.g. vulnerable children) slow the entire implementation process.

- Monitoring and evaluation processes need to be sensitive to and include social inclusion factors from the very beginning of a programme; failure to do so makes accurate data and information on progress difficult.

- While not a new lesson, it is important to reiterate that changing attitudes and practices on social inclusion is a long-term process that involves not only changes in the educational system but also the entire society.

8.3 Ways Forward

The ways forward in the social inclusion initiatives of PEDP-II require a long-term vision and a rethinking of what can be accomplished in the remaining three years of the programme. It is clear
from the conclusions and lessons learned in PEDP-II that practical steps need to be taken to reorient the social inclusion efforts. The Access and Inclusive Education Cell has already begun that process. Nevertheless, the recommendations that follow apply to other, higher policy and leadership levels as well.

1. The Project Proforma should be changed as soon as possible after the Mid-Term Review is completed to make it more flexible. There should be the capability to reassess and readjust the Proforma in each of the remaining years to meet the dynamic context of education and social inclusion in Bangladesh while also meeting realistic targets. The revised Project Proforma should provide realistic objectives for completion of PEDP-II tasks in the programme’s remaining years.

2. The original action plan on vulnerable children remains stalled for approval as PEDP-II reaches its halfway point. This in essence makes the plan more of a guidance document than an actual plan of action. Given that the Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) must now readjust their entire plan of action for the remaining time in PEDP-II (see next recommendation) the need for policy guidance on what they may do related to vulnerable children becomes more and more urgent. Policymakers in charge of reviewing the plan on vulnerable children should return the plan to the AIEC with clear and concise guidance on what is allowed to be done, and if not, why not. The AIEC can then determine what can realistically be done in terms of their workload and overall schedule to affect the education of vulnerable children.

3. In terms of objectives and their timing related to social inclusion, the Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) should submit a new overall action plan to the DPE and the donor partners that concisely outlines what can be done in each of the remaining three years. It is our understanding that this process, out of necessity, has already begun. Building on the previous action plans, prepare one overall action plan that encompasses, with realistic objectives, what can be accomplished in terms of gender, special needs, tribal and vulnerable children. In addition to revised objectives, this new plan should state the limitations of the plan in terms of current staffing capacity, the need to develop new staff capacity through appropriate training, time constraints and funding. The new operational action plan should be clear in the actions to be taken and how they can realistically be measured.

4. Add staff to the AIEC to allow for appropriate professional development training of the new and current staff while continuing a realistic work programme.

5. DPE must hasten the implementation of the much-delayed Innovative Grants programme, preferably so that it starts within 2007, in order to bring NGO creativity into the programme.

6. With DPE as initial host, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Social Inclusion should be established to bring together monthly, beginning in 2007, key personnel in the ministries that deal with children’s social inclusion issues (MoWCA, MoE, MoPME, Social Welfare, Food and Disaster Management) to identify how they will work together, what programmes can be worked on jointly and in a coordinated manner, and to share information. A newsletter on social inclusion, emanating from this committee, should be published monthly to inform all
professional personnel of the relevant ministries of the committee’s work and to share articles and research on social inclusion.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) staff must receive training, and further upgrading as necessary and feasible, on how to build gender and equity factors into their work, especially for qualitative use at the classroom level.

8. PEDP-II assessment and review teams, including JARMs and the end-of project evaluation, should include personnel that specifically evaluate progress on gender and equity and who are identified as gender and equity specialists.

9. Elevate the status of ‘gender and equity’ in all documents and meetings of PEDP-II and in its PLU. The PLU should (again) have one person dealing with gender and equity.

10. Outside the immediate purview of PEDP-II, but key to its success, the following are deemed essential to overall progress on social inclusion in the programme during its second half:
   - National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE). Since NAPE is a key conduit for transferring knowledge and methodologies on social inclusion to the trainers of PTI instructors, changes in recruitment and promotion strategies at the Academy are necessary, preferably in 2007, to ensure that the highest quality instruction is provided on gender and equity issues.
   - Changes in Civil Service recruitment and promotion procedures are fundamental to the improvement of all gender and equity initiatives in the educational system, and to the creation of a vital education cadre.

These recommendations form the basis of ways forward here, but more will need to come as the educational system and social inclusion is not static. The emerging problems of metropolitan areas and the future ramifications of this trend for gender and equity efforts is a case in point. The educational context for this SWAp, and any SWAp, is dynamic and changing. There needs to be a dynamic understanding of, and perspective on, education. The ways forward must therefore also be dynamic and flexible as well, but the rights to social inclusion in education, with security and dignity, with equality of opportunity, are fundamental to the future of a developing Bangladesh and its people. Bangladesh is a country that is rich: rich in creativity, rich in culture, rich in talented people. Social inclusion initiatives in an effective education SWAp modality have the potential to add much to that wealth.
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      — Annexure 7b: PSQL Indicators from PEDP-II Baseline Survey 2005.
      — Annex 10c: New Entrants in Class 1 Primary Schools 2005 by Gender and District.
      — Reconstructed Cohort Analysis for GPS, RNGPS, and Exp. Schools 2005 (Both Boy and Girl Students).
      — Table: Class-wise Pupils’ Enrolment by Gender and Type of Schools.
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*All of these materials have helped to inform the preparation of this report. Some have served as direct references while others have been important overall, indirect influences on the authors as they implemented this research.*


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Annex 1
List of Persons Met/Interviewed

