

# **Context analysis / Stock taking**

**on**

# **Skills development in Bangladesh**

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**Prepared for: the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation(SDC)**

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**October, 2006**

**(Disclaimer: Views expressed in the study are not necessarily those of SDC, while they are certainly those of the consultant's)**

### **Acknowledgement**

I would first like to thank her Excellency, Ms. Dora Rapold, Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh, for providing me the opportunity to contribute in this important domain of skills development. Special thanks to Ms. Tahsinah Ahmed, Senior Program Officer, SDC, Dhaka, for providing me with professional support. I would also like to thank Dr. Malte Lipczinsky, Senior Regional Advisor Capacity Development, South Asia Region for his expert guidance. I would also like to thank Ms. Naheed Ahmed, Senior Program Officer, SDC, for providing important inputs in reorganizing the presentation of the report. Finally, Bhuiyan Md. Imran, Senior Program Officer, Micro-Finance, SDC, Dhaka, as well as, other colleagues in SDC also deserves thanks for their support.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the members of ELCG subgroup, who were present in the last session of the 2 day long workshop on August 3, 2006, for providing rather positive feedback on the substance and findings of the study. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Mohammad Ibrahim, Executive Director, CMES, Mr. Ehsanur Rahman, Deputy Executive Director, DAM, and Mr. Habibur Rahman, Director, Education, Save the Children, USA, for their constructive comments.

I would also express my appreciation for Mr. Shaiful Karim, who has provided me with the unenviable support in collecting information, documents, and contacting relevant persons and institutions, also at times with professional suggestions, during the course of my consultancy.

I have associated with SDC for quite sometime now (since 1994), and I would like to see this relationship continue to grow in the days to come.

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## **Executive Summary**

The study entitled 'Context Analysis/Stock Taking on Skills Development', has been undertaken by SDC, in order to have a first hand assessment of the sector. This study, in essence, is a rapid assessment.

The purpose of the study is to take stock in the area of skills development (for poverty reduction), with a particular focus on employability and linkage to the market.

The strength of the study would perhaps be better understood, if its limitations were put into context right from the beginning. Bangladesh has acquired vast experiences in the domain of skills development. Even though these experiences, at times, are inconsistent and incoherent, yet they have significant potentials in contributing to poverty reduction process. In addition, the three key sectors (public, private and NGOs) have their own characteristics, and mode of operations. This has added to the complexity. The time and resources available were not sufficient, in providing a comprehensive outlook on this rather complex issue. During the course of information search, it was found that relevant documents are often not systematically preserved, and can only be accessed with some difficulties. This has left a number of obvious gaps in the study, particularly in narrating the demand side of the skills development.

Skills development in the form of vocational education and training was introduced rather emphatically, by the developing nations during the 60's, right through 80s. This policy orientation was well supported by DPs, since it favored the notion of increasing GDP by enhancing per capita income (this was the central policy for poverty reduction at that time). *This direct uni-dimensional approach gradually ran out of steam*, and the policy makers gradually realized that poverty reduction efforts goes much beyond vocational education and training.

Skills development has made a return, once again, as stated. This time, however, in an integrated package. Its scope has now become much wider. According to Kenneth King and Robert Palmer (January, 2006), *skills development covers all forms of training and education occurring in formal, non-formal and on-the-job setting*. This introduction of a wide definition has now become a major source of stress for the sector practitioners. A number of questions are being asked, which are: Why did the skills development have made a stage back recently? Is not it true that the scope of skills development has become so broad that it has lost its operational meaning? What should be the operational definition of skills development in the context of Bangladesh? What lessons have been learned in this domain? How these lessons could be translated into effective, viable and replicable interventions? What can SDC do to facilitate the process proactively? The study attempts to address these issues in line with the TOR provided by SDC.

The study covers seven major aspects. *Firstly*, the study deals with who is doing what in the sector. Under this theme, attempts have been made to encapsulate the complexities, resulting from the diverse nature of actors (public, private, NGOs) and their actions. The actions of the various actors have been analyzed on the basis of their quality, relevance, equity and their overall impact on poverty. The findings

reveal that the public sector is large, structured, formal and inflexible, which is not poor friendly. The skills it provides are not market-driven. In the public sector, one of the greatest obstacles that perhaps needs mentioning is the class eight barrier. The requirement that students will have to complete minimum grade 8 for getting entry into the government TVET system, immediately excludes a large number of aspiring poor, who are in dire need of skills for gainful employment, including self-employment. Lack of poverty-orientation, coupled with inflexibility, makes public sector highly resistant to any form of pro-poor systemic change. The public sector, which has the largest structures and resources lined up under its remit, therefore, requires a major re-orientation. In addition, it faces a formidable task in improving its level and effectiveness of coordination. This problem has been compounded due to the involvement of approximately 18 Ministries; all contributing in one way or the other, in the field of skills development.

NGO sector is the only sector, which has the overriding priority to serve the poor and, the ultra poor. Furthermore, NGOs are the only sector, which provides skills training to a large number of rural women, which can claim of being achieving some impact. The NGO sector seems to be engrossed with its apparent success in micro-credit, and its awareness programs (covering social, environmental, health and education related issues). The NGOs have income generating activities, but the scale and intensity of such activities are apparently concentrated with a few numbers of large NGOs, like BRAC and Proshika (of late, Proshika has become dysfunctional for a number of reasons). The strategic advantages of NGOs, in reaching the poor apparently remains underutilized in the delivery of skills development leading to market-oriented, sustainable, and gainful employment.

The private sector, even though, appears to be better aligned with the demands of market, yet it does not have the required institutional and technical efficiency, in order to make an impressionable change in poverty reduction. A sizeable portion of private skills development organizations provides training to expatriate workers, with employment opportunities in the Middle East and East Asia. The training provided by the private sector is sub-standard and are not pro-poor.

The public sector is largely formal. A significant part of public sector initiatives are export driven. The NGO sector appears to have more non-formal character because, the skills development services it renders, are organized and operate outside the formal system. The informal mode of skills development is mainly observed in the private sector. Each mode of skills delivery has its strengths and weaknesses, which needs to be understood fully, in order to devise appropriate interventions.

*Secondly*, of late, there has been intense discussion about market. The public sector and NGOs are gradually realizing the worth of generating marketable skills, in order to make economic gain meaningful and sustainable. However, assessing market needs, and then converting them into marketable skills, leading to sustainable higher income remains to be one of the central challenges.

*Thirdly*, one of the important propositions of the study entails targeting the poor and identification of their learning needs. This is essential to create a productive and learning society. This in turn will facilitate the process of acquiring effective

marketable skills. In this process, the policy makers need to explore carefully the right strategies to merge local economies with global economy, a challenge, which still largely remains un-addressed.

*Fourthly*, the skills development of women requires looking beyond pure income enhancement. It is often observed that in the name of economic activities, women are burdened with additional activities. This leaves them outside the decision-making process, which is object of empowerment. In this regard, it has been argued that women's empowerment will come with their comprehensive control over market-related activities, which begins with market assessment and ends with closing the deal after bargaining.

*Fifthly*, even though government's policy statements in the five-year plans cover a reasonable ground, they have little reflection in reality. The MDGs provide overarching guidelines, which is apparently well supported by the PRSP. Even though PRSP is often criticized, yet they provide a good basis to determine policies and strategies in skills development. They (PRSP) are discussed, debated and modified; therefore, they are live documents. However, lack of adequate human resources, coupled with fragmented institutional structure, is a major hindrance in articulating consistent and cohesive policies in the domain of skills development. As a consequence, the NGOs and private sector initiatives have also become disjointed and dispersed, and lacks synergies of impact.

*Sixthly*, in this state of policy inertia, due to institutional inconsistencies in the domain of skills development, SDC must vigorously explore and identify critical area/s of intervention/s, which can provide the optimum level of valid experiences (feeding into larger national policy dialogues on skills development). This exercise should be based on merging SDC's past achievements with existing market-oriented, demand-driven skills; which needs to be identified and translated into economic gains for the target-beneficiaries. Such strategic orientation towards skills delivery should be based on achieving outreach with optimum impact on poverty reduction (in line with the existing policy outline of SDC). To this end, SDC should actively look into various on-going activities in the different sectors, as well as, the activities in the making. While doing so, SDC should take into consideration that its future areas of collaboration should be favorable enough, so as to ensure its effective facilitating role. The effectiveness of SDC's facilitating role would be contingent upon the extent of influence it can exert on the momentum, and direction, of such initiatives. Therefore, it is not only the technical content of intervention that is crucial, but also equally crucial, if not more, is the nature of partnership and alliance, which SDC will have to forge for making its future interventions operational. Therefore, the challenge for SDC to become an effective change agent, in the domain of skills development in Bangladesh, appears to be quite formidable.

*Seventhly*, the significance and relevance of skills development to education could hardly be overemphasized. In fact, for SDC, education should become an entry point for promoting skills development initiatives in Bangladesh. It appears that SDC, by this time has contributed in small, but in a meaningful manner, in the domain of NFE. This achievement appears to remain understated. The way the NFE in Bangladesh has been conceived and implemented by the GOB, had potentials to succeed. But

those potentials could not be harnessed as of now, due to a number of institutional difficulties, which had culminated into the abolishment of DNFE, and its subsequent revival as BNFE. This has created institutional vacuum and above all, it has resulted into a very damaging discontinuity of NFE interventions, which has serious consequence for 18 million learners. While SDC should explore to contribute in the formal primary system, it should retain its focus on NFE. Apparently, SDC has now the advantage of having a project, which has acquired learning and experiences in the domain of NFE in its true and integrated form (the Sunamganj NFE experience). SDC has now the opportunity to seize the initiative, by translating Sunamganj experience into a larger policy dialogue, by raising the issue of its possible replicability in a modified form.

Having stated that, the success of skills development in Bangladesh would largely be contingent upon how well the post-primary scenario could be evolved effectively by making meaningful linkages with skills and market-oriented sustainable earnings. This will require meaningful collaborative exercise between Public, NGOs and Private sectors, as well as, support from the DPs.

*The first category of recommendations*, which are overarching in nature, covers a number of basic, but critical issues. Experience suggests, the NFE sector has suffered due to the lack of initiatives to define the scope and parameters of its activities, as well as its intended effects and impact, right from the beginning. This mistake, therefore, should not be repeated. In an ideal world, one would have liked to have a comprehensive and workable national policy on skills development in place, before any major initiative is launched. However, the reality is that it is not going to happen any time soon. Therefore, a viable alternative is perhaps to create a national dialogue with the relevant partners for defining skills development, on the basis of commonly shared meaning. This exercise, hopefully, will also pave the way for initiating dialogue on other relevant policy related issues, afflicting skills development, in Bangladesh. In addition, the first set of recommendations calls for carrying out intensive national assessments of skills-needs and impact of existing skills development, at a regular frequency, which is feasible.

The studies and documents available on skills development are not adequate for providing a comprehensive picture, which could effectively facilitate decision-making process. However, major donors like ADB, World Bank and European Union have recently taken initiatives to assess the skills development sector in Bangladesh. While these studies will help to fill the critical information gap, but still, SDC will have to find its own way to analyze and interpret the sector findings that supports its own institutional policies and mandates. The sector assessment on skills development should contain at least two components, which are; i) An assessment of effects and impact of the existing skills development initiatives in Bangladesh covering all the three sectors (public, private, NGOs), with a particular focus on initiatives taken by SDC; ii) This assessment should be translated into need-based market-oriented capacity development with a clear focus on poverty reduction guided by the PRSP.

*The second categories of recommendations* are more specific in nature. These recommendations provide SDC with options to gain valid experiences, by effectively dealing with multiple issues like access, outreach, relevance and sustainability. The

recommendations are further classified under five broad headings, which are: i) Institution-specific (organizational guidelines for SDC); ii) Technical and strategic dimensions (training content, curricula etc); iii) Inter-sector coordination (sharing information, experience and actions); iii) Access and outreach (creating right linkages with external projects); iv) Innovative interventions (new initiatives, new possibilities).

Considering the significance of the matter, the recommendation for creating a separate NGO forum for skills development, with specific mandates has been elaborated in a separate chapter with explanations and rationale.

Finally, in the concluding remarks, the key issues to be considered for evolving an effective pro-poor policy for skills development has been elaborated. While doing so, it has been emphasized that successful formulation of skills development polices are contingent upon the quality of participation with the target poor right from the beginning of interventions, to its bitter end. Only then, it would be possible to ensure that the contents of learning are relevant to the world of work of the target-poor, thereby ensuring sustainable outcomes leading to poverty reduction.

## **Chapter 1: Introducing the Study**

### **1. Introductory remarks about the study**

Perhaps, it is interesting to note that the extensiveness of the study, which unfolded during its gradual progress, was rather humbling. Given the bleak picture in employment sector, and the formidable challenges in poverty reduction initiatives, it is easy to assume that skills development in Bangladesh does not have much to speak for itself. However, the study revealed quite distinctly, the diversity and complexity of various skills development initiatives in Bangladesh. These initiatives are often inconsistent, incoherent and also, incomplete, to the extent that it does not result into sustainable market oriented employment. Skills development sector in Bangladesh is, therefore, a low performing sector, which needs a major reenergizing. The tone of the study is couched on this premise.

### **2. The purpose of the study**

The central purpose of the study is *to take stock* in the area of *skills development (for poverty reduction)*, with a particular *focus on the employability* and linkage to the *market*.

This study has been undertaken in order to facilitate the process of making sense out of this rather complex field of skills development, by obtaining relevant information and then attempting to identify the trends, patterns and challenges, which is expected to provide some insights for SDC's future intervention.

### **3. The key elements of the study**

The study contains four key elements. Firstly, the study deals with the various actors and their activities. The major actors being institutions and agencies, within public, private and NGO sectors. The outcome of this exercise is to create an understanding of strengths, weaknesses, as well as, potentials of these sectors.

Secondly, the study looks into the skills development and its relevance to education.

Thirdly, the study looks into some aspects of the existing policies relevant to skills development, which is critical for creating an enabling environment, whereby skills development initiatives could be effectively operationalized.

Fourthly, the study looks into the possible ways about how SDC can position itself as a proactive agent of change, in the whole scheme of things.

#### **4. The central premise of the study**

Even though SDC is in an exploratory mode in identifying the directions for its future interventions, it has already gathered valuable experiences, and also has contributed in multiple ways, in the stated domain for the last thirty-five years. All of these elements are expected to become important ingredients in this search.

By this time, SDC has gathered sufficient experience to realize that skills development carries different connotations, which is often heavily influenced by the organizational mandates of the respective agencies. The central challenge for SDC, therefore, will be to assess how these diverse thinking and perceptions could be translated into a cohesive and integrated system of thinking, which would be effective against poverty reduction efforts, and how, SDC can play a pro-active catalytic role in carrying such a process forward.

#### **5. Global context**

The directions and trends of skills development, globally and locally, have been influenced by the larger macro-economic aspects of development. The single focus on economy in the 60's and subsequent integration of social and economic dimensions in the development literature in the 70s and 80s, followed by further integration of environment, all have direct & indirect, consequences for skills development. The issue of skills development is further made complex due to all-encompassing issue of globalization, and the ability of the poor and the dispossessed, to deal with the market forces, not as passive victims, but as active beneficiaries.

Within the European Union, the "European consensus" is very clear about the importance of education and training for development policy (European Commission, 2002, 2005, 2006). UN organizations, such as ILO, UNESCO, UNDP and FAO have made the same point and the international financial institutions are also adopting a similar stance as well (Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development, 1966; Fluitman, 2005; King and Palmer 2005; Mayoux 2006). In short, the stage for embarking on skills development initiatives has been amply set. In all counts, this is a remarkable achievement in the process of global development policy reorientation.

Other global agreements have direct and indirect implications for skills development, like MDGs, CEDAW, CRC, Beijing Conference on Women etc. MDGs encapsulate the global development concerns succinctly and effectively; therefore, it has been taken as a strong point of reference in this study, along with the PRSP, specific to Bangladesh.

The problem, however, of defining skills development remains. It is not clear to the practitioners globally, as well as, for Bangladesh, what kind of implications skills development has, for systemic reforms for vocational education and training, covering both social and economic dimensions. Keeping this uncertainty factor in mind, the issue of skills development has been dealt with an open mind, in this study.

## **6. Bangladesh context**

Bangladesh is a country of 140 million people, with more than 40% of its people below poverty level. Agriculture is the predominant profession of the people. Approximately 60% of the population is landless or marginally landless. This entails that most of population are under resourced in terms of physical assets and human capacities. According to Labor Force Survey, 2001-2003, conducted by BBS, the percentage distribution of employed persons (15 years and above) is 30.6% of the total population. 46.7% males (15 years and above) out of total population are employed, while, 13% females (15 years and above) out of the total population are employed. This indicates, the challenges in the skills development sector for gainful employment are formidable.

According to an ADB report entitled 'Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh' (2004), "There has been a moderate acceleration in growth during the 1990s compared to earlier periods. The growth of GDP was supported by a rising rate of investment. The share of investment in GDP increased by more than 26% since the 1980s and the expanded investment was increasingly financed through the sources of domestic and national savings. The economy also became more open with relatively high growth of exports, which increased its share in GDP from 5.4% in the early 1980s to 13.4% in the late 1990s.

In agriculture, the growth rate of the crop and horticulture sub sector, which is the major activity, actually declined (from 2.7% in the 1980s to 1.8% in the 1990s) and fishing emerged as the fastest growing sub-sector experienced increased growth from 5.0% to 6.9% (from 4.9% to 7.0% for large and medium scale industries) as well as construction activities. In the service sector, wholesale and retail trade, hotel and restaurants, and financial intermediations experienced more rapid growth. It thus appears that some parts of all broad economic sectors of the economy got positive stimulus to emerge as the most rapidly growing activities in the 1990s. During the 1990s the share of industry rose to 34% along with declining share of both agriculture and services sectors.

In both rural and urban areas, the incidence of poverty is significantly high (75% and 67% respectively) for the households headed by casual wage laborers. Of the total number of poor, 46% in the rural areas and 36% in the urban areas belong to this category. Similarly, households whose heads are self-employed in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors account for 40% and 35% of the poor in rural and urban areas".

According to the World Bank's Bangladesh Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) 2006-2009, Bangladesh has taken large strides toward achieving the MDGs. It

increased gross primary enrollment from 72% in 1980 to 98% in 2001 and has eliminated gender disparity in the primary and secondary enrollment. On the other hand, infant mortality has sharply declined, food security has increased, and gains have been made in the income poverty. The share of population in poverty has declined from 59% in 1990 to 50% in 2000.

The snap shots presented by the two major players, paint a mixed picture, suggesting that while the overall development initiatives show upward trend, there are areas, which are seriously challenged, with implications to poverty reduction.

### **7. SDC's approach in dealing with the meaning of skills development**

SDC is looking to find a practical and workable meaning of skills development, which makes sense for poverty reduction efforts in Bangladesh. The meaning and the underlying concepts of skills development, as perceived by SDC, is based on generating productive employment by facilitating the delivery of market-oriented and demand driven skills. According to SDC, the scope of skills development also looks into the broader aspects of political and economic processes that empower the community, and therefore, help in achieving sustainable development.

### **8. Overall approach of the study**

The study has taken into consideration, SDC's Country Program for Bangladesh 2003-2007 and other relevant documents. Based on the discussion with concerned SDC staff, and the limitations faced in terms of time and resources, the pitch of the study is based on two basic ingredients. The first ingredient is based on the statement "We (SDC) look at global trends and policy debates, but concentrate on our strength to realize rather small actions in order to gain valid experiences to fuel policy debates" (Lipczinsky, Malte, Berne, interview 3.8.05) and secondly, the issue of outreach was emphasized. The other two elements, which were addressed as crosscutting theme, were equity and relevance.

As a result, the study, apart from conceptual and thematic analysis, gives information on ranges of activities being carried out in the sector, mainly in the form of projects. This is expected to generate the necessary options for SDC to determine area of future linkages, in order to gain valid experiences and achieve outreach.

### **9. The methodology of the study and its limitations**

The study was for 15 man-days, and one consultant was involved. For logistical support an assistant was appointed for 5 man-days.

Under the circumstances, the methodological options available to the consultant were limited. Firstly, key informants were interviewed based on their availability. The key informants included senior decision makers from public, private and NGO sectors. Secondly, existing documents relevant to skills development were reviewed.

Given the methodology adopted, it was not possible to look into the demand aspects of skills development at great length. The multitudes of poor, who are aspiring to become skilled, and are claiming their rights to decent life, could not be included in a manner, which can make detailed analytical elaboration possible. It was also not possible to cover the mid and grass roots level operators, who are individually and

collectively responsible for skills delivery. In the absence of such critical information, there are limitations, as to how much the analysis can be carried forward.

In addition, one needs to take note that the skills development sector is in a state of disorganization; therefore, it naturally creates difficulty in the process of systematic representation. On the other hand, the skills development sector in Bangladesh is complex, therefore, its depiction, at times also becomes complex.

Since three major players, namely the World Bank, ADB and the EU are in the process of making their own sector assessments, the study could not elaborate in clear terms, the future steps to be taken by them.

## **Chapter 2: Concepts and Perception about Skills Development**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

As referred earlier, defining skills development on the basis of commonly shared meaning has proven to be a problem not only for Bangladesh, but this problem is being felt globally. A certain amount of conceptual uncertainty is perhaps helpful, since it creates the space for innovation, by keeping the necessary flexibility and responsiveness, in order to enable the practitioners, to be better able to address a specific situation. Having said that, there must be a general sense of overall direction, in order to ensure that innovative efforts help the cause of poverty reduction effectively.

In the following, attempts have been made to provide definition of skills development, and a number of key concepts, associated with skills development. In this regard, it needs to be mentioned that the definition of skills development, which has been quoted, covers a rather broad area. This definition suits the purpose of the study. However, SDC will have to further fine-tune the definition through necessary in-house and external consultations, in order to make the definition in congruence with its strategic and operational needs.

### **2. Defining skills development**

There is no universally accepted definition of skills development. It is context specific. However, there are a number of concepts, which has wide acceptability. Given the state of poverty situation in Bangladesh, and its ensuing challenges and constraints, a more holistic understanding of skills development is perhaps desirable. In this case, the definition by Kenneth King and Robert Palmer (January, 2006), can be useful in setting the tone of the study. Their definition of skills development is as follows:

‘Skills development is not equated with formal technical, vocational and agricultural education and training alone, but is used more generally to refer to the productive capacities acquired through all levels of education and training occurring in formal, non-formal and on-the-job settings, which enable individuals in all areas of the economy to become fully and productively engaged in livelihoods, and to have the opportunity to adapt these capacities to meet changing demands and opportunities of the economy and labor market’. There are a number of terminologies, which are closely related to skills development. *The World Bank, the UN agencies and many*

*bilateral donor agencies still use the TVET (Technical Vocational Education & Training) concepts whereas; the EU speaks of VET (Vocational Education and Training). The TVET concept relate to two different levels of formal vocational (lower or basic) and technical (middle or higher) level, whereas the VET concept has always been inclusive, in terms of levels (it also covers higher and vocational and non-academic education) and more recently also in terms of non-formal and informal forms of education and training (King & Palmer, 2006).*

**Comments:** Owing to the existing confusion in defining skills development, the experts are apparently trying to bring a large number of elements within the definition of skills development. From the above text, it is apparent that the definition of skills development, not only refers to the elements, which skills development ought to deal with, rather it also deals with different mechanisms, through which, appropriate skills could be delivered.

### **3. General understanding about skills development among divergent partners**

- i) The overwhelming conviction among the various actors is that the skills development, in order to become effective, requires integration of many other skills like managerial skills, entrepreneurial skills, problem-solving skills, social skills etc. Unicef, and DAM (Dhaka Ahsania Mission) belong to this approach to skills development;
- ii) DAM and Unicef, both think that adequate and effective basic education is an essential condition for creating enabling conditions for the acquisition and application of skills development;
- iii) DAM and Unicef, have also acknowledged that understanding market mechanisms and being able to deal with the market forces for income enhancement is an area that needs special attention;
- iv) The Unesco version is much broader; they tend to argue that skills development for poverty reduction is one of the components within the wider vision of education. They are convinced that there should be an overwhelming concern for the comprehensive development within the context of the social and cultural heritage, replacing narrowed focus to poverty reduction only;
- v) ILO version, like Unicef and DAM, is focused on achieving sustainable economic self-sufficiency, but by laying emphasis to community based training programs of national significance.

**4. Common perceptions about skills development:** Despite divergences, most of the partners felt that skills development should be multi-dimensional and for Bangladesh, it should have a poverty reduction imperative.

### **5. Skills development and training: Concepts and consequences**

Any form of organized skills development initiative, invariably gets translated into training. Training could be provided both through formal, non-formal and informal mode of delivery.

