

## **The Role of Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE) for Development of Poor Children's Life in Rural Bangladesh: A Perspective on BRAC**

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to explore the role of BRAC's Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE) for development of the quality of the life of poor-underprivileged children in rural Bangladesh considering their health, intellectual, economic, environmental issues and life skills. It uses a mixed method approach of research taken from BRAC's NFPE programs in schools. Data were derived from BRAC's NFPE's two schools, and they are from school-based teachers, learners, guardians, school managing committee (SMC) members and local elites. The respondents were: one hundred students, fifty guardians, two teachers, eight SMC's members, two local elites and sixteen NFPE's graduate students who recently completed their NFPE cycle. Data have been collected by survey, key informants interview and focus group discussions with the students by using three sets of questionnaires and one set of FGD schedule. The findings show that NFPE's learners' daily life behavior, life skills, social and environment knowledge as well as awareness have developed. The findings lead to some recommendations which will give insights to policy makers and professionals engaged in this field.

**Keywords:** NFPE, Child Development, BRAC, Rural Bangladesh.

### **Introduction**

Education is a crucial element to ensure that children achieve their rights, particularly their right to personal development (UNICEF, 2018). The constitution of Bangladesh has recognized basic education as a fundamental human right. Article 17 of this constitution emphasizes on adopting effective measures for establishing a uniform, mass oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children, ensures properly trained and motivated citizens by removing illiteracy. But in Bangladesh, many children are unable to satisfy their social aspirations, such as proper education, health, recreation opportunity etc. In this fact for the development of life by removing these problems, education can play a vital role. In this regard, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has emphasized on education which is remarkable to achieve universal primary education (Bhuyan, 2006). Bangladesh became an enthusiastic signatory to the World Conference Education for All (WCEFA) framework at Jomtien, Thailand where the world community strongly backed the goal of "Education for All (EFA)" up at global gatherings (Monzoor, 2008). Besides, the GoB committed in the 'World Education Forum' held at Dakar and MDG-II at 2000 towards the achievement of Education for All (EFA). Bangladesh has shown great success in achieving target-II of MDG. Significant achievement has been made in increasing equitable access in

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education, reduction of dropouts, improvement in completion of the cycle, and implementation of a number of quality enhancement measures in primary education. At this time, enrollment rate of primary level is 98.7% where girls 99.4% and boys 97.2% (UNDP, 2018). On the other hand, after MDGs, Bangladesh has started working for achieving SDGs, which the SDG-IV target is ensuring quality education for all and create opportunity for lifelong education within 2030 (GED, 2017). It means there would be no children out of school, but in proportion to the population of Bangladesh, opportunities for formal primary education are very limited though Bangladesh holds one of the largest primary education systems in the world (UNICEF, 2009). So, another mode of education has been developed to assist the formal stream. This supplementary stream of education is called 'Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE)'. In order to ensure universal primary education, this stream of education is being run in Bangladesh in the middle 1980s along with formal education (Mamun & Rahman, 2013). NFPE cycle contains three or four year session but completes five year national curriculum prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of Bangladesh. NFPE schools are located closer to the doorstep of the poor. Every school has community teacher who knows the learners and she is closer to them. No school uniform is needed and the children can attend school with the dress that they could afford. NGOs provide basic essentials to learning including the workbooks, pencils etc. So, the learner can get education without any educational expenses (Nath, 2002). The clientele of NFPE is the poor-underprivileged children belonging to primary school age group who are still out of school or have dropped out from the formal primary school. To serve this clientele, NGOs in Bangladesh are heavily involved (Sukontamarn, 2003). At present, more than 937 NGOs in Bangladesh have different educational programs and all NGOs are providing NFPE (CAMPE, 2016). Among them, BRAC is one of the largest NGOs working to provide education to the poor and underprivileged children in primary sector. Across the country, almost 1.3 million children participate in BRAC's non-formal primary schools each year. Till 2018, more than 11 million children have graduated from this school (UNESCO, 2018). It shows that BRAC's NFPE plays a vital role in primary education in Bangladesh. In this criterion, to achieve the target of EFA and MDGs in Bangladesh as a developing country, the role of NFPE as a supplementary to formal primary education system is undoubtedly significant. But a question arises about the role of this kind of education for the development of the poor-deprived children, and the application of knowledge in real life situation learnt from primary cycle through NFPE. If they really get quality education, they will be self dependent to develop their life. It can be noted here that, in the previous time, many studies were done on BRAC's non-formal education, but there was no study found directly about the role of BRAC's NFPE in the development of the life of rural poor children.

In this regard, it is a major objective of this study to examine the role of BRAC's NFPE in the development of physical, intellectual, social and environmental knowledge as well as awareness of rural poor children in Bangladesh and to identify the problems of BRAC's NFPE for development of learner's life. Finally, this article will depict the

potential ways forward for building a viable NFPE system for rural poor children's life in Bangladesh.

### Methodology

This is a mixed approach research with both qualitative and quantitative data. Data were mainly collected from primary source. But secondary source of data (Books, Article, Newspapers, and Reports etc.) is being used for necessity of study. In this study, Laukathi union in Patuakhali district has been selected as the research area where BRAC's non-formal primary education (NFPE) program is going on and two NFPE schools had been selected purposively to collect data for the study. Data were collected in various times in March and April, 2017. The number of samples for this study is 178 and they have been selected purposively. For collecting data, three different types of instruments have been used and these are questionnaire (structured and semi structured) survey, key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussion (FGD). Besides, 2 FGDs with 16 NFPE students in each group have been conducted to get more insight into data. Data have been represented with some tables and charts. The following table shows the research instruments, respondents, number of sample and sampling procedure at a glance.

