



Six Monthly Progress Report
on
EQUIP
(Education Quality Improvement Project)

Period: July - December 2008

Education Support Programme
of
Livelihood Education And Development Services (LEADS)



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1. Introduction:

EQUIP is the education support programme of **LEADS** (**L**ivelihood **E**ducation **A**nd **D**evelopment **S**ervices). LEADS is registered itself with Social Welfare Department with a registration number Dha-07949. The goal of LEADS is to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development for an equitable society through improvement of livelihood and support social development of the poor community in particular women and children. Thinking of the present condition of the primary education LEADS started to support children of poor families of Government Primary School, as part of its education support programme **EQUIP**, which stands for **E**ducation **Q**uality **I**mprovement **P**roject. As the name implies the aim of **EQUIP** is to equip the poor children of government primary school with relevant knowledge , education and other essential skills so that they are able to have equal access and opportunity in the society and know how to avail their rights.

2. Background:

Bangladesh lies in the northeastern part of South Asia between 20 34' and 26 38' north latitude and 88 01' and 92 41' east longitude. The country is bounded by India in the west, north, northeast and east, by Myanmar in the southeast and by the Bay of Bengal in the south. The area of the country is 56,977 square miles or 147,570 square kilometres.

Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest countries with average GDP per capita only marginally higher than the dollar a day as per international poverty standards. The disparity between the rich and the poor is widening, the problem of inequality is tremendously increasing , and large segment of the population are facing the threat of systemic marginalization and deprivation. Rural poverty remained more extensive than urban poverty. The government has not successfully devised any exclusive mechanism to address the needs of the poor and to uplift their standard of living. Because of wide spread poverty, many women, girls and children are compelled to work under subhuman condition. Women in general are restricted to domestic four walls and made subordinate to men by some discriminatory laws and policies, customary social system, norms, values and cultures that are patriarchal. Women are confronted with multifarious social ills and violence such as acid throwing, sexual violence, rape, and domestic violence. The women operations include dowry, early marriage leading to early child birth, and hence increased mortality, morbidity, polygamy, divorce, higher mortality due to discrimination in intra household treatment and resource allocation(food, health spending etc), lack of voice and participation in decision making.

The Universal Declaration of Human rights said "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just work and to protection against unemployment". The constitution of our country as articulated in article 20 also refers work a right, duty and matter of owner of every citizen who is capable of working. Still there are huge unemployed people in the country and scarcities of work not only effect unemployed but also their families. Many families suffer from poverty as they do not have earning members in the family. Especially female headed household often suffer from chronic poverty as women fail to secure job due to the reason they do not have necessary education or skill. It is reported that the number of people suffering from poverty has increased over the years. **Shiree** a partnership between DFID and GoB reviews that 63 million people still live in poverty and 30 million of these live in extreme poverty.

World Bank in its recent poverty assessment revealed that Bangladesh remain a poor country with an estimated 56 million people in poverty in 2005. Literacy is one of the features but a universal one that is linked with poverty reduction, economic growth, and wealth creation. Literacy is means for development, enabling the people to access new opportunities and to participate in society in new ways. Literacy is also right in itself precisely because without it people will not have equal life chances. Right to education is fundamental human rights. Bangladesh as a developing state has shown strong commitment to education. The constitution of Bangladesh states that the basic education is the constitutional right of the citizen . It is the responsibility of the government to take all measures for facilitating education, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. Apart from constitutional obligation, Bangladesh has not only committed to achieve MDG and EFA goals, but also signed and ratified a number of international human rights conventions. Among others, Bangladesh is one of the earliest signatories of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), one of the most venerated human right conventions . However , eradicating illiteracy has not been possible despite numerous efforts being taken by the GoB and NGOs. Literacy assessment survey 2008 found strong co relation between poverty and literacy in Bangladesh. The constitution of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh pins down the need of education and links education with the need of society. Literacy assessment survey 2008 conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNESCO reveals that 40% remains illiterate even after completing primary education though enrollment is commendably high in primary education.

Bangladesh runs one of the biggest primary education systems in the world comprising up to 78,363 Primary level institutions of 11 categories in the country in 2002. The enrolment was 17,561,827 pupils with 315,055 teachers. Amongst the students 49.7% are girls and 50.3% are boys signifying gender parity of primary schools and received international recognition for its strong national commitment to education and the impressive gains it has made towards achieving primary “education for all” over the last two decades. Yet development of primary education poses a daunting challenge because of inaccessibility and resource constraint. Although primary education is free and compulsory as determined by law, there is a large group of excluded children in different isolated location within the country.

The successive governments, in fact, did adopt various programmes for the expansion of primary education in the country. As a result of these programmes and various non governmental efforts, progress in primary education enrolment has been exceptional, having reached a gross enrolment rate (GER) of 90% or more according to available statistics. But about half of the children enrolled at primary level drop-out before passing grade V (i.e. before completing primary education). Also quality of education at this level is extremely poor. At the tertiary level as well, quality of education is generally rather poor and facilities for both expansion and quality improvement remains very limited. Hence, human capability at all levels remains generally low.

