

Executive Summary

Bangladesh has gone through cycles of democracy and military rule since its independence from Pakistan in 1971. The current political landscape is a parliamentary democracy plagued by confrontational politics and poor governance (CIDA, 2003). Despite this volatile political situation, the World Bank (2005) notes strong economic performance, with annual GDP growth averaging 5 percent, although half of the population continues to live under the poverty line (UNDP, 2005). The country is ranked 139th on the UN's 2005 Human Development Index.

Bangladesh has a long history of civil society activity, shifting between a focus on political activism and a social development agenda (Zafarullah and Rahman, 2002). Despite a large and diverse civil society, the literature focuses on domestic NGOs as the main actors in civil society. Approximately 2000 NGOs registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs are currently working in development, 1882 of which are registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau to receive foreign funding (World Bank, 2005b).

enrollments in primary education and receives approximately 12% of all donor funding to NGOs (World Bank, 2005b). Ahmed and Chowdhury (2005) estimate that 500 NGOs offer their own unregistered non-formal education programs, focusing specifically on girls' education and hard-to-reach populations and reaching about 1.5 million students annually.

In 2003, Bangladesh developed a sub-sectoral approach to primary education. The main objectives of the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) (2003-2009) are to introduce national standards of quality, increase accessibility and rates of completion, ensure accountability and transparency, and to decentralize education management (MoPME, 2005). External doors have been steadily moving towards a coordinated sector support program based on the PEDP II. A donor consortium led by the Asian Development Bank and including the World Bank, NORAD, SIDA, CIDA, the European Council, DFID, the Netherlands, UNICEF, Aus-Aid and JICA has played a part in the evolution of the sub-sector program that strongly emphasizes the enhancement of government ownership and capacity to deliver universal quality primary education. However, the PEDP II has been criticized for neglecting the important and successful non-formal sub-sector, as well as for poor management of the plan and slow implementation.

Although MoPME has been somewhat apathetic towards government-NGO partnership, donor organizations have been encouraging government-led programs of support for the expansion of NGO-delivered non-formal primary schooling. A government managed NGO pooled fund was proposed by DFID, Netherlands and the EC in 2004 (CIDA, 2004). More recently, the World Bank launched the "Reaching Out of School Children" program (ROSC), to "fill the gap left by PEDP II by developing demand-side interventions" in the non-formal sector (World Bank, 2003:2). While this project is outside the sub-sector approach funded by donors, the World Bank considers ROSC to be consistent with and complementary to the PEDP II framework. Funds for this program will be channeled through MoPME to established NGOs. There are some concerns that conflict may arise between ROSC and PEDP II and that NGOs were not sufficiently involved in ROSC's design (ELCG, 2004). Some studies indicate that many civil society actors feel that international pressure for NGO-government partnerships acts to undermine social justice goals and the grassroots character of development NGOs in Bangladesh (Haque, 2004), and restricts the ability of NGOs to undertake advocacy work (World Bank, 2005b).

Bangladesh was the first country in the Commonwealth to develop a national NGO-EFA coalition (CEF 2005). The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) acts as an advocacy body for education-providing NGOs, working closely with the sophisticated policy department of BRAC. CAMPE conducts research on basic education issues in Bangladesh, and is active in public engagement and policy dialogue. Its annual reports have at times been controversial when they highlight government failure or contradict official statistics, but the reports are widely circulated and cited by donors and viewed by NGOs in other countries as a model for education NGO advocacy work. In fact, CAMPE has increasingly attracted donor funding, and is currently funded by the Swiss Development Corporation, the Netherlands, and NOVIB (CAMPE, 2005). CAMPE is a member of the Education Local Consultative Group, as well as the Global Campaign for Education and various regional education bodies.

Despite the success of CAMPE and BRAC, a considerable gap remains between NGOs and the government in terms of the former's ability to participate in policy discussions. It appears that the MoPME continues to view NGOs mainly as subcontractors rather than policy partners (Haque, 2004). MoPME, in particular, is viewed as having a history of anti-NGO sentiment, more so than any other

Overall, this desk study highlights many of the conflicts facing NGOs involved in education in the context of sector-wide approaches to aid. NGOs face pressure from bilateral and multilateral donors to work with governments, but even in a context where NGOs have a strong and effective tradition of policy analysis and advocacy, they find difficulty in gaining a strong voice in national policies. This may be confounded by sector support programs, which tend to position NGOs as subcontractors to government, and limit the amount of direct funding available to NGOs. The Bangladesh case has been unique among our cases because direct program support has been given to the NGO sector.