The formal training system is conceived, designed and implemented by the state. The state usually sets standards, criteria and enforces them through statutory laws and regulations. The non-formal mode of training is also organized and semi-structured mode of delivery. In both cases, it is the “*ordered and systematic transmission of skills and dexterities and technical know-how for workers (target poor), in skilled and semi-skilled occupations*” (CINTERFOR, 1997). The informal mode of training is a self-generative process, which results from interactions and interdependence between individuals and groups. It is very personal in nature and also, is cost effective.

With the broadening of the scope of skills development, the contents of training have also widened. Apart from acquiring technical know-how, training now a day, also embodies learning and skills acquisition through empowerment and capacity building. Skills development and training are more closely integrated or ‘embedded’ in a range of financial and non-financial interventions, which seek sustainable improvements in livelihoods of the poor.

The bottom line is, ‘training to overcome economic vulnerability’ embraces a much wider set of skills than just conventional technical and managerial competencies. These include basic literacy and numeracy, social and political awareness and life skills (Paul Bennel, 1999).

### **Chapter 3: Introducing Public, Private and NGO sectors-(I):Structures, Activities, Access**

#### **1. Introductory remarks**

In order to have a better understanding about the skills development sector, it is imperative to have a separate first hand understanding about public, private and NGO sectors, in terms of what they are doing, and what implications that has, in poverty reduction. In this chapter, the three sectors have been introduced, and the basic aspects of their structures and functions have been explained.

#### **2. Public sector**

The public sector skills development refers mainly to the TVET system. The TVET system is large and complex. It has inherent system inefficiencies. The involvement of three ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Employment, Ministry of Expatriate Welfare) at the policy level does not help the situation. The general aspects of the public sector TVET system have been described as follows;

##### ***i) Overall institutional framework of public TVET system***

Vocational training and skills development activities are coordinated and implemented by two ministries, which are: **Ministry of Labor and Manpower (MOLM)** [*Recently this Ministry has been divided into two Ministries, which are Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) and Ministry of Expatriate Welfare(MEW): The roles and responsibility of these Ministries have been decided, but according to BMET the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare is yet to be fully operational*] and **Ministry of Education (MOE)**. Through **BMET (Bureau of**

**Manpower Education and Training), MOLE offers vocational training at 22 Technical Training Centers (TTCs), which are located in the urban industrial areas. Under MOE, vocational training are provided at 64 Technical Schools and Colleges (TSCs) (former Vocational Training Institutes).**

**The TSCs** are placed under the Ministry of Education (MOE, under MOLE). Their main objective is to provide skills for employment. The training provided is practical oriented. Levels of certification provided are SSC (Voc) (two years course involving classes IX and X) and HSC (Voc) (two years course involving classes XI and XII).

The TTCs (Technical Training Centers, under MOLE) are placed under the remit of Polytechnic schools. They provide vocational training to medium level technicians. The practical and theoretical aspects are almost evenly balanced out. The duration of training is four years, which certainly cannot be afforded by the poor. The technical education is placed under the Ministry of Education.

The other ministries, which are engaged in this field, are **Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Youth Development and Ministry of Industry. Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Women's affairs** also provide training to women on non-traditional items like food processing, plumbing, masonry, electronics etc. **Ministry of Health** conducts training programs in occupations like radiographer, laboratory technicians and sanitary technicians (***Statistics on vocational education has been provided in Grouped Annex-1 & 2).***

***ii) Coverage: Main accredited vocational training providers***

Among many vocational training providers, the main government accredited centers are as follows (draft EC report on TVET in Bangladesh, 2006):

- Technical Training Centers (TTCs) providing SSC (Voc) courses under the technical guidance of BMET;
- Technical Schools and Colleges (TSCs) (former VTIs), provides SSC (Voc) courses;
- Secondary schools providing optional (Voc) courses;
- Higher secondary business management colleges HSC (BM) courses;
- Basic trade link schools providing basic skills courses;
- Polytechnic and Monotechnic institutes providing diploma courses;
- Private skills development training centers.

***iii) Administrative authorities and training institutions offering trade courses***

The various categories of government training institutions have been illustrated through a table in the following;

<b>Administrative Authority</b>	<b>Institute</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Annual Capacity</b>
Bureau of Manpower Employment, and Training (under the Ministry of Labor and Manpower)	Technical Training Center (TTC)	1	5,290
	Bangladesh Institute of	1	160

Administrative Authority	Institute	Number	Annual Capacity
	Marine Technology		
Directorate of Technical Education (Under the Ministry of Education)	Vocational Training Institute (VTI)	51	5,320
	Vocational Teachers	1	160
	Bangladesh Survey Institute, Comilla	1	40
Directorate of Youth Development (Under the Ministry of Youth and Sports)	Secretarial Science and Business Typing Center	14	1,040
Directorate of Women's Affairs (Under the Ministry of Women's Affairs)	Women Career Training Center at Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna	3	200
Textile Directorate (Under the Ministry of Textile)	Textile Institute	6	480
District Councils (Under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development)	Shaheed Shamsul Haq Technical Institute, Comilla	1	40
	Engineering and Survey Institute, Rajshahi	1	110
<b>Total</b>		<b>117</b>	<b>13,380</b>

Source: ADB, Vocational Training Project for the GOB, 1995

• **Number of institutes in the public and private sectors, and their intake capacity**

A draft sector study conducted by the World Bank (2006), shows that the private sector has more coverage than the public sector. The following table shows a comparative statistics of institutions and intake capacities of both private and public sector.

	Level/course	2005					
		Number of institutes		Intake capacity		Private share	
		Public	Private	Public	Private	Institute	Students
1	Diploma level	54	143	15020	13230	73%	47%
2	Certificate level						
2.1	SSC (Voc)	110	1,303	23,570	63,450	92%	73%
2.2	HSC (BM)	-	955	-	50,000	100%	100%

2.3	HSC (Voc)	64	-	5,560	-	0%	0%
2.4	Basic skills level	76	414	23,370	13,300	84%	52%
	Total	304	1,860	56,520	89,980	86%	61%

The first and foremost observation is that there is a serious mismatch between demand and supply. According to the above statistics, approximately 91% of the total training delivery capacity will not help the poor, since entry requirements are high (grade 8 completers and above). Even though the number of institutions providing basic education are 5.4 times higher in favor of private institutions, the intake capacity of public sector institutions, in the stated domain is, a little less than two times higher than the private institutions.

The private basic skills providers are 84% of the total sector and serve 52% of the total students receiving basic skills. This suggests, the private sector is operating below capacity. Also, it has been revealed from a number of studies and documents that with the exceptions of a few cases, the private institutions, generally provide substandard, therefore, ineffective training.

*Since there is a lot to be done in the private sector, and since private sector is more responsive to change, and also the fact that basic skills are relevant to poverty reduction, SDC might explore the possibility of collaboration in this specific segment.*

#### **Some critical comments about TVET in the PRSP, 2005**

The failure of the education system, particularly the technical education and vocational training (TEVT) system, to adequately cope with the demand for skills, both in terms of quality and quantity will be addressed by focusing on market driven skill formation.

The skill development system will be upgraded to meet the demand for skilled workers through a number of measures. These include operating the two mutually supportive and complementary programs, namely the National Skills Standard (NSS) and SSC (Voc) with restructuring of the NSS program, establishing a system of good governance comprising transparency, delegation of authority, and accountability coupled with a merit-based system of recognition and rewards, establishing mechanisms to provide meaningful follow-up support and placement services to the trainees with a view to promoting self-employment as a dignified and productive means of livelihood, devising innovative ways of resource mobilization and cost recovery to keep BMET/TTCs functional and effective, changing the orientation of training institutions and programmes in keeping with the needs of the informal sector and the population living in poverty, responding to the needs of unemployed youth through a change in the VET concept and curriculum, and providing support to the private sector in training, specifically in the sunrise sub-sectors mentioned earlier. SDC can technical support through collaborative inputs.

### **3. NGO sector**

**The diversity of experiences has made NGOs, the potential providers of skills at the grassroots, despite their institutional weaknesses. According to an ADB report over 100 NGOs have undertaken initiatives specifically targeting**

**vocational training for the poor, for instance St. Joseph's and Training School, both of whom provide vocational training to poor orphans.** In addition to that NGOs are engaged in varied activities within the domain of skills development.

***i) Ranges of activities undertaken: The ranges of activities undertaken by NGOs are rather huge. Some of these activities are as follows:***

- Relief and rehabilitation;
- Women's Development;
- Development Training;
- Sericulture;
- Rural Credit and Training;
- Poultry;
- Fisheries;
- Oral Therapy Extension;
- Livestock;
- Non-Formal Primary Education;
- Rural enterprise;
- Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development;
- Child Survival Program;
- Agriculture;
- Paralegal;
- Management Development Program;
- Women's health development program;
- Adolescent reading centers;
- Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) and Gender Resource Center (GRC);
- Continuing Education;
- Micro-Enterprise Lending and Assistance
- Social Development, human rights and legal services;

***ii) Ranges of NGO Education Training Program (CAMPE, 2004)***

- Early Childhood Care and Development;
- Pre-primary education;
- Primary education;
- Adolescent education;
- Adult education;
- Post literacy program;
- Quality of life improvement program;
- Equivalency program;
- Basic or Foundation training;
- TOT;
- Refreshers training;
- Teacher training;
- Supervisory training.

From the list of activities and training program, it is evident that a large segment of skills development are related to the development of human capabilities, which even though are not directly linked to gainful employment, rather they facilitate higher quality of life and prepare the target beneficiaries to acquire and apply skills for gainful employment.

### **iii) Coverage: Intake capacity of NGOs**

The physical facilities for conducting both residential and non-residential training is quite weak among the NGOs (as shown in the following table), both in quantitative and qualitative term. However, given the nature of its activities and the kind of people they serve, the NGOs have the capability to organize a large number of poor for skills training at their doorsteps, with flexible timing and introduce people centered methods of learning, at a rapid pace. So it is not so much the existence of physical facilities, rather the human capability of NGO that will come into play when delivering skills delivery.

**Intake Capacity of NGOs in Delivering Training**

Training Capacity	Training Hall		Hostel accommodation	Percentage
	Number of NGOs	Percentage	Number of NGOs	
Less than 25	14	16.47	25	39.06
25-49	45	52.94	26	40.62
50-74	12	14.11	6	9.38
75-99	3	3.53	3	4.69
100-124	3	3.53	-	-
150-174	4	4.71	1	1.56
Over 200	4	4.71	3	4.69

Source: SDC Financing Strategies, Upali et al , 1998

**P.S. NGOs have the capacity to provide training to approximately 3680 trainees at any given time.**

- **A few instances of Private/NGO vocational training institutes**

In an attempt to get round the difficulty of comparing such a diverse range of courses, the table below has been constructed using the following criteria:

- High cost means comparatively high for the production of one graduate regardless of breadth and depth of training;
- High quality rating means no educational barriers and equal access for woman;
- High relevance means an appropriate course mainly for massive informal small enterprise sector.

Course	Cost, equity, and relevance
BGS	A medium cost 'in-house plus monitored attachment' training approach, having high equity and relevance ratings
MAWTS (Long Course)	A high cost 'long course' approach, having a medium to low equity rating (mainly all male plus V111 barrier) and medium to high relevance rating (many graduates going into the formal sector).

Course	Cost, equity, and relevance
	Course is partially funded through production work and fee paying short course. A good course for the supply of instructors.
St. Joseph's (slum children course)	A low cost 'medium term course' approach having medium to high equity rating and high relevance rating.
Ideal College	Private college charging around twice as much per student month as the highly efficient Caritas mobile schools actually cost to operate. Medium to low equity rating (poor cannot easily afford such training and training are mainly all male plus Class V111 barrier) and a medium to high relevance rating (responds to demand and offer a diverse range of training).
ISTARN	Detail of costing uncertain but ISTARN has high equity and relevance ratings for those aiming at self-employment.
SSC (voc)	Low cost with medium equity rating (Class V111 barrier) but there are worries about relevance.
Caritas mobile	Low cost, high equity and high relevance ratings.

**Source :** DFID, improving skills for employment- stage-1 by Stephen Vardigans & Mirza Nazmul Huda, October 1999, p-98

**PS. NGOs have developed center of excellence as mentioned (including the widely discussed SDC supported UCEP and CMES), now additional inputs needs to provided in order to transgform these centers of excellence into replicable and sustainable skills development program for the poor. SDC can evolve an experimental project to that end.**

**iv) Foundations, Banks and NGOs: *PKSF (Foundation), BRAC(NGO), Grameen Bank(Scheduled with Bangladesh Bank): Micro-credit support and other activities with relevance to skills development***

Provision of micro-credit is an important ingredient for self-employment. Over the years micro-credit programs have extended their horizons in terms of their product trying to draw a winning combination between financial sustainability, finding optimum outreach and for having maximum dent on poverty. Such initiatives have added new dimension to micro-credit initiative to the extent that it is now termed under a broader umbrella of micro-finance, in which the issue of savings (among other things) is also being emphasized.

Few notable Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) providing substantial share of micro-finance are, BRAC, Proshikha, ASA, Shanirvar Bangladesh, Caritas, TMSS, Shakti Foundation, Buro Tangail, RDRS etc. Though the stated NGOs, as of now, a total of taka 37,455 (approx. US \$ 535 million) were spent, out of which, taka 33,011 (approx. US \$ 471 million) was recovered.

**Sub sector wise disbursement of MF- NGOs**

SI	Sub sector	% disbursed	% disbursed	% disbursed	% disbursed
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No.		up to dec-2000 (469 MF- NGOs)	up to June- 2001 (468 MF- NGOs)	up to dec- 2001 (489 MF- NGOs)	up to June- 2002 (478 MF- NGOs)
1.	Agriculture	12.77	12.23	12.41	12.31
2.	Fisheries	4.81	4.91	4.93	7.39
3.	Food processing	7.11	3.78	3.85	3.68
4.	Small business	41.81	43.02	42.85	4.79
5.	Cottage industries	3.08	3.03	2.95	2.75
6.	Transport	3.49	2.78	2.74	2.60
7.	Housing	1.30	1.16	1.23	1.18
8.	Health	0.37	0.45	0.42	0.40
9.	Education	0.02	0.08	0.11	0.04
10.	Livestock	20.53	18.11	17.64	17.68
11.	Others	4.71	10.45	10.86	10.22
12.	Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: CDF Micro finance statistics Vol-11, 12, 13 & 14 CDF, Dhaka.

- **PKSF (Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation):** PKSF has been intensively involved in financing for poverty reduction since 1990. As of 2005, the Foundation has disbursed funds amounting taka 24,770 million (approx. US\$ 353 million) through 235 partner NGOs. Out of the disbursed amount taka 124 million (approx. US \$ 1.77 million) has been provided for the institutional development of the partner NGOs.

As of 2005, PKSF is running the following projects:

Sl.N o.	Project Title	Project Fund allocation
1	Micro-Finance and Technical Support Project & Participatory Livestock Development Project	Taka 1051 million (approx. US \$ 15 million)
2	Training, Employment and Income Generating Program (TEIGP) in Jamuna Multi-Purpose Bridge Area	Taka 14 million (approx. US \$ 200,000)
3	South West Rehabilitation Loan Program (SRLP)	Taka 491 million (approx. US \$ 7 million)
4	Integrated Food Assisted Development Project (IFADEP)	Taka 71 million (approx. US \$ 1 million)
5	Micro-credit for the extreme poor	Taka 2000 million (approx. US \$ 28 million)
6	Small Scale entrepreneurs' credit support	Taka 698 million (approx. US \$ 9.9 million)

Source: Ministry Of Finance GOB, Bangladesh Economic Review 2006,

**Observation:** In addition to providing micro-credit, PKSF finances for institutional development of its partner NGOs. This makes PKSF a unique micro-finance organization. On top of that, PKSF has undertaken a number of projects that supports income enhancing activities like livestock development. SDC has the opportunity to collaborate with PKSF in this domain.

• **BRAC**

BRAC is a multi-sector organization, with a long-standing experience in skills development. Its programs are both extensive and intensive. The ranges of programs, implemented by BRAC include, micro-finance, job-creation, education, social development, health etc. In all counts BRAC's programs should get high marks in terms of quality, relevance and equity. One of its programs, which have strong relevance to skills development, is its program for the ultra poor. To organize the ultra poor effectively, it has classified the ultra poor in three categories, which are: i) Specially targeted ultra poor (STUP); ii) Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development (IGDVD) Ultra Poor; iii) BRAC Development Program (BDP) Ultra Poor. Through enterprise and employment development training, it aims to enhance the income enhancing skills of the Ultra Poor. During 2005, 50,000 STUP members, 466,200 IGVGD members and 160,000 BDP Ultra Poor members receive Skill Development Training.

The Ultra Poor have problems in defining their sense of identity and dignity, which hinders their social communications and economic activities. Their core values are often characterized by low self-esteem. A number of interventions are provided by BRAC, which are: i) Awareness raising through informal weekly discussion groups; ii) Community mobilization; iii) Back-up support, and iv) Confidence building training. In addition to the above, BRAC has very large education (NFE) and health program, which has relevance and implications for skills development. ( Source: BRAC Annual Report 2004 & 2005)

• **Grameen Bank**

Grameen Bank is the pioneer in introducing micro-finance programs, which has been able to provide credit to millions of poor in the rural areas, by bringing the banking facilities to their doorsteps. According to the 2004 annual report, Grameen Bank, through its 1358 branches, located in 62 districts is serving 4.1 million members. By the end of December 2004, it has disbursed loans amounting to taka US\$ 228 million. The Grameen Generalized System offers four types of loan products: i) the basic loan; ii) the housing loan; iii) the higher education loan; iv) the struggling members (struggling) loan. Through scholarship program, Grameen Bank has provided support to 14,550 boys and girls. Different categories of students, under scholarship program are primary, junior secondary, secondary, higher secondary and cultural. (Source: Grameen Bank Annual Report 2004).

• **Off-the-Job Skills Training Conducted by NGO and Public sector**

**Summary of the main off-the-job skills training provision of both GOB and NGOs combined**

Type of training	Approx. annual capacity	Approx. course duration	Award available
Occupational skills for agricultural IGA (Offered by	Over 0.5 million. (BRAC alone trains over 400,000	Days to weeks,	

Type of training	Approx. annual capacity	Approx. course duration	Award available
NGOs)	poor women annually)	some longer	
Occupational skills for agricultural IGA (Offered by GOB)	200,000	Days to weeks, Some longer.	
Basic Trades courses (Offered by some secondary, madrasha, private and NGO trade schools) <sup>14</sup>	20,000 enrolled in 1997 (most in secondary schools) M70% : F30%	360	NSS Basic
SSC (vocational) (Offered by selected secondary schools, madrasah, TTCs and VTIs)	10,982 took SSC (voc) exam in 1997. 57 percent passed. M60% : F40%	2 years	NSS III (Class IX), NSS II (Class X)
HSC (vocational) (Offered by VTIs)	178 (1998)	2 years	NSS I (Class XIII)
Trade training (Offered by private and NGO trade schools, and some GOB centers)	9,000 (mostly short course training)	Months to 3 years	Proprietary Cert, NSS Basic, NSS III, NSS II

**Source :** DFID, improving skills for employment- stage-1 by Stephen Vardigans & Mirza Nazmul Huda, October 1999, p-15

Even though, there is a serious mismatch between demand and supply of training, a considerable number of trainees are covered through off-the-job training. Apart from those training, which require, SSC or HSC qualifications, the rest of the off-the-job training provided by the government and NGOs have poverty reduction potentials. However, from the discussion with the various practitioners, it was apparent that the quality of these training programs is in question.

#### **4. Private Sector**

The private sector is yet to find prominence in the domain of vocational training, however, it is gradually achieving momentum. According to an ADB report approximately 200 private trade schools are functioning in the country. Only 159 schools out of these have been recognized by the Directorate of Technical Education. These schools usually cater for skilled and semi-skilled labor to Asia and Middle East. These schools offer informal, sub-standard training of short duration, with curriculum and entry requirements varying widely. Other private sector venues for vocational training include, in-plant and apprenticeship programs. Unfortunately the facilities available are grossly underutilized. The ADB report further observes

that industries tend to rely on on-the-job training due to both the low associated cost and the accrued benefit to firm performed while learning.

The following experimentations funded by the USAID, are examples of innovative approaches, by managing finances and access to market resulting into economic growth and creation of employment

Sl. No.	Approach	Facilitating Role	Delivery and Payment Mechanism	Market Entry Position	Exit Strategy and Sustainability	Impact
1	Bogra Handicrafts Association-Market Access through NGO/MFI	Strong-JOBS provided cost-sharing TOT and technical assistance through TMSS (a national NGO), which provides direct services to pre-selected producer group MEs	Strong-TMSS provides assistance in quality control, price setting, market intermediation, and credit	Reduced-Dependency relationship under TMSS as primary credit and BDS provider, as well as, market intermediary	Undetermined-ME producers within the association have acquired necessary skills for production, however remain heavily reliant upon NGO/MFI	Fair-Producer group members have increased incomes by 1,000 taka per month on average
2	The Modhupur Pineapple Association Production Networks through Commercial Finance	Medium-JOBS provided initial awareness activities in cluster group formation, and limited business services to stimulate business activity as well as loan facilitation	Light- Core Association brokers market linkages for producer group members	Fair- Self – elected and managed association of ME producers with commercial focus provides independence with bottom-line focus. Primary focus on spot market offers weakens ME positioning	Strong- JOBS has backed out of the Modhupur Pineapple Association, which is operating on commercial basis.	Significant-Modhupur Association shares a network of 261 members. Total increase through association formation of 520 acres
3	The Shafipur and Mirpur Producer Groups-Backward linkages from Lead Firm	Light-JOBS provided technical assistance in awareness building and cluster formation, as well as specific skills development training	Light-Limited cost-sharing and subsidies involved. Majority of efforts focused upon awareness building and network brokering	Strong- ME producers receive embedded BDS through commercial linkages, and enjoy access to multiple lead firms and marketing channels.	Strong- ME producers have established market positioning among leading footwear firms, and are operating on commercial basis	Significant- 101 new jobs created directly as a result of backward linkages, within individual incomes

Sl. No.	Approach	Facilitating Role	Delivery and Payment Mechanism	Market Entry Position	Exit Strategy and Sustainability	Impact
						exceeding 200%

P.S. JOBS is a US \$ 11 million USAID-funded job creation and enterprise growth activity that has been operating in Bangladesh for the last five years. The project has adopted an integrated approach to development, in which micro-enterprises are organized into producer groups, and provided a combination of business skills development, financial intermediation and market assistance. The three approaches used by JOBS have been illustrated above.

The above projects are not so much important in terms of their coverage; rather they signify the current challenges facing enterprises for creating effective marketing strategies. Devising effective marketing strategies have been tried under DNFE, but with limited results. However, a large amount lessons have been learned about the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.

#### **Chapter 4: Introducing Public, Private and NGO sectors-(II): Various Ministries/directorates and their activities relevant to skills development**

##### **1. Introductory remarks**

There are approximately 18 ministries, who are directly or indirectly linked to activities related to skills development. A large segment of these activities are pro-poor and concerns generation of employment. These activities are important for SDC in creating linkages in achieving access and outreach, and opens the opportunity to strengthen government's capacity to deal with their ongoing projects more effectively. In the following activities of a number of key ministries have been presented.

##### **2. Ministry of Education and its mechanism as lead Ministry: Responsibilities and activities**

The Ministry of education is responsible for policy making, planning, monitoring evaluation and implementing of the program related to secondary, higher secondary and madrasahs. The Ministry runs its operations through Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education and Directorate of Technical Education responsible for management and supervision if institutions under their respective control.

Under the MOE, there are a number of specialized autonomous bodies like National Curriculum and TextBook Board (NCTB), Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS). MOE has overall responsibility for secondary to tertiary education. The main features of vocational education is as follows:

- **Primary level:** There are no technical-vocational institution is primary level of education. Ebtedayee in the level (primary level) of madrasahs education have no scope for technical and vocational education.

- **Secondary level:** The certificate courses prepare skilled workers in various vocations beginning from ninth grade. At this level the courses are spread over 1 to 2 years. Diploma courses prepare diploma engineers at the polytechnic institutes. This course is spread over 4 years. There is technical education board in the name of BTEB, which grants affiliation to the technical institutes. It conducts examinations of the students completing different courses in different vocational and technical education, and awards certificates to successful candidates.
- **Information Management Cell:** there is an information management cell, which is responsible for developing EMIS of the country. It is also the National Coordinator of the RINSACA (Regional Informatics for South & Central Asia). Recently, it has been assigned with the important task of selecting, processing and computerization for awarding government subvention to the private education institutions.

The summary of projects being implemented by the MOE are as follows:

Sl.No.	Lead institution responsible for implementation	Number of Project	Project Summary
1	Projects of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education	16 projects	Madrasah development, extension and renovation old structures and constructions of new higher secondary schools, female stipend programs, teaching quality improvement in secondary education etc.
2	Education Engineering Development	03 projects	Details not known
3	Directorate of Technical Education	06 projects	Modernizing old polytechnic institutes and constructing new polytechnic institutes, establishing new engineering colleges, setting up new computer institutes etc.