However, the deterioration of quality , high drop –outs and low attendance rate have upset the benefits achieved through rapid expansion of enrolment. Though it has committed to achieve universal primary education of MDG by 2015 but we are not at present on track to achieve the EFA and MDG goals for 2015 or fulfill the constitutional pledge to “ extend free and compulsory education to all children.”¹ The present Education Watch study 2006 reveals that public spending on primary education remains low in comparison with other developing countries and insufficient to ensure acceptable quality.

Although teachers are often blamed for providing poor quality of education, a primary teacher has to carry out 73 different tasks along side teaching, reveals a report published by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). These ranges from birth registration to polling duties during elections and those tasks affect performance of teachers. Quality of teaching in rural schools, especially in non-government schools, is even poorer compared to that of Government primary schools. The information that is much concern is wastage. It is reported that children take an average of 8 years to complete primary education (it is nine years in RNGPS) .

Nearly 2 million of the pupils attending primary school are outside the official age range, primarily due to over-age enrollment. Repetition and drop-out (48 percent, base line survey report 2005, DPE) rates remain high, resulting in an inefficient cycle time of 6.6 years. Rate of survival to grade 5 of only about 54 percent. Pupil assessments have found that those who do complete the primary cycle perform on average at a third grade achievement level , lack essential problem-solving skills and almost one third of students leave primary school without acquiring basic competencies. Further, attendance rates for primary school are uniformly low, averaging 58 percent². Not surprisingly, these problems are more acute among socio-economically disadvantaged groups, such as rural population, ethnic minorities, slum-dwellers, and the poor. **Poverty impedes households' ability to pay for school fees** and/or other direct and indirect (eg "donations" for school authorities) costs that may be required for school admission or full participation in primary school. While primary education in Bangladesh (in government and government-registered schools) is theoretically "free", several studies show that this is not the case for most families. The recent Education watch Study 2006 views that the widely held but incorrect view that Primary Education is virtually free in Bangladesh , i.e., the government bears all expenses, particularly in government and registered/ recognized schools is not the case at all !³ Expenditure for primary school includes "official fees" where such fees have been eliminated, and "extra, hidden charges" required if a pupil is to succeed academically. It was also revealed by Education Watch Study of 2006 that 82-93 percent of the total annual private expenditure is incurred on : private tuition, stationary, fuel, Tiffin, health care and school dress.

Obtain "free" textbooks poses particular problems. A national survey reports that while only 15 percent of households with school-going children had difficulty in getting books, 55 percent of "very poor" households and 67 percents of rural households experienced problems, including delays, extra payments, and outright purchase.⁴

Studies also show that **private tutoring** is a pervasive practice even at the primary level, both as means of compensating for poor quality instruction in school and of augmenting teachers' salaries. It is reported by Education Watch study 2006 that out of total spending per child in government primary schools 59 percent came from household sources. Cost of private tutors was the single largest item of students . 43% percent of government primary school had private tutors. Households surveyed (done during the start of the project) indicated that even at very poor families pay minimum 100 taka for Private Tutors, which ranges from 100- 300 depending on their abilities and spend 220 – 560 taka for private tutoring and education material cost for the children. Unsatisfactory quality of education in the school forces the parents either for private tutoring or pull out their children from the school aggravating the drop out and non attendance.

Education provides a way out of the poverty trap in which many people find themselves. Reading, writing and numeric skills provide the vital link that can widen opportunities to improve their livelihoods. Education can be an effective vehicle for empowerment because it can transform the ways in which people communicate.

Bangladesh's Poverty Reduction Strategy, *Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction*, launched on October 30, 2005, focuses on pro-poor growth. It has the following eight-point strategic agenda:

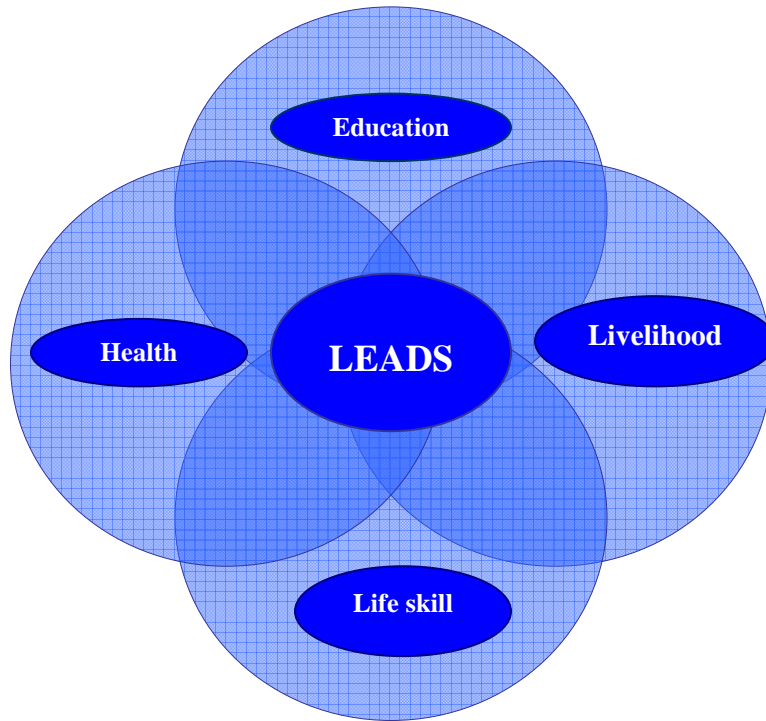
- employment;
- nutrition;
- quality education, especially for girls;
- local governance;
- maternal health;
- sanitation
- safe water;
- criminal justice.