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List of Acronyms

ADAB	Association for Development Agencies in Bangladesh
AsDB	Asian Development Bank
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BNP	Bangladesh National Party
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (formerly)
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
CIDA	Canadian Intern-0.0002 duc Tw

1. Background: The History and Political Economy of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a South-Asian country bordered by India to the West, North and Northeast, Myanmar to the East, and the Bay of Bengal to the South. The partition of India by Britain in 1947 divided the continent along religious lines, thus grouping Pakistan and Bangladesh into one country despite thousands of miles between the two regions. East Pakistan separated from Pakistan after a violent independence war in 1971 and became the Democratic Republic of Bangladesh. The population of 136.6 million (UNDP, 2005) is approximately 88% Muslims, 10% Hindu, 1% Christian, and the remaining Buddhist or animist. Just over 1% of the population are indigenous people from approximately 30 ethno-linguistic groups. Annual population growth between 1975-2003 was 2.2% (UNDP, 2005).

With the overthrow of a military government in 1991, Bangladesh became a parliamentary democracy, yet the current political situation in Bangladesh continues to be one of great tension between the two founding parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP). This on-going tension has left parliament largely dysfunctional (CIDA, 2003). Elections in 1991, 1996 and 2001, while marked by violence, were declared free and fair by international observers (CIDA, 2003). The BNP came to power in 2001 with 35% of the popular vote (World Bank, 2001).

Issues of poor governance plague the modern state. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index has ranked Bangladesh as the most corrupt country for several consecutive years (CIDA, 2003). The state "remains weak in terms of citizen accountability, its capacities to provide social welfare provisions or ensure an independent judiciary, to collect taxes or to represent the interests of the poor" (Lewis, 2004:308). Furthermore, interest groups and opposition political parties frequently call 'hartals' or general strikes, resulting in violence and weakening formal democratic processes (World Bank, 2001). Zafarullah and Rahman (2002:1013) report a volatile political order in which "there is a lack of political consensus, weak legislative authority, unhealthy modes of political competition, undemocratic political party structure, political and administrative patronage, and weak local governance." This political environment has, according to the World Bank (2001:3), "bred violence in labor and student politics and contributed to an overall climate of lawlessness in which life and property are both insecure."

Despite this volatile political situation, the World Bank (2005) notes strong economic performance, with annual GDP growth averaging 5%. Yet major impediments to economic growth continue, including a rapidly growing labour force, frequent natural disasters, difficulties in exploiting natural resources and slow implementation of economic reforms.

Bangladesh's economy continues to rely heavily on small-scale agriculture, with two-thirds of the population employed in this sector (CIA, 2006) and recognition of its role in reducing rural poverty (MoA, 2005). Rice is the most important crop, but jute, tea, wheat, sugarcane, potatoes, tobacco, pulses, oilseeds, spices, fruit, beef, milk and poultry are also important (CIA, 2006). The main actors in the agriculture sector are individual land-holding farmers, share-croppers and landless day-labourers, although the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) notes that the sector is currently undergoing a shift from subsistence farming into commercial farming for export to the European market. As a result, MoA is undergoing policy reforms to provide "greater scope and opportunities for private sector participation and a suitable environment towards promoting agro-business and investment" (MoA, 2005).

Although the energy (natural gas) and garment manufacturing industries are growing in importance due to foreign direct investment (projected to increase from \$470 million per year 1996-2000 to over \$750 million in 2001-2005), Bangladesh has been less successful in expanding its export base (World Bank, 2001). The reliance on ready-made garments for three-quarters of the country's export earnings is expected to result in medium-term economic uncertainty given that the Multi Fiber Agreement and Generalized System of Preferences has been phased-out (2005), leading to greater competition (World Bank, 2001). This may impact the 1.5 million jobs created by the garment industry, the vast majority of which are held by women. Remittances by Bangladeshi workers overseas are a major contributor to the economy, totaling \$2.6 billion in 2002, double the total amount of foreign aid received by the country (CIDA, 2003).

Table 1: Bangladesh Basic Statistics

GDP 2003	\$51.9 billion US
GDP per capita 2003	\$376 US
ODA 2003	\$1393.4 million US

(2005b), adding grants and loans, puts this figure at 25%. A vast portion of the aid (85%) goes to the ten largest NGOs, including Proshika and BRAC, while half of the NGOs in the country do not benefit from this aid (Lewis, 2004:306). A breakdown of aid channeled to NGOs by sector reveals that health receives 31%, while the micro-credit and education sectors each receive 12% (World Bank, 2005b:38).

2. The Education Landscape in Bangladesh

The education system in Bangladesh was neglected during rule under Pakistan. Schools were largely established, managed and financed by communities (Karim, 2004). Limited progress was made during the post-independence period, although primary schools were nationalized by the government (Karim, 2004, Unterhalter et al, 2003). Universal primary education was one of the promises of the Liberation Movement and was enshrined in article 17 of the Constitution (Hossain, 2004; Government of Bangladesh, 2004). Despite this, the modest ambitions of the First Five Year Plan were never realized due to a lack of donor aid to the sector and the socio-political and environmental crises of the mid-1970s (Hossain, 2004, Unterhalter et al, 2003). As a result of continued public pressure and political will, the 1980s saw a gradual expansion of the education sector, with a greater focus on universal primary education, mass literacy and gender equity (Hossain, 2004).