Source: Ministry Of Finance GOB, Bangladesh Economic Review 2006,

### **3. Ministry of Primary and Mass Education**

Bangladesh is committed to the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, March 1990) and the convention on the rights of Children (new York, September 1990). Recognizing the importance of primary and non-formal education in ensuring education for all and eradication of illiteracy, the government instituted primary and Mass education Division in 1992. The Division is now operating as Ministry.

The institutions, through which the Ministry runs its operations, are Directorate of Primary Education, National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE), Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE), Compulsory Primary Education Implementation Monitoring Unit. Projects being implemented by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education are as follows:

- **Curriculum Revision:** A competence based and life skills oriented curriculum has been developed. Textbooks for grades 1 to 4 were revised accordingly. These revised books for grade-1 and grade-2 have been supplied to the children in the academic year 2003. Textbooks for grade 5 will be revised and distributed to the children in the academic year 2006.

- **Stipend Project:** Between July 2002 and January 2005 Government spent about Tk. 12.93 billion from its own resources for giving to children. The number of benefited children under this intervention is about 6 million. The program is continuing with an allocation of the Tk. 5200 million (US\$ 86 million) for the financial year 2004-2005.

- **Partnership projects:**

The ECD project works with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Special Affairs, Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Institute of Child and maternal health, BRAC and Grameen Shikkha;

The Ideal project has been developed and implemented by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education with the funding support from Aus AID, SIDA, World Bank, Government of Japan, WUSC (Canada);

The BEHTUC project works closely with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, SIDA, DFID, NGOs.

#### **4. Ministry of labor and Manpower: Activities and functions ( activities of BMET under the Ministry has been provided in the subsequent section)**

As stated earlier, the Ministry of Labor and Manpower has been divided into Ministry for Labor and Employment, which is mainly concerned with employment within the country. For Employment abroad, another Ministry in the name of Ministry of Expatriate Welfare has been established. Both the Ministries are relatively new, therefore, details of its activity is yet to emerge in a concrete manner.

The formulation of planning for development of manpower and improving welfare of the labor was laid in the First Plan. Besides completing rehabilitation and reconstruction work following the War of Liberation, 7 new technical training centers and 12 vocational training institutes were set-up during the First Plan and the Two Year Plan. No marked progress was made in the Second and Third Plan.

During the Fourth Plan, government took some steps to raise domestic employment opportunities and sought employment opportunities in other countries to absorb surplus manpower. As a result, Bangladesh earned a major portion of its foreign exchange from remittances by Bangladeshis working abroad. Vocational training institutes in the country produced skilled manpower, not only for use and employment within but also for export.

A sum of Tk. 850.00 million was earmarked for the labor and manpower sector during the Fourth Plan for the implementation of twenty-four projects under various organizations/ agencies. Out of Tk. 850.00 million, a total of Tk. 180.00 million was spent. A total of ten projects were completed out of twenty-four projects during the Plan period.

**Skill development programs were carried out through 22 Technical Training Centers and Bangladesh Institute of Marine Technology. Non-institutional programs in the forms of apprenticeship, in-plant and up-gradation of training for the workers and supervisory personnel of the industry were introduced. The Technical Training Centers also offered special self-employment oriented**

**training courses for other agencies such as the *Ministry of Youth and Sports, Water Development Board, Technical Education Directorate, some leading hotels, private industries and non-government organizations.***

**5. Ministry of Youth and Sports**

As of now, the Youth Development Ministry has provided self-employment inputs to 2,531,738 young males and females. Out of these youths, 1,429,810 youth have been able to become self-employed. In order to facilitate self-employment 686,236 youth were provided with credit facilities. These youth have been provided credit from a revolving fund amounting to taka 6573,761,000 (approximately US\$ 93 million).

**6. Ministry of Women and Children affairs** The stated Ministry has undertaken a project for poor women, who are suffering from food insecurity. This is known as Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) project. This project was for the period between 2001-2005. The target-beneficiaries under this project are 1,761,000 destitute women. They receive 30 kg of nutritious wheat/food on a monthly basis. ***In addition, they are provided with trade skills training in 25 different categories.***

The European Commission (EC) has provided taka 1625.17 lakh (Approx US\$ 23 million) for supporting 70,074 destitute women. The project has been extended to second phase, in which up till February 2006, 2,79,000 women possessing VGD card has been provided with different categories of income generating skills. After completion of the skills training, the women will receive micro-credit support.

**Observation:** The above stated project by EC helps to identify the actual needy and is reasonably large project. This project appears to be able to deal with the outreach issue more effectively. This project is a potential area of collaboration for SDC.

- i) Under Employment for Rural Women, phase-2 project, 72,000 women have been provided with self-employment training and also with micro-credit support. However, its target has been extended, and up till November 2005, 190,191 rural deserving women have been provided with Tk. 1555,966,000 (US\$ 22 million) through revolving loan;
- ii) The Ministry has also initiated a collective drive for reducing poverty of women and children through NGOs. This project seeks to reduce economic poverty, reduce food insecurity and improve nutritional status of women and children. The project is run by drawing strength from communities.
- iii) Human Resource Development Initiative: The HRD initiative of the Ministry has been summarized below:

**Status of Training as of December, 2005**

Sl. NO	Training Institute/Provider	Number of women trained/supported	Domains of training/support
.			

1	Women's Agriculture Training Institute, Bagerhat.	200	-
2	Mother Fatima Training and Development Complex	650	Poultry, Dairy, Embroidery, Garments, Basic Computer etc.
3	Urban-based Women Development Program by the National Association of Women  <b>Observation: This project apparently has elements of innovation built into it and creates the possibility of generating valid experiences. SDC can explore the possibility of collaboration.</b>	21,280 women provided with training  5000 women have been provided with revolving loan.  4920 educated and semi-educated women have been provided with entrepreneurship skills	Income generating skills, entrepreneurship skills and micro-credit support

Source: Ministry Of Finance GOB, Bangladesh Economic Review 2006, P.S. An ADB funded project entitled 'Social Protection of Poor Female Workers of Garments Sector' is presently being implemented.

### **7. Cooperative Ministry**

**The cooperative directorate has registered 1,50,964 cooperative groups known as 'samity'.** Up till June 2005, through cooperative initiative a total of assets worth taka 11,860 million (approx. US \$ 169 million) have been created.

Under co-operative initiative **208,591 cooperative members have been trained in employment and self-employment.**

At the moment the Cooperative Directorate is implementing a project entitled "**Project for strengthening Cooperative Directorate and Poverty reduction through creation of entrepreneurs, and income enhancing employment**". This project is worth taka 6390 million (US \$ 91 million).

**Micro-credit program run by the cooperative directorate:** The credit union under the cooperative initiative was formed in 1979. This has now a collection of 136,137 members. This credit union has by now accumulated capital amounting to taka 294 million (approx. US \$ 4.2 million). In addition, as of now it has distributed credit worth taka 970 million (approx. US \$ 13.9 million).

**Observation:** The mix of micro-credit and employment generation skills, with the provision of entrepreneur skills is a good combination of creating empowered communities and individuals, who are able to deal effectively with market mechanisms. SDC has the opportunity to explore the area of cooperation in this domain.

### **8. Bangladesh Small Industries Corporation (BSIC)**

Through support from banks and financial institutions, BSIC has, so far, invested Tk. 2,232 million (approx. US \$ 31 million) for small and cottage industries, within financial year, 2005-06. Through various sources of assistance BSIC has created employment for 38,440 persons.

Additional projects undertaken by government for poverty reduction are as follows;

- i) ICT Technology for Poverty Reduction;
- ii) Rural Infrastructure Development Project;
- iii) Urban Poverty Reduction Project;
- iv) Rural Poverty Reduction Foundation;
- v) Bangladesh Rural Development Academy.

Through a combination of providing employment skills, combined with credit facilities, over 200,000 target-beneficiaries have been served, who have also been provided with over Taka 17,000 million (approx. US \$ 242 million) credit support.

**Observation:** This area holds promise of employment and effective poverty reduction. This sector also deals with non-traditional and non-farm items, as the above projects suggest. This is critical for effective resource mobilization supporting the mainstream agricultural and agri-based industries.

### **9. Activities by the Social Welfare Ministry**

The target-beneficiaries of the Social Welfare Ministry are the mentally, physically, and socially challenged segment of population, the orphans, the deserted children, and vagabonds. The major project undertakings of this ministry are as follows:

- **Social solidarity building and poverty reduction initiative:** Three major projects under the remit of the stated initiative are: i) Rural Social Services; ii) Urban Community Development; iii) Rural Maternity Centers. Up till December 2005, the total amount of credit provided amounts to taka 6,100 million (approx. US \$ 87 million). The other activities and number of target beneficiaries covered are as follows:

#### **Nature of activities undertaken and number of target beneficiaries covered as of Dec. 2005**

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Nature of activities undertaken</b>	<b>Number of target beneficiaries covered</b>
1	Vocational training	2,280,784
2	Social programs	3,187,245
3	Literacy programs	1,650,275
4	Awareness about primary health care	1,777,265
5	Awareness about having small families	271,154

Source: Ministry Of Finance GOB, Bangladesh Economic Review 2006,

**Observation:** Rather than implementing projects on uni-dimensional domains, SDC can facilitate the process of providing integrated support to social welfare initiative in the domain of skills development.

- **Human Resource Development initiative:** Through this initiative 9,600 children are being provided with education, upkeep, skills training and rehabilitation.

During 2005-06 financial year through non-government registered orphanages, 35,416 children were provided with financial support at the rate of taka 400 per month. To this end, a total of taka 170 million (approx. US \$ 2.4 million) was spent.

### **10. Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB)**

BRDB is a semi-government autonomous organization, which is extensively involved in poverty reduction activity that includes micro-credit. The nature of poverty reduction projects and their coverage during the financial period 2005-06 has been provided below:

#### **Project and coverage by BRDB**

	<b>Project</b>	<b>Coverage</b>
1	Rural Livelihood Project under Annual Development Program for Poverty Reduction	152 upazilas (sub-districts)
2	Rural Progress Project	1 union from 465 upazilas
3	Integrated Women's Development Project (From GOB Revenue)	100 upazilas
4	Integrated poverty reduction project	139 upazilas
5	Self-Employment for Women	349 upazilas
6	Small and bonded farmer development project	77 upazilas

Source: Ministry Of Finance GOB, Bangladesh Economic Review 2006,

### **11. Micro-credit initiative of the nationalized banks**

**As of now (within 2005-06), the nationalized banks have disbursed Taka 110,790, ((approx. US \$ 1,582 million) out of which Taka 106,782 million (approx. US \$ 1,525 million) has been recovered. This suggests 96% recovery. A few example of the nationalized banks are Shonali Bank, Agrani Bank, Janata Bank, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Rupali Bank etc.**

### **12. Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)**

Increasingly, the policy makers and sector-practitioners are realizing the significance of SME in generation of employment and self-employment. The Bangladesh Bank has allocated taka 1000 million (approx. US \$ 14 million) for SME development. In addition, the World Bank has provided US \$10 million to the Bangladesh Bank under a project entitled: 'Enterprises Growth and Bank Modernization (EGMP)' during 2004-05 financial year. In addition, the ADB has recently signed an agreement with Bangladesh Government for initiating the re-financing of SME development initiative. These initiatives are designed not only to create employment and self-employment, but also to increase the income of the low-earning population. In addition to the above, in order to create rural employment and poverty reduction, processing of agri-based products is being promoted by the Bangladesh Bank. These activities are concentrated in the peri-urban areas outside the divisional towns. For establishing SMEs and for providing associated technical support the Bangladesh Bank has allocated taka 500 million (approx. US \$ 7.1 million).

## **Chapter 5: Involvement of Development Partners**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

The significance of vocational training is now being widely felt among key donors, both bi-lateral and multi-lateral. In Bangladesh, as of now, three key players are positioning themselves for supporting skill development initiative in Bangladesh, in a significant manner at the national level. Their possible involvement has been discussed in the subsequent sections.

### **2. ADB**

By the end of the year, ADB will field a technical assistance team, who will assess skills development situation in Bangladesh. While the focus of the assessment will be government-run skills development system, it will also explore possible linkages with private, as well as, NGO sector. The focus of their study will be skills development and its linkage with market and employment. Following the study, ADB will decide its strategy for financing skills development in Bangladesh.

In addition, ADB has given green light to a Non-Formal Education project, which is known as Post Literacy and Continuing Education (PLCE). This project will have a skills development component built into it. This project, which would be implemented under the auspices of BNFE, will have the following trade skills component.

About NFE, SDC has previously co-financed with ADB in the domain of technical assistance. ADB has recently approved the initiation of another NFE program entitled 'Post Literacy and Continuing Education Project-2'. It is, therefore, natural for SDC to find area of cooperation with ADB in this field.

ADB will conduct a national skills development assessment, in which it will look into policy, strategic and implementation dimensions, of skills development. The end result of such an exercise will culminate into determining areas of collaboration with the government and other relevant partners in this domain. SDC can maintain continuous contact with ADB in order to find its collaborative role in the field of skills development.

### **3. European Commission (EC)**

According to the Counselor, European Commission is interested to support skills development initiative of the country in consultation with the Government of Bangladesh. In this connection, the EC is having a dialogue with the government.

Apart from this, the EC will have a NFE project of approximately 30 Million Euro, for a span of 5 years, beginning from the year 2007. To operationalize this project, EC has already asked expression of interest from the NGOs, which will lead to selection of NGOs under a set of pre-determined criterions.

Recently EC is in the process of completing a report entitled 'TVET in Bangladesh Preparation Process Final Report (2006)'. According to the EC representatives, the report rather comprehensively portrays the state of TVET sector in Bangladesh. According to EC, on the basis of the stated report, a project is being developed, which will promote the export sector in Bangladesh. This is 14 million Euro project.

The project will be implemented for the period between 2006 and 2009. The implementing agency of the project is ILO. The project will have 5 components, which are:

- **Policy system and legislation:** This component will look into implementation mechanism; cooperation; the process of decentralization;
- **Enhancement of quality and relevant flexibility of TVET:** This component will look into international qualification framework; possibility of lower entry requirement; classical apprenticeship; master craftsmen;
- **Strengthening of institutions:** This component will look into management of institutions; Teaching staff covering both formal and non-formal sectors;
- **Preparation of skills development:** This component will look into industry competitiveness leading to export growth; Raising awareness for employers for higher skills; Introducing modern practices; learning at work;
- **Informal sector:** This component will look into increasing the access of the underprivileged groups; community based training; improve and support to apprenticeship; assessment of existing skills; increase role of women.

The project will consist of two phases, the first phase will be of two years duration, during which time the legal basis for the project would be laid down.

*The second phase will be of 3 years duration. In this phase the ILO will be the key implementer, but the possibility of involving other partners will be considered. During this phase, SDC can contemplate to join on the basis of mutually agreed area of intervention. This project will have 15 pilot projects, findings of which would be shared and disseminated through dialogue.*

#### **4. The World Bank**

Of late, the World Bank, like ADB and EC, is positioning itself for strengthening the vocational and training system in Bangladesh. To that end, it has conducted a study on the stated domain, which apparently is quite comprehensive. The study is yet to be published, and is not in distribution yet. From discussion with a number of WB staff who were involved in the study, reveals that the study put emphasis to relevance, market needs and institutional issues and system management as the basis for comprehensive reform in the vocational and training system in Bangladesh. It has outlined its reform framework on the basis of ambitious reform agenda in the PRSP. Some of the options for reform involving the public sector are as follows:

- **Immediate:** development of a policy framework, in coordination with the private sector, which clarifies roles and responsibilities of various agencies.
- **Immediate:** Provision of information on the nature and quality of training, and facilitating regular and independent evaluations on the impacts of training programs;

- **Immediate:** Allow institutions to seek accreditation from internationally recognized accreditation agencies;
- **Medium term:** Setting up an autonomous Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET);
- **Medium-term:** developing a Qualifications Framework (QF).

**6. Preparatory Assistance project - Employment and Empowerment of Women and Youth -supporting the PRSP, being funded by UNDP**

This will have strong component of market-oriented skills training for employment. They are in the process of preparing the new project based on a previous successful pilot initiative. This is the right time for SDC to explore possibilities of cooperation with this project.

**7. Comments and observations:** All the indicators show that the key players are up for a massive intervention, each on their own accord. The skills development sector, as it is, has serious coordination problem. Therefore, coordination between DPs is crucial for effective inter-agency collaboration in the stated domain.

## **Chapter 6: Inter and Intra-sector Linkages**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

Inter and intra-sector linkages have not been strong and meaningful for skills development. The central constraint in this regard is that there is an absence of all-encompassing policy for facilitating inter and intra sector collaboration in the domain of skills development. In addition, there is a lack of understanding and growing mistrust between the sectors. The different factors that have implications for inter and intra-sector collaboration has been discussed below.

### **2. Intra-Ministerial relationships**

Since almost 18 ministries are involved, in one way or the other with skills development, the possibility of effective collaboration is constrained. Each Ministry is equal in stature with the other, and inter-ministerial tension is rife. Until and unless a super-ministry is created, or functions and responsibilities are relocated drastically, in viable decision-centers coupled with effective decentralization, one is not expected to institute an effective system in place.

Creation of a separate steering committee involving all stakeholders (employers, employees from public, private and NGO sectors), as proposed by the WB and EC is a viable concept given the reality. Whether such a viable proposition will prove to be an effective one is something, which needs to be seen. The committee, if established, will create the possibility of dialogue between stakeholders, which is essential for creating a viable policy addressing the needs and hopes of all concerned stakeholders.

### **3. GO-NGO relationship**

A bureaucratic system, which still runs on Gazette introduced during the height of British colonial rule can hardly be efficient and pro-people. This issue of governance,

which could be characterized in terms of Leviathan state, percolates in all fabrics of development initiatives. The government has created space for NGOs out of sheer necessity, which, however, comes with a sense of loss of power. The politics of developing countries is essentially entwined with politics of development. In simple terms, the ability to be able to decide allocation of resources is essential for creating power base. This stressful situation often translates into amalgamations of conflict and cooperation, which has characterized the GO-NGO relationship.

Give and take, the relationship has grown overtime. However, the growing relationship has experienced a new low with the recent unfortunate confrontation with Proshika. The real implications of such uncalled for confrontation will take some time to emerge. This Proshika incidence indicates how fragile is the GO-NGO relationship can be.

The idea where government channels resources and regulates action of NGO has not worked very well as of now. For instance, in case of NFE, where government, through a directorate, selected NGOs, provided resources and monitored their activities. This arrangement in the end failed to show much promise. On the one hand, government does not have the technical competencies to provide professional guidance, which quickly degenerates into administrative supervision leading to stress and mutual distrust.

#### **4. GO-Private relationship**

GO-private sector relationship does not consider the element of poverty reduction. It is based on contractor-contracted relationship. The prime consideration here is how much profit the private sector operator will make at the end of the day. The private sector is mainly contracted for materials and infrastructure development, like construction of roads, highways, schools, supply of books etc.

The private sector complain that government system is stringent, suffers lack of transparency and regulatory framework does not promote efficiency. This complain is more emphatic in case of export market, a good instance of which is the slow cargo loading and unloading coupled with corrupt practices in Chittagong port. This results into serious loss in time and money. On the other hand, the poor workers, whose interest government is supposed to protect have become disenchanted. Of late, initiatives have been taken to solve such problems through dialogue, but the accumulated problems have become complex to the extent that a worthwhile solution is not expected to come anytime soon.

One of the serious failures of creating effective regulatory framework is the IT sector. While India has already become IT superpower, Pakistan is gradually moving ahead, whereas Bangladesh still remains stagnant. The net result is, the private sector ends up blaming the government and vice-versa. Government's lack of effective support in manpower business resulting to loss of a huge number of employments in Malaysia is also something to be worried about.

#### **5. NGO-Private relationship**

NGO private sector collaboration is rare, rather NGOs themselves are now entering private profit earning sector following BRAC example. This has raised the question

of unfair competition by the private sector operators, since the NGO activities are subsidized. This gives them competitive edge over private sector operators, which is contrary to principles of fair competition. This has also raised fingers against NGOs, where people are asking whether NGOs are getting deviated from their original mandate.

Profit earning exercise should no longer be a constraint to development. The right approach should be forming profit-earning activities around the target-poor so that they are benefited. Such initiatives, if succeed, will no longer be subject to external dependence, therefore, they will become economically sustainable. The strategic partnership between NGO-private sectors should be premised on this principle.

### **6. Strategic outline for creating inter-linkages**

While a national skills development steering committee will provide an overall direction and system stability for skills development initiatives at the national scale, ***it is smaller initiatives, both existing and future, which would become crucial.*** These initiatives should be identified through more intensive research exercise. These home grown initiatives related to skills development signifies needs based development, which are self-generative in nature and therefore, are more sustainable. For instance, micro-credit initiative was a homegrown initiative, which has expanded and attained maturity through external, as well as, national support. ***Therefore, it logically follows that successful initiatives will gradually grow and develop life of its own, thereby, will create meaningful inter-linkages for its own continued survival.***

NGOs can become the link between private sector and public sector. ***In this case NGOs should consider themselves as more of a platform where the target poor can interact with the government and private sector, rather than being service providers in traditional sense, which perpetuates dependency.*** The nature and content of such interaction needs to be identified through further experimentation.

Each sectors involvement and the consequent nature of inter-linkages would be contingent upon their respective comparative advantage. NGOs being grassroots oriented provide the strategic support of ***targeting poor, organizing them, providing the target poor with information, and help create effective learning environment.***

The public sector will have to create an ***effective regulatory environment*** were the poor find it easier to be employed and self-employed. It can do this through creating a ***national fund for skills development*** through which, well directed and well-researched areas of intervention would be identified and supported.

The public and NGO sector are welfare-oriented entities, which are mandated to support the poor. The acid test of effectiveness of inter-linkages, therefore, would be contingent upon, how well the welfare-oriented support results into market-oriented empowerment. In order to achieve this, an effective integration should be made ***through identification of labor market requirements and provision of demand-driven skills.***

Gradually through such interventions as and when the target-poor will gradually become more self-sufficient and confident, **NGOs can also transform themselves from service providers to business development units, providing the poor with labor market and market-related information, provide specialized support like skills development training, advertising, transportation etc.** Initially, such support could be subsidized in the same way the micro-credit has been. It can then gradually grow into full-profit oriented sustainable entities, as an integral part of the market. These transformations are highly technical in nature therefore, it needs experimentations and perhaps, external assistance, especially from private sector operators.

The external support provided to the target poor shall have to be complemented by **local resource mobilization**. Such a mobilization will require considering **individuals, groups, community and local area with which communication could be established with relative ease**. Through interacting with these factors it would be possible to identify the resource and needs and the availability of resources to fulfill those needs; and in absence of needed resources, to seek external resources.

Finally, it needs to be noted that partnerships and meaningful inter-linkages are supposed to be needs based, it cannot be manufactured and imposed upon the concerned stakeholders.

Above all such meaningful inter-linkages needs time to grow and they tend to grow better outside the confines of fixed project approach.

#### **A few instances of possible Inter-linkages between Public, NGOs and Private sectors**

Sl.No.	Partnerships	Nature of collaboration
1	Public-NGO-Private	Policy makers and influential persons from civil society should dialogue with each other intensively in order to devise a viable policy outline for skills development.  Experts from the relevant fields should collaborate with each other in identifying market needs.  Collaboration with both government and private sectors should be sought in order to develop people-friendly training delivery capacities
2	Public-NGO	Should collaborate with each other in ensuring increased outreach in the rural areas.
3	NGO-private	Should collaborate with each other in identifying innovative process for devising viable marketing outlets and strategies that promote employment and self-employment
4	Intra-ministerial	This will need serious political commitment and reorganization of responsibilities of concerned ministries to provide a consistent and coherent structure for effective implementation of mandates.

5	Intra-NGOs	A functional NGO forum for skills development should be created to provide direction and outreach to NGO activities in skills development.
6	Financial institutions-NGOs-Private	Collaboration with both government and private sector financial institutions should be sought for small enterprise development
7	Employer-employee	In order to create meaningful linkages with labor market information and needs-based training content, it is important to create a meaningful platform on the basis of consensus, whereby employers and employees can interact in an effective manner.
8	Development groups and skills providers	There are numerous groups related to various NGO interventions across the country, like credit groups, water and sanitation maintenance group, social forestry groups etc. Meaningful linkages need to be created in providing skills development, in order to bring synergies of impact.

