

## Status of Girls at Secondary Level of Education: Perspective Bangladesh

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**Abstract :** *The major goal of this study was to assess the educational status of girls at secondary level of education. A blending of both qualitative and quantitative methods was employed for this purpose. Findings reveal that there has been an encouraging quantitative improvement in the overall situation of girls over the recent years, in terms of literacy and enrolment. However, as gleaned from the findings, a long way still to go for ensuring the internal efficiency i.e. quality of girls education. The empirical findings identified multiple factors to be responsible for this poor quality. Important of these are lack of awareness of the guardian and supportive familial and school environment. Poverty, poor base of primary education, illiterate state of the parents were also found to enthusiast in improving the situation through employing multiple measures. Despite this raising level of awareness, the secondary teacher respondents and they forwarded few preferences, training on which could be of much helpful in armoring them with required knowledge, attitude and skills for managing a gender sensitive teaching-learning environment in secondary schools. Implementation of the recommendations made in this regard might be very much conducive to this end.*

### Introduction

The importance of education for the well-being and development of an individual, his or his family and society cannot be overstated. In particular, education can transform the work opportunities available to a person and, thereby, the whole family's socio-economic status (UNICEF<sup>1</sup>, 1999:15). Bangladeshi women have long striving hard for achieving equity and equality in the arena of education. The government of Bangladesh is also through its various impressive preventive and intervening measures taking the issue ahead by integrating it with the various developmental goals over the last two decades. Consequently, girl's enrolment in primary

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education has revolutionized by surpassing the net enrollment ratio (80.0) of boys with 82.9 NER for females (UNESCO, 2000:31). In line with this development the secondary education (VI-X) sector has also marked a significant improvement in girls enrolment and participation rates, although not at the optimum level.

Secondary education, an extension of basic education, is an important complement to social and productivity objectives (UPL, 2000:53). In Bangladesh, secondary education, under general education, is divided formally into two levels: secondary education (Grades VI-X) and higher secondary or intermediate level (grades XI-XII), provided in college. The secondary level is further subdivided into two sub-levels: lower secondary (grades VI-XIII) and secondary (grades IX-X). Since Jomtien world conference in 1990 the government of Bangladesh is also striding hard to improve overall status of girls' education at the primary level. Resultantly, significant quantitative improvement has been achieved at primary level, which also has touched the secondary level of education. This is particularly true at lower secondary level, where female enrolment apparently makes up more than half of the total. According to UPL (2000:61), in the 1990s female enrollment as a percentage of the total enrollment at secondary level increased from 34 percent in 1990 to 48 percent in 1997, and from 28 percent to 36 percent in higher secondary education over the same period. Not merely in terms of enrolment rate, status of girls' education has also improved in terms of dropout rate, completion rate, etc. According to UPL (2000 : 61) all these developments are resulted from the government's policy, initiated in 1992, to give free tuition to girls in classes VI-VIII followed by female secondary school stipend program, which has contributed to growth in gender parity at 1.8 percent per year over the years. Despite this escalation quality of girls' education has remained a cause of major concern as according to a report (GOB, 2003:17) only one in five girls who enroll in grade 6 pass the Secondary School Examination (SSC) held at the end of grade X. In cognizance of the fact quality assurance measures for girls' education at secondary level requires strong consideration for nationwide action.

Quantitative achievement of any educational program cannot be



sustained unless quality can be assured simultaneously as these two are inter-oven. Women, who constitutes about half of the nation, therefore, should not or must not be spared from the right of having quality education at all sector of education including the secondary one. Various factors, in addition to academic factors underlie the quality and quantity of girls education, such as gender sensitivity of school environment, extent and magnitude of hindrances towards girls education and elimination of the root causes of gender discrepancies, etc. Extent of school level initiatives for erasing the barriers to female education is also very much important. Teachers' efficiency in the form of knowledge, attitude and skills in handling a gender sensitive environment at institutional level has also important implication to sustain the quantity and assure the quality of girls' secondary education. The major goal of this study was to ascertaining some of the above aspects considered to be conducive for a sustainable quality secondary education for girl students. To derive this major goal, the following objectives were specifically set to achieve :

1. To assess the literacy rate and girls' enrolment at primary level of education.
2. To assess the present status of girls' education at secondary level of education in terms of enrolment, dropout, completion and SSC pass rates;
3. To assess the quality of girls' education in secondary schools of the country;
4. Identify the reasons for girls' low academic performance;
5. Identify the measures adopted at institutional level for quantitative and qualitative improvement of girls' education.
6. Identify the status of gender sensitivity in school environment; and finally
7. Identify the training needs of the secondary school teachers in order to make them capable in managing gender sensitive teaching-learning environment in schools.