**Table 1: Sample and Process of Sampling of this Study**

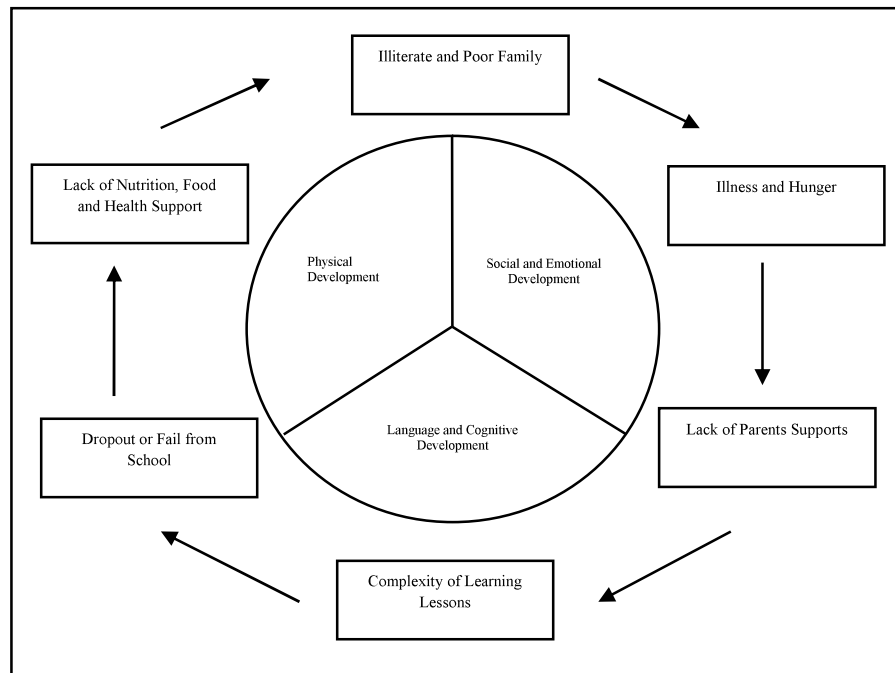
Research Instruments	Respondents	Number of Sample	Sampling
Questionnaire Survey	NFPE's Learners (The students of class three, four and five)	100 (50 from Each NFPE school)	Purposive
	Guardians of NFPE Students	50 (25 from each NFPE school)	Purposive
Key Informant Interviews (KII)	Teacher	2 (1 from each school)	Purposive
	Members of school managing committee	8 (4 from each school)	Purposive
	Local elite	2 (1 from each school area)	Purposive
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	NFPE Graduate student	16 (8 students in each group)	Purposive

### Non-formal Education and Child Development: A Conceptual Analysis

It is found in the study that the growth and consequence of the child's brain is completed by the age of two and depending on the brain, its intellectual development, its ability to learn increase and they can solve problems (Latif, 2001). If the child is not given the

opportunity to practice his intelligence with appropriate stimulus procedures during the formation of the brain, his intellectual development is interrupted. In this context, the overall development of the child's life- in order to ensure physical, emotional, social, language and intellectual development, the primary education level is important (Latif, 2001). But in developing countries, poor-based families, illiterate parents, poor quality and complexity of learning methods, adverse environment of primary school create obstacle in the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children (Latif, 2001). In his book *Non-formal Education of Bangladesh* Abu Hamid Latif has shown that complexity of the learning system in the poor family creates obstruction in the development of children life.

**Figure 1: Obstacle Cycle of Child Development**



Dhaka: Expose Media Relation, 2001. p.40)

Following the figure, child development has major three factors that are- social and emotional development, language and cognitive development, physical development (Latif, 2001). These factors depend on educational condition, learning process of children life. The children of poor families are hungry due to poverty, suffering from malnutrition and disease. Illiterate and hungry children cannot master all the lessons and skills in schools. Illiterate parents at home cannot help in his/her lessons. As a result, many

lessons remain unfinished and they lose interest in education and schools and drop out of school. Thus he/she becomes illiterate and less educated and enters into the jobs of low income. In a low income, he/she cannot provide good food to keep the family healthy, and cannot arrange good treatment for his children. As this result, these children are being imprisoned in the same obstacles as their parents (Latif, 2001). Children coming to the primary school of Bangladesh are, mostly, from poor, illiterate or low-educated people. So, they all fall into the trap of this evil cycle. The children deprived of parents' help fail to get proper help from the school to receive school education. As a result, they drop out from school and development of their life is completely hampered. By removing these problems, educationalists think about the development of the quality of life of children. In this regard non-formal primary education can play a vital role (Mamun & Rahman, 2013). But what is the non-formal education? What are its types? How does it work as a useful lesson for the development of the life of the poor, unprivileged children?