### Public, NGO & Private Sectors: Needs, Challenges & Opportunities

Sl. No	Elements	Public	NGO	Private
1	Needs	Sector needs major policy reorientations, in line with bringing relevance, quality and access to its skills development programs for poverty reduction.	NGOs need major improvements in institutional capacity building for skills development.	The private sector needs technical support for effective skills development delivery for employment and self-employment.
2	Challenges	<p>Bringing consistency and coherence through effective coordination in the skills development sectors, involving all the relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Creating a facilitating regulatory environment for skills development.</p> <p>Introducing effective</p>	Needs to incorporate its skills development initiatives with other development interventions (micro-credit, health, education etc.) effectively	<p>Needs to bring professionalism in its skills delivery</p> <p>Needs to extend its outreach to the rural sector</p>

		market-oriented curricula.		
3	Opportunities	Pro-active participation with DPs for policy re-orientation;  Creating tripartite relationship with government, employers and employees (trade unions);  Creating interface with NGOs to reach out rural poor	Supporting and complementing government initiatives;  Identify innovative interventions;  Collaborating with public sector;  Merging local markets with global markets.	Interface with NGOs to improve upon skills delivery capacity  Carry out dialogue with financial institutions for obtaining loans for business under favorable conditions;  Provide skills to government and NGOs about market needs assessment and marketing management.

**Chapter 7: Target-beneficiaries, Institutional aspects, Marketability of skills (I): Target Beneficiaries for skills development**

**1. Introductory remarks**

The nature of target-audience is different for each sector (Public, private, NGO) in question. The key profiles of target beneficiaries provide a picture about the extent of skills development initiatives towards poverty reduction.

**2. Public sector target-audience and key characteristics**

- The target-audience are largely young males (14+ years of age), who belong to low-middle class, therefore, not essentially extreme poor;
- Despite economic hardships, the families of these categories of beneficiaries are still able to invest approximately 10 years for education;
- During such period, the beneficiaries remain largely unemployed;
- The restraining pre-condition of these institutions is that the students have to complete up till grade 8, in order to get entry in the institutions;

**3. NGO sector target-audience and key characteristics**

- The target-audience of NGOs are the poor, and to some degree, hard-core poor;
- The target-audience of NGOs are largely landless or marginally landless farm laborers;

- A large segment of NGO are beneficiaries of credit program;
- A significant number of NGO target-audience are poor women (their occupation are too simplistically stated as housewives, whereas they perform multiple economic activities without economic valuations);
- A large number of NGO target-audience are well-sensitized about social and environmental issue

**ii) Specific instances of NGO target-audience for skills development**

Within the broad framework of the above stated categories, individual NGOs tend to develop target-beneficiaries according to the organizational vision of the each NGO. Some of such instances have been provided below:

MCC Bangladesh	Proshika	RDRS	SCF (UK) 'Partners'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men or women from households, who cannot produce or buy food for more than 3 months;</li> <li>• Own less than 1 acre cultivable land.</li> <li>• Not more than one member from the same family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landless and marginal farmers (men or women);</li> <li>• Not more than one member from the same family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household should have less than 1.5 acre land;</li> <li>• Member should be from 18-45 age group;</li> <li>• Not more than one member from the same family</li> <li>• A family head;</li> <li>• Not more than 8 years of schooling;</li> <li>• Permanent resident of the village</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women from households with less than 1.5 acres of cultivable land;</li> <li>• Permanent residents of NGO working area;</li> <li>• Not more than one member from the same family;</li> <li>• Monthly household income of less than Taka 1500.</li> <li>• No service holders</li> </ul>

Source: Learning NGOs and Dynamics of Development Partnership: Ahsania Books.2000

**4. Private sector target-audience and key characteristics**

Substantial number of target-audience of the private sector training are related to external employment market, mainly in the Asia and Middle East.

- The substantial segment of target-audience of the private sector, as of now, is not necessarily the poor or hard core poor.
- A large number of target-audience for skills development are children and adolescents, both girls and boys, who are often subject to hazardous working conditions.

**5. Various categories of target-poor and their learning needs**

SDC ought to look into the problem of skills development in a holistic manner. It needs to establish institutional linkages and innovative means to address the

learning needs of the following audiences, which have implications for the improvements in quality of life and market-oriented skills as well.

An illustrative Matix of NFE (target groups for skills development)

Sl. No.	Learning Objectives	Clientele	Diverse socio-economic conditions and stages of development of communities/localities (Situation analysis)
1	Early Childhood	Young children/care givers	
2	Non-Formal Primary Education	Primary age children/adolescents	
3	Second chance basic education	Older age adolescents/youth	
4	Basic education for children in difficult circumstances	Working children	
5	Life long and continuing education	Youth and adults with diverse interests	
6	Occupational skill learning/upgrading	Occupational groups	
7	Post-literacy/remedial classes	Basic literacy completers/youth and adults	
8	Inclusive learning	People with disabilities and special needs	
9	Special learning needs of ethnic and tribal communities	Selected groups with special needs	
10	ICT and distance education-based learning activities	Diverse groups with specific interests	
11	Equivalency with formal education	Diverse groups with specific interests	
12	Basic literacy	Groups of motivated illiterate population	

Source: NFE in Bangladesh: Synthesis of Experience and Future Directions, 2001 (Ahmed, Manzoor, Shiva R. Lohani).

The above matrix gives an understanding about skills development in terms of pro-poor learning needs. The above matrix also shows the scope and hints on the future challenges to be faced in the field of skills development. Existing TVET system will find it difficult to accommodate the above clientele group under its remit.

### **6. Various actors in need of skills within skills development system**

If skills development is to function, the entire system must function effectively. Therefore, it is not only the end users, or target-beneficiaries, who should become the object of skills development inputs. Skills delivery system involves the skills of trainers, training managers and policy makers. They must have the necessary skills to transmit skills within the given institutional arrangement. The profiles of this large number of operators could not be specifically identified in this study for the lack of time. However, these operators require intensive study, in order to determine skills gaps to be overcome through appropriate means.

Within larger development system, health, apart from education, is also an important denominator for human development. Health is also directly related with productivity. The skills development of primary/basic education providers and health operators

also needs to be included. These are not directly related with market-oriented skills; rather they are connected to development market. The health and education providers will remain part of development market as long as for those these services are provided, are not able to pay. If in the long run, the target beneficiaries are able earn income large enough to pay for these services on their own and are also willing to pay, then gradually these services can also become part of market-oriented skills.

## **Chapter 8: Target-beneficiaries, Institutional aspects, Marketability of skills (II):Problems and Prospects in relation to Relevance, Quality and Access**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

A review of access, quality and relevance will provide a general outline of strengths and weaknesses of each sector (private, public and NGOs) in question. It needs to be mentioned the access part has largely been covered in the previous chapters. Therefore, in this chapter, the focus is on relevance and quality concerning each sector.

### **2. Public sector**

The public sector, owing to its inflexible and non-responsive nature is subject to a number of constraints in terms of relevance, quality and access, which has been summarized as follows:

#### **i) Main problems of TVET system (draft EC report on TVET in Bangladesh, 2006)**

- *Low impact of the system;* The system does not cater for skills, which are pro-poor and market-oriented, therefore, are unable to cope with the competitive challenges for the country.
- *TVET system offers limited opportunities;* the total enrolment of the TVET system is about 3% of the total secondary students (about 115,000 students are enrolled in TVET).
- *The system is outdated;* there is an absence of sound and comprehensive TVET policy, which is based on curricula, which often do not address the need of the market, is replete with duplications.
- *The system is very centralized;* Training centers are not allowed to take planning and programming decisions;
- *Low managerial capacity within TVET institutions;* Organizational structure and functions, human resource development aspects, as well as, management of technical resources is weak.
- *The professional capacities of the Teachers are ineffective;* Some teachers hold diplomas, while the majority of the teachers hold only certificates. Majority of teachers were appointed before the establishment of TSCs and they are appointed on the basis of certificates obtained from VTIs, which are inadequate.
- *Quality and Relevance:* According to the experts in this field, a substantial part of vocational training consists of general education, which ought to be reduced. The skills provided are not relevant to the market demands. The practical aspects are not fulfilled due to lack of equipment.

### **3. NGO sector**

The emergence of NGO sector is an outcome of the development void created by the severe poverty situation, which is both extensive, as well as, intensive in nature. The central problem of NGOs is lack of institutional capacity, and its survival depends largely on external dependence. On the other hand, its central advantage is that NGOs have close links with the grassroots.

**i) Strategic advantages of NGOs**

- NGOs are strategically placed at the grassroots, and therefore, they apparently have strategic advantages over other sectors in rendering skills development, despite many institutional shortfalls. It is observed that NGOs are more involved in the education and awareness building model of skills development, which is often wrapped up with the micro-finance activities;
- All these activities in its varied combinations have been able to create some impression in arresting poverty.

**ii) Diversity of activities & relevance: Nature of activities and built-in strength of NGOs in delivering skills development**

Even though NGOs are deficient, in designing and implementing effective training system, they usually provide training to target-beneficiaries on issues, on which they are providing support. For instance, NGOs will provide training on water and sanitation, if they are providing direct and continuous support on the stated domain to the target-beneficiaries, in the form of project. In this case it could be the provision of tube wells or low cost latrines, or it could be awareness for hygienic behavior, in which case, the target beneficiaries are in continuous contact with the NGO extension workers. Therefore, the training the NGOs provide automatically becomes action oriented, and since people are directly benefited from the project-support, they remain receptive to the training provided. This tends to reduce the deficiencies in the training delivery system. The ranges of activities conducted by NGOs are immense. In the following, a few examples of activities carried out by NGOs have been cited. These are in no way exhaustive.

**iii) Lack of institutional capacity and coordination**

The very flexible conditions associated with establishment of NGOs and the potential it creates for having access to resources makes it a tempting prospect for many to start a NGO. This, without any prior experience or organizational knowledge about how NGOs operate and how services can be delivered to the poor effectively. This creates capacity void, which creates a number of management related problems. On the other hand, the NGO networks are loosely formed bodies, which operates on consensus and mutual goodwill. Such conditions are often not sufficient since this does not entail any form of statutory or regulatory obligation of one NGO with the other in terms of coordination of actions and activities.

**4. Private sector**

The private sector is an understudied sector. The central resource in the private sector is its vibrant entrepreneurs. The private sector, both in terms of formal and non-formal have urban character. However, it has potentials for making meaningful linkages with the rural sector. Some of the features of private sector have been provided below.

### **i) Private sector skills development is market-driven**

The private sector operates on the principles of free market economy. For obvious reasons, it focuses on high demand short-course training, for instance, computer training and driving. Even though, the quality of the training provided is wanting, a DFID report on vocational training reveals that there are pockets of excellence. The welding training center of Bangladesh Oxygen Company is a case in point.

The recipients of training in the private sector prefer short-term training. The short duration between investment and return is perhaps the main reason behind this. *Thus, short term trainings have pro-poor and poverty reduction implications.* The report further reveals that short course for migrant workers are costly, irrespective of low quality. The trainees do not mind, since they expect to get well paid job overseas.

### **ii) Potentials of private sector**

Since the private sector is profit-driven, it has to survive through competition. Therefore, there is a natural compulsion for increasing efficiency. However, due to lack of supportive policies, the private sector lacks the technical competency to deliver training effectively.

- **Lack of institutional capacity and professionalism**

However, they also lack management and financial capacity, and above all, this sector generally lacks professionalism. However, of late, due to rising competition, the sector is witnessing remarkable improvements in terms of professionalism in the service sub-sector. One of the glaring examples of lack of capacity and professionalism is IT sector. While there are growing number of IT professionals, and out them there are quite a few with technical competencies, yet they are unable to make any impressionable contribution in terms of software development linking with international market. The capacity to assess market, making contact, negotiating winning price and delivering quality services in time are some of the important ingredients lacking among the young professionals.

- **Access and relevance issues**

The nature of private sector is that it is not necessarily pro-poor. The single dominant driving force of private sector is profit. Keeping this factor as constant, it is possible to create a facilitating environment, whereby the poor can participate more effectively, leading to poverty reduction. For this, poor friendly financial support, managerial support and technical support need to be provided.

In the following pages, the key activities, features, characteristics and impacts of public, NGO and private sectors have been synthesized through tables.

### Key features of Public, NGOs and Private sector

Sl.No.	Skills Delivery	Public	NGOs	Private
1	For whom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class eight completers;</li> <li>• Lower-middle and middle class children;</li> <li>• Low academic achievers;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landless and marginally landless farmers;</li> <li>• Focus on rural women;</li> <li>• Target-poor with specific needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job seekers (to overseas);</li> <li>• Young graduates for IT;</li> <li>• Illiterate and semi-literate children and adolescents;</li> </ul>
2	Approaches and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly economic skills;</li> <li>• TVET system;</li> <li>• Inflexible;</li> <li>• Low outreach for poor;</li> <li>• Low impact;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and economic skills;</li> <li>• Non-Formal mode;</li> <li>• High outreach for poor;</li> <li>• Contains innovative space;</li> <li>• Medium impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic skills;</li> <li>• Unstructured and ill-defined;</li> <li>• Low outreach for the poor;</li> <li>• Low impact.</li> </ul>
3	Needs and demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very low market demand is met;</li> <li>• Low relevance to domestic and international markets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High relevance to community-based markets;</li> <li>• Low relevance to domestic and international markets;</li> <li>• Low priority to service economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low relevance to domestic and international market;</li> <li>• High priority to service economy.</li> </ul>
4	Modalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal;</li> <li>• Fixed-center based;</li> <li>• Urban-based;</li> <li>• Theory intensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-Formal;</li> <li>• Group-oriented;</li> <li>• Rural based;</li> <li>• Flexible;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unstructured;</li> <li>• Fixed-center based;</li> <li>• Apprenticeship;</li> <li>• Urban-based;</li> </ul>

			• Real life oriented.	• Real life oriented.
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## **Chapter 9: Target-beneficiaries, Institutional aspects, Marketability of skills (III): Activities, Approaches and Market Responsiveness**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

In the previous chapters the various actors and their actions have been discussed, which signified the supply side of the skills development. In this chapter the demand-side has been focused, which discusses, what types of activities are in operation in the labor-market, how skills are acquired and how market responses to a number of skills delivery approaches.

### **2. A general observation**

A study on skills development conducted by the DFID suggests, excluding short training associated with agricultural income generation, the total output of all **off-the-job training** program accounts less than 10% of total number of new entrants in the workforce. This makes **on-the-job apprenticeship**, the predominant mode of skills delivery.

According to the same study, if the definition of broad informal employment is taken to mean those establishments employing less than 10 workers, then in Bangladesh, around 90% of the total non-agricultural workforce, work in the informal sector.

The above two dimensions characterize, generally, the state of skills delivery in Bangladesh.

### **3. Various sectors and the world of work**

The working conditions, which is often well below standard, the pay is low, the hiring and firing is quite arbitrary, there is no cushion for absorbing shocks, no provisions for acquiring skills for enhancing economic conditions-all of these factors (and many more) characterize the world of work of the poor, both in the urban, as well as, in the rural sectors. This has been discussed in the following:

### **4. Urban Sector**

The urban sector could be further sub-categorized into formal and non-formal sectors, which has been discussed below:

**Formal sector employment:** The most distinctive employer in the formal urban sector is, the ready-made garments, which largely employs women. *The RMG is based on assembly line production, which functions on division of labor. This means that while there are many skills involved in the manufacturing of garments, each garment worker requires mastering a particular skill (mono skill) in the assembly line, which is usually easy to master by an individual in a short period of time. When a garment worker is employed, she is attached with other garment workers to master a particular skill, which the management wants her to master. From there she is gradually absorbed into the production process. This is cost effective both for the*

*employer and employee.* As long this is perceived to be so, it could be assumed that this will not change. However, due to the withdrawal of MFA, the Bangladesh garment industry will face stiffer competitions. At some point they might have to address the issue of skills related to improving quality, minimizing wastage and increasing productivity, along with improving the working conditions of the workers. For this to happen, a viable private-public partnership needs to be evolved. Of late, there have been violent protests by the workers for pay rise and better working conditions. A positive fall out of this protest is that **a tripartite dialogue** has been initiated involving the owners, garment workers and the government. *The other areas of formal employment is jute, which has suffered recently due to the closure of Adamjee Jute Mill, which was supposed to be one of the largest of its kind in Asia. Textile industries are on the rise.* The other industries like steel, sugar, chemicals, electronics do not appear to have mentionable increase or decline in productivity. In these sectors, trade unions are quite strong. This makes the process of hiring and firing difficult. There is an absence of responsible trade unionism in Bangladesh. The leaders of trade union, themselves, often become part of the vested interest group.

**Formal-sector employers** constitute the richest segment of the society, with close-knit connection with the politicians and bureaucracy, with ample influence to bent rules according to their favor. As stated, they are not welfare oriented and their sustained deprivation of the workforce has led to the existing crises at the time the study is being conducted.

- **Informal sector employment:** The informal sector in the urban area, is the employer of a considerable number of people. Many of the employed are children (To alleviate their sufferings, and to enhance their capacities through the provision of basic education, Unicef, mainly with support from Sida is implementing a project with the government. These children are called as 'hard to reach children').

According to a DFID study, the informal activities ranges from *welding, metal work to carpentry, plumbing, motor vehicle repairing TV repairing etc.* The skills are acquired through **apprenticeship**. In addition, small restaurants and stationary shops are some examples of informal sector small enterprise initiatives. The urban informal sector is quite vibrant. They employ a large number of people, mainly young people. They master their skills through observation and guidance from the master mechanic, who is the owner. No written material or manual is required. The skills are acquired through direct practice and trouble shooting under the guidance of the master mechanic. This apprenticeship arrangement of skills acquisition is quite effective. *What they need is capital injection. If financing could be arranged for them with conditions attached for better working conditions and wages for those they employ and if such an arrangement could be sustained, then certainly this is an option to explore. In this case the master mechanics would have to be provided with entrepreneurship skills, along with financial management skills.*

The urban area, especially Dhaka, has witnessed rapid growth of *construction industry*. This industry also employs a large number of poor, under exploitative, and often, life-threatening conditions.

The skills needed for the above stated activities, for the informal sector, as well as, for the formal sector, is largely acquired through on the job training. One of the mentionable skills, which are being learned through private training, is *computer skill*. The computer sector in Bangladesh is still substandard. Due to lack of policy initiatives and inertia, Bangladesh is yet to derive benefits from the information super highway. The IT professionals and entrepreneurs largely do not have the required level of professional proficiency, and business acumen, to compete in the international IT market. The quality of human resource in IT industry cannot yet match the global standards (with a few exceptions).

The other informal off-the-job skills delivery related to commercial products are offered by a number of NGO/private sector organizations, some of which (i.e. St. Josephs, UCEP), could be considered as centers of excellence. Pure private sector training centers are grossly sub-standard. ***(Caritas mobile training has a high rate of success, since it reaches the community and provides them training at the target trainees' place of residence. Apart from that it is very professionally detailed, which includes compensating the learners, carrying g out assessments to ensure that the skills provided are employable etc. This is replicable idea, which SDC needs to look into).***

**Informal sector employers** are mostly small-scale entrepreneurs, who face constant financial problems. The banks as of now, serve the rich and ultra-rich, as well as poor (not as much the ultra poor), but for small-scale entrepreneurs, financial support is sparse. This gap has been identified and many agencies have taken initiatives in this direction. They do not have legal entity, and as a result, they are subject to harassments from the law enforcing agencies and at times local muscle men. Given the difficult circumstances they are in, the efficiency and at times survival of their venture appears to be correlated with the exploitation of those they employ.

**The world of work** of the urban poor is characterized by *uncertainty and exploitative working conditions*. They do not have any legal protection, and are often subject to hazardous activities. A large segment of these workers are children. They are underpaid.

Targeting this segment of population for development is very difficult. They do not operate within a cohesive community, like that of rural areas, which can potentially support them. These workers are floating in nature. Their working, as well as, living conditions are quite hostile. Creating a learning and supportive environment, within their world of work, therefore, is rather difficult. Given all the constraints, the urban employment sector is apparently more successful due to the presence of a dynamic market, with an uninterrupted cycle of production and consumption, which makes employment sustainable.

## **5. Rural sector**

In the previous chapter, through the lists of NGO activities, the ranges of inputs provided to the rural poor have been presented. Also, in the previous chapter, the ranges of skills development activities carried out by the government, under the remit of various ministries have been spelled out in some details.

In the rural economy, the market is not sufficiently developed and monetized, which can make transition from acquiring skills to gainful employment easy. This has been validated by Sida assisted experimentation on Non-Formal Education linking literacy with gainful employment, which was carried out by the former DNFE. Therefore, it becomes imperative that at some point, linkages with community/village-based economy to national and global economy have to be made. To achieve this, the rural poor will need a whole range of technical support. This is perhaps, one of the central challenges of skills development in the rural areas.

BRAC alone has a range of program for ultra-poor, through which, it covers more than 600,000 ultra poor. The positive side of the NGO interventions is that it does not only attempt to reduce poverty by imparting economic skills, rather it provides a whole ranges of support and information covering multi-dimensional fields. Such an integrated approach supposed to have a better all-encompassing impact on the poor, which apparently is the case.

In the rural areas, the economic activities are mainly related to agriculture and livestock. These activities, however, have ample diversity. For instance, poultry and livestock related economic activities include, *chick rearing, Cage rearing, Broilers rearing, egg collecting, cow rearing, artificial inseminating etc.* Other activities related to economic skills development are; *fisheries, pond aquaculture, social forestry etc.* *the nature of skills development program is people friendly, is of short duration and are organized near to the households of the target poor.* In essence, NGO sector skills development should fall under Non-Formal category.

The application of these skills in the form of skills development is being complemented by credit facilities. However, a combination of credit facilities and skills development in the NGO sector is often fragmented and inconsistent. For instance, two major players like ASA and Grameen provides mainly credit. Skills development is not their overarching priority.

*Therefore, it is imperative that NGO sector should coordinate its actions in facilitating the concept of integrated approach, towards skills development.*

In addition to economic skills, NGOs also provide skills development in vast ranges of social development issues, covering health, education, environment and social justice. Over the last thirty-five years of experience such initiatives have apparently reaped rich development dividends in creating healthier, more educated and more enlightened communities. *Strategies, therefore, should be formulated in a way, which ensures convergence of these non-economic skills into the economic skills development process.*

**The world of work** of the rural poor evolves around agriculture and livestock. However, the need for service economy is also growing. For instance, in the rural areas, now a day, there is a growing need for *irrigation equipment, diesel engines and electric motors.* There is also the need for repairing *shallow tube wells, among other things, including household electronics items.*

In terms of providing training, the rural poor are easier to target, since they are not usually floating population. It is easier to conduct their profiling, and determine the nature of skills development they require. They can be organized with relative ease, and it is possible for the NGOs to provide support at their doorsteps. Given all this, the rural economies and its existing markets are not sufficient to create a dynamic environment, whereby the skills development could be applied in a gainful and sustainable manner. *In the rural areas, self-employment needs to be emphasized.*

## **Chapter 10: Trends, Challenges & Contemporary Issues -(I): Global Influences & Existing Policies in Skills Development**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

Global development policy statements often influence national policies. Therefore, a clearer understanding of local trends and patterns, in the domain of skills development, is contingent upon a better understanding of the global setting.

### **2. Various trends**

There is a need to have an understanding of past events that has led to present trends and patterns in skills development. The present trends and patterns, in turn, will decide the future direction of skills development.

This is a complex process. It is interesting to note here that same events are often analyzed and interpreted differently by different sector practitioners. This, due to the difference in experience, varied notions about key concepts, and different analytical framework used to interpret a common situation.

In order to have a better understanding about the wider policy debates in skills development, perhaps a quick look into global and local trends and events is needed. This has been discussed in the following.

### **3. Global initiatives**

The overriding emphasis on uni-dimensional economic development, which dominated the scene of the 50s and 60s, soon turned out to be a hollow promise. The emphasis gradually shifted to social dimension of development. These aspects have been well represented in the Report on World Social Situation, in 1952. However, the debate between economic quantifiers and proponents of social services went on for some time. The establishment of United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (Unrisd), in 1963, itself showed the worries and concerns of that time. In the 70s, a general global consensus was reached through a unified approach to development and planning, 'which (was supposed to) fully integrate the economic and social components in the formulation of policies and programs'. Later on, to sharpen the focus and in order to make development initiatives more meaningful, the ILO introduced the Basic Needs Approach, which aimed at the achievement of a certain specific minimum standard of living before the end of the century'. The 80's were considered as more sedate decade of development. For some it was indeed 'a lost decade of development' in which, little progress was made. In the 90's onward issues like environment and development made their entry in the development literature, whereby the issue of sustainable

development through multiple interventions was emphasized. A reflection of that was 1992 Earth Summit. Now the world has MDGs to refer to, which encapsulates global concerns in an effective manner. The MDGs have their counterpart in the PRSPs, prepared individually by a number of developing nations by taking into consideration their own local context.