January–March, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>NAME OF PERSON</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>TEL. NO.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donor Partners</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian Development Bank (ADB)</td>
<td><strong>Brajesh P. Panth</strong>&lt;br&gt;Programme Manager, PEDP-II&lt;br&gt;Bangladesh Resident Mission</td>
<td>Plot E-31&lt;br&gt;Shere-e-Bangla-Nagar,&lt;br&gt;Dhaka 1207</td>
<td>(88-02) 815-6000 to 6016</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bpanth@adb.org">bpanth@adb.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canadian International Development Agency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Robin Ruggles</strong></td>
<td>House 16A,&lt;br&gt;Room 48&lt;br&gt;Gulshan, Dhaka 1212</td>
<td>(880-2) 988-7091 to 7097</td>
<td><a href="mailto:robin.ruggles@international.gc.ca">robin.ruggles@international.gc.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department for International Development (DFID)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Barbara Payne</strong>&lt;br&gt;Senior Education Adviser</td>
<td>10 Gulshan Avenue&lt;br&gt;Gulshan, Dhaka 1212</td>
<td>(880-2) 882-0204/16/23/24</td>
<td><a href="mailto:b-payne@dfid.gov.uk">b-payne@dfid.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European Commission (EC)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stefan Lock</strong>&lt;br&gt;Second Secretary&lt;br&gt;Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh</td>
<td>Plot 7, Road 84,&lt;br&gt;Gulshan 2,&lt;br&gt;Dhaka, 1212</td>
<td>(880-2) 882-4730</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Stefan.lock@ec.europa.eu">Stefan.lock@ec.europa.eu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marion Mitschke</strong>&lt;br&gt;Education Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Marion.mitschke@oec.eu.int">Marion.mitschke@oec.eu.int</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JICA</strong></td>
<td><strong>Yasumasa Nagaoka</strong>&lt;br&gt;Primary Education Adviser/JICA Expert</td>
<td>Directorate of Primary Education,&lt;br&gt;Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME)&lt;br&gt;Mirpur-2, Dhaka</td>
<td>801-8743</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nagaoka@citechco.net">nagaoka@citechco.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Royal Norwegian Embassy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ingrid T. Haug</strong>&lt;br&gt;First Secretary</td>
<td>House 9, Road 111 Gulshan,&lt;br&gt;Dhaka 1212</td>
<td>881-6273</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ith@mfa.no">ith@mfa.no</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Irene Parveen</strong>&lt;br&gt;Education Adviser</td>
<td></td>
<td>881-6303</td>
<td><a href="mailto:irpa@mfa.no">irpa@mfa.no</a></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)</td>
<td>Monica Malakar</td>
<td>House 1, Road 51, Gulshan, Dhaka</td>
<td>Tel. (880-2) 883-3144-7</td>
<td><a href="mailto:monica.malakar@foreign.ministry.se">monica.malakar@foreign.ministry.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hassan A. Mohammed</td>
<td>BSL Office Complex, Minto Road, Dhaka</td>
<td>(880-2) 933-6701-10</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hasmohamed@unicef.org">hasmohamed@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ghassan Khalil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:gkhalil@unicef.org">gkhalil@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ara Yoo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:ayoo@unicef.org">ayoo@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shamima Siddiky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:ssiddiky@unicef.org">ssiddiky@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debashis Ranjan Saha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:drsaha@unicef.org">drsaha@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shamim Ahmed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:shahmed@unicef.org">shahmed@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syeedul Milky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:shmilky@unicef.org">shmilky@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monira Hasan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:mohasan@unicef.org">mohasan@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIZATION</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr M.G. Mostapha</td>
<td>Senior Project Officer Education Section</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:gmostapha@unicef.org">gmostapha@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Pema Lhazom</td>
<td>Operations Officer</td>
<td>8159001-14</td>
<td><a href="mailto:plhazom@worldbank.org">plhazom@worldbank.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Bangladesh</td>
<td>Md. Zakir Hossain Akanda</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary</td>
<td>Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka, Bhaban 6 (6th Floor) Room 601</td>
<td>716-8871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Primary and Mass Education</td>
<td>Qurratul Ayen Safdar</td>
<td>Senior Assistant Chief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directorate of Primary Education (DPE)</td>
<td>Carol Eggen</td>
<td>Team Leader Equity and Access Technical Support Team 4 (Package E)</td>
<td>Directorate of Primary Education Ground Floor, DPE Bhaban Mirpur 2, Dhaka 1216</td>
<td>8034-562 Mobile: 0171-1437-649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Md. Mabubur Rahman Billah</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Mobile: 0152402933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rokhsana Perveen</td>
<td>Research Officer Access and Inclusive Education Cell</td>
<td>01715-029415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zainab Akther</td>
<td>Gender Equity Specialist (International)</td>
<td>Mobile: 0172-7264-106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diba Hossain</td>
<td>Special Needs and Disabilities Specialist</td>
<td>Mobile: 0119-9113013</td>
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<td>ORGANIZATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Ron Brouillette</td>
<td>NAEM Campus</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:ronbrouillette@yahoo.com">ronbrouillette@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP)</td>
<td>Zaki Imam</td>
<td>NAEM Road</td>
<td>Mobile: 0171-937700</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Zakimam486@hotmail.com">Zakimam486@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Niels Bentsen</td>
<td>Equitable Access</td>
<td>Mobile: 0175-992780</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nbentsen@stofanet.dk">nbentsen@stofanet.dk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hosne Rara Begum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:niels@tqi-sep.org">niels@tqi-sep.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharmin Huq</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA)</td>
<td>Ganesh Chandra Sarkar</td>
<td>NAEM Road</td>
<td>933-6063</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>Hassan A. Keynan</td>
<td>House 68, Road 1, Block 1, Banani Dhaka, 1213</td>
<td>986-2073</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Ha.keynan@unesco.org">Ha.keynan@unesco.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mafuza Rahman</td>
<td>Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Ma.rahman@unesco.org">Ma.rahman@unesco.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR (United Nations High Commission on Refugees)</td>
<td>Francis Teoh</td>
<td>Road 90, House (N) E 8 Gulshan 2 Dhaka</td>
<td>882-6802</td>
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<td>Deputy Representative</td>
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<td>Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
<td>Anuja Begum</td>
<td>6, Barabag Mirpur Housing State</td>
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<td>BRAC</td>
<td>Limia Dewan</td>
<td>BRAC Centre 75 Mohakhali Dhaka, 1212</td>
<td>8824180-7</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Erum.m@brac.net">Erum.m@brac.net</a> <a href="mailto:limiad@yahoo.com">limiad@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Md. Rezaul Mazid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:mazidrezaul@yahoo.com">mazidrezaul@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safiqul Islam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:safiqul@brac.net">safiqul@brac.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education)</td>
<td>Rasheda K. Chowdhury</td>
<td>5/14 Humayan Road Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207</td>
<td>9130427</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rasheda@campebd.org">rasheda@campebd.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tasneem Athar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:tasneem@campebd.org">tasneem@campebd.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Women and Children Studies</td>
<td>Ishrat Shamim</td>
<td>92 New Eskaton Road Dhaka, 1000</td>
<td>935-1126</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cwcs_bd@hotmail.com">cwcs_bd@hotmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Md. Azad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Save the Children USA</td>
<td>M. Habibur Rahman</td>
<td>House 1(A) 2 Road 91 Gulshan –2 Dhaka-1212</td>
<td>882-8081</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hraham@savechildren.org">hraham@savechildren.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ummey Hamida Nila</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:nila@savechildren.org">nila@savechildren.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>UCEP-Bangladesh (Underprivileged Children’s Educational Programs)</td>
<td>E.H. Khan Majles Manager (GE)</td>
<td>Plot No 2 &amp; 3, Mirpur 2, Dhaka 1216</td>
<td>(880-2) 8011014-16</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ucep@citechco.net">ucep@citechco.net</a></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Engr. M. Mohiuzzaman Manager, Vocational Education</td>
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**School Visit**