Non-formal education became part of the international discourse on education policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It can be seen as related to the concepts of recurrent and lifelong learning. In the 1970s, Fordham mentions four characteristics of non-formal education related with the needs of disadvantaged groups, concerned with specific categories of person, focusing on clearly defined purposes, flexible in organization and methods (Fordham, 1993). Ahmed and Shiva Lohani opined that, non-formal education system is flexible, although the time, place, contents and methods are decided before hand; the system is adjustable to suit the convenience of learners (Ahmed, et al, 2001). The belief of educationalists opinion is non-formal education is the flexible and lifelong learning process for unprivileged-poor people who are deprived of the basic education in society. In Bangladesh, various Non Government Organizations (NGOs) and the Government operate seven types of non-formal education, such as Early Childhood Development Education, Pre-Primary Education, Primary Education, Adolescent Education, Adult Education, Post-Literacy/Continuing Education, and Technical/ Vocational Education (Akhter, 2009). In this arena we will discuss the non-formal primary education in this study. Actually, non-formal primary education is different from formal primary education. Under this kind of education, the underprivileged children can very easily acquire education in the development of quality of life (Latif, 2001). In this context, it is necessary to review the features of formal and non-formal primary education in order to get clear idea about the non-formal primary education. Educationalists adapted some characteristics of formal and non-formal primary education, these are below:

**Table 2: Characteristics of formal and non-formal primary education**

<b>Formal Primary Education</b>	<b>Non-formal Primary Education</b>
Generally the environment of education is not favorable.	Favorable environment for education (Arranging dance, singing, drawing pictures, sports etc.)
Long-term & general Credential-based	Short-term & specific non-credential-based
long cycle / preparatory / full-time	Short cycle / recurrent / part-time
Institution-based, rigidly structured and resource intensive	Environment-based, community related, Flexible, learner-centered and resource saving
Teacher-student ratio is higher (1:50)	Teacher-student ratio is low (1:30-33)
Providing education is basically teacher-centric	Providing education is basically children-centric
Learning is basically audacious	Learning is basically work-oriented
Most of time the student are passive	Most of time the student are active
Learning materials is less organized	Use of various types of materials for learning
Male/Female teachers	Only local female teachers
Supervision is not regular	Under intensive supervision
Provision of teacher training for teachers is not adequate	Teachers join refreshers course every month
Teacher-parent contact relaxes	Teacher-parent close contact

(Source: Simkins, 1977:12-15 and Latif, 2001:40)

According to the above discussion we see that, non-formal primary education is school-based curriculum reflecting the special needs of the unprivileged children development to cope with life. Its teaching-learning method is participatory. Learners are attracted to this type of education because it puts emphasis on songs, dance, physical exercise, drawing and other co-curricular activities. The school supplies all education kits free of charge. As this education is continuous, it eliminates any fear of examination. Assessment is done on a regular basis. The school system is regularly supervised. Monthly consultation meetings are held with parents and community leaders (Akhter, 2009). According to above discussion, apparently, non-formal primary education school is suitable for poor and unprivileged children for development of quality of life. But in the real context, it is questionable how the non-formal primary education plays a positive role in the development of the life of the poor and unprivileged children in rural society. It is noteworthy that NGOs are operating non-formal primary education programs for the development of the lives of poor and under-privileged children in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Among them, BRAC, Ahsania Mission, Proshika, Plan Bangladesh are one

of the largest NGOs working on this. In this regard, we will discuss BRAC's non-formal primary education program for the development of rural poor and unprivileged children of Bangladesh. In this viewpoint, child development and its factors- Social and Emotional development, Language and Cognitive development, Physical development are dependent variable, which is influenced by non-formal primary education of BRAC.

### **Methods of Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE) of BRAC**

BRAC is one of the largest NGOs in the country working on primary education. BRAC schools comprise 76 percent of all NGO primary schools (Kabeer, 2013). BRAC started working in 1985, opening 22 one-room schools and providing three years of schooling up to class three, which was later extended to class five (BRAC, 2016). The main objective of non-formal primary schools is to develop a school model for the poor-underprivileged and primary school dropout children, especially girls, to complete the five-year primary school syllabus in four years (Ibid). In this regard, the key features of the kind of approach that BRAC follows in its non-formal primary education program are:

- **One teacher for one school:** The one-teacher school is operated by the same teacher for the same cohort of children for a period of four years and delivers lessons in all subjects.
- **School hour:** The school hours are flexible and fixed according to needs.
- **Cost free:** Children do not pay any fees and there are no long holidays.
- **Relaxed of homework:** Little or no homework as most of their parents are not capable of assisting them.
- **Special material supply:** Children with special needs receive corrective surgeries along with devices like wheelchairs, hearing aids, glasses and ramps.
- **Lesson by own language:** Children belonging to ethnic communities receive class lectures and course materials in their own languages up to class two. So that they can overcome language barriers and cultural gaps.
- **Provided lesson materials:** BRAC develops textbooks and other materials for up to class 3 and government textbooks are used in classes four and five.
- **Social values and right based:** Students are taught about social values and their rights and responsibilities coupled with basic financial education to empower them.
- **Future plan for study continuing:** BRAC primary school graduates are being tracked by BRAC for further study (BRAC, 2016).

Also, BRAC schools provide a child-friendly environment in which students receive individual care and attention. In addition, upon graduation, BRAC students who enroll in mainstream formal schools are provided with follow-up activities by BRAC staff to ensure that they are not overwhelmed by the transition (UNESCO, 2018).