#### **4. Trends and patterns of development in general and skills development in particular in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh was part of Pakistan in the 1950s, at the time when simple economic growth was thought to be the effective way to poverty reduction. During that time the country was being ruled largely by the military dictators. Their overriding priority was development of infrastructure. The bulk of roads and highways, as well as, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals etc. were established during that time. A large number of vocational and training centers were also established. However, these infrastructures mainly benefited the middle class and the rich, without providing any mentionable access or outreach for the poor. The nature of vocational training was formal and urban based. The orientation of the present government-run vocational and training system has, by and large retained the orientation of the 50s & 60s.

In the agriculture sector, the then East Pakistan experienced the Green Revolution, which again (despite its many positive outcomes due to increased agricultural productivity), in the end, benefited the rich farmers. The poor bore the major brunt of the environmental and social fallout of the Green Revolution (Bandana Shiva). This vindicated the notion that growth only, does not automatically result into poverty reduction.

After the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, when the country was devastated completely, the government found it difficult to grapple with the formidable problems it faced. So it needed partners. One of the key post-liberation development phenomenon is the emergence of NGOs. NGOs came up, primarily for the relief and rehabilitation of 10 million refugees displaced during war of liberation. NGOs, despite many problems, have come a long way, and now have become a multidisciplinary sector, which apart from many forms of development initiatives, are providing leadership in policy advocacy, and are also considered as the part of the civil society. The central instruments of skills, as well as, capability development initiatives of the NGOs have been translated mainly into micro-credit and health, social and environment related awareness programs.

**General comments on the above stated events:** Historical experience suggests that the global and local thinking together, failed to translate into effective policies and strategies. While Bangladesh has witnessed worthwhile success in reducing poverty through micro financing (Grameen and Brac experience), and other forms of awareness programs, there has been far less emphasis provided to market-oriented skills development.

History clearly suggests, the founding principles of economic skills development in Bangladesh has been established on wrong footing, which lacks vision for effective poverty reduction. To this day, no serious initiatives have been taken to reorient the system. On the other hand, since the creation of NGOs is embedded with people-

centered actions, it appears to have better enabling environment to carry the pro-poor agenda of skills development. However, apparently NGOs are more bent on micro-credit and social development related programs. As a result, their potentials to contribute in contributing to market-driven sustainable economic development remain underutilized.

**5. Government policies relevant to skills development:** The 5 year plans were considered to be official documents, which reflected the government's position about various development initiatives. The trends and directions of government policies, as reflected in the different five year plans, have been discussed below:

***First five years plan (1973-78):***

- i) 20% of class eight completers would be directed to 3 years vocational training courses.
- ii) The recommendations made in the Commission's 1974 report was not implemented.

***Second five years plan (1980-85):***

- i) Scale of vocationalization was reduced.
- ii) Introduced the concept of community schools and the provision of non-formal technical and vocational training to people living in the vicinity of selected general secondary schools.

***Third and fourth five-years plan:***

- i) Human resource development continued to enjoy top priority and substantial amount of budget was allocated.
- ii) Effort for creating effective coordination failed.

***General comments and observations:*** All 5 year plans show a preference for vocational training for skills development, which was expected to create employment. However, such policies largely remained in papers. Sending 20% class eight completers in vocational institutions was a noble idea, but it proved to be practically untenable. The subsequent predominance of other development issues, relegated skills development to the backburner, and after a number of decades, skills development is making an effort for reentry.

**• Objectives of Fifth Plan**

Within the broad framework of overall national development perspective of poverty alleviation and human resource development (HRD), and keeping in view, the changing requirements, the major objectives of this sector during the Fifth Plan were:

- i) Generate employment opportunities within and outside the country;
- ii) Raise productivity of labor through skill development and upgrading of technology under the overall human resource development strategy of the government;
- iii) Ensure fair wages, welfare and social protection of workers under the structural adjustment programs adopted by the government;
- iv) Accord higher priority on self-employment and set up a specialized

- employment bank to this end;
- v) Ensure access of women in vocational training and employment;
  - vi) Maintain industrial peace and a congenial atmosphere for domestic investment and also for attracting foreign investment;
  - vii) Develop informal sector as a residual source of employment for the growing unemployed work-force;
  - viii) Encourage private institutions/organizations to participate in imparting training for human development;
  - ix) Strengthen institutional capabilities by introducing indigenous and modern technologies;
  - x) Initiate steps to protect children from economic exploitation;
  - xi) Make legal reforms more effective for regulating private manpower recruiting agencies; and
  - xii) Strengthen the wage earners welfare fund at important overseas destinations of Bangladeshi workers.

**General comments and observations:** The objectives in the fifth five-year plan were quite comprehensive. It not only dealt with the direct employment, it also focused on multi-dimensional aspects of vocational skills development, emphasizing on creating a facilitating environment through appropriate labor-friendly legal reforms and financing. The fifth year plan also provided policy direction for the expatriate labor force.

## **6. MDGs and PRSP**

The MDGs and PRSP together, provide more comprehensive policy directions for poverty reduction in general, and skills development in particular. More importantly, the PRSP, despite criticisms, has retained its dynamic character and continues to be widely discussed and debated among the relevant sector practitioners. These two policy statements have become departure points for many development initiatives in Bangladesh, and rightly so.

## **7. The policy contents of MDGs**

It is relatively easier for the nation states to come together under the banner of the UN, and express their collective will. MDGs are one of such important reference point. The MDGs acknowledge that there is a direct impact of literacy skills rates on hunger and poverty. Women's role in agriculture, access to resources and skills is of utmost significance. MDGs also assert that improved education, labor saving technologies and nutrition is important for maternal health. Finally, as a central strategy, the MDGs emphasizes on cross-sectoral focus, for instance, it asserts that education for rural development necessarily promotes the multi-agency mobilization of resources.

## **8. Poverty Trends in the PRSP and its implications for skills development**

According to the PRSP, Bangladesh has witnessed general decline in poverty (according to Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics show poverty declining from 58.8% in 991/92 to 40.2% in 2000). The trend suggests that lower growth with equity has been less effective in poverty reduction than higher growth with inequality. However, the PRSP asserts to bring more poverty reduction focus in the future initiatives. The human poverty index (based on deprivations in health, education and nutrition) declined by 2.54 percent per year compared with 1.45 percent in the national head-count ratio for income-poverty over the last two decades. On the other hand, far-reaching transformations have also taken place in the labor market. There is a trend towards an occupational hierarchy for the poor in which casual daily labor is the least preferred employment. The competition is for piece-rate labor contracts and fixed-rent tenancies in the farm sector, and for non-farm employment in rural construction activities, transport operations and at the lower end of trade and service activities. There has been a far-reaching deepening in *market orientation* among all classes of economic actors, rural and urban, formal and informal, producer and consumer, large players and small players. Women in Bangladesh have won important first round victories of visibility and mobility. Female gains in primary and secondary education, access to birth control measures and micro-credit compare favorably with the situation in other developing countries.

Micro-credit has rightly come to be seen as the most visible of anti-poverty instruments. Up scaling micro-credit and enhancing its poverty impact will be important factors in realizing the goals of accelerated poverty reduction. This is particularly so, in a context in which there is a growing void in rural finance.

### **9. GOB policy direction towards labor market policy and regulatory framework: ILO perspective**

Since Bangladesh is directing its economic activities towards open market economy, the labor market policies should draw a clear line between competitiveness and minimum labor standards. An absence of such a policy and regulatory framework has led to the recent crises in the garments sector. As ILO observes “cheapening the cost of labor and “worsening” the conditions of work are poor alternatives to expansion of human skills and productivity in developing international competitiveness.

According to ILO, some of the critical considerations in the formulation of a Labor Market Policy Framework (LMP) are set out below:

- i) A dominant consideration of an articulated LMP would lie in its ability to facilitate matching of supply and demand for labor, under constantly shifting market signals and firm-level restructuring;
- ii) The LMP framework would indeed have to reflect and safeguard constitutional guarantees on basic human rights (as mirrored in workplace rights), as well as those needed to give effect to international commitments, such as ILO’s Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work;
- iii) Special targeted programs would need to be designed and extended to provide employment and income support security, especially to the more vulnerable groups;
- iv) Wage-setting must be reviewed to ensure that wages have a fair

- correspondence with productivity gains, and to allow greater labor mobility and employment generation;
- v) Effectiveness of LMP will depend on the strength of LM institutions, as well as, on the extent of consensus achieved through social dialogue;
  - vi) Areas of interventions for elaborating an enabling LMP are; employment services, social security provisions, monitoring labor market information, and promotion of tripartism.

### **10. Overall comments and observations on government policies**

There is a need for the policy statements to become more consistent and comprehensive. The policy statements should encapsulate the national context, and provide directions that make sense. To that end, PRSP has done an important job to fill in the void. The faltering point, however, is the failure to translate the policies into reality. On the one hand, there is persistent macro-economic constraints, and political instability that hinder effective implementation of policies. In addition, the institutional arrangements, coupled with their systemic inefficiencies make policy implementation all the more difficult. Given such circumstances, policy statements should be intensely discussed, debated and dialogued. The ownership of policies, therefore, should not belong to the select few, rather it should be owned by all the stakeholders, who would have contributions in implementing skills development initiatives in Bangladesh.

## **Chapter 11: Trends, Challenges & Contemporary Issues -(II): Enabling environment and Institutional capacity-related issues**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

Institutional capacity is a precondition for bringing meaningful reforms in the skills development sector. First and foremost, the capacity of policy makers is of utmost significance. There must be a clear vision about the objectives and expected outcomes for skills development. Once that is done, things could be better managed at the strategy, planning and implementation level.

### **2. Enabling conditions for policy makers**

Institutional capacity at the policy level is contingent upon the commitment of the policy makers, as well, as from their correct understanding of a given situation. In the case of skills development, they have to be receptive to a number of ideas and propositions. Firstly, they must be in full concord with MDGs and the PRSP statements, among other important national, as well as, International statements and agreements.

Secondly, they must have a complete picture of the impact of existing skills development initiatives in Bangladesh, which has been implemented by the actors in public, private and NGO sectors.

Thirdly, the policy makers should also have with them, a well-researched national study of skills development.

Fourthly, they must have with them an institutional assessments of strengths, weaknesses, as well as, potentials of the existing skills delivery mechanisms, along with an understanding of the professional capacities of the operators. Such assessments, will not only provide them with in-depth understanding of their respective institutions, but also enable them to make effective decisions.

Once these four conditions are fulfilled, the policy makers will be able to take decisions, which would be best suited for the effective and efficient skills development interventions in Bangladesh.

### **3. The need for a decision-center**

Since about 18 ministries are directly or indirectly involved in skills development related activities, coordination has become a problem. The last meeting the NCSDT (National Council of Skills Development & Training) had was in 1983. This may as well be discarded, since this council is non-functional.

*The World Bank and the EC, both are contemplating separately, to create a sort of national steering committee comprising of all stakeholders from private, public and NGO sectors. This is envisaged to create better conditions for collaboration and cooperation. In the light of existing circumstances, this proposition appears to be valid. Given that there must be a decision center within the government's administrative mechanism, or a facilitating body outside government system (as separately proposed by WB and ADB), which will be responsible for making policy decisions and coordinate inter-ministerial activities.*

*If this does not work and there are good chances that it might not, the alternative is to create an integrated policy on skills development, in which roles and responsibilities of each ministries would be clearly specified. This might not be ideal, but given the circumstances, it might turn out to be a feasible proposition.*

Since the above issues are very sensitive, it could be carefully taken by the proposed national steering committee, which will operate outside the government system.

### **4. Enabling conditions and capacity related issues at the strategy, planning and implementation levels: Public sector**

*Once the policies are adopted, it should be reviewed periodically, whenever felt to be feasible, in order to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. Therefore, those personnel entrusted to develop strategies and plan for implementation, must have the capacities to translate those policy statements into viable strategies. Based on the strategies, they are to lay down plan for future actions.*

The senior personnel at the strategy level are usually located at the directorate level. In case of skills development, it is usually the heads of DTI and BMET, who are responsible to strategize, plan, implement and monitor skills development projects.

*Those at the helm of these strategic responsibilities usually do not have the professional qualifications, and experience to provide technical leadership. They usually belong to administrative cadre and therefore, they have overriding concern for administrative aspects of skills development like, how many teachers have been appointed, whether new institutions have been established, whether books and equipments have been procured etc. While the inputs management is important in the whole scheme of things, the process and output management is also crucial for bringing in the desired effects and impact. More so, rapid turnover of key staff from strategic positions do not help the cause.*

These are issues concerning governance, and therefore, external influence can do little to affect change.

*To help retain capacities within institutions, a number of manuals and policy guidelines should be prepared for the senior officials. Such documents/manuals should contain, succinct guidelines about the underlying rationale, principles, and concepts behind policy statements. This will enable the decision-makers to analyze and interpret the changing environment more effectively, and make necessary adjustments in line with the overall dictates of policies.*

*In addition, the senior managers at the strategic level should also have a fair understanding about how skills development projects are to be conceived, planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated.*

*According to experience, in large public organizations, it is a few number of mid level and lower level employees, who are usually younger, do most of the critical work related to planning, as well as, in facilitating implementation. This small group of people should be identified and trained, in the respective work they do.*

Another aspect that needs to be looked into is the documentation at the strategic implementation level should be strong. This will help the cause of quick and efficient takeover of responsibilities.

**The teachers are the frontline actors at the implementation level**, who transfer skills to the learners. A number of studies suggest that the *teaching methods are traditional and largely outdated*. Teachers should be acquainted with modern participatory methods of teaching-learning process. To improve the quality of teaching, the process of supervision and monitoring system should be in place. Once the teaching and learning process evolves around competencies, it will create a quality push, since the skills acquired by the learners will have to be demonstrated in a practical situation successfully.

*The issue of capacity development is an all-encompassing affair. It is not only the professional competencies of the individuals, that is crucial, the systems and structure through which various activities are carried out, is also responsible for creating or inhibiting enabling environment.*

##### **5. Enabling conditions and capacity related issues at the strategy, planning and implementation levels: NGO sector**

A study conducted by Sida NFE TA team reveals that NGOs are heterogeneous group in terms of age, experience, program/projects and staff strength. From the sample of NGOs studied, it was found that the youngest NGOs were in existence for 17 years, while the oldest one was for 27 years. Available information indicates a strong correlation between age of NGOs, staff strength, types of field interventions, and capacity in human resources development, which includes training. The older and the bigger the NGOs, the chances are that they are better managed than the younger and smaller NGOs, as well as, the larger NGOs are institutionally more sustainable.

A registered NGO has an executive committee, which is supposed to oversee the policy and strategic issues of that NGO, and also keep a tab on the overall progress of the concerned NGO. However, the reality proves otherwise. The center of decision, power and authority mainly lies with the executive director, who usually maintains a semblance of participation. Therefore, performance of a given NGO is largely contingent upon the commitment and capacity of the head of the organization.

*A natural consequence of such a situation is that, the organization head gets embroiled in day-to-day micro-management, thereby losing sight of organizational visions and policies.* The senior and midlevel implementers have to take approval in each step, which inhibits their capacity to take decisions, and their professional capabilities, remain underutilized; to the detriment of the organization they serve. This fact is more applicable to smaller NGOs, since for larger NGOs, the sheer volume of activities forces the organization head to delegate responsibility, and therefore, place more able staff at the senior level positions.

*A large number of NGOs have their own training unit with trained manpower. A large number of these trainers are involved in agri-based income generating activities.*

The training needs stated by the sample NGOs included, the capacity to link basic literacy to income enhancing activity. The capacity to assess market demand was identified as another important training needs. The other areas, where the NGOs expressed technical support were material development and financial management.

**Program implementation skills of the mid-level and grassroots level implementers** are also of utmost significance. From the findings of the study, as well as, putting into context, NGO experience in general, a number of aspects could be inferred.

In the rural areas, to bring external support to the people, invariably requires **creation of small groups**, roughly ranging between 10 and 20 participants in each group. These groups are segregated by sex, due to cultural reasons. *These groups could be of many categories, like credit groups, literacy groups, social forestry groups etc.* To provide economic skills to the rural poor, either these groups have to be supported. This will save time and cost, as well as, create the

advantages of integrated development, or separate skills delivery groups has to be organized, which might make skills transfer more effective.

*These groups will invariably need a facilitator, who will have the capacity to organize skills development initiatives, monitor progress and help learners to solve problems as and when they arise. That person will have to be located in the community will work with the community and thereby provide continuity to programs. It is clear, that the facilitators' salaries cannot be financed for an indefinite period. Therefore, the facilitators would also have to become economic beneficiary of the skills delivery interventions. These facilitators would have to be provided with adequate training, which will require them to acquire multiple skills, including communication, coordination, community organization, ability to assess market needs at the basic level, ability to negotiate with market, as well as, problem solving skills through facilitation, among other skills.*

*At the NGO level, there must be a provision for providing an overall guidance and supervision support. This could be done effectively, provided the concerned staffs are provided with the stated critical skills. In short, the skills the NGO supervisory staff will need a combination of technical and administrative skills, which will ensure that the activities by the target poor continue to remain effective and sustainable.*

In the end, the community themselves would have to find ways to manage such program all by themselves, replacing the NGOs. By doing so, they will become community organizations, who would be able to directly address their social and economic problems, in an effective and sustained manner.

## **6. Enabling conditions and capacity related issues at the strategy, planning and implementation levels: Private sector**

The private sector is driven by profit-orientation. They are largely urban based. They prefer on the job training. Private sector produces only those goods and services, which has market demands.

However, the private sector requires assistance from the government in terms of infrastructure, conducive regulations, and favorable law and order situation, along with political stability. Private enterprise cannot control these stated elements, but these conditions must be in place in order to business to succeed. The containers must leave the port on time, no harassments in the customs clearance, the electricity supply should not be frequently interrupted and factories cannot be closed due to hartals.

While the business enterprises cannot influence these elements, as stated, they can certainly get together and organize themselves to negotiate with the concerned authorities to fulfill their legitimate claims. There are chambers of commerce for the country, as well as, for major cities. The garment industry also has associations. On the other hand, the labor unions also exist to ensure the rights of the workers. Despite that it is observed that these institutions within private sector suffers from inefficiencies and fragmentations, due to political divisions and conflict of interests, which often culminate into ego-centric

confrontations. All these needs to take hard look into. Any measures to bring professionalism and harmony in private sector institutions, require cooperation of all stakeholders in meaningful manner.

## **Chapter 12: Trends, Challenges & Contemporary Issues -(V):Global connection to market, empowerment factor and sustainability**

### **1. Introduction**

The central premise in this chapter indicates that market driven initiatives cannot remain confined to local community based markets (in the face of rising unemployment) in this age of globalization. Mechanisms needs to be evolved to take the target-poor out of the market to wider local, national and global levels. This will require innovative thinking, whereby technology and innovation will come into play. The Grameen initiative of mobile phone is a case in point to this direction.

### **1. Rising unemployment and poor wage: indicator of mismatch between market demand and supply of labor**

There is a growing trend in unemployment, both in the urban and rural sector. Over the last 10 years, there has been .2 million (66% increase) in case of urban male unemployed and in case of urban female there has been an increase of .1 million. Over the same period, there has been .5 million increase in case of rural male unemployed, which is 50% increase, and in case of rural female, the change is stable (no change).

Again, from the employed, if the below US \$ 1 is considered as poverty-line in a simple sense, which is easily verifiable, and has widespread use for crude estimation of poverty, then most of the employed segment of population are living below and around poverty line. Their capacities and productivity needs to be enhanced in order to increase their income to a decent level. The minimum wage rate of the garments workers, for which, the country is witnessing violent agitation, is still well below income poverty line.

### **3. Market and skills development**

As of now, there is an uneasy relationship between the two stated concepts. Development initiatives by the public and NGO sectors are largely premised on welfare. Skills development initiatives are often devoid of market assessments, and skills development is seen to be end in itself.

Whatever skills are acquired, the poor do not receive placement support for successful employment. On the other hand, there is inadequate support for entrepreneurship skills, leading to meaningful self-employment. All these shortfalls are due to the lack of understanding of market, and the interplay of market forces.

The fact is often forgotten that it is not sufficient to acquire a certain skills. Firstly, one needs to know whether that skills will lead to gainful employment (market needs assessment). Secondly, the training facilities should be convenient and accessible to the poor, whereby they can acquire skills without considerable loss to their daily earning. Thirdly, they need to have the equipment needed for production, for which they might need initial seed money. Fourthly, the target poor should have a constant

and uninterrupted supply of raw materials. Fifthly, the target-poor must have the means of transport to carry his or her products to the market. Sixthly, the target-poor must know how to advertise his or her products to his or her target audience. Seventhly, the target-poor must have negotiating skills to ensure that she or he derives maximum profit from his or her sales. Eighthly, The target should have post-training support, so that the target-poor can modify and readjust his or her skills in accordance to the dynamic changes in the market.

The above processes are indicative of the various management and entrepreneurship related skills, which are needed to translate the acquired vocational skills into gainful employment.

#### **4. Merging with global markets**

This issue has been an object of discussion for sometime now. However, no worthwhile steps have been taken in this direction. There are a very few examples like BRAC's Aorang, but they portray only a partial model. The ultimate poor in this endeavor are only laborers. They do not exert any influence on the entire marketing cycle. It is a fact that dealing with global markets requires higher skills, which cannot be rapidly acquired by the poor. However, this process of empowerment can certainly be pushed further through innovative means and people-friendly development initiatives. This is certainly an area, which needs to be looked into.

#### **5. The question of empowered communities**

Given the magnitude of the unemployment problem, whereby every year hundreds of thousand youths are making their entry into the unemployment sector, even the combined efforts of the three sectors (public, private and NGOs) are not sufficient.

The social and economic circumstances, especially in the rural setting, is characterized by the presence of dynamic and interacting communities. Even though such communities are not always cohesive, they have enough social capital, which can generate and sustain economic initiatives through mutual cooperation. Once the communities involved are convinced about the benefits of skills development initiatives, they have enough capacity to internalize the organizational skills to make the management of skills development their own business; whereby, skills development managers, training providers and training recipients, from within the respective communities, can work together in making such initiatives sustainable, through the mobilization of the local resources.

Such empowered communities have the potentials of evolving their own market, which will negate or minimize any form of exploitation (middlemen factor), but also their collective stance will make it easier to deal with external markets (outside the communities) more effectively.

#### **6. Empowerment of women and skills development**

Empowerment of women is a vast issue. It is vast, since it embodies non-economic factors also. It brings forth not only the issues of acquiring skills for economic self-sufficiency, rather it forces one to think how the money is earned, and how much that earning influences in terms making decisions and choices, as well as, having access to resources. In short, what influence increased earning can have on women in terms of negotiating and bargaining within and outside the household is the object

of consideration. As Amartya Sen in his gender-based theory of conflict and cooperation argues that household members prove their worth by their intensity of participation in the market. The level of participation is directly related to entitlements to resources. Since women's contributions are non-market in nature, they lose out in the resource entitlement game. Therefore, the intensity of market related activity should be associated with increased **mobility** and **visibility** of women in the process of applying skills and negotiating with the market. This can be achieved through growing acceptance of the expanded role of women by the community, followed by their collective support to women in their endeavors. In such transformative process, women should be involved in all forms of decision-making processes. Otherwise, as Sen suggests, women empowerment issue degenerates into patient-doctor relationship, where the problem is diagnosed by the doctors (program personnel) and remedy is given to the patient (women). All these factors are needed to be considered while considering empowering women through skills development.

The NFE experience in skills development show that women prefer skills, which do not take them out of their homesteads. This results into acquiring traditional skills like poultry, embroidery, tailoring etc. On the first count these skills cannot ensure a decent income for women. In addition, their confinement does not provide the opportunity to deal with the various market forces effectively. As a result, women's economic activities benefit their families, and not them as individuals, since such activities add up to their burden. In order for women to have voice in decision-making processes on matters that concern them, they must be able to complete the full marketing cycle beginning from market needs assessment, to the closure of deals through bargaining. In this case, the communities could be pursued to facilitate the process of organizing women, in a way, which helps them to participate and negotiate effectively with the market (bypassing the middlemen), thereby assert more control over their earnings.

### **7. Synthesizing the issue of sustainability: Problems and prospects**

The issue of sustainability, from development intervention standpoint, is a matter of endless discussion. A sustainable intervention entails that once the development initiatives are withdrawn, it could be taken up by the target communities, for as long as such interventions are needed.

Therefore, before embarking on a serious discussion on skills development, a number of elements have to be considered outright. Many of these elements tend to make a quick entry in development discourses, but not so much practiced in reality.

- *Lack of participation of the target-poor in project preparation, project implementation and project evaluation:* The way projects are conceived and approved, through a complex and often time consuming processes, by the time the projects reach the target poor, the key parameters are set. Experiences suggest that even if major constraints are identified during the course of project implementation, the project regulations usually do not allow major corrections. In addition, during evaluations, the target-poor are consulted as beneficiaries at the end of the project, and not as project participants. On the other hand, projects are evaluated on the basis of project performance, and not in terms of impact. Since, impacts of skills

development interventions have to take place after three or four years from the completion of projects. All these factors create serious hindrance in transforming development interventions to sustainable development interventions.