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<tr>
<td>Dharenda Government Primary School, Savar</td>
<td>Dr Fr Mintu L. Palma</td>
<td>Dharenda Govt Primary School St Joseph’s Catholic Church Dharenda P.O. Savar, Dhaka-1340</td>
<td>008802-7713003</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fmintu@bdcom.com">fmintu@bdcom.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sister Renu Metilda</td>
<td>Dharenda Govt. Primary School St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Dharenda P.O. Savar, Dhaka-1340</td>
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<td>Dalia Marak</td>
<td>Dharenda Govt. Primary School St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Dharenda P.O. Savar, Dhaka-1340</td>
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<td><strong>Sharmin Huq</strong></td>
<td>Flat C</td>
<td>Mobile:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Huq_sharmin@yahoo.com">Huq_sharmin@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert on Disabilities and Special Needs</td>
<td>House Tutors Quarter Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib Hall Dhaka University</td>
<td>0191936519</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Jacqui Mattingly</strong></td>
<td>St. Vincent, Caribbean</td>
<td>+1784 4574282</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Randj.mattingly@gmail.com">Randj.mattingly@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(former International Consultant in DPE)</td>
<td>Telephone interview</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Colette Chabbott</strong></td>
<td>George Washington University, Washington DC USA</td>
<td>Mobile: 0172-044-8427</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chabbott@gwu.edu">chabbott@gwu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Theodore (Ted) Thomas</strong></td>
<td>Washington DC USA</td>
<td>Mobile: 0172-020-7236</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ted.thomas@verizon.net">ted.thomas@verizon.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant</td>
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Annex 2
Code of Conduct for PEDP-II Consortium

Status of this document
1. The signatories to the present voluntary Code of Conduct, together referred to as the PEDP-II Consortium or ‘the Consortium’, recognize the need to consult and co-operate in an open and transparent manner in the primary education sector in Bangladesh and agree to the guiding principles for their co-operation set out below. The signatories expressly recognize that this document is neither legally binding nor legally enforceable.

Guiding principles
2. Members of the Consortium are committed to a systemic development of primary education in Bangladesh, with the ensuing commitment to support the policies of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), work with GoB systems, and accept common procedures and requirements. As regards financial flows, Development Partners (DPs) are committed to the principle that, to the extent possible, resources will be channelled through government systems and decided to work together for greater levels of harmonization in line with GoB procedures and requirements.

3. The Consortium partners mutually decide on a representative of one of its members to chair the Consortium, normally for a period of two years. The ADB, as Lead Agency, will be permanent Vice-Chair and Member Secretary. The Consortium will meet on a regular basis but in any case not less than once every quarter, with at least ten days notice. The Chair or any group of three members can request the Chair to call an ad hoc meeting. If possible, at least one-week notice will be given, including the agenda for the meeting and supporting documents.

4. The Chair is responsible to ensure that all basic administrative tasks are done, as far as the communication between the Consortium and all other stakeholders like GoB and PEDP-II Liaison Unit is concerned. She/he will be assisted by the PLU to perform the tasks of the Chair. The Chair chairs all meetings of the Consortium, and represents the Consortium at other meetings and events. The Chair will make a clear distinction between her/his role as representative of her/his own agency and her/his role as Chair. The Chair may request assistance from other Consortium members for specific tasks. The Vice-Chair assists the Chair with all tasks, replaces her/him when necessary, and adheres to the same principles stated above.

5. ADB, the Lead Agency, will establish and manage a PEDP-II Liaison Unit (PLU). The PLU will represent the consensus view of all Consortium members. Terms of reference for the PLU will be developed and agreed with the Consortium.

6. A meeting of the Consortium has a quorum if representatives from a majority (more than 50%) of the signatories are present. Decisions will be taken on the basis of consensus, with possible disagreements being recorded. If an important decision has to be made by a meeting which some of the Consortium members have not been able to attend, those members will be consulted by e-mail or telephone before the decisions are considered final. Except in matters of urgency, 48 hours will be given to that member to react.
7. Consortium members receiving requests for new funding or technical assistance will share and discuss such requests with the Consortium. Poolfunding DPs will refrain from parallel funding of Technical Assistance for PEDP-II.

8. All major issues affecting the overall implementation of PEDP-II (such as proposed significant changes in planned reforms and activities) will be presented to the Consortium, and any required decisions on such issues will be made by the Consortium in accordance with the principles laid out in this Code of Conduct. The Consortium will participate in annual reviews, but will not be consulted on day-to-day implementation matters.

9. Representatives of Consortium members shall be deemed to represent their Government or Agency.

10. Consortium members will endeavour to communicate to GoB and other stakeholders with a common voice.

11. To the extent possible planning and organization of activities by Consortium members will be done jointly, particularly for activities which put demands on the time of GoB officials, including overseas trips.

12. Consortium members will participate in annual joint reviews, the midterm review and the final evaluation of PEDP-II, under agreed Terms of Reference. Consortium members will ensure the required skill mix of review teams, including expertise on gender and disadvantaged groups. Gender balance and the employment of local consultants will be encouraged.

13. Reporting will be harmonized so that one common reporting system will be used for all activities under the PEDP-II, and accepted by all Consortium members. Non-poolfunders requiring additional or different documentation will avoid duplication and will minimize to the extent possible demands on GoB counterparts' time.

14. Audit requirements will be harmonized so that one common financial reporting system and one set of audit requirements will be used for all activities funded through GoB in PEDP-II, and by all Consortium members. In case of serious audit observations, the Consortium will provide a joint and co-ordinated response based on a report of an audit sub-committee set up by the Consortium.