Following the above discussion, BRAC has developed the cost-effective, social awareness, parent-oriented, easy-to-read, and well-organized environmental-centric approach to educate poor-underprivileged children in the non-formal education program. This type of education system is a useful medium for the physical, social and intellectual development of poor- underprivileged children. We will discuss various roles of BRAC in the physical, social and intellectual development of poor- underprivileged children according to the opinion of the respondents of the research area.

### **The Role of NFPE Program of BRAC for Development of Children's Life: Analysis and Presentation of Field's Data**

The goal of primary education is to develop the moral, physical, emotional, social and personality of the child, where the child is conscious of patriotism, duties, and citizen awareness. The objectives of primary education are: gathering proficiency in writing; reading and writing in mother tongue and getting acquainted with the basic knowledge and techniques needed for future citizens (Biswash and Das, 2005). In view of this goal, BRAC's non-formal primary education programs are doing various types of education and awareness based work in the physical, social, language-based and intellectual development of the rural poor and underprivileged children.

In the study area, all sampled guardians of BRAC's NFPE School learners' education level are not high, income is low and their occupation is low quality. As they are very poor, they are not capable of educating their children in formal educational school. They opined that, BRAC's non-formal school based education is cost free, learning materials are provided free, good supervision and also it is the medium of getting loan. So they send their children to BRAC's non-formal primary school. They believe that, BRAC's NFPE is very much eligible for their children's life development. But it is a matter of discussion on how positive the NFPE of BRAC is for the development of children's living standards. Below is an attempt to discuss the role of Non-formal primary education for development in different aspects (e.g. physical, social, cognitive and intellectual) of child life.

### **Health Awareness Activities for Physical Development**

One of the main issues of child development is health awareness in which cleanliness, use of sanitary latrines and hygiene issues play a key role. We see through BRAC's NFPE school observation that BRAC's non-formal education program provides awareness based learning about the use of sanitary latrine, drinking clean water and washing hand before and after eating to increase the health awareness of children. In this regard, under the influence of education of BRAC schools, the standard changes in child



health awareness are analyzed through a table below. It is to be noted that we have analyzed 'before' and 'after' condition of learners in joining to BRAC's NFPE School.

**Table 3: Changing trend of learner's daily behavioral activities based on health awareness (Before and After Joining NFPE of BRAC)**

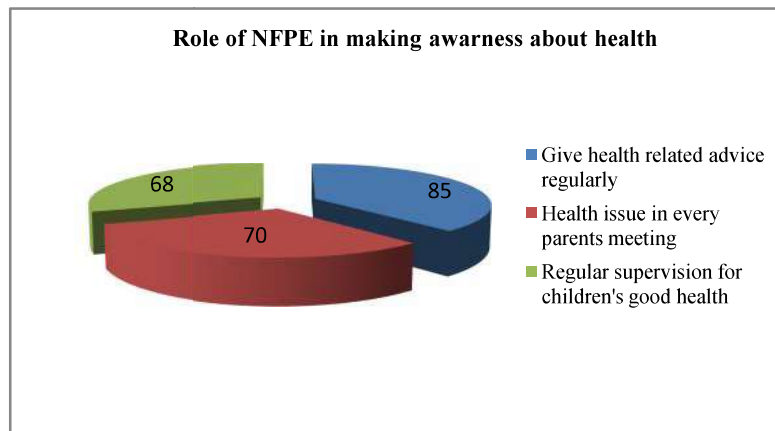
Option	Indicators	Before	After	Changing Rate (%)
Using sanitary latrine	Always	35	85	58.8
	Sometimes	50	10	80.0
	Never	15	5	66.7
	Total	100	100	Average Change=68.5%
Wash hands properly before meal and after using latrine	Always	25	88	71.6
	Sometimes	43	8	81.4
	Never	32	4	87.5
	Total	100	100	Average Change=80.2%
Regularly drink clean water	Always	48	87	44.8
	Sometimes	42	9	78.6
	Never	10	4	60.0
	Total	100	100	Average Change=61.1%

(Source: Field survey)

It is observed in the above table that on the basis of information obtained from 100 non-formal primary school learners in BRAC shown that the 'Always usage' the sanitary latrine rate is 35% of before joining to BRAC School. Then after joining (After 3 years) to BRAC School, this rate has increased to 85%. In this regard, the change rate is 58.8%. Similarly at last 'Never usage' the sanitary latrine rate is 15% of before joining to BRAC School. Then After joining (After 3 years) to BRAC School, this rate has decreased to 5%. In this regard, the change rate is 66.7% and total average change rate in this section is 68.5%. The section of Wash hands properly before meal and after using latrine shown that 'Always wash hands' rate is 25% of before joining to BRAC School. Then after joining (After 3 years) to BRAC School, this rate has increased to 88%. In this regard, the change rate is 71.6%. Similarly at last 'Never wash the hands' rate is 32% of before joining to BRAC School. Then After joining (After 3 years) to BRAC School, this rate has decreased to 4%. In this regard, the change rate is 87.5% and total average change rate in this section is 80.2%. Similarly, there has been a positive change of children in the habit of drinking pure water. We can see that under the influence of BRAC's non-formal education program, the rate of drinking water in the children increased at an average of 61.1%. But why learner's daily behavioral activities based on health awareness is positively change? In this regard, guardians of children have mentioned some causes that are: BRAC School's teacher guidance is good for changing children's bad habit; such as

the teacher checks whether the learner's nails have been cut, whether the clothes are clean or not; To discuss in every monthly meeting about the health awareness of children and guardian; Regular supervision is remarkable. In this context, based on the views of the parents of the children, the role of NFPE in making learners aware about health is discussed below.