**Research Methodology:**

This study was a blending of both qualitative and quantitative methods, which included (i) secondary data analysis and (ii) a survey type structured interview with secondary school teachers as the research approach.

**Secondary Data Analysis:**

A review of related literature, as secondary data analysis, was made to draw data and information on quantitative improvement of girls' education at primary and secondary level of education as stated in objective one. The literature included various reports, project documents, empirical studies, research articles, etc.

**Structured Interview:**

**Respondents and Sampling Technique:** In this study a total of 129 teachers were interviewed. They were selected from 43 purposively selected non-government secondary schools, located in two administrative divisions- Dhaka and Rajshahi. The schools were under Female Secondary School Assistance Project II and mainly located in rural area and outside the municipal areas. From each school three teachers, including Head Teacher and two assistant Teachers, were sampled with the use of random sampling technique.

**Instrument Use :** To collect the quantitative data a questionnaire containing both structure and open-ended questions was used. The specific areas covered in the structured portion of the questionnaire were (i) respondents' profile and (ii) seven inquiries on the following issues.

- ❑ Quality of girls' education in secondary schools;
- ❑ Reasons for girl students' low academic performance;
- ❑ Measures taken at institutional level to increase the status of girl's education;
- ❑ State of gender sensitivity in school environment;
- ❑ Areas where gender insensitivity prevails; and
- ❑ Areas on which teachers prefer gender sensitivity training.



The instrument was duly subjected to tryout, on a similar group of school teachers assembled during a training workshop of the secondary school teachers, in order to find out its reliability and validity.

**Collection of Data:** The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents. Before administration respondents were oriented well of the goal of this study and on the answering technique.

**Statistical Technique:** To analyze the data on various issues subjected to this inquiry, simple statistical measures such as percentage and rank were employed.

### **Presentation and Analysis of the Findings**

The findings of this study is furnished under five sub-sections, namely A. Respondents' Personal Profile; B. Status of Girls' Education C. Quality of Girls Education: Problems and Prospects; D. Gender Sensitivity of School Environment; and E. Training Needs of the Secondary School Teachers on Gender Issues.

#### **A. Respondents' Personal Profile**

**Present Status :** Out of 129 respondents 43 (33%) were holding the position of Heads of the institutions. The rest were in the position of assistant teacher and were teaching various school subjects like Mathematics, Social Science, Religious Education, etc.

**Age Structure:** About 45% of the teacher respondents belonged to age group 25 to 34. Almost 17% were between 45 to 49. Age of 18% were above 50%. Ten per cent fell in age group 35 to 44, while 9% of them were from 20 to 24 yrs. age group.

**Sex:** The sample constituted of 38 (29%) female teachers and 91 (71%) male teachers.

**Educational Qualifications:** About 89% of the respondents had bachelor level of education. Only 11% obtained education equivalent to Masters. None had education above master level of education.

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**Professional Education:** Of the teachers interviewed, 69% obtained B Ed or equivalent level of professional degree. Only 7% pursued M Ed level of education. Rest 24% respondents had all no professional degree.

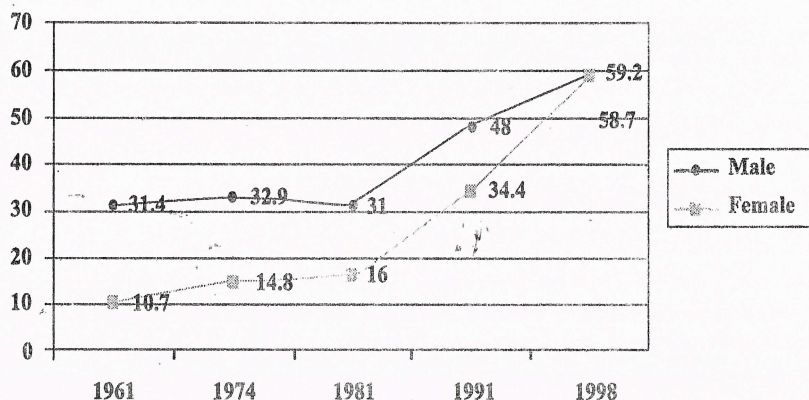
**In-service Training Received:** Respondents received training on administration, management and on teaching of various school subjects like Bangla, English, Mathematics, Science, Teaching of population Education, etc. However, none were found to receive training exclusively on gender issue.