- *Can market-oriented skills development alone result into sustainable development?* Of late, the market-oriented skills development is getting some attention. However, often it is not clear, what does the terminology means, and what does it intent to achieve. It needs to be clarified that being able to make a product and sell it, does not signify that market-oriented skills has been acquired in a sustainable manner. The idea of market and market-oriented skills embodies complex ranges of factors and activities, which has to be mastered in order to ensure that market oriented skills results in gainful employment and self-employment. In this context, an associative collaboration between the target poor and the external facilitators for a period is necessary. The bottom line is, mastering market-oriented skills in a sustainable manner requires having individual and collective efforts. These efforts are a combination of market-oriented skills and organizational skills, leading to the creation of communities, which can address its problems effectively, without external support.
- *Targeting the poor:* As discussed above, skills development initiatives, in order to become effective and sustainable, has to address learning needs of all sub-categories of people, who are poor, starting from children to adolescents, and adults needing economic skills in farm and non-farm activities. This is essential for creating a learning society, which is able to mobilize resources to solve its skills development related problems, without external assistance.

*Key elements of 'sustainability mix' of skills development initiative, in the face of rising unemployment:* In this chapter, three elements have been highlighted, which could be considered as essential ingredients for sustainable skills development intervention, which are i) *Adequately empowered communities:* as stated, without empowered communities, skills development initiatives are simply not sustainable; ii) *Creating linkages with national and global markets:* Communities cannot remain tied down to their localities. They must gradually become part of national and global markets. A very challenging proposition, which ought to be fulfilled; iii) *Empowering women:* Without making women involved in the entire cycle of marketing, their economic and social empowerment will remain incomplete.

### **Chapter 13: Trends, Challenges & Contemporary Issues -(VII): Introducing policy debate, dilemmas, and exploring the issue of coordination**

#### **1. Central premise in determining policies**

The broad-based definition of skills development, which has been referred in the earlier chapter, encompasses all forms of productive capacities, acquired through all levels of education, and training, involving formal, non-formal, informal and on-the-job setting. It needs to be mentioned that the notion of poverty has also become broad-based and therefore, it has to be dealt in multiple ways. The policymaking process should therefore, consider the skills development issues in all its diversities and complexities.

## **2. The key challenge in the determination of policies**

Policies are to be translated into reality, and this translation has to be carried out by relevant institutions. The central question in this regard is, whether the institutional arrangements are responsive enough in elaborating viable policies, and whether they have the means and capacity to make those policies effectively operational. This is the central challenge.

## **3. Dilemmas in determining viable strategies for skills development interventions**

The directions, which the MDGs provide; the policy initiatives, which the PRSP encourages to take; and institutional strengths and weaknesses the public and private sector inherits, have to be considered in its entirety to develop viable, replicable and economically sustainable strategies, in the domain of skills development, for poverty reduction.

From the very outset, this calls for identification and selection of sectors, which the skills development initiatives needs to, contribute in reducing poverty. This exercise will help to guide the path towards the nature and direction of skills development initiatives.

First and foremost, most of the poor in Bangladesh are located in rural areas, with the overall state of women being worse than that of men. Most of the rural poor earn their livelihood from *agriculture sector*. Skills development ought to start from there. Since, industrialization and urbanization policies have not been able to generate pro-poor growth to the desired level, now the policy imperatives are leaning back again towards rural and agricultural development. There is now a growing preference towards *rural development in general and agricultural development in particular*.

The challenge here is two pronged. Firstly, there is the need for creating a facilitating environment for employment and self-employment. For this to happen, innovative development approaches are to be introduced, in which, possibilities of introducing employment generating *labor-intensive technologies*, need to be actively sought.

On the other hand, the productivity of unemployed and the underemployed labor force require to be enhanced through appropriate *health and education interventions*.

Taking the above context, some of the critical questions the policy makers should ask are: What should be the contents of skills development training in the agriculture sector, for both farm and non-farm products? What kind of employment such training will achieve and for whom? How can self-employment be created and sustained? How can the target-people, especially the women, have access to training?

*The other aspect of creating an enabling environment for the poor, involves making the health workers, teachers, supervisors of health and education programs more capable and effective in delivering services.*

On the other hand, Bangladesh is undergoing urbanization at a pace, which is unheard of. This process is largely concentrated in Dhaka. Whatever implications

the process of urbanization might have in the urban landscape, the economic fall out of this process is, it has given rise to a vibrant formal and informal economy. The formal economy includes RMG sector, which employs a large number of women. Recent unrest in the RMG sector calls even more emphatically, the need for a viable labor regulatory framework, which ensures decent working conditions, while retaining the overall competitiveness of the industry. In addition, the rapidly growing construction sector also needs to be brought under a viable labor regulatory framework.

The case of the educated unemployed youths is also of significance. It is observed in case of many countries that the rising numbers of educated unemployed youth contribute to social unrest, and instability. A number of countries, from which, India is the most prominent, has revolutionized its economy through IT industry. IT industry is relatively low investment and high return industry, which is based on knowledge economy. IT industry quickly connects with globalization, and has many positive externalities. Bangladesh should have a visionary IT policy in place, among other policies, for meaningful youth employment.

There are proponents (EC being one of them) who believe that Bangladesh should improve upon its competitive advantage rather than keeping on focusing on comparative advantage for promoting export oriented growth. This will entail provision of skills, which are not often directly linked to poverty reduction. However, it has an overall effect on the economy that facilitates the creation of employment and income (like China, India, Vietnam etc). Therefore, a balance has to be struck between low wage, low productivity and higher wage and higher productivity, while allocating resources for various interventions.

#### **4. Debate in determining effective delivery approaches: The formal/non-formal divide in the delivery of skills development**

The difference between the two mode of education/skills delivery lies in the way the contents of knowledge are determined, time is allocated, space is managed, and instructions are delivered and recognized.

The nature of formal system is that it is *hierarchical, structured, inflexible and impersonal*. The institutional framework of a formal system is based on the principles of stability, which is often not equipped in responding to the dynamic environment. The operating principles of a formal system are based on *predictability and conformity*. It is run on the costly mode whereby the learning environment is isolated from the real world of work, and each learner has to invest a substantial amount of time and money (opportunity cost included), before getting any chance for application.

The formal system, however, *provides direction, uniformity, and cohesion, and makes the intervention more 'moniterable'*. Therefore, *it is easier to exert control, as well as, assess effect and impact of format system interventions*. However, when poverty has become all-encompassing, the people are locked *into day to day vicious struggle for survival, where the lives of the people are characterized by lack of adequate income, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness, the non-formal mode of education can become a potentially effective way forward*.

The skills development according to broad definition implies all the things that are necessary to enable the learners to utilize their skills that increase their income in a manner, which is sustainable. The conceptual dimension of NFE is that it is constructed on the basis of *i) responsiveness; ii) flexibility; and iii) inclusiveness*, whereby provisions are created to provide skills and knowledge to the learners in a way where they learn *i) At their own place (they do not have to move out from their world of activity); ii) At their own time (with a minimum disruption to their daily world of work); iii) At their own pace (importance to self-learning)*. The non-formal mode of education is more tuned to adult needs and adult psychology, which emphasizes on the learning needs of the target-beneficiaries, which can be readily applied and derived benefit from.

### **5. Capacity and coordination issues in the public TVET systems: Some practical aspects, which might resist change**

The government-run systems involving skills development has all the trappings of a large bureaucratic system. It has many compulsions. Some of these compulsions are not specific to skills development; rather they are related to all-pervasive issue of governance. They cannot be changed anytime soon. Some of these aspects have been discussed below:

- ***Inter-Ministerial tensions:*** A large number of Ministries are involved in providing TVET support. Since all the concerned Ministries enjoy the same status, the element of accountability is missing. In addition, there is a certain degree of inter-ministerial tension, a phenomenon common to many bureaucratic systems of many developing, as well as, developed countries.
- ***High rate of turnover:*** The bureaucrats, who are at the helm of affairs, largely come from the administrative cadre. Usually, a bureaucrat belonging to the administrative cadre can only stay in a given position, for a period, not more than a few years. This hinders the process of strengthening institutional capacity to deliver skills development. The continuous transfer of the key administrative staff leaves the public sector TVET system in a state of capacity gap, in a sustained manner.

Further details of the various aspects of the TVET sector have been provided in the subsequent chapters. Here, a few key points have been stated to support the notion that TVET systems in its present form are inefficient, non-responsive to market forces and are, resistant to change.

### **6. The need for Non-formalization of the skills development sector**

**i) Starting with NGOs:** The activities of the NGOs could be categorized as non-formal in nature, since its development interventions are pro-poor. The ranges of development services it provides include, micro-finance, as well as, health, environment, social and education related programs. Their strategic advantages (the strategic advantages of NGOs in no way change the fact that they lack transparency and institutional capacity) could be characterized under the following broad generalizations:

- **Responsiveness of NGOs to change:** NGOs in general, have ranges of institutional capacity related problems. The NGO sector mainly comprises of small NGOs, which need capacity improvement. The large and middle size NGOs tend to be more efficient in general. In spite of many problems faced, NGOs tend to be more dynamic and are, more receptive to change. Their pro-poor orientation makes them a sector of choice in the skills development initiatives.

- **Potential of NGOs to carryout skills development on the basis of integrated approach:** The Micro-credit programs in Bangladesh, for instance, has earned global acclaim, since it has been able to bring banking services at the doorsteps of the poor. It has a direct empowering effect, and is now being replicated globally. Since, micro-credit programs are implemented through group approach, there is no reason as to why other programs, including skills development initiatives cannot be brought into the doorsteps of the poor. Now a day there is ever growing preference for integrated approach to development. However, there is no clear notion about the optimum skills development mix, which could be most effective in reducing poverty. This creates a strategic opening for bi-lateral donors like SDC to contribute in this sector, through creative and innovative interventions.

**ii)Public sector:** The multiple problems and constraints of the public sector TVET system has been discussed. Since in Bangladesh more than 80% live in rural areas, for poverty reduction purposes, the public sector must reach the rural poor. Before the public sector forges alliance with NGO and private sector, it must do two things. Firstly, it must improve its institutional capacities. Secondly, it must expand its outreach to the remote rural areas. It can achieve this outreach either in partnership with NGOs or on its own initiatives; or, it can use a combination of both approaches.

**Government has, to its credit a number of areas, with potentials of improving outreach. Under the deputy commissioner, who looks into all the administrative aspects of a district, there are 22 development officers. These development officers are university graduates in diverse subjects as agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries etc. However, they are under motivated and have low commitment. They also lack the capacity to transfer skills to the target poor. This segment could be taken into consideration for improving outreach.**

**Again, there are agriculture extension workers, who are known as deputy assistance agriculture officer (former block supervisors). Their work practice is similar to that of the development officers. This segment is also strategically well placed to deliver skills development to the rural poor. These segments of government officials could be interlinked with NGO initiatives effectively through appropriate interventions.**

**iii) Private sector:** Private sector is an underutilized sector, when it comes to skills development. If private sector can be convinced about earning profit, it can be modified and blended through pro-poor strategies, which the private sector can quickly adapt. Now a day, the **missing middle** is a much talked about phenomenon. The middle-income segment of population can provide leadership in creating medium enterprises, which holds tremendous promise of creating sustainable

employment and self-employment. Because of the perceived education, communication skills, and access to institutions, the middle-income segment is considered as better generators employment (through medium enterprises), however, there is no reasons to believe as to why the poor cannot manage medium enterprises, if provided with the right technical and financial inputs. This medium level economic activity, which, the economists like to term as meso-level should be explored and mobilized through non-formal mode of skills delivery, thereby allowing the much needed flexibility and space for innovative thinking. The essence of such a process of non-formalization means creating more linkages between private and NGO sectors than with government run TVET systems in its current form.

### **7. Public and NGO sectors, and their comparative potentials in delivering skills development**

The essence of the public sector is that it is large, relatively inflexible, centralized and therefore, difficult to reorient. Whereas, NGOs have relatively more flexibility and dynamism, given the fact that their institutional capacities are often, inadequate. A number of comparative issues related to their potentials, in delivering skills development, have been discussed below:

- ***In terms of access***, the public sector skills development excludes those who have not completed class eight. The farm and non-farm laborers in the rural areas, the RMG/textile workers, urban construction laborers, and substantial amount of unemployed and underemployed poor have not completed class eight. From the very beginning the public sector excludes the poor. Hypothetically, even if the class eight barriers were to be removed, the poor would have still found it difficult to attend public vocational centers on a regular basis, since most of the training centers run by the public sector are located in the urban and peri-urban areas. Whereas, the NGOs do not operate from such binding and inflexible conditions, and are better able to adapt to a given condition. Due to their deeper attachments with the grassroots, they are better able to take the skills development program to the doorsteps of the target people.

- ***In terms of relevance***, the curricula followed by the public sector are archaic, and is less responsive to the needs of the market. The rate of employment is very low. The vocational skills provided by the public sector are uni-dimensional, and do little to promote the cause of self-employment. NGOs, in general do not provide vocational skills in the way the public sector does, but they provide health and education related support along with micro-credit, which create better enabling conditions to the provision and utilization of vocational skills.

- ***In terms of quality***, the public sector vocational curricula include general education, and the vocational part is often theory intensive. The practical part of the vocational training faces many problems due to lack of equipments for demonstration and hands-on training. On the other hand, the curricula are yet to become adequately competency based. On the other hand, NGOs have a few high quality training centers, which however, can provide training to a very limited number of learners.

### **8. SDC's strategic option to facilitate coordination process**

The World Bank, and European Commission (EC), each independently, are heavily bent on strengthening the existing public sector TVET system. The strategies to be adopted by ADB are still not known, but from discussions it is quite evident that the World Bank and the EC are each positioning themselves for separate interventions in the TVET system.

This creates the opportunity for SDC to take NGO sector as the launching stage for skills development initiative. By doing so, it will immediately place itself in an enabling environment where multi-dimensional support system are available to strengthen vocational skills delivery.

Right from the beginning, SDC should ensure that institutional arrangements should provide a healthy environment for coordination among different players. The World Bank is envisaging the creation of a coordinating body by including key members from all the relevant sectors. Therefore, SDC should find ways to consider its strategic options to derive benefits from such a coordinating body. However, for reenergizing the NGO sector, and for creating conditions, in order to give it direction, will require considering the option of creating a coordinating body, within the NGO sector.

The proposed coordinating body created by SDC should not become an end in itself. It should run on the principles of many other successful sector-specific coordinating bodies in Bangladesh, such as NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation (in which SDC also has a major contribution). This coordinating body should be responsible for channeling resources for the effective delivery of skills delivery. This coordinating body should have the following key mandates:

- **Channeling resources:** It should have the mandate for channeling resources through partner NGOs, as well as, relevant organizations in the private sector, in the same way a number of coordinating bodies in the NGO sector are doing.
- **Developing capacities of partner NGOs:** It should have the mandate to develop skills development capacities of the partner NGOs through training and participative interventions.
- **Monitoring and evaluating progress:** It should have the mandate to monitor, and evaluate progress of activities of its partner NGOs, which should ensure continuous improvements of interventions.
- **Policy advocacy:** To influence the policy makers in strengthening the pro-poor focus on skills development, such a coordinating should voice concerns of the various stakeholders, including the target participants in the various skills development intervention.
- **Integrating regional experiences with national experience:** South Asia and regions in Asia Pacific has many success stories and positive experiences. Despite social and cultural divergences, the 'Asian mind' has many things in common. In order not to reinvent old wheels, it is important that policy makers have a reasonable inter-exchange of experience between each other.

SDC should facilitate the creation of national fund for skills development for creating effective modalities for skills training through tripartite collaboration between the government, private sector and NGOs. This process of inter-agency collaboration should be facilitated by the proposed forum on skills development.

## **Chapter 14: Skills Development and its Relevance to Education -(I): Primary/Basic Education, Formal/Non-Formal Experience**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

The issue of skills development is inseparable from the issue of education, as a matter of policy. The question of human capabilities makes it imperative that people are provided with enabling education, which often cannot be achieved through outmoded, inflexible approaches.

### **2. Setting the tone for educational policy reform: The overarching concerns and challenges**

In broad terms, the issue of educational policy reform has basically two alternatives. Firstly, the policy makers can speed up the existing pace of expanding the formal systems. Experience suggests that formal systems put a formidable resistance to change, therefore, any form of reform initiatives needs to be realistic about the degree of change, it can bring. Such an approach usually has limited impact on the existing labor market structures and educational costing policies. Experience suggests that this alternative, however, well thought they might be, leads to further unemployment, poverty, inequality and rural stagnation (Todaro).

The other option is to bring reform through appropriate demand and supply adjustments in relation to educational opportunities. This need based responsive orientation towards education reform, comes with reformulation of curricula in light of the actual resource needs of the nation (Todaro).

*Some of the overriding policy concerns in line with the second alternative are, i) Primary and post-primary education, addressing specific social and economic needs of the poor, should get the largest pie of the educational budget opposed to those formal secondary and higher education systems, which are based on general education principles. This orientation will help facilitate self-education and rural work-related learning (a matter of paramount significance for skills development leading to poverty reduction); ii) Low income groups should be given subsidies to offset their private cost (including opportunity cost) of schooling (an area where the government has done a commendable job); iii) To increase the productivity of the rural poor, a combination of formal and non-formal mode of education is needed, which provides skills mainly to fulfill occupational requirements of the rural people, this issue has been further discussed in the subsequent section).*

### **3. Policies and issues relating education with skills development in PRSP thematic reports**

(According to PRSP) the education sector is the centerpiece of human development, helping the overall strategy of poverty reduction, economic growth and social

development. The thematic report indicates that the education system in Bangladesh is not equitable, thus not pro-poor, and the contents of the curriculum do not therefore effectively serve the goals of human development and poverty reduction. The key considerations of the thematic reports are: a) access to education; b) quality and relevance of education; and c) equity in access and participation, so that the poor and the disadvantaged are indeed the beneficiaries. For redirecting the education system of the country to support the national strategy of poverty reduction, the report has covered, among others, the following systemic issues: i) a commitment to increase the access to education with quality and equity; ii) proper coordination among all educational institutions; iii) increased public resources for education; iv) greater decentralization of education planning and management at all levels; v) a longer-term perspective of educational change; and vi) a greater voice of stakeholders at all levels. The report also suggests addressing a host of other issues like the need for a unified approach, support to early childhood education, a nationwide network of community learning centers, attention to marginal groups, a policy and organizational framework for non-formal and adult education, the need for decentralization of management, professional development and specialization at the secondary level, expansion and modernization of VTE with greater benefits for the poor, particularly emphasizing textile education to supply the present and future need of textile employment at all levels and increasing external effectiveness of higher education.

#### **4. Overarching role of Ministry of Education as identified in PRSP, 2005**

The formal mode of education consists of primary, secondary and tertiary education. Under two ministries, the government controls both formal and non-formal mode of education. The concerned ministries are: i) Ministry of Primary and Mass Education; ii) Ministry of Education.

	Education including primary and mass education, female education, vocational and technical education	<p><b>Lead Ministry:</b> Ministry of Education</p> <p><b>Associates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Ministry of Primary and Mass Education</li> <li>ii) Ministry of Women and Children Affairs</li> <li>iii) Ministry of Youth and Sports</li> <li>iv) Ministry of Labor and Employment</li> <li>v) Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment</li> <li>vi) Ministry of Science and Information &amp; Communication Technology, and</li> <li>vii) Directorate of Technical Education</li> </ul>
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By making Ministry of Education the Lead Ministry, the GOB has created a sense of direction about the roles and responsibilities of the various Ministries related to skills development.

NGOs have NFE program for children and adults. BRAC has one of the largest NGO run NFPE education systems in the world. Among multi-dimensional educational support components, one that deserves mentioning is that BRAC has managed to establish 49,000 primary and pre-primary schools with an enrollment of over 1 million children, 65% of them are girls. In addition a number of NGOs provide innovative education with linkage to income generating skills (i.e. UCEP, CMES, FIVDB etc). For the adult education, the central program is being implemented by NGOs, under BNFE (BNFE is placed under the Ministry. of Primary and Mass Education).

**5. A few important lessons learned in the formal primary education sub-sector:**

The primary education is a crucial sub-sector. The effectiveness of this sector can directly influence the effectiveness of skills development. The positive relationship between the two elements is well researched and well documented globally.

**i) Students' Performance of the Primary School (Education Watch 2001)**

- Students are poor in expressing themselves in writing in both Bangla and English. 7% of the students achieved none of the Bangla and 15.5% achieved none of the English competencies;
- Every day life problem solving was most difficult competency in mathematics. 13% students achieved none of the competencies;
- Like other areas of assessment, the students of NFE schools performed better in Environmental education;
- Area-wise or gender difference was less prominent in non-formal schools;
- Students' socio economic background, school characteristics and extra educational inputs are significantly correlated with their learning achievement;
- Gender difference favoring boys appeared in 18 of the 27 competencies;
- Students of the non-formal schools are ahead in 15 cognitive competencies; government schools in 4, and private schools none.

**General comments and observations:** Bangladesh has been globally acclaimed for its achievement of 97+% enrollment, with consequent significant reduction in the drop out rates. Achievement of gender parity in enrollment, as well as, in the completion of the primary education cycle is also a mentionable milestone. However, the above findings show a dismal performance in the quality domain, which is most likely to hinder the acquisition of higher skills, relating to employment and self-employment.

Without creating solid foundations for primary education, reforms in the post primary education will not succeed. Despite many claims of success, the primary education is still very much deficient. Therefore, interventions are needed to improve the quality dimensions in the primary education, while, at the same time, a viable post-primary education needs to be drawn, which can support and facilitate effective acquisition of market-oriented economic skills.

**ii) Some important recommendations from the Education Watch Report (2001)**

**a. Short-term measures**

- Revisit the list of 53 competencies, retain these, which are competencies in the real sense of term, and redefine these, as necessary, in terms of measurable pedagogic outcomes;
- For the new list of competencies, design fresh orientation programs for teachers and their supervisors in terms of both teaching-learning and assessment processes. Devise and introduce measurement indicators and standard for the competencies;
- Supply textbooks and Khata and pencils free of cost. If necessary divert resources from Food for Education program;
- Support collaboration between formal and non-formal systems and institutions.

**b. Medium and long-term measures**

- Create autonomous district education authorities for overall planning, management and accountability of primary education; begin with trial in a number of districts to ensure success and learn lessons;
- Train the trainers of PTIs through hands-on experience in primary school teaching;
- Improve the reach and performance of the secondary school system to create aspirations among primary school and their parents;

**General comments and observations:** The above stated measures are right steps towards improved quality and management of the entire primary education sub-sector. However, what remains to be seen is that how these processes would be carried out, and coordinated, between the various stakeholders. The multi-year, multi-component Primary Education Development Program II (PEDP-II) apparently attempts to address the above stated issues.

**6. A few important lessons learned in the non-formal primary education sub-sector:** For two decades, a rich array of lessons has been learned from the eventful sector of GOB led NFE. Some of these lessons have been discussed below (the lessons largely reflect the findings of the Swedish (SIDA) assisted technical assistance to GOB led NFE programs):

**iii) Central lessons learned from the GOB's NFE initiative**

Following Jomtien, a separate division was established under the Prime Minister's office in providing its EFA (Education for All) commitment an effective operational direction (the division has been transformed into full Ministry from 2003 onwards). It initiated its literacy projects through the former DNFE (Directorate of Non-Formal Education) following an integrated experimentation known as INFEP (Integrated Non-Formal Education Project). One of the central lessons learned from the GOB led NFE experience is that political commitment at times, can become victim of its own convictions. In order to fulfill its EFA pledge, the government rapidly pooled its resources and embarked on a massive campaign. *The operational strategy of that campaign was to cover a maximum number of learners, with a minimum amount of resources and in the fastest possible time. This enthusiasm led to rapid expansion of basic literacy coverage to the extent that it became unrealistic to expect the directorate to cope with such a situation. As a result, the Directorate went from one*

crisis to other. However, the assumption that basic literacy will automatically lead to economic and social gains was to be proven as deficient, and the skills development component was introduced later. For a number of reasons, the momentum of DNFE as a learning organization was somewhat lost and as of now, it is striving to restore its institutional stability and effectiveness.

ii) A notable byproduct of these crises is that a National Task Force on NFE policy has been established, which is in the process of articulating a substantive NFE policy framework capable of providing a long-term direction to the sector. In order to make skills development initiatives effective, there must be a strong collaboration between the actors, who would be providing leadership to the skills development initiatives at the national level, and the National Task Force for NFE, who by this time has proven to be quite cohesive and functional group of policy makers.