**Figure 2: Role of NFPE in making learners awareness about health**



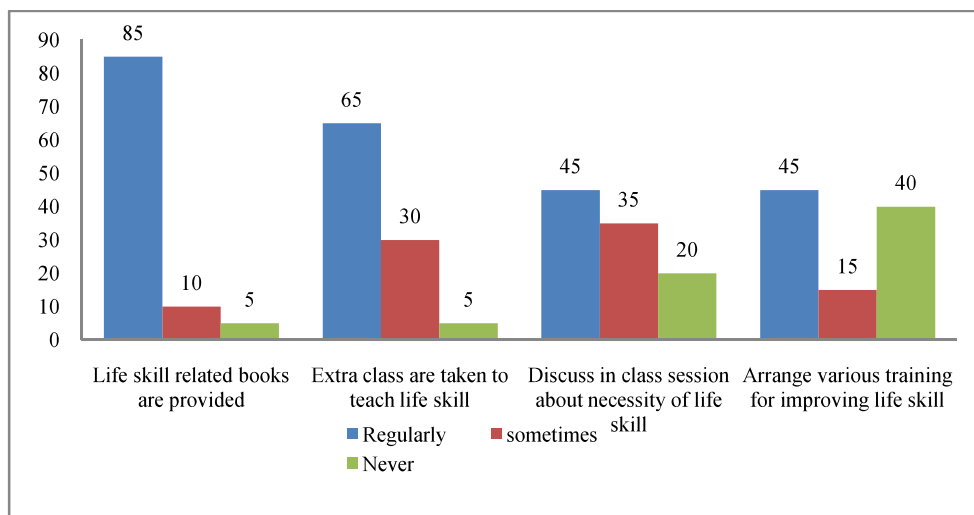
(Source: Field survey)

In order to develop their life, it is really important to make the students aware about their health (Mamun and Rahman, 2013). The above the graph shows that, 85% guardians opined that BRAC Schools regularly give advice to children for creating health awareness. 70% opined that health issue is discussed in every parenting meeting and 68% think that regular supervision by BRAC School can make health awareness of children. So it can be said that, BRAC school arrange positive role play highlighting health issue to ensure their students' health awareness.

### **Life Skill Improvement Activities**

BRAC's NFPE plays a vital role in improving their learner's life skills, which enhance the efficiency of the child and help to overcome the obstacles in life. The NGO's NFPE's School operates extensive based different type's activities to increase the learner's life skills. Schools provide life skill related books and arrange extra classes to improve the learners. Sometimes, they arrange various skill improvements based training by upper officer to make life skills development for students. Role of BRAC's NFPE's School to improve life skill of learners is analyzed in the below graph.

**Figure 3: Role of BRAC's NFPE to improve life skill of learners (%)**



(Source: Field survey)

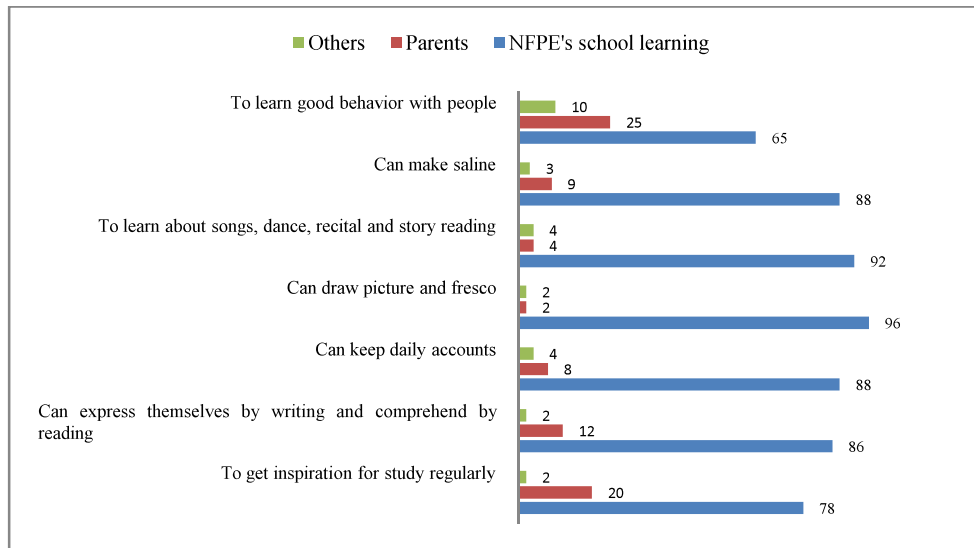
Based on the opinion of the respondents according to the above graph, BRAC's NFPE is working on various types of activities regularly to develop their learners' life skills; the highest level of regular book providing and additional classes organized. But it is noteworthy that the rate of discussion in the class session about necessity of life skill and arranging effective training for improving life skill is very low in BRAC's NFPE. In this criterion, most of the learners (80%) opined that all the activities of BRAC's NFPE are positive for their life skills development. They point out some activities that are learned through their school and which these activities increase their life skills. Those are:

- helping parents earn money at home,
- To cultivate vegetables in the house courtyard,
- To repair the small-scale electrical things (e.g. house walling, bulb setting, fan repair etc.) and
- Handicrafts (dolls, paper cut flowers, birds making etc.)