## **B. Status Of Girls' Education**

### **B.1 Development in Women's literacy Rate**

Status of women's education is an important indicator not only for raising their status in the society but also for enhancing the ability of a country to use its human resources efficiently for national development. Unfortunately, as indicted by the literacy rates of 5+ age group, women's education had remained all time low than that of man. From the data in the following graph a sharp difference between the literacy rates of both the genders were found prominent until 1991. After 1991 the difference started to be narrowed and reached at almost same level during 1998. The year-wise differences between the genders with regard to literacy rate were 20.7% in 1974, 15% during 1981, 13.6% in 1991 and only 0.5% in 1998. The analysis of data further reveals that since 1961 to 1998 males' literacy rate has increased by 27. 80 point (59.2%-31.4%), while it is 48.0 (58.7%-10.7%) for female. Thus, it explicitly indicates a sharp and steady increase in female literacy rate after 1981, which is almost double than that of male. Another significant finding in this regard is that the national literacy rates for both genders have reached in almost on a par, 59.2% for male and 58.7% for female, in year 1998 for age group 5+, although there still exists regional discrepancies.

**Figure-1 : Growth in Literacy Rate (5+years)  
by Sex, 1961-98, %**



Source : BBS & MWCA-Gender Dimension in Development :  
Statistics of Bangladesh-1999, p.60

"The Government of Bangladesh is committed to fulfill its obligations to the declaration adopted at the various global conference on women including the most recent Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women" (UNDP, 1998:7). It is also committed to the fulfillment of its constitutional obligation of providing equal educational opportunity to all irrespective of gender. To the realization of these commitment and specially in the backdrop of World Conference on Education For All in 1990 government has adopted multiple policy measures like enactment of Compulsory Primary Education Act (1990) and its implementation, Establishment of separate division for primary and Mass education (1992) under Ministry of Education (MOE) and which has later on emerged as a separate ministry, formulation and implementation of primary Education Development Plan (1095), adopting a National Plan of Action on Education for All, establishment of Compulsory primary Education Implementation Monitoring Unit, etc. All these are the possible contributing factors of such a significant improvement in the literacy rate of women for age group 5+. However, as revealed by the same source (BBS & MWCA, 1999:61) there is still a broad gap of 16.90% point between the literacy rates (59.4% of male and female (42.5%) for the age group 15+.



Illiteracy remains a major impediment to the development and well being of women in the region (UNESCO.1990:1). Lack of opportunity cost, social construction of gender roles, poverty, dominant social code regarding intermixing of gender and cultural norm, etc. are the contributing factors of comparatively lower literacy rate for female in the older age group (UN,1994: 56-57).

## **B.2 Girls' Enrolment at Primary Level of Education**

It can be seen in Table I that enrolment of both girls and boys in primary schools has consistently increased, which may be regarded as a step forward for education of Bangladesh. It is further observed that the pace of girls' enrolment is higher than that of boys, thus easing the gender disparity that was evident prior to the 1990s.

**Table-I : Growth in Primary School Enrolment By Gender  
(1991-1998)**

| Year | Percentage of Students |       |
|------|------------------------|-------|
|      | Boys                   | Girls |
| 1991 | 54.69                  | 45.31 |
| 1992 | 54.15                  | 45.45 |
| 1993 | 58.50                  | 46.50 |
| 1994 | 53.02                  | 46.98 |
| 1995 | 52.62                  | 47.38 |
| 1996 | 52.44                  | 47.56 |
| 1997 | 51.94                  | 48.06 |
| 1998 | 52.16                  | 47.84 |

*Source: UNDP & UNFPA, Education for All 2000 Assessment Country Report Bangladesh, 2000,p 32*

As mentioned before net enrolment of girls (82%) has also surpassed the net enrolment rate of boys (80%), which clearly demonstrate that a gender disparity has been eliminated in primary education. In terms of enrolment and gender parity in enrolment Bangladesh ranks well regionally and in on par with Indonesia and

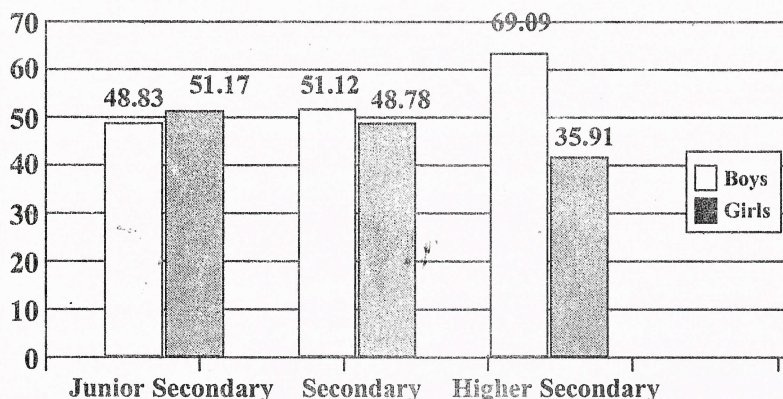
China (UPL, 2000:6). This revolutionary change in primary sub sector produce comparatively a larger number of female primary graduates every year, which in turn create more girl entrants at secondary level of education. The ultimate result is more number of girls' enrolment at secondary level of education, highlights of which are presented in the following section.