15. Whenever Consortium members are required to undertake a bilateral audit they will do their utmost to avoid duplication and unilateral action.

16. New donors to PEDP-II will be encouraged to sign this Code of Conduct; the GoB will be encouraged to convey this message to future donors.

17. The Code of Conduct may be reviewed annually as part of the PEDP-II review process. This does not preclude amendments at other stages, whereby changes and additions can only be made on the basis of consensus by all the signatories.

18. Issues relating to co-operation between development partners not foreseen in this document should be discussed and made through consensus only.
Annex 3
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for PEDP-II

1. Current public expenditure on education increased to at least 2.8% of GNP by 2010.
2. Primary education expenditure per pupil increased to 10% of GNP by 2010.
3. Public expenditure on primary education, as a percentage of total public expenditure on education, to reach 47%-48% by 2010.
4. Apparent (gross) intake rate of new entrants in primary Class 1 as a percentage of the population of the official entry age 103% by 2010.
5. Net intake rate of new entrants to primary Class 1 who are of official primary school entrance age as a percentage of the corresponding population 90% by 2010.
9. Increasing numbers of schools operating a single shift system (900 hours per year for all classes) to 50% by 2010.
10. Percentage of primary school teachers having the required academic certification (C.-in-Ed) and teaching in primary schools 95% by 2010.
11. Teacher absence without leave reduced to 10% by 2010.
12. Teacher attendance on time increased to 90% by 2010.
13. Repetition rates in all classes less than 20% by 2010.
14. Survival rate to Class 5 (percentage of the pupil cohort reaching and completing Class 5) 82% by 2010.
15. Coefficient of efficiency (actual number of pupil years needed for a cohort to complete the primary cycle, expressed as a percentage of the ideal number of pupil-years) 116% or a cycle time of 5.8 years, by 2010.
16. Percentage of pupils having reached at least Class 4 of primary schooling and who master a set of nationally defined learning competencies 50% by 2010.
17. The number of disabled children out of school reduced by 30% by 2010.
18. Student absenteeism reduced by 20% by 2010, with no discrepancy between boys and girls.
19. Education achievement of girls improved to at least the same level as boys by 2010.
20. The number of pupils achieving acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy (as measured by National Assessment instruments) increased by 50% by 2010.
21. The proportion of Class 5 students entering for the Primary Education Scholarship Examination increased to 50% by 2010.
22. The proportion of Class 5 students achieving the Primary Education Scholarship Examination pass level increased to 60% by 2010.
23. The transition rate from Class 5 to Class 6 increased to 40%, with gender parity, by 2010.
24. The number of students achieving a defined level of competency-based learning achievement to reach 65% by 2010.
Annex 4
Interview with Mother of a Disabled Child

Mukti Gomes
Mother of a Disabled Child

Dharenda Government Primary School
Savar, Dhaka
Interview by Mahbuba Nasreen
March 2007

Mother of Chinmoy Mondol, Mukti Gomes is a music teacher. She provides private tuition on music to children of the community at her home. Her husband Manuel Mondol recently joined as a cook in the Squire (a multinational company). Prior to this job he was unemployed for three years. Mukti Gomes had the responsibility to provide support to her family. The couple has three children: 2 girls and a boy. Two of her children are the students of Dharenda Primary school (the daughter is in Class 5 and the son is in Class 4). The youngest daughter is only three years old. The story of Mukti is a saga of misfortune. Her son Chinmoy was attacked by typhoid when he was eight months old (in 1995). Within 15 to 20 days he could not move as the right portion of his body became dysfunctional. The parents took him to Dhaka IPGMR for therapy, where they received support from a nurse who is a relative of Mukti. Chinmoy started to move his right side but was recommended to have surgery from CRP. The family had to sell their assets and depend on their relatives to have the surgery. It took 20,000 taka for the treatment. However, it was a successful treatment and Chinmoy started to go to school. He cannot move his right hand and the therapy is still continuing.

Mukti is grateful to the teachers of the school as they are taking care of her child. Chinmoy used to attend the classes with his sister in the same class, but last year he was not promoted to Class 5. He became sad as now he needs to study at school without the support of his sister. However, it has been learned that recently he is more independent as his sister is no longer in the same class. ‘This is a good sign of his development,’ Mukti said. Chinmoy is very keen to learn and he will never say ‘no’ to school. He does not have a sharp memory due to his sickness and that is why Chinmoy needs special care. Mukti, who is a HSC graduate, takes special care of her son. She even goes to the school when there is a new teacher appointed to brief her about her son’s problem. ‘It is not that I give preference to my son, but this is because he is a special child, who needs support. Although my daughter is only a student of Class 5, she needs to take care of her two siblings while I am giving lessons in music to other children.’ Mukti seems very positive about her children, especially Chinmoy’s future. She thinks because the teachers and the classmates are having positive attitudes towards Chinmoy, he is learning in a friendly environment.
Annex 5
Case Study: An Inclusive School

Dharenda Government Primary School
Savar, Dhaka
March 2007

Sanjay Tripura, a student of Class 5, hailed from Bandarban. He was brought to Savar ‘home’ by the home authority as a part of the homes policy in 2003 at the age of eight years. His father passed away when Sanjay was only two years old. His mother could not run the family of four having almost no resource. One year Sanjay was educated at home as he does not know ‘Bangla’ language. At that time Sanjay missed his mother and two sisters more than now. He was admitted directly to Class 2. Sanjay likes the school very much as he gets proper education, drinking water, toil et (separate for boys and girls) and other facilities. Teachers are affectionate to him not only because he is an ‘adibashi’, but also because he occupies first or second position in the examinations.

The home is within the boundary of the primary school and St Joseph High School. It takes only five minutes for him to come to school. Before coming to school at 9.30 Sanjay takes rice and returns ‘home’ at 4.30. In between he does not take any food. All expenses related to education and livelihood are free for Sanjay. The school provides books, home supply khata, pencils, etc.