These modest gains made in educational expansion set the stage for staggering growth in the sector and a whole-hearted adoption of Education for All goals in the 1990s (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2005). Nineteen-ninety saw the passing of a compulsory education act “in order to implement the constitutional provision for free, universal and compulsory education” (Ahmed et. al., 2005). This period saw an increase in donor funding to the sector, increased household and community investment in education, and a significant increase in government spending for both primary and secondary education (Hossain, 2004, Unterhalter et al, 2003), such that “Bangladesh now boasts one of the largest primary education systems in the world” (Hossain, 2004:4).

Table 2: Education Funding

	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
Education’s share of recurrent budget (%)	19.9	17.7	18.3	18.1

Primary share of recurrent education budget (%)	44.5	46.5	38.1	45.1
	2004	2005	2006	
Total EFA primary programme costs (US\$ millions)	48.4	242.0	338.8	
Government Funding (US\$ millions)	31.0	154.8	216.7	
Direct Donor Funding (US\$ millions)	17.4	87.2	122.1	

Source: World Bank, 2005c

Aid to education (US\$ millions)		Aid to basic education (US\$ millions)	
1999	42.8	1999	32.2
2003	109.1	2003	91.6

Source: UNDP, 2005.

Education expenditure represents only 2.2% of GDP, the lowest spending of any South-Asian country (CEF, 2005). The Education for All National Plan of Action II (NPA II) calls for an increase in expenditure on basic education to 4% of GDP in 2003-2004, increasing to 10% by 2015 (MoPME, 2003). The jump in government spending towards meeting EFA primary goals between 2004 and 2005 (see table above) would suggest that this scenario is already beginning to change. Karim (2004:23) writes that “education now constitutes one of the largest items in both the revenue and development budgets and education’s share in the government’s total budget has also increased over time.” The Commonwealth Education Fund (2003:5-6) reports that “more than 90% of the revenue expenditure is spent in meeting teachers’ salaries and benefits, leaving very little for quality enhancing activities.”

Half of the financing for the primary education sector 1990-1995 was provided by donors (Hossain, 2004). Foreign aid to education increased steadily between 1990 and 2000, but this was significantly outstripped by gains in public spending in the sector (Hossain, 2004). Asian Development Bank is the lead coordinating agency for educational aid, and main donors to the sector include: Australia, Canada, European Commission, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UNICEF and World Bank. Donor coordination occurs through the standing sub-group on education of the Local Consultative Group (ELCG), consisting of 30 members from bilateral and multilateral agencies and civil society stakeholders who meet bi-monthly. The ELCG’s main priority areas are

sharing of information about programmes and the financing of education for harmonization and collaboration, contributing to policy and strategy issues i.e. Education For All, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) etc;

It is noted that issues of access continue to plague the system regarding the poor, ethnic groups and those in remote locations (GoB, 2005). Estimates suggest that up to 50% of school-aged children from ethno-linguistic minority backgrounds do not have access or are not enrolled in primary schools in either the formal or non-formal sub-systems. Additionally, approximately 1 million disabled children are estimated to have no access to formal schooling, although there are limited NGO programmes which either target or enroll these children in the non-formal sector (MoPME, 2003).

Drop-out is also a significant issue at the secondary level. In 2002 the dropout rate was 18.7% in classes 6-8, 51.6% in classes 9-10, and 43.8% in classes 11-12 (GoB, 2005). The final secondary school exam, necessary to gain admission to higher levels, remains a major hurdle for students, as only 40% of students who take the exam pass (MoPME, 2003).

Table 3: Summary Education Statistics

	Year	Statistic	Source
Gross primary enrollment rate	2003	97.38%	BANBEIS, 2005
Net primary enrollment rate	2003	84% / 87.34%	UNDP, 2005 / BANBEIS, 2005
Net secondary enrollment rate	2003	45%	UNDP, 2005
Completion rate (5 years primary)	2003	60%	CAMPE, 2001

framework under the Ministry of Education. Approximately a quarter of these community secondary schools are Madrasahs (Ahmed and Chowdhury, 2005).

NGOs primarily provide services in the non-formal education sector, defined in Bangladesh as targeting students from poor households who have either dropped-out or never been enrolled in formal schooling. Approximately 500 NGOs offer their own unregistered non-formal education programmes (MoPME, 2003). One and a half million students have

and programmes, there is a history of inaction concerning educational policy statements confounded by aggravation of political divisiveness which has led to “skepticism about formal policy exercises.”