3. Livelihood Education And Development Services (LEADS):

These realities and challenges have motivated LEADS to move forward. In early 2007 LEADS started its journey through its education programme EQUIP (**E**ducation **Q**uality **I**mprovement **P**roject) as education is one of the main ingredients for human resource development and alleviation of poverty. Health is wealth is an old proverb with eternal implication. Although the organization is taking necessary step for the children to be regular in their school, through its Education project but due to ill health the guardians are not mentally at peace to send their children to school regularly. Different studies revealed that lack of awareness about health and hygiene, absence of appropriate medical care and lack of food are major reason for ill health. The constitution of Bangladesh, Article 15(a) and Article 18(1) has provided top priority to public health and nutrition as a state policy of government. Keeping all these in mind the organization has also given top priority to improve the health, nutrition environment and sanitation of the poor community through the **EQUIP** family members so that the children are able to continue their studies. The health project named **HEALTH- Health Enrichment and Life skills Training** for better **Human**, aims to ensure better health of the children and their families through different awareness programme and logistic support. These awareness programmes demanded for life skill and livelihood training for the target beneficiaries as we know that still there are huge unemployed people in the country and the scarcities of work not only affect unemployment but also their families which then force them to withdraw their children from school. Many families suffer from poverty as they do not have earning member in the family or any other alternate source of income. Especially, female headed households often suffer from chronic poverty as women fail to secure job due to the reason they do not have necessary education and skill. Therefore, to bring the families out of poverty and reduce the financial burden **LEADS** also is providing livelihood support with life skills training to the families of **EQUIP** children, especially their mother and female guardians. It gives them opportunity for alternative income generating source.

Thus the goal of **LEADS** is to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development for an equitable society through improvement of livelihood and support social development of the poor community in particular women and children.

4. Development Programme of LEADS:



5. Education Support Programme:

5.1. Name of the Project:

Education **QU**ality Improvement **P**roject (**EQUIP**):

While the quantitative aspect of primary education has achieved considerable success, the qualitative aspect of primary education is not considering strongly yet. The student's enrolment increased in a considerable level, the quality of primary education is not improved at the expected level and the students are not achieving basic competencies. It is reported that Bangladesh achieved 100% enrolment in primary schools in 2004, the quality of learning remains questionable. Quality of learning means the levels of student achievement that meet defined minimum standards. Low quality of learning achievement remains a major challenge. After five years of primary education, students master only about two to three years of the content. The recent "National Assessment of Pupils of Grades three and five 2006" (7th February '09, Daily Star) reveals that 70% can not read, write even after 5 year study. Public resources specially aimed at improving the quality of education at either primary or secondary level are still inadequate to meet the growing demand. The public resources provided are mostly for salaries, construction, and maintenance. Although, stipends provided are conditional upon attendance and examination results of certain results, is not enough to ensure quality of education of even the stipend receiving students. Moreover, poverty has been consistently identified as one of the most pervasive factors in non-enrolment, low persistence and attainment, and poor performance of children in primary school. The poor account for about 50 percent of Bangladesh's total population, and 37 percent are counted among the "hard-core" poor, who live in the direst circumstances (Bangladesh Human Development Report 2000, BIDS).

The National Education Policy 2000 states that a goal, among others, of primary education is: to impart necessary knowledge, ability, outlook, values and social awareness to the children and to equip them with basic functional education and to motivate them to pursue ably studies at the next higher level; that this level of education is universal, i.e. for all. It would appear that in practice government programmes have been mainly directed towards expanding access and improve gender parity to the neglect of quality of education. The Secretary in charge of Primary and Mass Education admitted that the government in order to encourage parents to send their children to schools expanding primary education used to be the main target of the education ministry not the quality education (7th February '09, daily Star). He also mentioned that main goal of the ministry is now to ensuring quality education.