**iii) The need for putting NFE back in track: From cheap alternative to formal education towards multi-dimensional approach to poverty reduction**

The issue of NFE education has risen to further prominence, due to present day policy priority, in the developing world, for creating meaningful linkages between education and real world of work. Under this context Philip H. Coombs and Manzoor Ahmed provided a groundbreaking typology (as early as 1972), in which they have grouped educational needs for young people and adults, males and females, into four main categories (Todaro, New York University). These categories, under the umbrella of NFE are:

- General or basic education (literacy, arithmetic, an elementary understanding of science and the immediate environment, etc)-what most primary and secondary schools now seek to achieve;
- Family improvement education-designed primarily to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes useful for improving the quality of family life, and including such subjects as health, nutrition, homemaking and child care, home repairs and improvements, and family planning;
- Community improvement education-designed to strengthen local and national institutions and processes through instruction in such matters as local and national government, cooperatives, and community projects;
- Occupational education-designed to develop particular knowledge and skills associated with various economic activities that are useful in making a living.

Todaro further observes that ***'For the most part, only category 1-general education- has been emphasized in developing countries. But the learning needs of the three occupational sub-groups of rural areas-farmers and farm workers, persons engaged in non-farm rural enterprises, and rural general personnel-are likely to fit quite poorly with most formal education curricula'***.

**iv) Linking work, economic skills and knowledge**

- Even though, the national NFE task force has gone a long way, yet there is a problem of the lack of common understanding in the domain, which is largely due to the lack of commonly shared vision;
- The institutional capacity and arrangements, with flawed project design are responsible of project objectives not being achieved;
- The lessons learned in this sector are sparse and fragmented;

- The NGO orientation, preparation and training on NFE needs further strengthening;
- The role of the communities are considered as a second priority intervention;
- Most field facilitators have inadequate training, their working conditions are difficult, and due to temporary nature of their job, they are less motivated;
- Lack of understanding of markets and marketing skills result into failure to transform acquired skills into economic gains;
- Learning needs assessments and market demand survey are not given adequate attention while designing NFE programs;
- The significance of task oriented training and on the job retraining at all levels is insufficiently understood;
- The post-training supports are insufficient.

**v) Field lessons learned linking literacy to (skill development leading to higher income)**

It has now been proven globally that without providing people with basic literacy, it becomes rather difficult to bring meaningful changes in the socio-economic lives of the people.

The NFE initiative, spearheaded by the government, has provided a number of significant lessons in this domain. Some of these lessons have been discussed below:

- **The content of literacy and its relevance to life:** Literacy can be effectively transmitted to people, if the people for whom the literacy is intended, can relate its content with their real life situation. The primers, which were used in the NFE literacy, went a long way in this context. *However, broadly speaking, the primers did not emphasize enough on relating literacy to economic, entrepreneurial and market aspects.* These elements are considered as vital for NFE and its relation to skill development.
- **Acquiring of literacy skills:** This is the first step and a difficult part of literacy program. In this stage, the illiterate have to play the role of passive learners, since they are taught how arbitrary symbols are transformed into words and sentences, thereby creating meaning. The quality of teachers and soundness of methodology come into play here. *In the NFE program, perhaps this was the strongest part.*
- **Retention of literacy skills:** Once the literacy skills are acquired, the literacy skills have to be retained. This suggests that literacy skills have to be internalized in the long-term memory of the learners. For this, a sustained use of literacy skills is needed. Since the learners largely do not need to use literacy skills for their day-to-day work, the acquired skills are easily forgotten. *Due to the lack of application a large number of learners have relapsed into illiteracy.*
- **Transfer of literacy skills:** This is the most challenging part of the literacy continuum, since through effective transfer of literacy skills, it is possible for the learners to transform literacy skills to social and economic gains. *Unfortunately, regarding the NFE programs in Bangladesh, the transfer of literacy skills were quite sparse, since the other steps in literacy were not adequately fulfilled.*

**vi) Positive externalities of NFE programs:** It appears that some of important achievements of NFE programs are forgotten. These achievements have important significance for the future skills development intervention for poverty reduction:

- **Bringing people together:** *Through NFE programs, it was possible to bring a large number of people in an organized manner, for a sustained period of time, on an almost daily basis.* The other program, which can claim to bring people together successfully nationwide, is credit programs. However, credit programs are unable to bring people together on a daily basis, in the way NFE intervention can do;

- **Interest and commitment of the learners:** It has been clearly observed that even with many shortfalls, the learners are very much committed to learn. This signifies that there is a demand for acquiring skills. *However, almost inevitably, majority of the learners link literacy skills to economic gains, without the effective inclusion of the economic component, however, the learners lose interest in literacy programs in the long run;*

- **Gender dimensions of NFE intervention:** More than 50% of NFE participants are women. The NFE programs enable them to get out of the confines of their homes and socialize among themselves. This daily get together helps them share mutual concerns. This creates a sense of bondage, which is essential for any sustainable development initiatives, based on the principles of participation. *Thus, NFE programs have been able to contribute to the process of gender empowerment.*

## **7. SDC 's involvement in Formal sector**

*SDC is now looking to enter in the larger domain of education encompassing the formal education sector. Given the difficult nature of the formal sector, and its scale of operations, SDC should take a cautious and phased approach.*

*To start with, SDC should now look into the primary education sector, **and also the post-primary education, which is in dire need of reformation. This topic can easily become a separate object of discussion.***

*For now, within the primary education sub-sector SDC should also look into scale-neutral activities (By scale-neutral it means those categories of activities, which will have wider impact on the sector with no relation to the number of people having to be served. For instance, development of learner-centered curricula, improving the teacher training quality, implementing Monitoring Evaluation & Reporting systems are some examples of scale neutral activities).*

## **8. Strategic considerations for SDC on Non-Formal Education**

Despite policy shifts, NFE still occupies an important place in SDC's policy statements. It has initiated a virtually ground breaking intervention in the district of Sunamganj. The intervention appears to have covered enough ground by this time, that the sector-practitioners should now look into the lessons learned, and share the findings with other partners.

## **Chapter 15: Skills Development and its Relevance to Education -(II): Post Primary Scenario**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

Post-primary is a logical way to think ahead. It is not that the sector-practitioners have not taken note of it. The massive quality related problems in primary education are somehow responsible for the 'thought-block' that apparently exists in the sector. As a result, post primary scenario is often considered as an isolated project-based concept devoid of holistic approach. With the introduction of market-oriented skills development, the post-primary phenomenon can no longer be ignored.

### **2. Dilemma regarding post-primary situation**

The questions SDC is asking about post-primary situation are: " What happens to the primary school leavers after they come out of formal or non-formal schools? Do they have the necessary skills and qualifications to find work or pathways to self-employment? Do they have the capacity to contribute to family income yet? To find answers for these questions we need to ask how to reach a majority of primary school leavers in order to create opportunities for them, or how to train them for the world of work" (Lipczynsky, Malte.SDC, Berne. Interview 3.08.05).

In Bangladesh, primary education means children between 6 and 10 years (the age range varies) attending classes between grades 1 and 5, for a period of 5 years, under government-led system. By government definition, children are not ready for work until they are 15 years.

In Bangladesh, children from middle class and higher middle class (not so much the rich) also attend government led primary education. For poverty reduction, these children are not target for skills development. Conversely, children belonging to poor segment of population are needed to be addressed.

Firstly, there are poor children, who are grade five completers. Many of these children have to get into world of work, during and after study, due to poverty. In urban areas they are known as hard to reach children, due to floating nature of their existence. In rural areas, they are easier to locate. The grade five completers in the rural and urban areas especially girls need context specific skills, so that as and when they take up livelihood related activities, they are well prepared. On the other hand, there are dropouts who also need special assistance. According to the government, children under 15 years are not supposed to work, and therefore, they are not considered as unemployed. A massive number of poor children either complete primary education or get dropped out, gets around 5 years, before becoming almost adults, for further inputs for skills development. Skills development should therefore target children, who are either grade five completers, or dropped out. Again, there are children who have to work, and therefore, skills development programs should cater for their special needs. These children are present in both urban and rural areas. Again children, who can invest a year or more after completing grade 5, should get different kind of intervention. Meeting the needs of children of different categories is one the central challenges of post-primary education.

The adults between ages 15 and 45 years (the upper limit is widely agreed in adult NFE programs), who have completed basic literacy (18 million learners), also require specific intervention. These 18 million learners are located in the rural areas. They also require further inputs in skills development.

Another possibility of post-primary linkage is that there are huge number of girls completing secondary, as well as, higher secondary education under FSSAP, FHSSAP. Higher education based on general education principles, however, does not get translated into economic activities automatically. Through the provision of vocational training catering market needs for the urban and rural areas, these girls could be provided with adequate vocational and livelihood training, which can then become sustainable earnings. These vocational training centers also provide post training support, like credit and placement support.

*Education for children and adolescents in this regard could be provided through formal and non-formal means, while for the adults, it has to be invariably through non-formal means.*

However, one needs to be reminded that the children and adults in urban and rural areas have different learning needs. Furthermore, there are localized context specific needs. All these needs have to be addressed effectively. This could be addressed through modular courses and competency based (of late, there is a growing realization in the BTEB about introducing competency based curricula).

### **3. What strategies should be pursued in post-primary scenario?**

While the policy statements in MDG and PRSP provide a sense of direction for skills development, they need to be translated into worthwhile post-primary strategy. The introduction of the terminology of 'post-primary' is important because it assumes that targets in primary have been achieved. In Bangladesh, the primary and post-primary should be pursued simultaneously. The reason is while Bangladesh has achieved quantitative targets in primary education, it is far away from achieving qualitative targets. In this age of continuing dwindling resources for education, if focus shifts towards post-primary scenario, then the very momentum generated to evolve a strong primary education might be somewhat lost. ***Therefore, in case of Bangladesh, it should not be only post-primary, but primary and post-primary, pursued simultaneously, in an integrated manner.*** In the previous chapter, the primary sector and modes of delivery has been discussed. This chapter discusses the post-primary scenario. A scenario, which has emerged almost simultaneously with the emergence of skills development. Indeed, it is gradually unfolding that the post-primary scenario and skills development are two side of the same coin. In fact, there are those who believe that skills development has not worked for the poor. Therefore, the prime emphasis should be on micro-credit, health, education etc. However, three decades of experience suggests that, while such interventions have helped to smoothen poverty reduction, they have not managed to solve poverty in a manner, which is sustainable, market driven and empowering. Therefore, to meet the growing need of globalization and to make development a self-generating force to propel market forcers with reduced external dependence has become an approach, which is worth trying.

#### **4. Ingredients of visions for the post-primary scenario**

The change of vision is a must, since the existing ones are not leading us to the desired end. The vision will come from the ground realities, which are well understood and well interpreted. This will come from intensive reflection, dialogue and by relating policies with grassroots realities and perceptions. Visions, therefore, will not come through this study, or any study of this nature.

##### ***i) Are we forsaking our past achievements in the name of skills development?***

Before going into the economic dimensions of post literacy scenario, the social dimensions should also be addressed. The social, environmental and health related awareness has certainly helped the society in achieving higher human resource index, largely due to NGOs. Impact studies of such interventions are difficult to quantify, yet there are many innovative researches in hand, which validates this claim.

Post-primary scenario, therefore, is not about the target poor only; it is about their households and the community, in which they live. These children and adults, are witness to intra-house-hold discrimination to resource allocation, where women are usually the prime victims, they are also witness to many forms of ignorance in terms of health and hygiene related practices, which can be overcome through information and persuasion, resulting into higher quality of life without much additional resources inputs. The recipients of the primary and basic education are also members of the community. They can provide information about mobilizing resources, create awareness about social problems and social injustices, and thereby become agents of change. The existing curricula is not geared to that direction, therefore, the direction must change, for setting the right stage for post-primary scenario. This has been indicted in the previous chapter.

##### ***ii) Should we target skills development beyond individuals?***

When we are discussing about skills development these days, we are talking about market-oriented skills. This strategy is simple and effective, since the end result mainly in terms of increased income can be measured at the end of the day. The central lesson learned in 60's, right through 70's onwards that increase in income does not bring development. Development in order to become effective has to be holistic. This is a foregone lesson; a lesson learned the hard way.

##### ***iii) Redefining schools***

Schools and learning centers should therefore, change their functions from static entities to a dynamic mobilizers of knowledge and resources. As Upali Sedere puts it "The neighborhoods and the living environment are changing entities and would expand to other neighborhoods and eventually to the larger world community". As experience suggest such dynamic experimentations could only evolve through involving NGOs and communities.

##### ***iv) Mainstreaming vocational system***

At the vocational front, there should be an attempt to bring general and vocational education, under one cohesive structure (Upali Sedere). The state of fragmentation of the vocational sector in Bangladesh has been discussed. It is unlikely to go away

soon despite the well-intentioned interventions by the major DPs. In addition, there should be some form of equivalency for NFE delivery in line with Thailand NFE system. However, it needs to be kept in mind that NFE should not be constrained, or made inflexible, in order to achieve equivalency. There is a real danger for NFE here.

#### **v) *Getting involved with the informal systems***

The informal systems are understudied. Informal systems emerge from local communities' needs. It is a response of the community to the formal and non-formal mode of delivery. The community utilizes its intricate social capital and relationships to address problems, and often take collective initiatives to solve them. Any intervention directed towards the informal sector will transform into a formal one, and holds the possibility of robbing away from its ingenuity and dynamism. Any involvement in this sector should be based on go-slow' approach.

### **5. Post-primary scenario and continuing education**

The post-primary education should not be based on 'banking approach' as Paolo Freire liked to depict formal education, which emphasizes on accumulation of knowledge as passive recipient. The post-primary scenario should, therefore, emphasize on self-generative learning. A process, through which entire communities and society would be able to define problems and identify resources to solve them through mutual interaction by utilizing formal, non-formal and informal mode of communications. The nature of problems will certainly not always be economic in nature, but they will be obviously related to the lives and the needs of communities in question.

## **Chapter 16: Lessons learned and emerging trends in the nature of skills development**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

By this time, the world has gathered enough experience in the field of development in general, and skills development, in particular. Perhaps, it would not be unfair to state that skills development is undergoing a stage of deconstruction. Having said that, there have been a number of clear lessons learned. Some of these trends, and challenges, which might have policy implications, have been discussed below.

### **2. Challenge of Defining skills development**

Defining skills development is not merely an academic exercise; rather it has serious implications regarding the orientation, and direction of skills development. The central challenge here is that it cannot be too focused, as experience clearly suggests that such an approach is not effective in reducing poverty. On the other hand, trying to incorporate too much of variable renders skills development initiative rather meaningless. Therefore, a balance needs to be struck, which has now become an important global debate.

### **3. Dealing with the problem of coordination**

Of late, the issue of skills development has become an object of intense discussion. However, such efforts are not being translated into a consistent and cohesive system of thinking. Firstly, there is no substantive inter-sector collaboration.

Secondly, the leadership, which the government is supposed to provide, often lacks the drive and initiative due to inflexibility, which is inherent in the system.

During the course of this study, it was realized that there are many qualified officials within the government system. They appear to have a substantive idea about how things are moving, and what could be done to change the system. However, the bureaucratic environment does not encourage critical thinking. As a result, there is an apparent tendency among the senior level officials to see the entire problem of skills development as a problem of resource constraints.

One of the significant challenges, therefore, will be to convince the senior officials within the government TVET system is that; *it is indeed through policy reorientation the limited resources could be utilized effectively, rather than channeling more resources to the problem.*

Experience suggests that attempts for coordination between ministries have fell short of its objectives. The creation of coordinating bodies proposed by the WB and ADB, is a logical necessity. However, it might take some time for the idea to take roots in the vast system. *Therefore, a logical alternative could be, to initiate a process by a limited number of sector practitioners, who will conduct dialogue with different representatives from government, private and NGO sectors, on the basis of short, but well researched evidences. The purpose of such an exercise will be to promote coordination through experience sharing by a low profile group of sector practitioners. Such processes will not only inform decision-makers with relevant findings in the field of skills development; it will also promote inter-ministerial rapport, which is an absolute must to make coordination efforts effective and meaningful.*

#### **4. The need for institutional capacity building**

All the sectors (public, private and NGOs) are deficient in institutional capacities. In this regard, the institutional capacities within the government system are of utmost significance. The government has to intervene in a large number of issues, which includes: *i) Enhancing policy making capacity; ii) Enhancing implementation capacity; iii) Creating enabling conditions; iv) Creating favorable regulations; v) Setting standards; vi) Monitoring and evaluating activities of private and NGOs.* The NGOs and private sector primarily require developing implementation capacities, by acquiring the ability to transfer market-oriented demand driven skills effectively and efficiently.

The government system does not only lacks institutional capacity, it also find things difficult to manage since it is highly centralized. Decentralization helps to transfer capacities to all levels of management, since people at all levels are forced take more direct responsibilities for their actions, or lack of it.

To bring positive changes in the areas stated above, a more participatory client-oriented technical assistance is needed for a sustained period of time, even though the notion of technical assistance is not very popular these days.

#### **5. A clear gradual shift towards a more holistic approach**

One clear lesson is that, the skills development cannot be confined within the vocational training only. Poverty reduction, in order to be meaningful has to come in an integrated package.

It needs to be mentioned that skills development in Bangladesh is largely associated with vocational training for the poor, which is indeed a very narrow version. However, recently there is a gradual shift towards more holistic version of skills development. This holistic version includes additional skills like problem solving skills, entrepreneurship skills, management skills etc.

The central problem in this exercise is that the practitioners are yet to determine the ranges of factors, which would translate into effective sustainable poverty reduction interventions. It is quite safe to assume, given the complexity of the subject that determination of the combination of factors would be *context specific*, rather than a fixed package, which could be applied to all circumstances.

### **6. Emerging consensus for market-oriented skills development**

The reason for the existence of public services, as well as, the NGO intervention is due to market failure. It is overridingly felt that social and physical infrastructure has to be largely provided by the public sector, and to some extent by the NGO sectors. As a consequence, the notion of market is often seen with suspicion by these sectors. However, this notion is fast changing, specifically among the NGOs. They are now in the early stages in dealing with the market forces. This will take sometime, since, for the NGOs in general, the idea of market oriented skills development will require a major ideological and institutional reorientation.

### **7. Skills development and empowerment of women**

This issue is so vast that perhaps it deserves separate attention. Women, specially, the poor women, living in villages have come a long way. Before being critical, one should acknowledge the extent of positive influence NGOs have had in improving the living conditions of rural women, through micro-credit and other awareness related development interventions. Having stated that the process of women's empowerment is far from complete. *Lessons drawn from the grass-roots show that until women are able to manage and control market forces, they will not be able to assert their voices, or make choices, which brings meaningful benefits to them as individuals.*

### **8. Rural market**

In a simple sense market consists of employer, employees and consumers. These three entities interact together in deciding the nature of economy they are in. In developed economy, market is impersonal and institution-based. The producer and consumer do not need to interact at a personal level to close transactions. However, in rural areas, (which for obvious reasons are central objects for skills development for poverty reduction), the idea of market operates in a different manner. The producers (employers & employees) and consumers interact as individuals and groups. The village 'hat' (rural market), 'shalish', 'samaj' etc denote different units and sub-units of village society, which conducts out-of-the-court settlements of dispute and provide social cohesion, and enforce common code of conduct, also represent a common market, where transactions are initiated and closed. No

development initiative has considered this intricate social fabric of rural society, or explored their worth in facilitating economic growth through creating opportunities for employment and self-employment. So, such social units and sub-units are not only economic entities, but are also social entities that look after the mutual well being of its members. While the significance of community development is emphasized, little is done to find out these complex arrangements, and place development interventions strategically so that the benefits of these social structures can fully be utilized.

The vast number of literature on rural skills development show a substantial number of organizations, both from NGOs and public sector, providing skills training on ranges of economic activities. These activities are traditional in nature, and they are repeated throughout the country. The profit margin from such traditional undertaking is minimal. They fail to make any substantial impression on poverty reduction. Traditional skills, among others, include, tailoring, embroidery, poultry, cow rearing etc. It is assumed that if the process of providing traditional skills is intensified, in all probabilities, it is possible that after a point, the market would be saturated. This will remove the marketability of the traditional skills. *Therefore, there is a great need for developing skills in non-traditional sector.*

#### **9. The urban market**

The urban market is more dynamic entity, but nevertheless, is less personal. One cannot link with urban market and social support system. However, people of Bangladesh have strong sense of community in their culture. Given the right opportunities they can organize themselves for common cause very quickly. *In this case, low-cost business centers could be developed in local areas, where concerned employers and employees can get together and share information, and if conditions are right, organize training for skills development.* Targeting and reaching urban labor market for skills development is a difficult proposition, and will require innovative thinking. The existing TVET system is not able to provide training both operationally and technically to small groups of organized urban labor groups, if they are formed at a given point in time.

#### **10. Viability and replicability**

One of the positive trends of today is that the DPs are encouraging innovative interventions focusing on critical aspects of development. These innovative projects are being undertaken in an experimental form in a limited scale. During such experimentation, intensive management inputs are provided, including MER (monitoring, evaluation & reporting) support. As a result, the outcomes of experimentation are usually successful. However, when these programs are tried in a larger setting, with large institutions involved, the quality dimensions of the project falls apart and the effectiveness of replicability disappears.

#### **11. Linkage between the vocational training and basic education**

It has been identified globally, that quality basic education is essential for developing sustained acquisition of skills, and the ability to acquire new skills, with the growing demand of time. The NFE interventions provided to the poor in Bangladesh needs to

do more in ensuring the quality of basic education. With such an essential precondition remaining unfulfilled, the effectiveness of skills development programs will always remain under a question mark.

**12. Creating preconditions for skills development**

In fact this issue is not necessarily specific to skills development, rather this embodies the entire matrix of good governance. An efficient government, with transparency and accountability are considered to be essential for any development initiatives to succeed. In case of skills development, the additional inputs are needed in reorienting the skills development initiatives, to make it more responsive to needs of the market.

**13. Trends in vocational training in Bangladesh**

Over the years, due to rapid transformations in the way business is being conducted globally, coupled with the availability of enabling technology, the form and content of business is fast changing. The essence of such a change is that business is becoming highly competitive and knowledge-based.

According to BTEB, some of the areas that have undergone changes are:

- i) Information Technology;
- ii) Microelectronics;
- iii) Bio-technology;
- iv) Materials technology.

Bangladesh is yet to position itself to take benefit from these changes. However, it can position itself for capturing markets, which have crept up as a result of byproduct or externalities of global changes. Some of such areas, which might help to create jobs and have an impact on poverty, are as follows:

<b>Manpower sector:</b>	<b>Industrial sector:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel and tourism service;</li> <li>• Health care and technology;</li> <li>• Security;</li> <li>• House keeping;</li> <li>• Transport worker etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Petrochemical;</li> <li>• Geo-technology and mining;</li> <li>• Canned food and food preservation;</li> <li>• Micro-electronic goods and their servicing;</li> <li>• Medicines, especially herbal medicines.</li> </ul>

To cope with such changes as mentioned, the forms and content of skills development should change. According to BTEB the nature of skills consisting of knowledge, attitude and practice, which will be needed in the future, are as follows:

- i) Breadth of skill rather than depth of skills (to deal with market demand fluctuations);
- ii) Multi-skills in preference to mono-skills (mono-skills creates the risk of redundancy);
- iii) Diagnostic skills more than operational skills (given the increase in the complexity of tasks be performed);
- iv) Micro-electronic goods and their servicing.

## **Chapter 17: Recommendations**

**1. Institution-specific:** *The following recommendations, attempts to provide a few guidelines, which might enable SDC to find ways to determine effective organizational directions, for promoting skills development in Bangladesh.*

### **i) Four specific recommendations directly addressing the information gap in the skills development sector**

The four recommendations are crucial for setting the skills development initiatives in the right track. If one or more of the studies are undertaken by any major players, SDC should support and complement those studies, to suit their own organizational need.

- ***Impact assessment on skills development initiatives:*** Studies in the stated domain is rather sparse. The studies available are hardly representative. Without a comprehensive and a representative study depicting the skill requirement, it will be difficult to identify areas of intervention, propose appropriate policies in a convincing manner. The studies conducted by key players like the World Bank, ADB and EC are sector studies. Impact assessment is one of the components of their studies; by study design such impact assessments are not in-depth in nature.
- ***Carrying out nationwide skills needs assessment (following impact assessment):*** A logical next step is to carry out a national needs assessment on skills, in domains of both farm and non-farm products and services. This will also enable to identify specific areas of intervention and determine appropriate policy options. Without a valid and reliable needs assessment of skills, the participation of the skill receivers cannot be ensured. Without the reflection of the actual hopes and aspirations of the ultimate target-people, the entire effort will become traditional top-down initiative, once again.
- ***Continuity of above stated initiatives:*** Such a process should be recycled on continuous basis with the skills needs assessment carried out bi-annually, while the impact assessments on the skills development and application interventions should be conducted every five years.
- ***Provision for skills impact assessment in the relevant GOB led projects:*** SDC should pursue the government to create provision for impact assessment (5 years after project completion) for all the project/s approved by GOB, which has skills development component.