Planning is the shared responsibility of the planning departments within the Ministries and the Directorates, and the chief of the social sector in the Planning Commission. Major priorities for the education system include “fighting poverty, promoting sustainable development, addressing globalization challenges, and upholding quality in education” (Ahmed et. al., 2005). Despite recognition of these priorities, Ahmed et. al. (2005) argue that coordination is difficult without a long-term policy framework and that the mechanisms and processes for moving from these broad priorities into coordinated sector-wide programs and strategies with effective implementation are lacking. Development projects and the new sub-sector plan for primary education draw heavily upon external technical assistance (Ahmed et. al., 2005). In addition, the reliance of government on external donors for one-third of the annual development budget in education allows donors considerable leverage concerning the development of policies and strategies (Ahmed et. al., 2005).

Bangladesh does not have a national education sector plan, but has developed an Education For All National Plan of Action (NPA). The NPA was first developed after the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, and sought to address issues in five programme areas: 1) early childhood care, education and development, 2) universalization of formal primary education, 3) non-formal basic education, 4) adult education, and 5) continuing education and lifelong learning (MoPME, 2003). A group of “expert” participants from academia, practitioners, NGOs and civil society were asked to contribute to the formation of the second NPA (2003-2015). The goal of the NPA II is

to establish a knowledge-based and technologically-oriented competent society and ensure every school age child has access to primary level institutions that provide all necessary facilities, continue in school to receive and achieve quality education and provide opportunities to pre-school children, young persons a

Standardized quality basic education across all providers
Gender equity in basic education for both learners and teachers
Transparency and accountability in both the formal and non-formal systems
Shared responsibility between the government and NGOs for reaching these goals
(MoPME, 2003:15-16)

Despite several years, the NPA has yet to be approved by the government.

While this National Plan of Action is not considered a sector plan, sub-sector plans have been created in order to meet the goals laid out in the NPA. MoPME has developed a six-year donor supported primary education sub-sector plan for the formal system, the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II), 2003-2009. PEDP II has 10 main objectives (MoPME, 2005):

- i) to introduce national standards of quality
- ii) to increase accessibility of all children
- iii) to increase enrollment, attendance, and rate of completion
- iv) to create a more learner-centred environment
- v) to integrate PEDP activities into MoPME and DPE
- vi) to decentralize education management and decision making
- vii) to strengthen the capacity of school management systems at all levels
- viii) to ensure accountability and transparency
- ix) to provide free textbooks and learning materials
- x) to strengthen the role of parents and the community in school management and support

PEDP II is supported by AsBD, World Bank, NOR

donor-government dialogues. In the face of resistance from the government, donors are reluctant or unable to pursue the issue to a logical conclusion (personal communication, Ahmed, 2005).

More recently, the World Bank launched the “Reaching Out-of-School Children” programme (ROSC),

evaluation mechanisms, improve the capacity of School Management Committees (GoB, 2005). The recommendations also noted the need to “reduce the gap in quality of education between urban and rural areas, accord priority to technical and vocational education and make education more job-oriented” (GoB, 2005:30). Additionally, the NPA II notes that quality differs widely between primary implementing institutions and recommends standardization and increased monitoring (MoPME, 2003). More concerted efforts must be undertaken to reach ethno-linguistic minorities and disabled children who are currently excluded from both the formal and non-formal systems on a wide scale (CEF, 2003).

A study done by Transparency International Bangladesh (Karim, 2004) revealed serious issues in the governance of the education system which negatively impact educational quality and attainment. Although the education system in Bangladesh is supposedly free, surveys revealed that “teachers, the school management and government employees were major actors in incidences of corruption,” requiring students to “make unauthorized payments for admission into the schools, purchase of books, sporting events, promotion to higher classes, entertainment of officers from the Upazilla Education Offices, holding of religious events...and examination fees” (Karim, 2004:35-36). CAMPE’s 2001 study found that 90% of parents report paying, on average, an annual amount of 1000 taka per child in extra expenditures. This figure represents 2% of the average household income in Bangladesh (CAMPE, 2002).

Professionalism and professionalization have been identified as important issues. Ahmed et. al. (2005:21) argue that personnel in government departments and support units are generalists within the civil service and are “subject to frequent rotation and other civil service regulations.” In my observation, professionalism is also an issue in the NGO non-formal sector. Training of a cohort of national professionals is required to generate innovative solutions to local educational issues and to reduce dependency on foreign consultants. Professionalization is also required in regards to research capacity. Ahmed et. al. (2005:15) note that “research capacity and culture in education remains relatively underdeveloped. Much of what exists is supported by non-governmental organizations” such as CAMPE, IED and BRAC.

The administrative structure of the education system is described as being highly centralized, and one of the recurring recommendations in the PRSP is the decentralization of the sector. Ahmed et. al. (2005:20) note that “the highly centralized political and administrative structure has a special implication for the education system, because the far-flung education network is more extensive and directly involves more citizens than any other public service.” The National Plan of Action II (MoPME, 2003:19) notes that “centralization of authority holds up appropriate and timely action at the field level, causing delays and waste of resources as well as creating clogs in the system and programmes.” The Commonwealth Education Fund Bangladesh (2005) notes that the centralized financial system results in schools being extremely limited in their ability to set budgets of manage themselves financially. In regards to secondary level education, decentralization is recommended in the PRSP in order to “increase authority and capacity at the zonal, district and Upazilla levels for effective planning, monitoring and inspection, audit, and academic supervision to improve the quality of secondary education” (GoB, 2005).