The right to education is fundamental human right. EFA Global Monitoring Report (2000) says that education is for personal development and fulfillment as well as for the development of cognitive and functional skills and that is vital for building democratic citizenship. It occupied a central place in human right and it's essential and indispensable for the exercise of all other human rights and for development. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Thinking of the present condition and importance of primary education and to support the government to achieve its goal, the education support programme **EQUIP**, started to support the children of poor families of Government Primary School. As the name implies the aim of **EQUIP** is to equip the poor children of government primary school with relevant knowledge, education and other essential skills so that they are able to have equal access and opportunity in the society and know how to avail their rights.

As education is the fundamental human right the project aims to support the mainstream poor children of government primary schools so that they are able to avail this right in a proper way. It is noteworthy to mention that knowing the limitation of the Government the organization is not pulling out the children from government school rather it is ensuring that the children stay in their own school and avail their right to education. They are provided with academic support after school hour so that they are able to achieve the class wise competencies and are able to finish the primary cycle, stays healthy and the families have some income generating sources to come out of poverty. A World Bank study in Bangladesh has found that the livelihood of a household being below the poverty line declines by 37% when the head of that household has had only one to five years of primary education. Better quality education would do much more than just lift a nation out of poverty. Thus EQUIP children are provided support in a comprehensive way.

5.2 . Duration : 5 Years

5.3. Goal :

Equip the poor children of government primary school with relevant knowledge , education and other essential skills so that they are able to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development for an equitable society.

5.4. Purposes:

- Improve the quality of basic education
- Increase attendance in the school
- Capacity building of the targeted students
- Ensure better health
- Empower the family

5.5. Outputs:

- Achievement of class wise competency of the selected students
- Completion of primary cycle of the poor children
- Help in the reduction of drop out rate in the school
- Increase knowledge on livelihoods and life skills issues
- Awareness about health and environmental issues
- Awareness about their rights

5.6. Expected major outcome of the project are listed below:

- Capacity of the poor children developed so that they can cope with the changing society
- Life skills knowledge and livelihood of the children and their family developed to have equal opportunity
- Quality of life of the benefited children's family is socially and economically improved
- Children raise voice and avail their rights when needed

5.7. Beneficiaries:

The beneficiaries of the project are the following target groups on priority basis:

- Poor children of government primary school
- Children of the same family
- Hardcore poor children of female headed parent
- Broken family
- Poor children with large families

5.8. Steps for Sustainability:

- Support the mainstream children
- Develop peer educator
- Develop livelihoods skills
- Empower the whole family

6. Journey Towards EQUIP

6.1. Five month research on pilot basis :

The organization did research on some sample students of two government primary schools on pilot basis before starting the journey. The research including the questionnaire development, field testing, data collection, selection, orientation and other relevant procedure took 5 months. It is to mention that the actual support started just before the 3rd term exam (October '07) of the respective schools and got only 21 days to support the students before the 3rd term (Nov'07) and 30 days before the post assessment test conducted by the organization. Even though it got only 21 days and 30 days respectively to provide academic support, EQUIP was able to improve the academic result as well as the post assessment test of the students within this short time.

6.2. Researched School:

- Jhigatala Model Government Primary School
- Progoti Registered Primary School

6.3. Methodology followed for selection of students :

6.3.1. Questionnaire development:

At first the EQUIP team developed questionnaire to collect the overall information including socio-economic aspect and educational status of the targeted students and their siblings so that LEADS can select and support students as per need. As the aim of LEADS is the overall development of the family it included the questions in the field of education, health, livelihood, disability, dowry & neat and cleanliness related questions. It will give the real picture of a family.

6.3.2. Selection of schools:

As EQUIP aims to support the poor students of GPS / RNGPS, it initially selected 8 government primary schools with the support of DPEO and TEO of Dhanmondi Thana. EQUIP contacted the ATEO of Dhanmondi Thana to share the goal and objectives of the project with her clustered HTs. EQUIP Team met the HTs during the monthly meeting. Out of 8 HTs, of Dhanmondi Thana 2 HTs responded positively. One was Jigatala Model Primary School and the other Progoti Primary School. As the project office is located in Dhanmondi for close monitoring and communication the school from Dhanmondi Thana were selected.

6.3.3. Field testing :

The questionnaire was field tested after it was developed to determine the time needed as well as to see whether the questions are practical and need based. The questionnaire was further modified based on the feedback of field testing.

6.3.4. Data collection:



The relevant Head Teachers were requested to provide a list of poor students of class I, II and III as they keep a record of students during the admission. Moreover, this will also gave an opportunity to involve the HTs in the project activity and they can claim the ownership to the project. After collecting the list, the guardians were requested through the HTs to be present at the school premise to provide information. The information was collected by EQUIP team at the school premise, on the suggested date and time given by the Head Teachers. The goal, objectives and

activities of EQUIP were communicated to the guardians with the conditions of admission so that the guardians are very transparent at what EQUIP is doing.

6.3.5. Spot verification:

Based on the information, the house of the short listed candidates who fulfilled our criteria was visited to verify the information and spot.