Sanjay likes mathematics best of all the subjects. He wishes to become a teacher and serve his own community so that children do not need to travel long distances to have education. He mentioned that there is no primary school in his ‘para’ at Bandarban. Sanjay is good at drawing but hardly participates in any cultural functions or games. This is also true for other ‘adibashi’ children in the school. He can also make some handicrafts. Sanjay loves his school but thinks it would be better if games and cultural functions were arranged regularly. He is also in favour of a noise-free school. He does not find any problem studying with children from different categories. He already has many friends from the Bangalee community.
Annex 6
Qualitative Study of an Inclusive School

Dharenda Government Primary School
Savar, Dhaka
Meeting with Renu Metilda Gomes, Headteacher

Established in 1916, Dharenda became a Government Primary School in 1974. There are 913 (430 girls and 483 boys) students in the school, from all communities irrespective of their religion, gender, ability and ethnic identities. A total of 13 teachers of the school take classes in two shifts. All the teachers of the school are women. According to the headteacher this is a practice from the very beginning of the school. ‘The teachers are from different religious backgrounds: 7 Christian, 5 Muslim and 1 Hindu. The students are also from different religious groups, 325 Christian, 557 Muslim and 31 Hindu.’

Before taking the responsibility as headteacher in 1990 Ms Metilda had served the school as a teacher since 1980. She has studied up to Higher Secondary level and has professional training from Primary Teachers Institute (PTI), ESTEEM and IDEAL projects. She is the class teacher of Class 3 and teaches English, Bangla and Religion. At present the student : teacher ratio is 50 : 1, which is beyond the management of teachers. The teachers virtually do not have any rest. ‘They must get rest at least for one period. The ideal student : teacher ratio should be 30 : 1,’ according to Ms Metilda.

It was interesting and encouraging to note that the students of the school are from different indigenous groups. There are also some students with special needs. At the time of our visit there were 30 students from different indigenous communities: Mandi, Tripura, Baum and Saontal, brought from different parts of the country, including greater Mymensingh (Mandi), Rajshahi (Saontal) and Chittgong Hill Tracts (Tripura and Baum). They live in the privately supported ‘home’ (an individual called Dilip Sarkar is running the home since last year; prior to him the home was supported by the Netherlands). During the Dutch support, both Bangalee and indigenous children from poor families used to live in the same home. However, after the end of the project period of the Dutch, the home was divided into two parts: one for Bangalee (taken over by a Korean organization) and the other for indigenous children (taken over by Dilip Sarkar).

Of the students with special needs, three boys have mild physical disability (Classes 4 and 5) and three are mildly visually impaired (2 girls and a boy in Classes 3, 4 and 5). The teachers do not have any training on inclusive education provided by PEDP-II. However, one of the teachers attended a workshop organized by UNICEF. The workshop was on introducing inclusive education through Meena’s story. The headteacher was of the opinion that training is needed for all teachers to teach all categories of students in the same classroom. However, she believes that practical training should be given within the school premises so that teachers do not need to take leave. ‘We only have a small number of teachers, who are overloaded. If any of them need to be spared this will create more pressure on the remaining teachers. Moreover, training within the school will benefit all the teachers.’
Since the school has different types of students, the teachers have to use different methods to teach them. For example, children with special needs sit in the front benches which are close to the blackboard, using peer group teaching. A ramp, as part of PEDP-II intervention, has already been constructed for physically disabled children.

The headteacher informed that children of different indigenous groups face language problems at the beginning. However, they overcome the challenges very quickly as the caregivers (all call them ‘dada’, i.e. brother, or ‘didi’, i.e. sister) take special care of these students. Classmates, class teachers and neighbours also help them to improve. Among the indigenous students Baums and Tripuras faced language problems more than others and were not comfortable to organize sentences. However, in many cases students of indigenous communities perform better than Bangalee students in the examinations. There is no variation in the performances between girls and boys or between poor and non-poor. It is also the case that the ‘adibashi’ (indigenous) students are little bit older than their Bangalee classmates. This is because they learn Bangla in the ‘home’ for about one year before they are enrolled in the school. Children with special needs, especially visually impaired girls, are doing better than the physically disabled. Poverty, lack of special care, sickness, parents’ ignorance, and dependency on others are mentioned as causes of poor performance.

The school informs the caregivers of homes and the parents/guardians of the children’s behaviour, learning difficulties and other weaknesses. The students are generally weak in mathematics and in English. The headteacher also informed that 50% of books given to the children are new and the rest are old. However, since primary age group children play with everything, they are not able to keep the books in good condition. It would be better to provide new books to all children, which would also make children more attracted to school. The school keeps materials, handicrafts and art work created or collected by students. However, more equipment should be given to the school to make it inclusive to all. ‘As Dharendra is often referred to by people, including DPE, as a well performing school, such type of schools should be given special attention. Poor students coming without bags or shoes can be assisted by the school if there enough resources can be raised through the school fund from various sources.’
Annex 7
Causes Behind Gender Differences in Maths

From the PROMOTE Gender Resource Pack
(PROMOTE is the programme to Motivate, Train and Employ Women Teachers in Rural Secondary Schools in Bangladesh. It is funded by the Government of Bangladesh and the European Union.)

The findings show teachers’ expectation that boys will do well and girls will have problems, and their dealings in class reinforce these expectations. This leads to girls’ lack of confidence in their ability to do maths – even those who do well. There is also strong evidence of strong bias towards classroom interactions involving boys rather than girls – boys are nominated far more often than girls, and where there is an open question to the class, the boys are far more likely to respond – and bias in the distribution of and access to resources. There were many references to girls’ inattentiveness in maths class, and this is generally ascribed to lack of interest rather than exclusionary practices. There was no analysis of the school texts in this study, but there is almost certainly gender bias in those texts.

Outside the classroom, boys are far more likely to be engaged in activities that require maths – going to market (buying/selling, prices, calculations, giving change, quantities, weights, etc.), and helping with household accounting and budgeting. As for games, boys are more likely to play games such as ha-du-du, cricket and carom which require score-keeping, spatial awareness, etc., but girls play less complex games such as golla chut. Girls also are allowed to play games far less often. Girls’ gendered activities that require some form of maths are not recognized as such – either in the curriculum or in society (cooking, weaving mats, needlework, making fences), and this lack of recognition that girls do in fact use maths in their stereotypical roles leads to a widespread feeling that girls do not need maths. Most parents’ educational aim for their daughters is for them to acquire literacy (enough to write a letter and find a husband), but not necessarily numeracy. Parents of children in BRAC schools often have had very little education themselves, and are not able to help their children with their maths. Because girls cannot leave the home, they cannot get help from outside; boys can. When one guardian was asked why the daughter but not the son was required to do housework, the surprised response was, ‘What are you telling (sic)? She is a girl. If she doesn’t learn domestic works, will anyone marry her?’ This indicates that parents regard housework for girls to be part of their education, and perhaps more important than maths.