Finally, one of the largest issues in primary education is the lack of coordination between the different streams. Ahmed et. al. (2005:22) argue that “the overall organization and management of education show critical disjunctions and discontinuities.” The formal, non-formal, madrasa, and private English medium schools all work with different learning objectives and academic standards with little sharing of experience or learning, and there is “limited opportunity for horizontal movement of students, and no interaction among organizational authorities running these different streams” (Ahmed et. al., 2005:22).

3. Civil Society in Bangladesh

Civil society is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh, but can be traced back to colonial times. Zafarullah and Rahman (2002:1013) write that “over the centuries, its features and focus have changed; sometimes it has acted with a political purpose, and at other times, with a social agenda.” They cite civil society as being at the forefront of “mass movements to establish rights to liberty, language, democracy, autonomy and self-rule” (Zafarullah and Rahman, 2002:1013). ‘Traditional’ civil society actors involved in these movements have been students, lawyers, journalists and cultural activists. Today the World Bank (2005b:11) defines civil society in Bangladesh as including:

(i) approximately 45,000 clubs, local-level organizations, religious organizations, foundations and development-oriented NGOs which are registered with the Department of Social Welfare (ii) national and local trade unions, professional and business associations and (iii) numerous local community-based organizations (CBOs), including savings, religious, community development or social welfare groups, many of which may be temporary and informally constituted.

Despite a large and diverse civil society, the literature focuses on domestic NGOs as the main actors in civil society, perhaps since NGOs are more organized, active and prominent while other actors are more diffused (personal communication, Ahmed, 2005). Bangladesh has a large and active NGO community that differs widely in terms of “size, structure, location and orientation (White, 1999).

legitimate voice of the Bangladesh people” in order to gain legitimacy and rights to aid money. The government sometimes sees NGOs as being favoured by donor support and feels they are lacking in accountability (Mia, 2004). They are also concerned about the involvement of NGOs in political activities and increasing involvement in income-generating activities (World Bank, 2005b). White (1999:313) argues “there is also without a doubt both envy and distrust amongst higher government officials of the economic resources and increasingly political influence wielded by senior NGO leaders.” Interestingly, friction between NGOs and the government is reportedly often “smoothed by the close personal relationships between senior officials and NGO leaders, facilitated by their mutual membership of a close-knit national elite” (World Bank, 2005b:5).

The government, with support from donors, created the GO-NGO Consultative Council (GNCC) in 1996 in order to “build complementarity betw

concerning the registration and regulation of NGOs (World Bank, 2005b). These laws contain numerous ambiguities and inconsistencies, and limit the capacity of NGOs to respond to needs “in a flexible and fully participatory way” (Banglapedia, 2005). This legislative framework is implemented by four government agencies: the Social Welfare Ministry, the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Women and Children (World Bank, 2005b). The Ministry of Social Welfare has sweeping powers to suspend or dissolve the governing body of an NGO without recourse to judicial appeal (World Bank, 2005b).

Any NGO receiving funds from foreign donors must be registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), created in 1991 as part of the Prime Minister’s Office. The number of NGOs registered by the end of 2004 was 1882 (World Bank, 2005b). The objective of NGOAB is to ensure quality and accountability within the NGO sector and was conceived as one-stop shop for NGOs. NGOAB activities include:

registering NGOs, processing and approving NGO project proposals, disbursing project funds, approving appointment and tenure or services of expatriate officials and consultants, coordinating, monitoring, inspecting and evaluation NGO programmes, reviewing reports and statements, realizing fees/service charges from the NGOs, and maintaining liaison with the NGOs and donor agencies. (Banglapedia, 2005)

Before foreign-funded NGOs register with NGOAB they must first “establish themselves under the various Acts ... that are administered by other agencies” (World Bank, 2005b:57).

Despite this seemingly complex legislative framework, regulation of NGOs is considered quite weak. There has been no recent reform of regulations despite the changing organizational form and role of NGOs, which are considerably different than when legislation was designed (World Bank, 2005b). One of the most important laws still in use dates back to 1861, and no changes to legislation have been made since 1982. A World Bank report (2005b:53) argues that “the legal framework is outdated, obsolete and in some cases not in sync with modern NGO regulatory concepts.” Regulations concerning the internal governance of NGOs, especially in regards to transparency and disclosure, are considered rudimentary (World Bank, 2005b). Furthermore, current legislation lacks “appropriate procedures for censure and appeals” (World Bank, 2005b:56).