6.3.6. Selection of students :

We collected data from 38 students in the academic year 2007 and initially selected 30 students and 41 in the academic year 2008 and initially selected 30 students respectively, from both Jigatala Model Government Primary School and Progoti Primary School. The students who fulfilled the criteria were selected. The names of the initially selected students were submitted to the head teachers to inform the guardians.

6.4. Admission Procedure :

6.4.1. Pre assessment test:

To assess the quality of learning and assess the class wise competencies of the student ABC test was held. A short ABC questionnaire based on their text book and Essential Learning Continua was developed to assess the quality of the students. This also gave the opportunity to know their areas of improvement and support accordingly.

6.4.2. Orientation Meeting :



The guardians were then informed about a date for orienting them and the new students. The orientation meeting was arranged with the consent of Thana Education Officer and the respective HTs to ensure their availability. The First

Orientation Meeting was held on September, 2007 and the Second Orientation Meeting was held on March, 2008. Thana Education Officer of Dhanmondi Thana, Headteachers, Teacher, SMC member, and EQUIP team were present during the orientation. There the EQUIP Team shared the whole programme and its activities with the invited guests and the guardians. It also sought their views on improvement. As LEADS wants to develop the whole family it informed the guardians about the different social development programmes like HEALTH and livelihood support to the guardians.

6.4.3. Admission of the Students :

The guardians who agreed with the terms and conditions were admitted and the names were provided to the Head Teachers for their continuous support. The admitted students were provided with necessary education materials from the project. The names of the students were also given to the Van Driver who was then introduced with the HTs so that when the students are picked from the school there are no mis- understanding. Moreover, the project maintained a register where the HTs or their representatives signed everyday so that it ensured the attendance of the students before they come to the center.

7. Activities against Goal and Objectives

Period: January – December 2008

7.1.Goal:

Equip the poor children of government primary school with relevant knowledge , education and other essential skills so that they are able to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development for an equitable society.

7.2.Activities:

- a. Publish Newsletter: The news letter was not published as there was not sufficient fund during the reporting period.
- b. Publish Brochure: The brochure of TRK has been published during the reporting period even though the involvement of the press people for the national election and upazilla election hampered their work a little bit.

7.3. Purpose/Objectives:

7.3.1. Improve the quality of basic education:

a. Conduct teaching and learning:

To improve the quality of education, the EQUIP teachers / facilitators are imparting teaching and learning in a participatory way so that they can achieve good academic result in their school as well as class



wise competencies . The emphasis is given to improve the result of their school in a qualitative way. The teachers are helping the students to finish their class work in line with the text book. Weekly test is taken to see their improvement. Each student is provided with individual support for their improvement. Even the slow learners are provided with extra support. During the reporting period the students gave their final exam for which full support were provided by the EQUIP teachers. Most of them did very well compared to their previous result. The students who did not do well were not regular for their sickness or change of address. The graphical presentation of their academic result is attached in **annex-1**

b. Pre assessment based competency test:

EQUIP Team has takes the pre assessment test of class I, II & III on a regular basis to see the status of their class wise competencies. The question is developed on the basis of GoBs Essential Learning Continua. The question gives emphasis on the basic competencies a child will have Due to the preparation of final examination of the students and urgency to complete the syllabus, it was not possible to take the pre ABC test of the last quarter on the targeted time that was on 3rd week of October,2008. It was held on November '08. It was noticed that they have achieved 70% of the class wise competencies.

c. Post assessment based test :

Based on analysis of the result of pre assessment test the EQUIP Team identifies the areas of improvement they need and supported them accordingly. The post assessment test of will be taken in January, 2009 after providing necessary support and developing their needed areas. It will help in developing and ensuring the class wise competencies of the children when they are in their next class.

d. Follow up visit to the school:

To know the student's performance in the school, the EQUIP Team visits the school. During the visit The Team discusses with the class teachers about the respective students school performance . Permission of the Head Teacher is taken beforehand. The discussion issues were to identify the strength and areas of improvement of the student after the support . It gave the knowledge on how much the student have improved in their class room performance with EQUIP support . Most of the teachers opined that the students have become vocal than before , increased their interest to learn, results are good enough and their behavioral changes are noticeable.

7.3.2.Increase Attendance in the school

a. Paying exam fees :

LEADS had a plan to pay the exam fees on December, 2008 by arranging a guardian meeting but it was not possible to arrange the guardian meeting after the exam as most of the guardian went to village after election and school holiday. This is to mention that the students have their own individual clay bank to encourage saving tendency among the children. These are kept in the center . LEADS do not pay the exam fees before the exam as the guardian can not tell the amount before paying . Therefore, as the money for the exam fees were already paid by the guardians it was decided to keep the money in the bank in front of the guardians.

b. Follow up meeting with the guardians and Head Teachers:

The follow up meeting with the guardian is arranged regularly to share the condition of the student before the final exam so that guardians can also provide necessary support . The guardians also shared their opinion. The first term and second term result were shared with the guardians. It was emphasized to send their children regularly to school and to the center as those students who were not regular in both the centers and school did not do well. Those who were not able to send their children to the school due to financial problem LEADS assured to help them by giving livelihood support. Here LEADS offered the mothers of the student to participate in livelihood programme of LEADS to be self employed . The guardians who are trying to send their children to earn rather than to go to school would be able to share the financial burden of the family and can remove the burden of their children. Most of them appreciated it and joined the livelihood programme.



c. Work shop with the relevant government & other officials:



On 6th December, 2008 a work shop was arranged on “*Ensuring Quality Primary Education – our responsibilities*” which was jointly supported by TRK Consultancy Services and Dutch Bangla Bank Limited. The main objective of the work shop was to identify the responsibilities of government & non government organization to improve the quality of primary education. DG of B.C.S Administration Academy, Deputy Director of District Social Welfare Department, Dhaka, District Primary Education Officer, Dhaka, TEO, ATEO, SMC Chairman, Head Teachers and General Teachers were the participants of the work shop. The participants were asked to share their views on how the quality of primary education could be ensured with the support of government and non government organization. It emphasized on the limitation the government have and how the civil society and the NGOs can work together to meet the challenges. The participants worked in group to identify the problems of quality primary education. There were three groups the TEO, ATEOs were in one group, the SMC chair, HTs were in one group and the teachers were in one group. The findings were then shared and discussed in plenary. They also gave some suggestion to overcome the challenges they have. They emphasized the support they have to solve the existing problem through LEADS. The HTs were satisfied with the support and requested to increase the number of students, which they think is very negligible. LEADS also expressed their financial constraint even though having the system to expand. For temporary solution it was proposed to use the class room of Jigatala School after the school hour. The initial assessment has been started to see the viability of the proposal. In the mean time, guardians already started to come to admit their child hearing the reputation of LEADS.



7.3.3.Capacity building of the targeted students:

a. Study Tour:



On 29th November, 2008 LEADS arranged a Study Tour for the children to enrich their knowledge, build their capacity and develop them mentally. Before the study tour the Head Teachers were



informed and the permission of the guardians was taken. They were briefed about the tour and how they will behave as for them it was first time to travel by bus and go out of Dhaka. They were taken to Sonargoan, the previous capital of Bangladesh to show them

the history and culture of our country. A bus was hired to take them to Sonargaon which took almost two hours from Dhaka to Sonargaon. They were very excited as some of them were in the bus for the first time. Two singers accompanied as to entertain them with songs. They enjoyed the tour very much and learned many things. It also encouraged them to know more about the history and culture. They were provided with lunch and breakfast. They also visited the Sonargaon museum.

b. Share learning workshop with the student:



EQUIP team is arranging share learning workshop in every alternate month with the student. During the share learning workshop the students are asked to share their opinion how they want to be good, what kind of

good things they have done talk in front of everybody, develop their capacities. more vocal and developed support of the team. They on what and how they want preferred group wise they can compete with each



etc. They are even asked to write in the board etc to Most of the student became their presentation skill with the share their views and the areas to improve. Most of the student competitive learning so that other to do their best.

b. Develop peer educator:

All through out the learning process LEADS through it's EQUIP project is developing peer educator so that they can provide support to their peer as well as can develop leadership capability.



c. Recognition for good result:



LEADS arranges meeting with the guardians to give prizes to the students who do well in their school exams. It arranged a prize giving ceremony in the last quarter as well on 12th November, 2008 after the follow-up meeting. This is done after each final exam to encourage them to do well in their school. The guardians along with the TEO, HTs are usually invited in the ceremony or meeting. The prizes are given to the student who secures highest number in their class and prizes to the regular student.

e. Extra Curricular Activities:



Thursdays are values day when the students are asked to develop their other qualities side by side general education. Almost every Thursday, the students are asked to read stories from their text book or other books while the remaining students are asked to listen and ask question. It gives the opportunity to them how to use the punctuation and develop the pronunciation. Everyday they read newspapers and discuss the lead news and the news they find interesting. They also watch cartoons and other learning movies. The class three students are given the opportunity to learn basic knowledge of computer so that they are familiar with the computer. They are also learning how to sew. During the reporting period the all the children sewed their hand kerchiefs. Two students of class four are sewing Katha as livelihood support. They will be paid the labour charge upon completion

d. Eid reunion and get together:

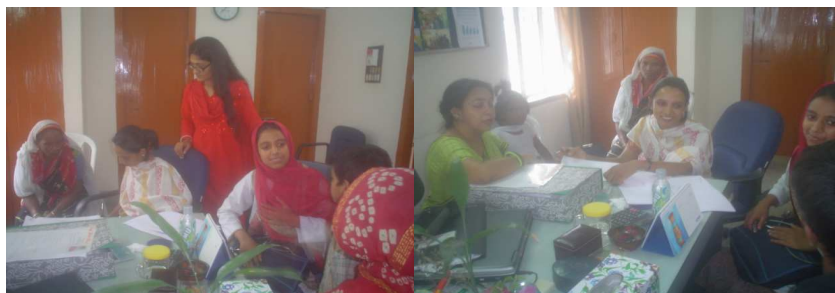
For the mental development after each eid the children are asked to get together on the day when all of them come to the center. They are asked to wear their eid dresses, they are provided lunch, and they share with each other how they spent their eid day and watch movies and cartoons.