Girls are far more likely to be pulled out of school to look after siblings, take on domestic chores, etc., leading to lower attendance. Boys tend to have few out-of-school responsibilities apart from going to the market, which of course helps with their maths development. One example showed the boys questioning the text, which gave the price of rice at 8.0 taka a kilo, when they knew it was 12.0 taka – the girls had nothing to contribute here. Not only are girls not allowed to go to market, they are often not even allowed to go to school on market days for ‘security’ reasons, and through this practice may lose one day’s schooling a week – a very significant proportion of their school life.

Excerpt from Gender Resource Pack, PROMOTE (undated)
Causes Behind Gender Differences in Maths: An Exploratory Study, by M. M. Shahjamal, Dhaka, 2000
Annex 8
Case Study of a Child in a Refugee Camp

School Is Nearby and Yet Such a Distant Dream
Mohammed Ashraf lives in one of the many countless, pigeon-hole-like houses in the Geneva Camp in Mohammadpur. On either side of narrow alleys are rooms created by partitions of hanging saris and filled to bursting with people. There is no authority responsible for cleaning out the garbage, constructing roads, and maintaining water facilities and sanitation and the area is extremely mismanaged. There is only one toilet for each alley of houses and they always stink badly, with waste and garbage scattered everywhere. Even a slight drizzle is capable of making the entire neighbourhood muddy and people have to trudge through the stinky mud. During the rainy season, water pours into the houses, causing sleepless nights for everyone. During the day, barely any sunlight can enter the rooms. This is the state of the environment in which Ashraf is growing up.

Ashraf was afflicted with polio at a very early age, when he was about 1–2 years old, and he suffered from it for five years. At age seven he was sent to school, the Borabo Mohanpur Government school. There was no tuition fee and the school even supplied the books. But he soon stopped going to school. All he remembers of his classes is that ‘they used to teach us how many hands and legs we have.’ For some time after he left school, he studied with the help of his father, who had studied up to Class 3 at the non-local Junior School. But then his studies at home stopped. Now Ashraf works as a mechanic in a shop, fixing refrigerators. Ashraf falls sick frequently and on his face there are the tell-tale signs of chronic weakness. Yet he continues to work from eight in the morning to nine at night because his family needs the money.

Ashraf’s family has been staying at the Geneva Camp since the end of the Liberation War. They used to live in Hazaribagh and before that, pre-1947, his ancestral home was in the Mugar District of India. During the partition of India, they came to then Pakistan. In a low voice, Mr Akhter says that they still have relatives in India and they even have some relatives who got the chance to go to Pakistan. But Mr Akhtar is not interested in moving anywhere else. He thinks that the fate of the poor is to suffer, wherever they may be. Hard labour is their destiny. In Pakistan as well, the chances for his family are very low. At least in Bangladesh they have been able to find a way to survive. He works as a rickshaw puller. He said, ‘I have to bring Tk 140 to 150 home every day … But after earning Tk 100, I don’t have the strength to carry on.’ But no matter how late it is, he has to bring home the Tk 150 because he is the main earner in this family of eight people. Eight years ago he was able to buy his rickshaw for Tk 4000 and this rickshaw is the mainstay of the family. The family comprises elder son Ashraf, daughters Roji, age eleven, and Ishrat Parvin, age eight, his wife, his sister Khaerunnesa and her daughter and his mother.

After their first child was born, Khaerunnesa’s husband left her and married someone else. Since then she has been living with her brother. Mr Akhter said, ‘My Tk 150 income meets the cost of our daily food. Other necessities are paid for from the little income the other members of the family get for their handicrafts work.’ His wife, his daughter Roji, and his sister and her child sew silver and gold thread embroidery and earn Tk 800 a month. Because they own the house, they pay the electricity bill of Tk 20 and the sweeper’s bill of Tk 10 per month. Their joint income can maintain this unless one of them becomes sick.
When someone becomes ill, money is obtained from others. His sister got water in her lungs once and that cost them Tk 25,000. They had to borrow the entire amount to cure her. Now they have to return the money, little by little.

Ashraf’s youngest sister is studying in Class 3. It costs them very little and as she is the youngest in the family, she does not need to help earn money. Mr Akhter said sadly that she wouldn’t be able to continue even to the SSC. He has three children and he could not afford to admit any of them to good schools. His other daughter Rozina has never even been to school.

Khaerunnesa spoke up, ‘We have very little rights.’ Angrily she continued, ‘We now belong to no country, neither India, neither Bangladesh, neither Pakistan.’ Another problem is that when speaking Bangla, their Urdu accent is very obvious. For example, when Khaerunnesa used to work in a garment factory, whenever she had any disagreements with anyone, she would be called ‘chi-of-a-Bihari’ and other derogatory things. Mr Akhter said, ‘Then we try to say “we are also humans, we are also humans”’. He knows that to develop his children into more ‘capable human beings’, education is necessary but he is without any hope.

Some of Ashraf’s friends work, some study. After coming home from work, Ashraf hangs out with his friends for a while before going bed. He doesn’t have any problems at work as the owner is Bihari. He feels alone because there is no one else of his age at the shop but he likes his work. The highlight of his life is playing cricket with his friends at the Eidgah (lawn for players) in Tajmahal Road. But that happens less and less, only on those Fridays he is not ill. Ashraf likes the international cricket teams and knows that international matches are now held in Bangladesh but he said that only rich people go to see the matches. Ashraf still wants to go to school. If he no longer had to work, then he would go to school. Even though his friends of the same age attend Class 4 or 5 but he would have to start again from the very basics if he were to go back to school, he has no objection to that. His eleven year old sister Roji has the same answer. If their family did not need the earnings from their work, then they would really like to study in school.

People’s Report on Education
Children Excluded from Primary Education
ActionAid Bangladesh
Annex 9
Interview Questions

The following were used on a selective basis, depending on the organizations and persons being interviewed, among personnel of government agencies, donors, NGOs and individuals.