NGOs whose primary goal is to provide services, such as BRAC, stress their complementarity with the state system and, as such, are rarely impeded in their work (Hossain, 2004). The degree of social development in Bangladesh is seen as being heavily influenced by the basic service provision of NGOs within a weak state with limited service delivery capacity (GoB, 2005). Indeed, since democratization in the 1990s, “the government has sought the involvement on NGOs in various projects which required nationwide personnel and logistical support that the government could not provide in the short term” (Mia, 2004:91), especially in regards to service delivery to hard to reach sectors of society. Haque (2004:275) argues that the main forms of partnership include “the joint implementation of projects by both partners, the subcontracting of public sector services to major NGOs, and the direct financial support of government extended to various NGOs.” Partnerships have been created in sectors such as banking, primary education, health, crop storage and training, to name a few (Haque, 2004). This environment of seeming cooperation and complementarity is thought to be highly influenced by donor expectations and prescriptions (Hossain, 2004; Lewis, 2004; Haque, 2004). Indeed, the World Bank (2001) notes that donors see partnerships between the government and civil society as essential for improving the quality of policies and institutions in order to achieve aid effectiveness.

These partnerships are not without their pitfalls. Haque (2004:283) argues that the NGO community has become increasingly polarized, the result being that government-NGO collaboration “has empowered NGOs themselves instead of empowering the people.” Haque further argues that there is a growing sense that these businesslike arrangements between government and NGOs undermine the “grassroots character and developmental mission” of civil society in Bangladesh” (2004:286). These collaborations may also negatively impact the scope of NGOs to undertake advocacy work as organizations dependent on official financing are less likely to risk criticizing the Government” (World Bank, 2005b). Even outside of formal contractual relationships, an NGO’s advocacy work and service delivery can be at odds.

The conflict arises because it is imperative for service delivery NGOs that they are granted permission – and as Government funding of NGO activity grows in importance, approval – for their activities. This contradiction meant many NGOs were hesitant to involve themselves in pro-democracy and related campaigns through the 1980s and beyond, and were correspondingly treated with mistrust by other parts of civil society; there remains lingering skepticism about the scope for NGOs to combine effective pro-poor advocacy with service delivery (World Bank, 2005b:31).

NGOs that are more vocal in the political sphere do indeed tread on more shaky ground. “Where the ‘political’ line is drawn is a matter of continual negotiation and conflict between NGOs, other civil society actors, political parties and the state” (World Bank, 2005b:31). The government has continually blocked the registration of a Bangladesh chapter of Amnesty International under the Societies Registration Act. In addition, educational programmes aimed at increasing political awareness are frowned upon (Mia, 2004). NGOs suspected of being politically aligned have provoked “annoyance and sharp scrutiny of NGOs suspected of playing a political role. These circumstances create division among members of the NGO community itself” (Mia, 2004). The current government has implemented measures to marginalize politically active NGOs it feels are sympathetic to the opposition or former regime (Lewis, 2004).

Increasing government concern with the perceived

perhaps best described as one of mutual tolerance, within which a general feeling of mistrust persists due to the production of reports by NGOs (such as CAMPE's) which contradict official government statistics (Mia, 2004). Ahmed (personal communication, 2005) argues that "MoPME seems to view formal primary education as its own preserve, not to be shared with non-government actors. This attitude has led to expressions by some senior Ministry officials of anti-NGO sentiments, more so than in other government ministries."

NGOs and Advocacy

The late-1980s saw the beginnings of increased advocacy work on the part of civil society. The use of public interest litigation for civil liberty, environmental concerns and economic rights established itself as an important tool (World Bank, 2005b). Despite its continued use as an advocacy strategy, litigation has resulted in only a few "proactive policy changes," for example, legislation concerning violence against women, but rulings are often stayed through various means (World Bank, 2005b:34). Due to the aid agenda, the 1990s saw a shift towards advocacy around good governance issues (Lewis, 2004, World Bank, 2005b). A survey done of NGOs in 2003 reports that 42% were involved in advocacy or lobbying the Government within the previous year (World Bank, 2005b), but only 20% report lobbying for policy change (World Bank, 2005b).

Civil society organizations attempt to influence the formal political system indirectly through their mobilizing and advocacy work. Zafarullah and Rahman (2002) note that civil society is very active in mobilizing public opinion through seminars, debates, workshops, litigation, networking and media campaigns. Local governance is a key mobilizing issue. In addition, voter education has become an important NGO activity (Zafarullah & Rahman, 2002), and one where the definition of what is

to provide “systematic advocacy interventions for the creation of macro policy environment committed to the eradication of poverty in Bangladesh” (Proshika, 2004). Proshika conducted various advocacy activities by means of research dissemination workshops and media campaigns at the national level, and advocacy activities at the international level through involvement in the CIVICUS World Assembly. Research and advocacy campaigns related to policy have included:

a broad study meant to engage the poor, CSOs and NGOs in consultation about the PRSP in order to provide the government with input into the final PRSP document

a document meant to identify the connections and contradictions between the I-PRSP, the national budget and the Millennium Development Goals; to examine the implementation of these strategies; to forward a coherent plan of action .
(Proshika, 2004)

While these campaigns were meant to offer interesting alternative policy statements, IDPAA has remained ineffectual in this regard. The studies were never completed due to “non-availability of funds” and “unavoidable circumstances” (Proshika, 2004) after the government suspended donor funds to Proshika due to accusations of partisan political behaviour.