### **B.3 Female's Enrolment at Different Stages of Secondary Education**

The data on enrolment is considered a critical and universal variable in determining the various phases of development of the education system (BANBEISE, 1999:35). Enrolment of girls has increased rapidly over the past few years and is now equal to that of boys in the secondary phase, grades 6-10 (UNICEF2, 1999:9. As revealed by the data of 1999 of Figure II, of the total students enrolled at different levels of secondary education, girls constituted 51.17% at lower secondary level, 48.78% at secondary level, 36.91% at higher secondary levels of education. From this it is evident that Bangladesh enrolls a relatively high proportion of females at secondary level. This is particularly true at lower secondary level, where female enrolment apparently makes up more than half of the total. At secondary level the proportion of female enrolment drops off to 48.78% of the total and is only 36.91% at higher secondary level. Thus, the findings further reveal a steady decline in female's participation in formal secondary education with increased levels of education.

Girls' enrolment in non-government secondary school is even higher, 58%, than the average enrolment rate (UPL, 2000:58). This is true for both gross and net enrolment rates. During 1990s the overall enrolment of girls at the secondary and higher secondary levels were 34% and 28%, which have increased at 48% and 36% respectively in 1997 (UPL, 2000:61).



**Figure-2 : Enrolment (1%) of Girls and Boys at Secondary Level of Education, 1999**

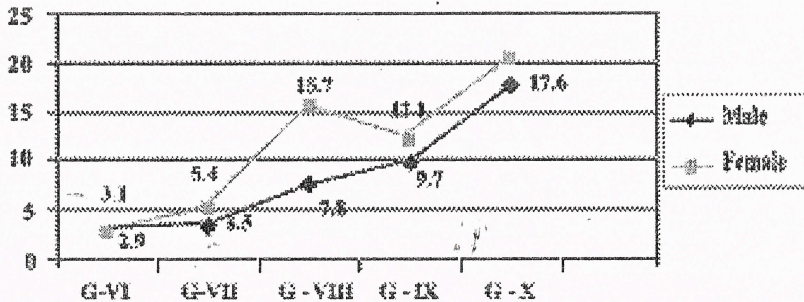
*Source:* Calculated from *BANBEIS, National Education Survey (Post-Primary), 1999, P.37*

Much of this improvement in females' enrolment in secondary education can be attributed to the stipend programs, which support girls students in the form of monthly stipends, tuition fee payments, examination expenses and assistance in purchasing textbooks and learning materials beginning from grade 1 to grade 12 (GOB, 2003:17). The increase in primary enrolment and completion rate might also have significant contribution to it. Overall change in the social outlook with the passage of time regarding girls' education perhaps another determinants of this quantitative improvement of girls' secondary education.

#### **B.4 Girl's Dropout Rate at Secondary level of Education**

The data on dropout rate of both the genders at secondary level of education are shown in Figure III. As of the data of 1997 the dropout rates were very high for both genders. However, dropout rate has always remained higher, in all the grades of secondary education, among the female students than that of males. It was lowest in grade VI and increased with the increase in the grade levels and was the highest in grade X.

**Figure III: Girls' Dropout Rate at Secondary Level of Education by Grades, 1997**



Source: BBS & MWCA, *Gender Dimension in Development: Statistics of Bangladesh, 1999*, p. 61

The gender wise difference in dropout rates in grade VI indicates a subtle difference of 0.2% point. After that it started to be widened and reached at peak at grade VIII with almost double drop out rate of female students than that of male students. After that the gap narrowed in grade IX and again heightened in grade X with a steady increase and constant difference of almost three percent point between the genders, which skewed towards girls students. One significant findings with regard to dropout rate is that although dropout rates for both the gender were highest at grades X, however in comparison to boys almost double number of girls' dropout in grade VIII. Grade VIII is the last grade of lower secondary education. It is a pathway of having access to secondary (Grades IX and X) levels of education from where students are to choose a stream of education for their future course of studies. Bulk of the secondary level girls students reside in rural area. These younger adolescents are particularly vulnerable to a variety of pressures which force them to leave school, such as financial hardship, early marriage and socio-economic norms restricting their mobility, whereas girls who reach the highest level of secondary education have either not faced such obstacles or have managed to overcome them (UNICEF, 1999:14). Moreover, lack of favorable environment and motivation of the parents, as explored in this study, may also play conducive role in increasing the dropout rate at grade VIII.