### **Cognitive and Intellectual as well as Life Skills Development Activities of Learners**

BRAC's NFPE also strengthens learners' cognitive and intellectual development. As a result, learners can do various essential works for improving quality of life. They can contribute significantly to the development of family and society. Cognitive and intellectual life skills developments are shown in following graph.

**Figure 4: The role of BRAC's NFPE for cognitive and intellectual development as well as life skill of learners**



(Source: Field survey)

In the light of the above figure, learners of BRAC's NFPE School are capable in various intellectual and cognitive matters. More than 84% learners have developed their cognitive and intellectual as well as life skills through NFPE's learning. The students expressed their opinion that due to their education in BRAC School, they got knowledge about different subjects. They believe that they can express their feelings by writing, can keep daily calculation, can take primary treatment and at the time of diarrhea they can drink saline making by their own. But it is also clear that the parents of the child and the surrounding environment play a role in the development of the child's intellectual development. However, BRAC's NFPE program works as one of the agents of change in their life.

### **Social and Environmental Awareness Development**

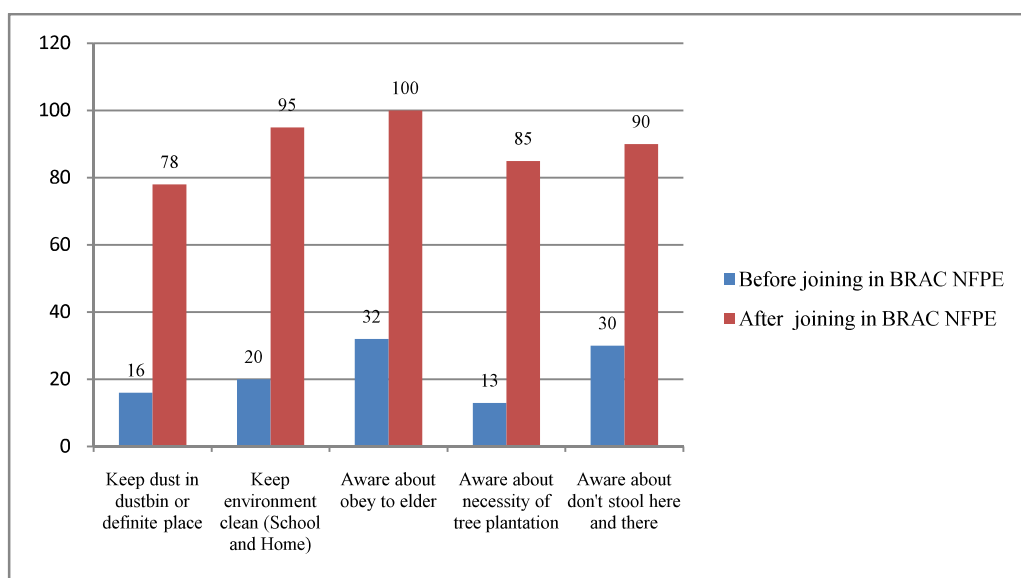
The important factor of children's life development is built up of social and environmental awareness. The development of a society accelerates through the creation of such awareness of the child, because education is the medium of awareness creation. In this regard NFPE is working hard to improving learners' social and environment awareness. In the study area of BRAC's NFPE School has taken various initiatives to make their learners aware of social and environmental issues. According to all the respondents' opinion, initiatives taken by their school follow:

- Include environmental issue in every subject/course;
- Emphasize on environmental issues and school environment;

- Ground meeting with guardian of learners to be aware of social and environment issues;
- Discuss about the respective behavior of learners in class session;
- Motivation to plant trees and keep clean the surrounding environment of school and home.

It is understood that such school-based initiatives increase the social and environmental awareness of learners and they have positive impacts on the learners' life. In this regard, the impact of BRAC's NFPE's learning and various initiatives, the increasing trend of the social and environmental awareness of the students are analyzed through a figure below. It is to be noted that we have analyzed 'before' and 'after' condition of learners in joining to BRAC's NFPE School.

**Figure 5: Increasing trend of learners' social and environmental awareness (before and after joining NFPE of BRAC)**



(Source: Field survey)

In the above figure, Before joining the BRAC's NFPE, only 16 children are aware about keep dust in dustbin or definite place, Then After joining (After 3 years) to BRAC School, this rate has increased to 78%. In this regard, the positive change rate is 81.6%. In the same way, the awareness of the students has increased of keep environment clean, obey to elder, necessity of tree plantation, and do not stool here and there. In this criterion, the average increased rate of social and environmental awareness of learners is

75.9%. That means this kind of awareness build up activities by NFPE is positive of their learner's life development.

### **Problems of BRAC's NFPE for Development of Children's Life**

Whether there is an empirical and systemic problem of BRAC's NFPE, which is obstacle for the development of the life of rural poor children. What kind of problems do they face? In response to this question, two FGDs have been arranged with the students who are NFPE Graduate of BRAC. These FGDs reports are discussed below.