4. Civil Society and Education

As noted above, NGOs form an important part of the education system in Bangladesh, constituting what is often referred to as a “parallel structure” in education (Unterhalter et al. 2003:90). NGOs have acted as implementing partners of government programmes, and have initiated their own non-formal education programmes serving 1.5 million hard-to-reach children annually. The Education for All National Plan of Action II (NPA II) argues that “the government, NGOs, broader civil society, the community and other stakeholders share the responsibility and work in conjunction to achieve the EFA national goals” (MoPME, 2003:16). Yet the role of NGOs in education has been largely relegated to service provision in a parallel system. NGOs and other civil society are not recognized as potential actors in PEDP II, and NGO schools are not recognized in official statistics. Moreover, the World Bank (2005b:28) notes that “coordination between Government and NGO education programs in primary education remains weak.” Archer (1994:225) writes that “there is no joint planning, no joint training, no sharing of materials, no exchange of experience.” For this reason, donors continue to give direct budgetary support to BRAC, the largest implementer of non-formal education programmes, through a donor consortium. (See Appendix B for a list of civil society players in education.)

Some of the larger NGO service providers, such as BRAC, have recently begun to focus more of their energies on changing their relationship with the Ministries of Education, moving away from primary service provision and seeking greater influence through new initiatives on the margins of the formal school system. These initiatives include opening preschools and the development of secondary in-service teacher training programmes. The aim of these initiatives is to move away from NGOs working in a parallel system towards ‘partnership’ with the government to improve the overall quality of education (Ahmed, 2005). The World Bank (2005b:28) argues that “this role as facilitator of better quality education is likely to yield greater results for larger numbers of people than if NGOs focused on becoming a direct provider of post-primary education.”

There is a dearth of information concerning an important group of civil society actors involved in education – teachers’ unions. Teachers’ unions at all levels are important stakeholders within the education system. Hossain (2004) notes that the vast membership of the teaching force (see table below) gives primary school teachers’ associations a considerable amount of power. Ahmed et. al. (2005:16) note that unions “play an important role in education development and policy-making,” although they fail to mention the nature of this role aside from the fact that successful implementation of programs and policies rests with teachers as front-line workers. Unfortunately unions have not come together to advocate around educational issues regarding teaching and learning, and instead focus their attentions on service terms and remuneration (personal communication, Ahmed, 2005). In fact, the plethora of unions at each level is encouraged and exploited by the political parties with which various unions are affiliated. Ahmed et. al. (2005:16) argue that “this rivalry has harmed the interests of teachers and has limited the prospects of playing a constructive role by teachers’ organizations in educational development.” Much more research is required to understand the structure, role and activities of teachers’ unions and organizations in Bangladesh.

Table 4: Number of teachers	
Government primary teachers	162, 114
Non-government and other primary teachers (registered and non-registered)	164, 255
Non-government junior secondary school teachers	28, 347
Government secondary school teachers	7, 323

Non-government secondary school teachers	170, 887
Total:	532, 926

Source: MoE, 2005

Civil Society and Advocacy in Education

NGOs are becoming increasingly involved in public engagement and advocacy surrounding educational issues. Hossain (2004) notes that a recent important development is the growing ability of civil society to pressure the government to improve the provision and quality of education. Research and advocacy capacity is high within many civil society/NGO organizations (Appendix B).

One advocacy strategy which has been successful is the “Report Card” of the formal primary education system undertaken by Transparency International Bangladesh. This study revealed major issues of

coalition which has ensured a voice for NGOs at the policy table. The purpose of CAMPE “is to raise public awareness, conduct advocacy and facilitate policy dialogue in favour of EFA” (Ahmed and Nath, 2004:2). The forum started with the support of individuals, but gradually attracted the participation of national NGOs, such as BRAC and

A number of committees guide and oversee [redacted], including an Advisory Board, a Working Group and a Technical Committee (Ahmed and Nath, 2004). Committee members are drawn from professionals, researchers, academics, activists and government officials, although Ahmed and Nath (2004:2) note that “government officials in the committees, although included in their personal capacities, were generally not active.” ([redacted] Appendix C for a list of CAMPE council members.)