**B.5 Completion Rate:** Although there has been a significant improvement in enrolment of girls at the secondary level, however their completion rate is still very low. According to GOB (2003:17), only one in five girls who enroll in grade 6 is expected to pass the SSC exam. The factors responsible for high dropout rate may also play the same role in determining the completion rate. Besides, as stated by UNESCO (2000:17), "Unsafe school environment and biases in teacher behavior and training, teaching and learning process and curricula and textbooks often lead to lower completion and achievement rate for girls."

### **B.6 Internal Efficiency of Girls' Education in terms of SSC Examination Result**

Table II presents the data on internal efficiency of the educational attainment of girls in terms of their pass rate in SSC examination. As revealed by the data academic performance of girls at secondary level of education has almost always remained lower than the average pass rate. The output statistics also demonstrates a marked decline over the period 1990-2001. For example, whereas the difference between the overall pass rate and female pass rate was only 1.62 (31.73-30.11), it increased at 2.94 (40.66-37.72) during 2001. The differences were much higher during 1994 (12.49) and 1996 (7.61). From these evidences it could be said despite the positive trend observed in terms of literacy and enrolment figures, performance of girls' secondary education suffers a drawback. It means girls remain backward as compared to boys in terms of quality of education. This assumption on declining performance of girls' education was found supported by a project document (DSHE, 2002:4) saying, "The internal efficiency of the secondary education in Bangladesh is low. Only a fraction of the student who enter into the secondary education complete grade X and pass the SSC examination and even fewer complete grade XII and pass HSC exam. Of the 100 students enrolled in grade VI, 60 complete grade X and 31 eventually pass the SSC. The SSC pass rate was lower for girls compared to boys during 1998-2000. A steady dropout averaging more than 10% per year combined with low pass rate on the SSC examination results in only a few female students

who were enrolled at grade VI completing the SSC without repetition." It further observed that quality of girls' education suffered as the enrolment tends to increase continuously and less than half of the stipend recipients could be able to pass SSC examination (P 6).

**Table-II: Results of Secondary School Certificate (SSC)  
Examination by Gender 1990-2002**

| Year | Pass Rate |        |
|------|-----------|--------|
|      | Total     | Female |
| 1990 | 31.73     | 30.11  |
| 1991 | 64.95     | 65.37  |
| 1992 | 61.60     | 56.85  |
| 1993 | 61.09     | 56.62  |
| 1994 | 71.46     | 58.57  |
| 1995 | 73.20     | 71.58  |
| 1996 | 42.61     | 35.00  |
| 1997 | 51.45     | 49.30  |
| 1998 | 47.96     | 45.13  |
| 1999 | 54.62     | 53.60  |
| 2000 | 35.22     | 33.77  |
| 2001 | 40.66     | 37.72  |

*Source: GOB, Total Quality Improvement in Secondary Education project Draft Final Report, 2003, p.13*

The decline in quality of secondary education can in large part be attributed to poor teaching. Besides, there might be some other reasons specifically responsible for poor efficiency of girls' education, which should be identified for proper treatment.

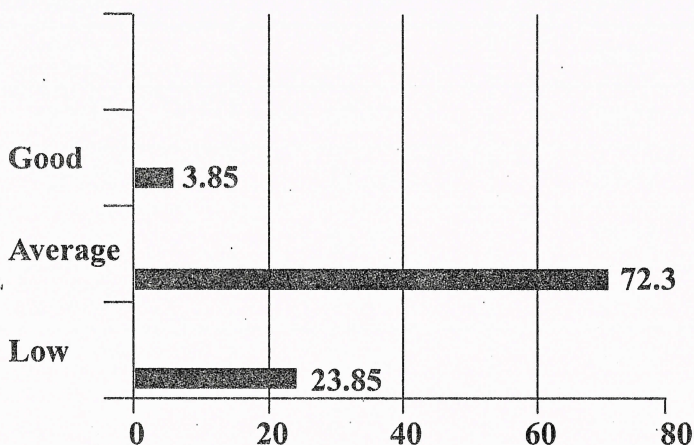


## C. Quality Of Girls' Education : Problems and Prospects

### C.1 Quality of Girls Education: Teachers' perception

Quality of girls' education is an important indicator not only for raising their status in the society but also for increasing their efficiency to live as skilled human resource in the society. Unfortunately, as revealed by the data on internal efficiency, the educational attainment of girls in terms of their performance is lower than boys. Similar view was found to express by the teacher respondents of secondary schools under this inquiry, as 72.30% of them identified the quality of girls' education as average and almost one fourth (23.85%) termed the quality as low. A negligible portion, only 3.85%, of the respondents viewed the quality of girls' education as good.