**Table 4: Some problems of BRAC's NFPE as derived from FGDs which is obstacle for the development of poor children life**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Statements of discussion</b>	<b>Identifying problems</b>
Teachers behave	All learners say that their teacher behave well with them. Always she expresses happiness in front them. Most opine that, sometimes their teacher becomes angry with them and sometimes she beat up for study.	- Anger and beat up burden
Teaching process	Most of learners say that, they like the teaching process of their teacher because, dancing, singing, recital, drawing are practiced in class. Some students say that many times their teachers got tired of exercising these and she suffered frustration.	-Tiredness and frustration of teacher
One teacher for one school	Most of the learners opine that, one teacher for one school is problematic of NFPE. They said that, It is almost impossible for a teacher to control all the students in the school. Many times when the teacher goes to a class, students of other classes create chaos.	-One teacher can't fully control a school and all classes
School closing matter	Most of the learners opined that when their teacher is sick, their class is closed. Most of the learners opine that when their teacher is sick, their class is closed which creates problems in their studies.	-Irregularity for teacher's sickness
Teacher's expertise	Some students say that, A teacher is not expert to all subjects. Yet their teacher tried to teach about all subjects.	- A teacher is not expert in all subjects
Study cost	Most of learners say that, Books, papers, pencils/pen are provided by the school. But there is a fixed time to provide them. They do not get allotment in the time when their study materials run out. At the time these things have to be bought by themselves, which is expensive for their families.	- Study materials are not full free.

(Source: Field survey)

According to the FGDs, most of the problems of BRAC's NFPE are 'one teacher one school oriented'. Many times only one teacher can't manage the whole school and class alone. Because of class load of a teacher, she feels illness, frustration occurs, which adversely affects children. Also irregular school, lack of timely providing study materials, beaten by teacher are major problems of BRAC's NFPE, which create obstacle for development of learners' life.

### **The Initiatives that Need to be Taken to Improve Learner's Quality of Life**

It is apparently true that, the all learners of NFPE are so much poor family and underprivileged. Without this educational support, any well support is so much low for quality of life development. For this result ensuring quality of life of NFPE learners some initiative should be taken. Key informants interviews (KII) with the teachers and members of managing committee of NFPE's school, they have raised some suggestion for BRAC's NFPE to ensuring learner's quality of life. Their opinion discussed the table below.

**Table 5: The initiatives to be taken by BRAC NFPE's students to ensure the quality of life (According to notice by the key informants)**

Type of key informants	Different types of initiative to be taken to improving learners' quality of life that noticed by the key informants
Teachers (02)	The teachers (100%) of BRAC NFPE's school mentioned that the organization should provide support to NFPE's learner for admission in formal secondary school, give them support to get further education free of cost; Also BRAC should provide to them learning material for further study and should give them scholarship according to their academic performance.
Members of school managing committee (08)	Six members (75%) of SMC's opinion are same. These respondents have mentioned that the organization should help the learners of NFPE to get admitted into the formal high school and ensure their further education. Learning materials for further education should be provided and scholarship based on their academic performance should be offered. They should arrange some vocational education so that they can earn money besides education to support their family.
Local elites (02)	Local elites say that, the students of NFPE claimed that some initiatives should be taken by the authority of the NGOs. They can provide technical training for the children so that they can increase their life skills and get access to income generating activities.

(Source: Field survey)

Following the above table, Local elite, school teacher and SMC members of NFPE's school have given important suggestions regarding BRAC's initiatives to improve the

quality of life of learners which are: to provide support to get admission in formal secondary school; to give them support to get further education free of cost; to provide them learning material for further education; to give them scholarship according to their academic performance; to arrange some vocational training as they can earn some money beside study to support their family are mentionable.

Also from the group discussion with the NFPE's Graduate learners see that, most of them can't get admitted into the formal high school after completing NFPE cycle. Presently, they want support from BRAC for admission in formal high school. Everyone wants to establish himself as a first class citizen by having higher education. For that the learners hope to get the support from the school authority to admit into high school, deduct tuition fees, and free learning materials, scholarship on their academic performance and technical training for ensuring income generating activities.

### **Major Findings and Recommendations**

- Non-formal elementary education is a flexible, short-term, work-oriented, cost-free education program, where education centers are located near in the learner's home, teaching providers teachers are the same community's people, so this kind of education is eligible for rural poor-disadvantaged children.
- As a result of receiving education NFPE learners' daily behavior has changed positively. Their health awareness grew more than before. For example, after joining the BRAC's NFPE school, their sanitary latrine usage has increased 68.5%, Washing hands properly before meal and after using latrine rate has increased by 80.2%, drinking pure water increased by 61.1%. Besides, the awareness has increased in regularly cutting the nails, wearing clean clothes and cleanliness. These show that their health consciousness is increasing day by day. For these reasons, it is proved that BRAC's non-formal primary education plays a positive role in the increase in health awareness and physical development of the poor children.
- To provide life skills related books, arranging additional classes in schools, and occasional training arrangements by BRAC for development of their learner's life skills. Show that, 80% of students opined that such activities of BRAC are increasing their life skills. Because, through this work of BRAC they learn about help parents to earn money in the house, cultivate vegetables in the house courtyard, small-scale electrical things repairs (e.g. house walling, bulb setting, fan repair etc.), handicrafts (dolls, paper cut flowers, birds making etc.). Therefore it is proved that the BRAC's NFPE is positive for their learner's life skills.
- The students expressed their opinion that due to their education in BRAC School, they got knowledge about different subjects. They believe that they can express their feelings by writing, can keep daily calculation, can take primary treatment and at the time of diarrhea they can drink saline making by their own. They also learn about extracurricular activities; such as singing song, dance, drawing, fresco writing etc. In this learning of NFPE's school, contribution rate is more than 84%. Therefore, it



proves that BRAC's non-formal primary education is positive in cognitive and intellectual development of poor children.