Significant findings of the [redacted] reports include (Ahmed and Nath, 2004:6-7; Ahmed, 2005):

- Collection of baseline statistics on enrollment, achievement, attendance, gender participation, etc..
- The overall poor quality of the primary education system
- Large urban-rural gaps in achievement and quality
- Large gaps between gross enrollment rates and net enrollment rates
- Households incur major direct costs which are higher than per student public spending
- Teacher training does not impact student achievement

Each [redacted] report is launched with a large media campaign and the presence of government authorities, including Education Ministers. Ahmed and Nath (2004:7) write that “the media has been highly responsive. The EW reports each year created a flurry of headlines, editorials, special feature articles and a public debate which help to make the public aware of the issues and influence public opinion.” A series of national and regional workshops and seminars are held following the launch in order to create space “for local functionaries and civil society groups to interact with the EW effort” (Ahmed and Nath, 2004:8) and to receive feedback from the local level. Recently, CAMPE has been challenged to provide more “user-friendly” versions of their findings for local grassroots use (Ahmed and Nath, 2004).

NGOs and donor agencies are the main consumers of [redacted] reports. Regarding the impact of the reports, Ahmed and Nath (2004:6) note that “[redacted] has established itself as an independent, alternative and complementary system of monitoring EFA.” Indeed, bilateral and multilateral donors often cite [redacted] findings and statistics, as does the PRSP report. Still, Ahmed and Nath (2004:7) argue that one of the weaknesses of [redacted] is that the “concerned ministry ... of the government has been critical about findings of [redacted] and has not used these sufficiently in policy development and programme planning.” Yet, Hossain (2004:20)

optimistically argues that “the high-profile nature of these reports, and the government’s tolerance of their role in this process, suggest that primary education is an area in which pressure on government to perform is accepted as appropriate or necessary.” Perhaps, Ahmed (2005) hopes,

an active and meaningful seat at the policy table may be confounded by sub-sectoral support programmes which tend to position NGOs as subcontractors to government.

More research is required to paint a clearer picture of civil society's ability to impact educational change within sector wide approaches. A detailed examination of non-NGO civil society actors, including teachers' unions, and their activities and networks is necessary. Furthermore, it is necessary to gather more information concerning the disparities between what organizations and policy statements say in principle and the reality of the situation. Of particular concern are government documents, such as the PB 090.000nrarticul and

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Appendix A

Table: Education Management Structure			
Organization	Role	Responsibilities	Works with:
Ministry of Education (MoE)	Administration, management of planning, except for primary and adult education	<p>allocation and oversight of functions of education managers at the directorates down to the district education officers</p> <p>recruitment, selection, promotion, transfer, dismissal and disciplinary actions regarding teachers of the government-run high schools and colleges</p> <p>selection of teachers for training abroad</p> <p>inspection of education institutions managed directly or assisted financially by the MOE</p>	<p>Directorates of Education (for planning activities)</p> <p>Directorate of Inspection and Audit</p>
Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME)	Determines policy and implements development programs in primary and general adult education	<p>mobilizing public and community support for compulsory primary education</p> <p>overseeing the approval of the registration of non-government primary schools and their eligibility for receiving salary subvention for teachers</p> <p>carrying out periodic national child and literacy surveys</p>	
Directorate of Primary Education (DEP)	Implementing policies and development programs, managing sub-sector	<p>construction</p> <p>repair and supply of furniture, supplies</p>	MoPME
Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE)	Implementation of policies and development programs, managing sub-sector	<p>enforcement of academic standards of secondary and college education</p> <p>recruitment of teachers and non-teaching employees of the government schools and colleges, (decision-making lies with MoE)</p> <p>payment of salary subvention</p>	MoE
Directorate of Technical Education (DTE)	Planning, development, coordination and supervision of technical and vocational education	<p>assess the needs of skilled manpower</p> <p>prepare policy guidelines for the MoE on consolidation, improvement and expansion of technical and vocational education and training</p> <p>prepare annual budget proposals for institutions under its purview</p> <p>allocate funds from the approved budget, and supervise its implementation.</p>	MoE
National	Developing	review curricula and introduce changes	MoE, MoPME

Appendix B

Main NGOs with a stake in education		
Type		NGO Name
International Organization		UNICEF
International NGOs		ActionAid
		Plan Bangladesh
		Save the Children
National NGOs	Service Delivery NGOs	
		BRAC
		Proshika
		FIVDB
		HEED Bangladesh
		Dhaka Ahsania Mission
	Education NGO Network	CAMPE
	Research Organizations	CAMPE
		Proshika
		Institute of Education and Development (BRAC University)
		Bangladesh Foundation for Education Development
		Foundation for Research in Education Policy and Development
		Power and Participation Research Centre
		ActionAid Bangladesh
		Centre for Policy Dialogue
		Research and Evaluation Division (BRAC)
		Dhaka Ahsania Mission
Faith based groups	Service Delivery	Seventh Day Adventist
		Baptist Mission Bangladesh

Appendix C

CAMPE Council Members 2004		2005
Portfolio	Name	Organization