**Figure-4: Quality of Girls' Education in Secondary Schools:  
Teachers' View**



From this school level statistics on internal efficiency (Table I) it could be said that quality of girls' education at secondary level is average to low. This can in large part be attributed to poor teaching. Besides there may be some other reasons specifically responsible with girls' education. As stated in a report on TQI-SEP (GOB, 2003:18), "At least three factors may be responsible for it: First, in a male-dominated society, boys often get preference when special attentions is needed in preparation for examinations. Girls typically

have to perform household duties from an early age from which boys are normally exempt. Second, if the school is located at some distance, it leads to concerns about girls' safety and security, which may cause higher absenteeism on their part. Finally, particularly in rural areas, early marriage often restricts the study time for girls, negatively affecting both attendance and academic performance." These were also found substantiated by the data in the following sub-section.

## C.2 Factors Responsible for Girl Students' Low Performance

Teacher respondents were asked to identify the reasons of girls' low level of academic performance i.e. poor quality of education. They identified several barriers in the way of Achieving quality education for girls.

**Table-III: Major Reasons for Girl Students' low performance: Teachers' View**

| SI | Causes                                           | Responses |    |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|----|
|    |                                                  | Frequency | %  |
| 1  | Lack of awareness of the guardian                | 49        | 38 |
| 2  | Lack of supportive familial environment          | 36        | 28 |
| 3  | Lack of conducive environment in school          | 29        | 22 |
| 4  | Poverty                                          | 27        | 21 |
| 5  | Poor base of primary education                   | 26        | 20 |
| 6  | Illiteracy/low level of education of the parents | 15        | 12 |
| 7  | Early marriage                                   | 14        | 11 |
| 8  | Irregular attendance                             | 10        | 08 |
| 9  | Lack of motivation in studies                    | 09        | 07 |
| 10 | Parental discriminatory attitude                 | 08        | 06 |

The major impediment, as identified by 38% of the respondents, was lack of awareness on the part of the guardians. It was followed by lack of supportive familial environment (28%), which is essential for achieving better performance in school as well in public examination like SSC and HSC. Lack of conducive school



environment, poverty, poor base of primary education were some other significant barriers as identified by the respondents. Other unfavorable factors of girls' low quality of education were early marriage, irregular attendance, lack of motivation, poor educational state or illiteracy of the parents, parental discriminatory attitude, etc. The hindrances as identified in this study suggest that younger girls of secondary school age are particularly vulnerable to a great variety of impediments, which severely affects quality of their education. If girls are to ensure the opportunity of quality education, these should be considered with due importance and through taking various educational interventions as well as advocacy programs and measures for the stakeholders of secondary education.

### **C.3 Measures taken at Institutional Level for Quality of Girls' Education**

Teachers were further asked about the measures taken at institution level for improving girls' education. According to them schools adopted multiple measures to this end. Providing toilet and pure drinking water facilities in schools was the most responded measure (90%) of all. Taking regular exam (75%) and holding regular meeting with PTA (65%) were the second and third measures adopted by the schools. In fact these two are conducted as part of regular program of all secondary schools. The significant measures employed exclusively for girls' education were opinion exchange with parents/ guardians with regard to their daughters' progress and deficiencies (56%); rewarding for regular attendance (37%), taking motivational measures for girl students (33%), providing remedial measures to poorly performed girls (25%), etc. An important measure as mentioned by 20% respondents was arranging special discussion session on the occasion of various important days like International Women Day, Mother Day, Parent's Day, etc. to highlight the needs of girls' education. Encouraging girls to be involved in co-curricular activities, attach special attention to girls, education during teaching learning process, adopting motivational measures, rewarding for good achievement and regular attendance, providing common room facility were some other important measures employed by the schools in the initiative of expanding girls' education both qualitatively and quantitatively.

**Table IV: Measures Taken by Schools for Improving Girls' Education both Qualitatively and Quantitatively**

| SI | Measures Taken                                                                                    | Responses |    |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----|
|    |                                                                                                   | F         | %  |
| 1  | Providing toilet and pure drinking water facilities.                                              | 116       | 90 |
| 2  | Taking examination regularly (weekly, monthly and terminal).                                      | 97        | 75 |
| 3  | Holding regular meeting with parent Teacher Association (PTA).                                    | 84        | 65 |
| 4  | Opinion exchange with parents of girls regarding their offspring progress and deficiencies.       | 72        | 56 |
| 5  | Rewarding for regular attendance.                                                                 | 48        | 37 |
| 6  | Motivating girl students to attend school regularly.                                              | 43        | 33 |
| 7  | Providing remedial measures to slow/weak performed girl students.                                 | 32        | 25 |
| 8  | Arranging special discussion sessions on the occasion of women day, mother day, parents day, etc. | 26        | 20 |
| 9  | Through more involvement of girls in .                                                            | 26        | 20 |
| 10 | Rewarding for better achievement of girl students. co-curricular activities                       | 19        | 13 |
| 11 | Give special attention to girls' education during classroom teaching learning process.            | 14        | 11 |
| 12 | Providing facilities of separate common room for girls in school                                  | 6         | 5  |

