

Proper schooling facilities for children

Facilities for education and human capital formation through investment in children have to be expanded in an equitable manner. This is necessary to ensure equitable distribution of income and alleviation of poverty, writes **M Azizur Rahman**

MOST of the people in the world are poor. Ten years ago about 40% of the total population of Bangladesh were below the poverty line. According to official data, the level of poverty in the country has recently been on the decline - from 40% to 33%. It means that more than 50 million people in today's Bangladesh are still poor. Most of the poor people are poor from their childhood.

This scenario of poverty in Bangladesh is not significantly different from the average global syndrome. In most countries and with most of the people worldwide, poverty starts from childhood. Some children are poor by birth. Some are born in affluent families and the others are born and live in poverty.

About 8.0 million to 10 million children are poor around the globe. Poverty among the children is a significant part of the total poverty. There are many reasons for this

poverty. The social environment and family income do not allow most poor children to go to school. Children not going to school for lack of opportunity is a significant reason for their poverty. Poverty and schooling are inversely related. The higher is the schooling, the lower is the poverty; and the lower is the schooling, the higher is the poverty, other things remaining the same. For example, the poverty in Bangladesh has recently been decreasing with an increasing rate of literacy - now reaching 67%. It means that education can fairly help the poor to beat poverty.

Lack of investment in children will deny them of many opportunities. The acquisition of education and training, knowledge skill, technological skill, intellectual ability, smartness etc, all together increase the human ability and their working efficiency.

Parents' disability and lack of

knowledge are also responsible for the children's poor health-care and their unhealthy physical and mental growth, besides the denial of educational opportunities to them. The children in the poor families do not have enough nutrition. Mental and physical growth of human beings are interdependent. If we cannot feed our children, their mind does not function very well. Sometimes they become ill. They cannot receive proper treatment services for their ailing health. Such children grow without having enough physical ability.

Investment in children is the best form of investment. Such investment is never negative. It is always positive. Through investment in children, the latter are befitted personally, socially and nationally. The rate of return on investment in children - particularly for their education - is very high on all counts.

Long-term sustainable income can be assured to today's children, when

they are properly educated and join the workplace on completion of education. Investment in today's children may be required to be made for a period of 20 years, i.e., up to the growing stage of their life. But the children can reap the benefits of such investment (education) for the rest of their future life.

Investment in children is, thus, a kind of business. This is, indeed, the best kind of business we can think of. Children borrow money in practice from their parents in their early life. They can gradually earn income through jobs in any place of employment or self-employment fields and thus earn the ability to repay the loans that were, so to say, taken from their parents.

Educated families are self-dependent ones. The educated people are normally healthy. They know better how to take care of their health, life and living. Education does make a difference. It can change everything.

It helps to keep the people's body and mind healthy and sophisticated. If we can achieve the goal of literacy by 100%, our personal, family, social and national income would be maximised. We will then be able to create favourable working and business opportunities.

Our gross domestic product (GDP) per capita will increase at a faster pace through extension of education facilities to all concerned. Poverty will decrease to a substantial level. Then we can develop the country properly. Moreover, with increased school enrollment, adult literacy, higher longevity and improvements in human development index, the quality of our life and living will witness phenomenal progress.

It is the basic responsibility of the parents to invest in their children. As one of its prime public responsibilities, the government also needs to invest in the education sector at an increasing rate on a priority basis and

also ensure the outcomes of such expenditures in qualitative terms.

Facilities for education and human capital formation through investment in children have to be expanded in an equitable manner. This is necessary to ensure equitable distribution of income and alleviation of poverty. Education is for all. A culture of donation for the education sector and the educational institutions in particular, in terms of scholarship programmes and financial assistance, has to be nourished among the wealthy and affluent sections of the population. The amount of money, so donated, should be considered a tax-deductible income. All such actions can contribute a lot to removal of the constraints to proper schooling for our children and help them grow, and develop themselves, properly for the ultimate benefit of the society.

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