- After receiving education through NFPE, the learners are very aware about their surroundings environment and society. It can be seen that due to this education, most of them do not keep garbage in here and there, they keep clean environment of school and home, they obey to elder and they know about necessity of tree plantation. In this regard, after joining BRAC School, the awareness of the students on social and environmental issues has increased 79%. So we can say that the role of BRAC's NFPE is positive for development of social and environmental knowledge and awareness of their learners.
- In the discussion with learners, it is seen that there are some systematic and empiric problems of BRAC's non-formal primary education, in which, one teacher in a school management problem, irregular class, not providing the materials as required, beaten up by teacher are major problems. These problems are obstacles for learners' life development.
- After receiving education, the learners of NFPE are aware enough about their responsibilities and their rights as citizens of the country. They hope BRAC will continue their support for higher education and they will not be the burden of the country.

It is proved that the role of BRAC's non-formal primary education is positive for the development of rural poor and underprivileged children. However, its educational activities are not above the problem. In order to make this education more effective for the development of poor children, some recommendations were presented below.

- To control the daily classes and a school by a teacher is very difficult. For this, it is necessary to increase the number of teachers for uninterrupted teaching and proper school management.
- BRAC should design some occupational skills and trainings, these training should be provided during or at the end of the learners NFPE cycle so that learners can develop themselves economically.
- Teachers must have training to understand the students' psychology and identify the needs and lacking of students.
- Teachers must have good motivational capacity to inspire the students in order to improve their learning. For this, it is necessary to increase the teacher's motivational training.
- NFPE school' teacher uses various attractive materials for teaching to learners. But we see that, it is comparatively low for necessity for a school. For this, relevant and attractive supplementary materials should be increased for making lessons attractive.
- Through the discussion with learners and observation of school it is noted that, regular monitoring and supervision is not done by NGOs regularly. So, NGO authority should give emphasis on school monitoring and supervision to achieve the

goal of the program through finding out the problems and solving those, because, without strong monitoring and supervision, the program may fail to achieve its goal.

- In rural Bangladesh majority BRAC's NFPE schools are run in very congested classrooms, where natural light and air cannot enter. Also there is no electricity opportunity in these class rooms. This kind of classroom is not favorable for learning. So the BRAC's authority should increase the environmental facilities of the classroom to support better learning.
- The schools can award those students who follow the rules of health and stay neat and clean. It will be a good motivation for the learners to take care of their health and abide by the rules of health.
- NFPE's graduated learners want to continue their education. But most of them cannot get admitted into the secondary school for poverty. So BRAC should proper supports their students closely to get admission into the formal secondary school after completing NFPE cycle. Otherwise these learners would be a burden on society.
- Through the discussion with learners and observation of school it is noted that, NFPE school environment is not hygienic in rural areas. Sometimes there is no tube-wall for drinking clean water for learners in the school. If we want to ensure learners' life development, it should improve the school environment.
- In addition to providing education to students, BRAC should develop a program in order to increase awareness and motivate guardians, so that the students can continue their studies and be able to develop their quality of life.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to ensure universal primary education through quality education for all as per target-IV of SDG. But it is clear that many of the poor family's children in rural area of Bangladesh are deprived of primary education due to poverty, although Bangladesh has shown great success in achieving goal-II of MDG. However, it is important to bring up in the light of education of the huge rural underprivileged and poor children for the implementation of the SDG target and to accelerate national development. In this case, non-formal education can play an important role, because such educational programs are suitable for the poor, underprivileged children. BRAC is the largest NGO of Bangladesh which is involved with this program and is doing extensive work in primary education for poor-unprivileged children of the rural areas. The study shows that the NFPE's schools run by BRAC at the rural area of Bangladesh are playing a positive role in the development of physical, psychological, intellectual and social indicators of these poor children life. As a result of enrollment in this school, the health awareness, knowledge of environmental problems, life skills knowledge, moral education and social awareness of these children have increased. The findings also show that, receiving education from BRAC's NFPE, the daily behavioral activities of the students have changed positively. They are participating in studies as well as on family and social awareness activities (e.g. making saline for diarrhea patients, tree plantation, hygiene etc). It is evident that NFPE has a good impact on the learners' life. However, there are some problems mentioned in

this kind of education program, such as one teacher for one school, bad behavior of teacher with their students, not fully cost free, and the problems of the school environment. It is seen that such problems create obstacle for ensuring quality education for the poor and underprivileged children. Therefore, NGOs engaged in non-formal education must take initiatives to overcome these problems and Bangladesh government must take effective steps to implement this education.

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