In our society woman suffers the consequence of her gender throughout the life. Increasing awareness and understanding of the issue is essential to get rid of the situation. The wide range of measures taken by the schools as identified in this study is a positive indication to it. Proper application of these measures

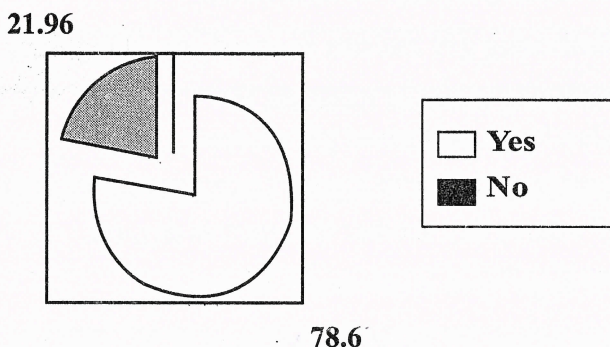


hopefully will reap positive impact in the attempt of improving girls' education in the society. More coordinated and consolidated efforts, should be directed by the secondary schools to this end in order to supplement the government initiatives.

#### **D. State of Gender Sensitivity In School Environment**

As regards to gender sensitivity in school environment, great majority of the teacher respondents (78.6%) were of the opinion that gender sensitive environment was prevailing in their schools. However, a significant portion of the respondents (21.96%) replied negatively to it.

**Figure-4: State of Gender Sensitivity in School Environment**



Gender sensitivity simply refers to such a discrimination free environment where both boys and girls are equally able to pursue their studies. It is a precondition of motivation and encouragement for girls' education at institutional level. Creating gender sensitive environment in school depends on both human and physical factors, which should be made available in schools. Appointment of more female teachers can play vital role in this regard, particularly in rural areas, as currently less than 15% of secondary school teachers are female in against of policy provision of appointing at least 30% female teachers at secondary schools. Other factors will also be brought in to consideration with due importance.

### E. Areas of Gender Insensitivity in School Environment

An attempt was made in this study to identify the areas of gender insensitivity of secondary school environment.

**Table-V: Areas of Gender Insensitivity at Secondary Level of Education**

| Sl | Areas of Gender Insensitivity                    | Responses |     |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----|
|    |                                                  | F         | (%) |
| 1  | In different co-curricular activities.           | 26        | 20  |
| 2  | Contents of instructional materials              | 24        | 19  |
| 3  | Attitude of the teachers towards girl students.  | 23        | 18  |
| 4  | During classroom teaching-learning strategies.   | 09        | 07  |
| 5  | Attitude of male students towards girl students. | 07        | 05  |
| 6  | During evaluation and assessment                 | Nil       | Nil |

The highest number (20%) of the respondents opined that girl students in secondary schools of Bangladesh experienced the most insensitive behavior in the area of co-curricular activities. The second insensitive area was the contents of the instructional materials being used in schools. Attitude of the teachers towards girl students was identified as a third major area of gender insensitivity with 18% responses. Only 7% of the teacher respondents found classroom teaching-learning strategies as an area of insensitive behavior, while only 5% encountered in male students' attitude. The significant finding to mention was that none of the respondents could identify any discriminatory behavior in evaluation and assessment process of secondary schools.

Co-curricular activity is an important area for all round development of the students. All educational institution, therefore, should ensure participation of all in it irrespective of gender. It will in one hand let the girl students to have the opportunity of enjoying all round development and on the other hand feel attracted to school



environment. Gender discriminatory contents should also be replaced from the curriculum by positive ones. As stated by Commonwealth Secretariat (2001:1), "Gender bias in school textbooks take many from and is often subtle and difficult to detect. It is embedded in both the form and the content of the texts. It creates and sustains a view of the world in which male activity and male persons are of primary importance and of great value, while female activity and female persons are marginalized, made invisible or down graded." These are harmful against development of women. UNESCO (2000:17) warned of this situation saying that unsafe school environment and biases in teachers' behavior and training, teaching and learning process and curricula and textbooks often lead to lower completion and achievement rates for girls.

#### **E. Training Needs of the Secondary School Teachers on Gender Issues**

Teachers were asked whether they require any training for developing gender awareness among them. All the teachers responded to it affirmatively. However, they differed in frequency in the areas of training needs, which could be gleaned in the following table.