Introductory

We are working on a case study on behalf of the Regional Office of UNICEF on SOCIAL INCLUSION: Gender and Equity in Education SWAps in South Asia. It is a three-country study; the other two countries are Nepal and Sri Lanka. We would very much appreciate your help. The stated ‘intended impacts’ of these case studies are:

- Through involvement in the case studies, governments, civil society actors, international agencies and other ‘players’ in the education SWAps studied will have strengthened insights into key dimensions of social exclusion and inequality that need to be addressed, how these are interlinked and the impact that they have on educational access and outcomes.

- Through involvement in the case studies, the SWAp partners will have strengthened capacity and understanding to take the opportunities provided by the SWAp to make progress on equity and inclusion through a coherent set of effective strategies, supported by conducive structures and partnership arrangements.

- Government/donor partners working in other education sector programmes, within and beyond South Asia, will gain ideas for supporting the development of SWAps/PBAs in education that are both ‘equity-sensitive’ and ‘equity-effective’.

- Based on the findings, a Synthesis Report of the three country studies and a Guidance Document or ‘Toolkit’ will be developed to offer systematic support to the above.

- The Synthesis Report and Guidance Document will provide a quality contribution to wider debates on aid modalities, education sector development and addressing social exclusion in education.

Please note that we are not ‘evaluating’ the SWAp as a whole; rather our main interest is in the progress of this SWAp (PEDP-II) in tackling issues of gender and equity. On the other hand, your help may lead to conversations on general effectiveness issues of PEDP-II which neither you nor we can avoid. Your personal comments will remain anonymous; we are discreet.

We welcome your assistance and appreciate your patience and your valuable time as we try to obtain your perceptions on the particular SWAp in question here – PEDP-II – and on your work with education, gender and equity in education in Bangladesh.

THANK YOU
PART ONE

The following questions were used for the various stakeholders, and adapted as relevant and/or as noted in the question itself.

A. The Main Actors

Perceptions of the roles of donor partners
1. What are your perceptions of the respective roles of the various donor partners that you know, specifically in regard to the work you do re gender, disabled/vulnerable group disparities in Bangladesh? Are their roles the same? Do certain donor partners seem to be more involved than others in aspects of gender/disparity work? Please tell us about it.
2. What is your perception of how often – and how well (quality) – the donor partners engage in dialogue, and more specifically how often and how well does this dialogue touch on gender and equity issues? (Have the donors supported progress on gender/equity issues and how well?)

Linking, sharing, and moving forward effectively: communication
3. How are the different donors LINKING and SHARING knowledge and work on gender and equity issues re PEDP-II?
4. How effective do you think is the communication, specifically regarding gender and equity among the donor partners?
5. If you could, and had the power to do so (or even if you didn’t), how would you IMPROVE the communication/sharing of information/tasks/work on gender and equity issues?
6. What are your perceptions about how the different donor partners participate? Your own? Other partners? But specifically regarding the topic of interest here: gender and equity.
7. What are your perceptions of the quality, quantity and effectiveness of communication between donor partners and NGOs on equity and gender issues? Is it enough? Is enough time being devoted to this communication on this subject? Gaps and Weaknesses? Please tell us.

Effectiveness, outcomes, and impacts
8. What is your personal understanding of what PEDP-II is trying to achieve regarding gender and disparities in Bangladesh?
9. How effective do you think PEDP-II has been so far in this regard? What do you think or know they have accomplished re gender and equity?
10. More importantly what IMPACT on society has PEDP-II had to date and to your knowledge on the gender and equity situation in Bangladesh?
11. To your knowledge, what are the lessons learned so far regarding PEDP-II and gender and equity? How about lessons learned prior to PEDP-II? Any learning progress? Or not? If not, why not?

What have you NOT told us that you think might be helpful … creative ideas, ‘brainstorms’ and thoughts about reducing disparities in Bangladesh? About the general approaches … the effectiveness of programmes?
B. Assessing Costing and Accounting of PEDP-II

A major underlying assumption of most modern SWAp is that more coordinated and accountable financing mechanisms will emerge.

1. Do you think this is true about this SWAp? Any SWAp? Your perceptions and understandings?
2. To your knowledge, are funds in PEDP-II targeted to equity issues? How are these funds accessed?
3. Are there any ‘conditionalities’ in this SWAp that are equity-focused? Negative or potentially negative impacts on addressing equity issues?
4. To your knowledge, are ENOUGH funds designated for gender and equity issues in PEDP-II? Do you know the current amounts designated for such work?
5. Is the money originally allocated for Inclusive education aspects of this SWAp (PEDP-II) still in the budget?
   (a) Please show us the current budget amount for implementation of inclusive education activities, including gender and disabilities activities.
   (b) How much has been spent per ‘quarter’ since the project began on inclusive education? On what has it been spent?
6. IF it was all YOUR personal money devoted to gender and equity issues in this SWAp, THEN would you spend it? Where would you put most of your efforts? What would be the focus? How would you think it should best be done?

What have you NOT told us that you think might be helpful … your personal ideas, creative ‘brainshowers’ and thoughts about the situation with disparities in Bangladesh, the work of donor agencies and other organizations to address these issues?

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

1. On Monitoring and Evaluation, is there any specific coverage of gender and equity issues in PLANNED monitoring and evaluation implementation? What has taken place so far in the regard? After two and a half years, has there been any EVIDENCE of progress – besides listing of ‘INPUTS’ – regarding gender and equity under PEDP-II?
2. Although the Baseline Study has been completed, though not formally accepted – is it now ‘late’? – how do you feel about the gender and equity aspects of this Baseline? Enough? Not enough? Why and why not? Has any preliminary evidence been gathered on this?

D. Human and Institutional Capacity for Analysing and Addressing Disparity Issues

Another intention (and assumption) about a SWAp is that it is to improve the government’s abilities, at all levels, to deliver QUALITY education services – with equity and gender in mind.

2. What are the ‘institutional structures’ and the ‘communication linkages’ WITHIN and ACROSS ministries – and, specifically, regarding gender responsibilities, disabilities and social inclusion in general?
3. Please describe ‘capacity development programmes’ in PEDP-II. Do they cover different ‘levels’? More specifically, do they cover and address gender and equity issues? Progress on building capacity? What, specifically?
PART TWO

The following questions were designed for use at the local level in schools and communities.