7.3.4. Ensure better health:

a. Health Check Up:

As mentioned earlier that ill health pulls the children from school and they can not be regular and eventually drop out, so thinking of the health situation LEADS has incorporated health support programme for the EQUIP children and families through



its HEALTH project. During the beginning of the project doctors visited the center and did general check up of the children and their mothers. The doctors prescribed the medicine for the general disease. The children who had some serious problems were referred to specialist doctors. LEADS arranged different times to send them either to Dhaka Medical college and Shahid Sohrawardy Hospital through its van car. During the reporting period one of the mother and another child became very sick, who was then sent to different doctors in different hospital. The child is suffering from kidney disease and is now under the advice of Head of Nephrology Department of Dhaka Medical College. One of the main objectives of LEADS to provide health

support was to show them the right path of treatment . It was found that in most of the cases they were not aware where to go and what the actual problem is unless it becomes very serious. In the near future LEADS has a plan to provide door to door health support and do the health checkup of the families and the community where they live if it can arrange a vehicle from any source.

b. Provide Tiffin:

For ensuring better health and remove the burden of malnutrition LEADS is providing nutritious tiffin to the student. The children are coming to the centers from the school . LEADS felt that if the children are hungry then they will not able to concentrate on their studies. LEADS is providing fruits, vegetable rice, meat, milk, bread and jelly, egg, fruit juice etc as tiffin so that they are in sound health. The children are also provided with vegetable Khichuri twice or four times a month or with improved diet like meat , rice .

It also ensures to provide them with all seasonal fruit so that they are familiar with those and grows the habit of eating. They are not allowed to say no to any nutritious food . It was observed that the mother who complained that their child does not take vegetable enjoyed the vegetable Khichuri provided by the center.



c. Distribution of First Aid Box & health and cleanliness kit:

As part of health support there was a plan to provide First Aid Box and cleanliness kit on December, 2008 but due to Eid-ul-Ajha and National Election it was not possible to arrange such a programme as schools were closed and the children with their guardians went to village to cast vote. It was also planned to distribute the box during the health awareness training . Due to the election and school holiday this also could not happen.

d. Provide medicine:

Not only the student, any member of the family those who became sick LEADS sent them to the hospital and to the respective doctor and provide medicine according to the doctor's prescription. LEADS also took steps to continuous follow-up to see the condition of the children or their family whether it is improved.

e. Pathological Test:

LEADS paid for the pathological test of those children and mother who went through LEADS. LEADS also tried the government opportunity of free pathological test or with less cost from the government hospital where possible as it thinks it is their right to avail that but where it was not possible LEADS paid the cost.

f. Health awareness training:

As mentioned earlier health awareness training did not happen in formalized way as planned because of the non availability of the guardians and the children during the reporting period. It will be done in the next quarter.

7.3.5. Empower the family:

a. Livelihood support:

To support the education and health programme, LEADS is also supporting the Livelihood programme so that the families of EQUIP children have some alternate income generating source. The



mothers or guardians who did not have any work to do are encouraged to sew katha. The organization bears all the cost for materials and the mothers sew the katha and get the labour charge. During the reporting period one grandmother of EQUIP child sewed one katha and got her labour charge which helped her to solve some of her financial problem. Two students of class four and one mother of a student of class two are also sewing Katha for which they will be paid their labour cost.



b. Life Skill Training:



LEADS also thought of training the guardians on life skill issues as different studies revealed that they are not very much aware of the issues and the laws for which they are most of the time victim of cheating and



exploitation. If they are aware of these issues they will be conscious and will be able to build their capacity and avail their rights. Life Skill issues like birth registration, health and environment, family planning, dowry and its law, inheritance law, divorce law etc will be the main training issue. During the reporting period Training on birth registration was done as from the government side it was emphasized to do birth registration of all the children of primary school as well as all the citizen. During the training,

importance of birth registration, from where they can do registration etc has been communicated to them. LEADS has taken the initiative of ensuring that at least all the children of EQUIP has birth certificate and has started the process of filling the forms and submitting. Even LEADS will bear the cost of birth registration of the adolescent siblings who is not voter or do not have national ID. LEADS already communicated with the respective HTs regarding the birth registration and extended any help they require.

8.Challenges Faced :

During the start of the project and during the implementation of different programmes LEADS faced challenges which were sometimes difficult to overcome but it gave the opportunity to learn and take further and alternate steps.