**Table-VI: Training Needs of the Teachers for Developing Gender awareness**

| SL | Training Needs                                                                          | Responses |    |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----|
|    |                                                                                         | F         | %  |
| 1  | Necessity and benefits of female education                                              | 123       | 95 |
| 2  | Raising awareness of the gender differences in the field of Education.                  | 52        | 40 |
| 3  | Knowledge and skills required to conduct gender sensitive Teaching-learning strategies. | 50        | 39 |
| 4  | Rights of women and children in various fields (socio-economic, Political, etc.).       | 45        | 35 |
| 5  | Women and children repression act.                                                      | 39        | 30 |
| 6  | Special needs of adolescent girls.                                                      | 30        | 23 |

'Necessity and benefits of female education' with 95% response rate topped the list of training needs on gender issues. Raising awareness about the gender discrepancies in the field of education was identified as the second priority with 40% response. A significant portion (39%) of the teacher respondents showed interest to acquire knowledge and skills of conducting gender sensitive teaching-learning process. Significant percentages of them also expressed interest on Rights of Women (35%) as well as women and child Repression Act (30%). About one fourth (23%) were found enthusiastic about special needs of girls.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study attempted to give an overview on the present situation of girls' education at secondary level based on primary and secondary data. It particularly focused on state of gender sensitivity in school environment, reasons of girl students' low achievement, and the measures taken at institutional level for escalating quality and quantity of girls' education. It also focused on the training needs of the secondary school teachers to equip them with required knowledge, attitude and skills in handling a gender sensitive teaching-learning strategies. It is evident from the finding that overall situation of girls' education has enhanced in terms of literacy and enrolment rates. Gender parity has not only attained between the enrolments rates, but also exceeded in favor of girls nationally both at primary and secondary level. However, as revealed by the data on internal efficiency, quality of girls' education is still a distant cry. Given the context, it is appropriate to take measures to increase the quality of female education. The empirical data on this issue revealed some crucial findings in this regard. It revealed that quality of girls' education at secondary level suffers due to lack of awareness of the guardian, lack of supportive social and schools environment, poverty, illiteracy/low educational status of the parents to support their daughters' education academically, early marriage, irregular attendance, lack of motivation, poor base in primary education, etc. Secondary level institutions were found aware of the problems and taking various measures in improve girls' education, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Despite all these efforts a significant per cent



(21.96%) of the respondents opined that secondary schools lack in gender sensitive environment, which can act as a pull factor for girls to pursue their education. The respondents also identified a number of areas as gender insensitive, such as contents, co-curricular activities, attitude of teachers, teaching-learning strategies as well as male students' attitude of which co-curricular activities was responded as the most gender insensitive area. In a search of solution of the problems they identified some training needs to armor the teachers with required understanding and skills in order to establish a gender sensitive environment in secondary schools.

Education is an agent of basic change in the status of women. It is also a powerful instrument that can bring about change in the attitude and prejudices that undermine the status of the girl child in the family, country and society (UNESCO and UNFPA, 1998:3). Therefore, education should be considered to be an effective tool for women's empowerment. For achieving this school should create such an environment, where girls will be able to advance with a mission of improving their overall educational status. The following recommendations are relevant for consideration to this end.

1. Creation of an educational environment in secondary schools in which girls and boys are equally treated and equally encouraged to develop their full potential.
2. Development of curricula and teaching materials, which promote non-stereo-typed images of women and men through inclusion of gender sensitive and gender inclusive language, example, picture, portraits etc.
3. Development of such a behavioral pattern of the teachers, which can accept both boys and Girls equally.
4. Strengthening girls' participation in co-curricular activities and be careful that they are not Segregated from co-curricular activities only for gender.
5. Adopting a more gender sensitive teaching learning strategies in classroom transaction of curriculum.

6. Enlisting support of the parents and the community to achieve the foal and objectives set out for development of girls' education.
7. Elimination of the barriers to quality education and arrest of early marriage to make able to continue and complete schooling with due quality.
8. Training and retraining of educators and school administrators to be gender-sensitive.
9. Gender sensitivity training for the teachers to equip them with required knowledge, attitude and to be role model for the elimination of discrimination against girls and women from education.
10. Making available gender-sensitive professional school counseling particularly for girls to provide them with adequate understanding of their development issues as well as to encourage them to have a broader career choices and opportunities.
11. Monitoring attendance of girl students in secondary schools.
12. Taking measures to involve community in the process of increasing the quality of education through mobilizing parents for regular attendance of their daughter.
13. Make special arrangement in school for providing remedial classes/coaching for poor performed girl students.
14. Creation of congenial learning environment for girls in the classroom where they are given the opportunity to learn.
15. Arranging teacher and community sensitization program on the necessity of girls' education.



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