A. School and Classroom Observation

School
1. Has special arrangement for children with special needs (note the type of arrangements)
2. Has functioning separate toilets for girls and boys
3. Has functioning drinking water facility
4. Has playground

Classroom
1. Body language of the teacher
2. Categories of children attending the class (sex, special needs – mention type of special needs, ethnic background, etc.) and number for each category
3. Teacher uses teaching aids inclusive to all children
4. Teacher instructs the students to memorize the answers
5. Teacher tries to identify the reason of students who fails to understand a lesson
6. Teacher tries to understand the classroom environment – if it is cordial, pleasant and joyful as well as if the students are feeling that it is monotonous or boring
7. The teacher uses sign language for the hearing impaired students
8. There are books for visually impaired students
9. Teacher gives encouragement to or abuses the weak students
10. The sitting arrangement is inclusive
11. The space of the classroom is adequate and the voice of the teacher is heard from all corners
12. Pronunciation of the teacher
13. Teacher asks questions to all students in a balanced way (Bangalee, ethnic students, girls, students with special needs)
14. Response of the students (Bangalee, ethnic students, girls, students with special needs)

B. Unstructured Questionnaire for Teachers

1. Name
2. Educational qualification
3. Nationality/ethnicity
4. Year of joining
5. Mother tongue
6. Professional training (Subject and institution)
7. Subjects taught
8. Problems faced in teaching more than one subject
9. Satisfied with the present student : teacher ratio
10. The best student : teacher ratio
11. Teach with teaching aids and practical examples
12. The students understand the lessons (Approximate percentage)
   Bangalee – %, Ethnic – %, Girls – %, Children with special needs – %
13. The subjects in which the students are weak
   Bangalee   Ethnic   Girls   Children with special needs
14. Reason for weak performance………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………

15. The teachers would be more confident if the following issues were included in the training for inclusive education ……………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………

16. Difficulties faced in teaching all categories of students in the same class

……………………………………………………………………………………

17. Any special steps taken in development of weak performing students

18. Involved in any other income generation work

19. Knowledge on PEDP-II objective on inclusive education

20. Suggestions for ensuring quality education to make it inclusive

C. Checklist of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with Students

1. Introduction: Name and Class
2. Distance from home to school (mobility map)
3. How much time it takes to attend school
4. Mode of transport to school
5. Work done at home and time (before and after school)
6. Involvement with income generation work
7. Rate of presence and absence from school
8. Hours of study after school
9. Person supporting with lessons at home
10. Goes to private tutor (subject)
11. Education books and materials purchased by parents
12. Subject liked and prioritization
13. Marks received in last examination
14. Want to continue studies up to which level
15. Future plan
16. Difficulty in understanding lessons/language of teachers
17. What would be the best way to support in understanding better
18. Good results are encouraged by teachers or not
19. Steps taken by teachers for the students whose results are not up to mark
20. Types of occasions celebrated and other programmes organized by schools
21. In which programmes do students participate (mention type of students)
22. Other occasions which would be supportive for students in all categories
23. Things needed to be done for good result
24. Problems faced by different categories of students
25. Suggestions for improvement
26. Other opinions/information

D. Unstructured Questionnaire for Guardians/Fathers/Mothers

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Profession: Monthly expenditure: Monthly income:
4. Educational qualification Mother: Father:
5. Nationality/ethnicity:
6. Household property information

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<td>Household plot</td>
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<td>Domestic animals</td>
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<td>Poultry</td>
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<td>Plants and trees</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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7. Number of sons/daughters
   Girls | Boys | Age

8. Number of children attending school

9. Category of child (child with special needs, etc.)

10. Academic result of your children

11. Subjects your children are weak in; reason for being weak

12. Action taken to overcome weakness

13. Are you informed by the teacher about your child’s result?

14. Comment about the teacher’s teaching method

15. Facilities that should be available in the school

16. Children share about their studies with you

17. Children should study up to which level? Girls: | Boys:

   Reasons for making differences among boy and girl (if mentioned)

18. Expenses of parents for sending a child to school

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<tr>
<th>PARTICULARS</th>
<th>APPROXIMATE EXPENSES</th>
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<td>School dress</td>
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<td>Books and exercise copy</td>
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<td>Transportation cost</td>
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<td>Fees</td>
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<td>Examination fees</td>
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<td>Private tuition</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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19. Your child attends school regularly (if not, state reason)

20. Work done by children at home and outside

21. Reaction of teacher to absenteeism to your children

22. Suggestions for doing better in studies

23. Your future thoughts about your children

24. Steps taken if the child gets bad results in examination
E. Checklist for School Management Committees

1. Personal introduction
2. Committee's introduction
3. Existence of Teachers–Parents Association
4. SMC members aware about the responsibilities of a member
5. Regularly attends SMC meetings
6. Responsibilities of SMC in enhancing education quality for students
7. SMCs are active in the school, the agenda of problems are discussed in the monthly meetings and action taken (give example)
8. Their opinion on gender balance in SMC, teachers and students (what may be the benefit of gender balance in these areas?)
9. SMC takes special steps for students with special needs, poor, girls, ethnic students (type of steps for special needs children)
10. Recommendations towards development for enhancing education quality (especially for students those are weak)
11. Knowledge on PEDP-II
12. Knowledge on inclusive education (any training received?)

F. Checklist for Students

1. Category of student (ethnicity, religion, special needs, sex, etc.), language and class
2. Distance of school from home
   Mode of transportation (walking, rickshaw-van, bus)
3. Work needed to be done before going to school and after coming back
   Number of working hours
   Absent in school (reasons)
   Attend school through own motivation (do parents demotivate)
   Number of days absent
   Action taken by parent if child does not want to study
   Parent helps in learning
4. Difficulties faced in school
5. Any support from home in understanding lessons
   Lessons given in class are done
6. Your ambition
   Want to study up to which level
7. Parents' academic qualification
8. Parents' profession
9. Number of brothers and sisters
   Your role in looking after them
10. Number of children in your neighbourhood not enrolled in school
11. Language of teacher understandable
12. Reason for not understanding
SOCIAL INCLUSION:
GENDER AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION SWAPS
IN SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH CASE STUDY

Mahbuba Nasreen
Sean Tate