▪ **Non trust of the HTs:**

During the beginning of data collection LEADS thought to approach through the community and select children of government primary school. Unfortunately , no HTs of nearby schools had trusted on LEADS . Therefore, LEADS changed its approach and met the DPEO who understood the objective and extended his help through TEO of Dhanmondi Thana. It is to mention that after just 6 months of the project the HTs themselves are now requesting EQUIP to admit more students in the center and sending the guardians.

▪ **Over age enrolment :**

Over age enrolment became a major problem for the project as one of the boy who along with his sister was studying dropped out due to overage enrolment . We admitted the boy finding him deserving. With our support he gradually developed himself . Finding our programme good his mother admitted her daughter. Moreover , as our objective is the overall development of a family we give preference to them first. Unfortunately, the boy did not find any supportive environment in the school as he was over age for his age and dropped out from the school. LEADS tried its best by offering him livelihood support but he did not continue. His sister is still continuing.

▪ **Van support :**

Thinking of the safety of the children LEADS rented a van for the children on monthly basis. It indeed is a good support but it was found that when LEADS had to send the children or their mother to Dhaka Medical Hospital or Shahid Sohrawardy Hospital for health support, it becomes very unsafe for the children to travel so far. It would have been good if a vehicle was there . It would have been easy to provide door to door help for medical check up and provide emergency support with a vehicle . Moreover, a vehicle would help us to bring more deserving children from distance .

▪ **Change of office :**

During the end of the reporting period TRK and LEADS changed its office as the previous office has been given to developer. Due to shift of office it had slight effect on the teaching learning of the student. The new office was shifted from 1st November '08.

▪ **School timing:**

The children who were in class II and III have been promoted to the upper classes and accordingly their school time has been changed. For some of the girl child it became a problem as by the time they leave the center it becomes dark and they feel unsafe with the van .

▪ **Fund limitation:**

The project started with own personal fund with 12 students. As per the demand of the guardians it is increasing its number to 30 and is doing the initial work, but fund remained limited. Other than small one time funds from different individuals , DBBF, Zilla Parishad, District Social Welfare Council the project did not receive any long term continuous fund hampering the smooth implementation of the activities. Some of the activities as per plan like distribution of first Aid box , health and cleanliness kit etc could not happen due to fund crisis . Moreover, due to fund limitation the project is not able to extend its support to more children and ensure quality education for many deserving children.

9. Future Plan:

Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest countries with average GDP per capita only marginally higher than the dollar a day as per international poverty standards. The disparity between the rich and the poor is widening, the problem of inequality is tremendously increasing, and large segment of the population are facing the threat of systemic marginalization and deprivation. Rural poverty remained more extensive than urban poverty. The government has not successfully devised any exclusive mechanism to address the needs of the poor and to uplift their standard of living. Because of wide spread poverty, many women, girls and children are compelled to work under subhuman condition. In different studies the quality of learning achievements was found to be much lower for girls and in rural areas.

According to 2001 population census more than 75% of the population lived in rural areas and less than 25% in urban areas. According to the GoB statistics in 2001 nearly 18million pupils were enrolled in over 78,000 primary level institutions. Education Watch 1999 showed that 80 % of the primary –school age children live in rural area. This study showed that rural children lagged behind their urban counterparts roughly by one academic year in respect of basic competencies. In terms of children not enrolling, dropping out or failing to acquire the essential competencies, it is still predominately a rural problem. It is revealed that policies and programmes in primary education have not specifically taken into account the disparities in quantity and quality of educational provisions and services between urban and rural areas and among rural areas themselves.

Education Watch 2006 revealed that even though the guardians living in urban areas spend on primary education significantly larger amounts per students compared to guardians living in the rural areas. The conditions of deprivation of children in urban slums are also worse in many respects and can not be ignored for which LEADS has its programme in urban area but as majority of primary school age children live in rural areas LEADS has plan to extend its attention to address these children through its different development programme in a wider way. LEADS will use the experience it has and will replicate the programme as the system is already developed and will be modified as per need. The goal, purpose and outcome will remain same but with different approach to achieve those goal and objectives.

LEADS has planned to extend its support in Laksham, Comilla and Dhamrai, Dhaka, on pilot basis covering more children and schools as it will get some logistic support initially from there. The initial work like selecting schools, talking with DPEO, Comilla and Dhaka, data collection are in process. As LEADS does not have any office yet in Comilla, process of establishing an office and center are also in process subject to funding from any source.

10.Conclusion:

The journey towards EQUIP has completed its 1st year with many bottlenecks in its path. LEADS took the bottlenecks as challenge from where it learned many things to develop its programme in a qualitative way. It is learning by doing approach but for one fix goal of ensuring quality education for all and supporting the government to achieve MDG in due time! Ensuring quality education is the main goal of the present government also as the guardians are already sending their children to school for which enrollment is reported to be 100% in 2004. It is hoped that all the people including the organizations, individuals, Banks through their CSR, Non Resident Bangladeshis and civil society will work hard to support this project to achieve its goal and contribute to the social development for equality.