### **ii) Policy options for SDC**

- Since SDC's country framework has been already elaborated and decided upon, there are two strategic options available to SDC. **Firstly, to find out to what extent the issue of skills development could be incorporated in each of the existing themes (Education, Micro-Finance, Local Governance, Sustainable Land Use). Secondly, to find out to what extent, it is feasible to add yet one more priority theme of skills development along with other themes.**

- **Incorporating skills development with NFE experimentation in Sunamganj:** In case of NFE, SDC has already embarked on needs-based skills development through an integrated form of NFE intervention initiative for the extreme poor in the district of Sunamganj. Even though, the issue of market and employment is built into it, the economic and market element of skills development perhaps needs to be refocused and reshaped.

The project is based on integrated approach, whereby the learners are made literate and provided with necessary market-oriented skills in order to increase their income in a manner, which is sustainable. A number of well-reputed national NGOs are in the implementation process. This project in essence is an integrated form of development with NFE as an entry-point.

SDC can conduct different categories of comparative experimentations by introducing skills development by adopting different approaches. At the end of such experimentations, SDC needs to carry out impact assessments, which would lead to critical lessons learned. These lessons will form the basis of viable and replicable lessons, which will form the basis of policy dialogue at the subsequent phase.

**2. Technical and strategic dimensions: *The following recommendations deals with the technical and strategic dimensions of skills development, which SDC can only initiate through collaborative exercise.***

**i) Carrying out assessment of TVET skills in order to make it more relevant**

Since two major players (WB and EC) are independently getting involved in the policy and institutional reform of the entire TVET system, perhaps it would be prudent for SDC to carryout a more intensive intervention in assessing the existing skills delivered by TVET, and then try to find innovative ways to transfer those skills to the poor, who are largely illiterate or semi-literate. Some of the probable ways of achieving such skills are as follows:

- **Identification of skills that does not need literacy:** Field experience reveals that the illiterate and semi-literate target-poor are able to master a large range of trade skills provided the nature of training is practical oriented. The assumption here is that by reorienting training delivery, it would be possible, to provide the illiterate and semi-literate poor, with a reasonable number of skills, which are only provided to literate learners.
- **Identification of skills that is compatible with the class 5 completers:** Bangladesh has achieved 97+% enrollment rate and 67% completion rate (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2005). This entails that a large number of primary education completers are also entering the market. It is assumed that their level of acquisition of basic literacy is better, and as a result, are better placed to acquire higher level skills.
- **Identification of innovative training delivery mechanisms, which can provide skills to the illiterate trainees at the same level with class 8 completers in selected domains:** The assumption is that providing same skills to the illiterate

and semi-literate, which are designed for class eight completers could prove to be challenging. On the other hand, a very demonstration based practical training approach could effectively offset such learning constraints.

- **Creation of women friendly training mechanism:** Poor and destitute women, are certainly high priority targets for poverty reduction. Even though, women in Bangladesh have come a long way, they are still subject to gender related constraints. Therefore, for them it is not only the contents of learning that is important, rather, creating gender sensitive learning conditions are absolute necessity in order to make skills development effective. For instance, distance from household and learning center, and learning conditions in the center (i.e. existence of sanitary latrine near the center for women only) are some of the important factors in creating a gender sensitive condition.

#### **ii) Increasing the capacity of trainers, who provide basic services**

Paul Bennel states that 'Surprisingly, the literature on training for the poor focuses almost exclusively on the direct provision of training to the poor and largely ignores the role of training in improving the provision of basic services for the poor. This is a serious omission because the failure of many of the services provided by the state to benefit the poor (particularly women in rural areas), is a key characteristics of the 'training crises' in many developing countries'. Skills development of the basic service providers should invariably become an important component of skills development policy.

#### **iii) SDC's outlook in contributing to the formal primary education sector**

SDC should now look into the primary education sector to determine area of collaboration. It should also look into scale-neutral activities (By scale-neutral it means those categories of activities, which will have wider impact on the sector with no relation to the number of people having to be served. For instance, development of learner-centered curricula, improving the teacher training quality, implementing Monitoring Evaluation & Reporting systems are some examples of scale neutral activities).

***3. Inter-sector collaboration: The following recommendations have inter-sector implications. Therefore, these recommendations can be implemented through inter-agency collaboration, in which SDC would have a facilitating role.***

#### **i) Initiate inter-sector dialogue**

Initiate a process by a limited number of sector practitioners, who will conduct dialogue with different representatives from government, private and NGO sectors, on the basis of short, but well researched evidences. The purpose of such an exercise will be to promote coordination through experience sharing by a low profile group of sector practitioners. Such processes will not only inform decision-makers with relevant findings in the field of skills development; it will also promote inter-ministerial rapport, which is an absolute must to make coordination efforts effective and meaningful.

#### **ii) Forging NGO-private sector alliance**

Free market can function effectively in conditions, which are close to perfect competition. SDC can provide its technical assistance in a number of areas. In a free market economy production of goods and services can only begin with the analysis of the target-audience. Information about target audience is a must, since it helps to decide, *what kinds of product are to be produced? And at what profit? The determination of skills development comes after satisfactory answer of the first two questions.*

In this regard, the NGOs have comparative advantage of providing integrated support, including micro-financing, while the private sectors are well acquainted with market dynamics. The comparative advantages of these two sectors could be brought together, in evolving effective mechanisms for delivering market-oriented skills development.

SDC could also facilitate collaboration between private and NGO sector in the domain of trade training. A number of NGOs like DAM is strategically well placed to initiate such a process of collaboration.

#### **ii) Linking with networking NGOs**

- **CAMPE:** This is a networking organization of national repute. It has been able to create partnership with over 400 NGOs. It works for facilitating coordination, information sharing and policy advocacy in the domain of education, including NFE. Also it has been observed that small NGOs needs to fund in stages since, before implementation their institutional capacities need to be strengthened.

- **BRAC's ESP program:** BRAC has over 250 NGOs within its network of Education Support Program. This network could become a potent platform to initiate skills development interventions. The ESP effort is placed within BRAC integrated development effort coupled with professional support spearheaded by BRAC's Research Evaluation and Development Division and BRAC's Institution of Education and Research.

#### **iii) Linking with Foundations**

The Foundations are now days preferred by many sector-practitioners. Its legal framework gives it more stability and makes it better accountable to the government; as a result, it can receive funds more easily. PKSF is a foremost example in this area, which has contributed to the poverty reduction to the extent that it has attracted national and to some respect international attention.

On the other hand, Social Development Foundation (SDF) has been established and has started to function. Given its innovative dimension and its overarching concern for community driven sustainable poverty reduction intervention, which are targeted both to the individuals and areas, SDC should look ways and means to establish collaboration with SDF. To that end a very brief introduction to SDF has been provided below:

The **Social Development Foundation (SDF)** has been established by the government of Bangladesh in 2001, under Companies Act, 1994 as a not for profit

making body for promoting community driven initiatives designed to serve the cause of the poorest and the most vulnerable. Its activities are also inspired from the three elements of the Country Assistance Strategy: i) Consolidating gain in human development; ii) Implementing an integrated approach to rural development; iii) accelerating and broadening private sector-led growth. *The initial project area is Jamalpur and Gaibandha Districts. The project will cover 14,00 villages from the 2 districts (700 villages from each District) within four years.*

#### **iv) National Fund for Skills Development**

SDC should facilitate the creation of national fund for skills development for creating effective modalities for skills training through tripartite collaboration between the government, private sector and NGOs. *Collaboration with SDF should be sought.*

#### **v) How GO-NGO can collaborate**

- GO can help NGOs to develop their skills development capability in vocational training, but the exercise will have to be in the form of collaboration;
- GO experts can work with NGO experts to gradually transform GOB's existing program so as to make it reachable to illiterate/semiliterate target poor;

#### **4. Access and outreach: The following recommendations are concerned with creating access and outreach by linking effectively with networking organizations, large individual organizations and/or appropriate projects.**

*i) This project is being implemented under the Youth and Sports Ministry: EC helps to identify the actual destitute women, who suffer from extreme poverty. This project appears to be able to deal with the outreach issue more effectively. This project is an potential area of collaboration for SDC.*

*ii) This project is under the Cooperative Ministry: The mix of micro-credit and employment generation skills, with the provision of entrepreneur skills is a good combination of creating empowered communities and individuals, who are able to deal effectively with market mechanisms. SDC has the opportunity to explore the area of cooperation in this domain.*

*iii) BSIC projects hold promise of employment and effective poverty reduction. This sector also deals with non-traditional and non-farm items. This is critical for effective resource mobilization supporting the mainstream agricultural and agri-based industries.*

*v) SDC can help transform Social Welfare Ministry's existing projects towards more integrated and holistic approach.*

*vi) EC is contemplating to strengthen the TVET system. In connection to this effort it will implement 15 pilot projects. SDC could further explore this matter.*

#### **5. Innovative interventions: The following recommendations could be considered as innovative proposition, which might provide valid experiences to fuel on going national policy debate in skills development.**

### **i) Helping to create market-driven social infrastructures**

The following statistics shows the dismal coverage of sanitation in the rural and urban areas. Government and NGOs combined do not have the ability to ensure coverage for all. Private sector must join hands to expedite the process. If successfully undertaken, it will serve the dual purpose of promoting public health and generate employment in the rural economy. This initiative has been successfully implemented in a limited manner. This effort needs to be further expanded.

#### **Households by sources of Toilet Facilities, 2001**

<b>Sl.N o.</b>	<b>Sources of toilets</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
1	Sanitary	36.87	67.3	28.15
2	Other	41.53	25.34	46.18
3	None	21.59	7.36	25.67

Source: BBS, Population Census 2001

The above table shows the state of sanitation coverage in Bangladesh. Given the rate of progress, it is highly unlikely that such services would be made available to most of the people in the near future.

Specially in case of providing safe water and sanitary facilities, it is not possible for the government and NGO combined to provide subsidized help for the entire population. On one hand, there is the need for 'demand-pull' for safe water and sanitation, which could be the result of intensive awareness campaign coupled with change in behavior relating to hygienic practices. On the other hand, the private sector initiative is needed for providing 'supply-push'. Mechanisms and modalities need to evolve in this direction. NGO Forum for Safe Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, which had been well supported by SDC could become the focal point to spearhead such an effort.

### **ii) Promoting other non-farm activities**

Villages that have electricity can provide the all-important maintenance support to rickshaw, van, tractor, water-pumps. This kind of service is already available in the villages with electricity. Since these maintainers have a certain degree of technical skills, they could be provided with additional skills, which could lead them to making products for external markets in their adjacent upazilas, peri-urban areas and cities.

#### **Irrigation Equipment and Power Tiller Repair Service Market**

In Ghatail, Tangail, there are about 15 irrigation equipment shops of which 5/6 deal in diesel engines and electric motors. Others sell irrigation pumps, pipes and accessories. In addition, there are about a dozen engine repair workshops with lathe machine facilities, which also manufacture low-cost engine spare parts.

Repair of Shallow Tube Well (STW) and power tiller engines on a seasonal contract basis has been widespread in the Ghatail area. A few years ago it was started by some rural mechanics who charged 4 maunds of paddy at harvest per STW irrespective of the number of breakdowns in the season. In recent years, the rate has diminished from 4 to 3 maunds of paddy due to competition arising from an increased number of mechanics. In Ghatail area there are about 30 STW engine mechanics but only a few of them have spare parts shops of their own.

Ashraf is an engine mechanic from Shailota village in Ghtatail. He contracted to repair of 39 STW engines spread over eight contiguous villages in Ghatail union in 2000. Costs of spare parts are provided by the STW owners. Since Ashraf also runs his own spare parts shop in the Hamidpur Bazar he supplies spare parts from his own shop on credit. He charges a little higher price if they are paid for in cash. The repair services include machine overhauling and oiling at the beginning of the season as well as mending the engines as and when required. In the 2000 irrigation season, Ashraf earned 117 maunds of paddy as payment for his service. He also contracted to repair of 5 power tiller engines at the rate of 8 maunds of paddy per year (i.e. 4 maunds for Boro land preparation and 4 maunds for Aman). Ashraf has his younger brother Abed Ali to work with him as an apprentice. Ashraf's family also has a new power tiller for hire service. They have a driver who is paid roughly 10 percent commissions on the service fees collected. Last year, Ashraf's power tiller earned approximately Tk 30,000 net of costs. In addition to providing repair services, Ashraf also took up the reconditioning of old engines for STW irrigation. The old engines are bought from the locality through an efficient network of mechanics who have the information about who has what type of engine and in what conditions. In 2000 he sold 18 reconditioned engines for STW irrigation. The prices of the reconditioned engines would be about 25-30 percent lower than for the new ones.

The reconditioned engine market has accompanied the rapid growth of rural repair services and contributed significantly to the rapid expansion of the irrigation water market in the country. The linkage of the growing irrigation water market with the power tiller hire service market has not only contributed to increasing HYV rice production but also generated considerable income and wage employment in the countryside. As Ashraf noted, more facilities for skill training, easy access to bank loans and provision of rural electrification are needed for further development of the equipment market.

*Source: PRSP, 2004*

*Adapted from Mandal, M.A.S. A Review of Bangladesh's Development-2002, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka., 2003*

### **iii) Creating opportunities for educated unemployed**

The educated unemployed could be turned into asset by adopting appropriate IT policies. Effective use of IT technology will not only improve the employment situation for the educated unemployed, it will have immense positive externalities in merging local economies with global economies. A few initiatives taken by the government has been given below. SDC can explore possibilities to determine areas of cooperation with such initiatives.

#### **• Establishment of ICT incubator:**

Government has established an ICT incubator at Kaoran Bazar, Dhaka. This ICT incubator provides high speed and uninterrupted transmission of information for the software developers. The area consists of approx. 69,000 square feet and at present 48 organizations is working in the ICT incubator.

#### **• Establishing High-Tech park:**

The high-tech park houses a number of high-tech activities like ICT, electronics, telecommunications, engineering, bio-technology and other elements of knowledge based economy. This park is expected to be set in Kaliakoir at Gazipur. To that end,

a feasibility study will be soon carried out by Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

• **Software export**

Bangladesh is exporting software to a number of international well known companies like Nokia, World Bank, Hp, American Postal and Agriculture department etc. The software export from Bangladesh covers countries like USA, Japan, Canada, Australia, and many European countries. This sector has a lot of potentials and therefore, should be promoted.

**iv) An NGO managed urban initiative SDC can associate with: Community-based Waste management in Dhaka**

The project provides waste management services in five slums, low and middle income communities of Dhaka city, with a combined population of about 30,000. It also promotes the use of solid waste for compost in rural areas to improve fast depleting top soil fertility, creates employment for the urban poor and reduces environmental pollution and health risks caused by uncollected or unmanaged waste.

In 1999, a partnership agreement was signed between Waste Concern (NGO), in Public Works Department, Dhaka City Corporation, and private company (Map Agro). The Ministry of Environment and Forests and UNDP (which provided seed funding) have also participated. Since 2002, the project has been replicated in large number of cities and towns across Bangladesh

**Chapter 18: Skills development initiatives as a process of transformation**

The diversity of institutions performing activities, especially in the public sector shows the amount and extent of fragmentation. These fragmentations often result into duplications of activities, leading to wastage of scarce resources. For instance, the TSCs and TTCs under two different ministries are administering similar vocational training program, apparently without any worthwhile institutional logic. In addition to wastage, such duplications also create monitoring and evaluation problems, in terms of assessing the effectiveness and efficiencies of services rendered.

There are a number of factors that needs to be considered to determine the nature of interventions in the domain of skills development in the public sector. Firstly, the resistance to change has to be assessed and a practical strategy has to be formulated based on how much the public sector institutions are ready to change. Any form of assessment, therefore, will require classification of activities, which are doable and 'not-so-doable'. It also needs to be identified, what can be done in the immediate, medium and long-term perspective.

***To this end, the efforts from the DPs should be integrated and cohesive. Government should have a clear picture of the combined impact of support provided by different DPs. To this end, a perspective concept paper, with detailed strategies and necessary analytical framework should be presented to the government for consideration. This concept document should be combined effort of the major DPs, who are looking for contributing to the***

**sector. The concept paper should cover NGOs and private sector also, in order to make skills development intervention a national initiative in the true sense.**

SDC's role in this respect should be transformative. Its policy imperatives forces it to look into its own initiatives, out of which, Sunamganj experience is critical in the whole scheme of things as suggested. In addition, the need for transforming centers of excellence to wider people-oriented interventions can easily find expression by assessing the 'replicability' and 'linkability' of CMES and UCEP experience, which have been amply studied, as well as, at the moment, being reasonably monitored by SDC. Therefore, SDC has in its remit a reasonable number of initiatives, which could show some light in the post primary uncertainty.

The challenge, therefore, is to bring convergence of such diverse initiatives and activities. Creation of separate skills development forum provides the platform and much needed space to bring the different streams of thinking and activities together.

By bringing thoughts and actions into dynamic interplay it will then be possible to create policy arguments with valid evidence, which will continuously keep alive the process of meaningful dialogue, between the sector-practitioners in an active and meaningful way.

In the face of dwindling resources for development, it needs to be stated that skills development should not become a replacement for other development activities. The supportive role of skills development in the form of increased earning should complement the existing initiatives, like micro-credit, health and social awareness programs. **One of the central lessons learned is that for achieving maximum coverage project cost per beneficiaries should not be reduced to a level, which makes meaningful impact improbable. The number of target-beneficiaries should be appropriately rationalized with resource allocation, thereby making optimization of impact possible.**

SDC considers the post-primary scenario as the stage for skills development initiatives. The post-primary scenario offers a number of promises, which has been discussed in the previous chapters (perhaps the terminology has not been used as much).

The central transformative process entails to what extent the public systems can deregulate itself. The public system should become the standard setters, regulators, monitors, technical support providers to the skills development initiatives being provided by the NGOs and private sectors. This will become a central challenge in the coming days. NGOs have skills development components at a large scale. However, NGOs are yet to develop its capacities to transform the skills development into sustainable income earning by the poor. The NGOs are well acquainted with the complexity, as well as, the chronic and transient nature of poverty. What they have not been able to do, however, is to transform their institutional support systems as an integral part of the market. The very limited profit-oriented economic activities, which they have undertaken looks more into the institutional sustenance, rather than the sustenance of the target beneficiaries. The possibility that these two aspects do

not have to be mutually exclusive, rather, on the contrary, they can become very much mutually supporting activities have been long overlooked. On the other hand, the involvement of private sector will be contingent upon, how well the public sector (representing the state) and NGO sector (representing the society/communities) can together create space whereby the private sector can contribute effectively in poverty reduction on profit.

As stated earlier, transformative, processes can only emerge if the existing initiatives in the skills development sector, both successful and 'not-so-successful' initiatives are undertaken, and are provided strategic support. Such a support system will have to be strategically placed in a way so that these initiatives can converge into a self-generative system of market-oriented skills development processes, providing yet another thrust into the poverty reduction initiatives in Bangladesh.

### **Chapter 19: Key conclusions for initiating future interventions**

In this study, conclusions have been derived at policy, strategy and implementation levels. Many of the conclusions have been embedded in the trends, and challenges. In this section, selective conclusions have been presented, which should help to initiate future interventions with the right framework of mind.

Skills development sector in Bangladesh requires reorientation. This reorientation should be the result of clear and precise understanding of ground realities, supported by valid evidence. Through such an exercise, it would be possible to identify the exact strengths, weaknesses of the different players in public, private and NGO sectors. This will then provide the basis of elaborating comprehensive and effective policies in the domain of skills development. The policies in turn can be translated into reality by making appropriate institutional adjustments. In this chapter attempts have been made to round up the findings and assessments in order to draw some concluding remarks, which might enable SDC to sharpen its perspectives on its future intervention in the stated domain.

There is a difference of opinion about the definition of skills development, which varies according to individuals and organizational mandates. However, there is a wider consensus among various sector-practitioners that, skills development should have the overarching mandate of poverty reduction. In addition, skills development should not be associated with vocational skills only. On the contrary, skills development should include multiple skills, which makes employment and self-employment sustainable.

Development sector in general, has suffered due to the absence of commonly shared meaning on key terminology. For instance, NFE experience in Bangladesh shows that NFE was reduced to cheap alternative to formal education, as a result, the allocation of resources and directions of interventions was minimized into pure literacy program, which did very little in transforming the economic conditions of the people. By this time 18 million have received literacy intervention. Most of these learners have forgotten their acquired literacy skills, for obvious reasons. The situation perhaps could have been avoided if the meaning of NFE could have been

determined through dialogue with the policy makers and sector-practitioners right from the beginning. This is important, since the extent of resource allocation, the nature and content of intervention is guided by the scope of definition on a specific development issue.

Drawing lessons from the ground realities is the crux of the matter. These lessons, however, has to be based on valid and reliable information. Such lessons need to be integrated into a consistent and coherent system of thinking, which could be translated into effective policies and strategies, for market oriented skills development.

While generalizations are important to arrive at policy and strategic conclusions, it needs to be recognized that there are considerable diversity between the public, private and NGO sector, with each sector having their own comparative advantages and weaknesses. Therefore, it is not only on the basis of trends, or broad sweep of events that should dictate policy directions, but specific events and initiatives, specifically the home grown ones, should also become an object of study. All these will need much more intensive focus and time, in creating a meaningful understanding about the processes and outcomes of skills development initiatives.

It is important to bring appropriate changes in the regulatory framework for the laborers, both in the formal and informal sector. This will entail creating facilitating environment for ensuring decent working conditions. In this regard, special attention needs to be provided to both urban and rural women.

Creation of enabling environment also includes introducing education curricula, which benefits the farm and non-farm workers in rural areas. The urban laborers, whose numbers are rising rapidly also need education that strengthen their earning capacities. Simultaneously, since the productivity of the workers are positively correlated with their health conditions, provision of basic health facility is vital for their overall well-being and consequent productivity.

This is a well-known fact that the skills development sector is fragmented and lacks coordination. Simultaneously, if the efforts by the DPs are also fragmented, it will certainly not help the cause. The process of consultation, even at informal level, should therefore, start immediately.

One of the key historical lessons learned, in the domain of skills development, is that the public sector TVET systems are deficient in poverty reduction. The public TVET systems are relatively inflexible and non-responsive, which do not make much of a connection with market demands. Even if, the capacity and performance of TVET, in its present form, is strengthened, it will still be a long way from creating employment and self-employment for the poor, especially in the rural areas. Nevertheless, it will be wrong not to address the public sector. However, it is very important to decide upon the overall approach of reformation. The issue of reorientation of the public sector towards a pro-poor strategy should get precedence over strengthening of institutions, within the existing system and structures. Therefore, the traditional approaches leading to quantitative expansion and development of human resources on the basis of existing or slightly modified curricula will not help the cause of

poverty reduction. For effective reorientation to happen, the cycle of policy inertia has to be broken through appropriate policy dialogue, and perhaps, policy advocacy.

Given the achievements and existing situation in the development sector in general, perhaps, it would be feasible to create an opening for skills development intervention through NGOs. By doing so, skills development initiatives could be integrated into other development interventions (micro-finance, health, education etc), thereby creating the possibility of ushering in viable and replicable integrated approaches. In this connection NFE could become a viable entry point, which can transform skills development initiatives into an integrated process, which will result into sustainable employment and self-employment.

In order not to repeat the mistakes of the past, the policy makers should take time to reflect in order to have the right assessment of the ground realities. In addition, there is a need for experimentation in multiple fields, in order to gain viable knowledge for developing replicable and economically sustainable skills development interventions. These experimentations ought to be carried out in full participation with the ultimate beneficiaries, in the form of action and applied researches.

P.S. (After thought) With the winning of Nobel Prize by Dr. Mohammad Yunus and Grameen Bank for the year 2006, micro-credit will be in the center stage in the media for some time to come. Since micro-credit in particular, and poverty reduction in general, has now been clearly associated with peace, democracy and human rights; this opportunity could be taken to initiate wider dialogue regarding skills development in public domain (due to its relevance to sustainable poverty reduction). A possible platform in this regard is a very popular TV program 'Matee 'o Manoosh'. The producer and narrator of this program is Shaikh Shiraj, who enjoys a star status in Bangladesh. He has recently conducted a nationwide dialogue with farmers to explore their possible role in the national annual budget making and budget criticism process. He has a large range of documentation of livelihood initiatives taken by people in the grassroots. Recently, he introduced Haripada Kapalik to the nation. Haripada is a farmer, who has engineered a high yielding variety of rice totally from indigenous knowledge, which is popularly known as 'Hari Dhan').

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