



# Reversing the Trend: Analyzing the Mainstreaming of Out-of-School Children into Formal Education or Learning Centers in Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the mainstreaming of out-of-school children into formal education systems, focusing on their enrollment in Learning Centers (LC) and the quality of their learning experiences. Applying a mixed-methods approach that encompasses both quantitative analyses—such as surveys directed at learners and teachers—and qualitative techniques, including Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), this investigation assesses the multifaceted aspects of the mainstreaming process. Findings indicate nearly 100% enrollment rates, a negligible dropout rate, and a high level of satisfaction with the learning environment among both learners and teachers. Nevertheless, challenges such as absenteeism, the sporadic disbursement of stipends, and a scarcity of textbooks remain, highlighting the exigency for precise interventions. Recommendations are proposed to enhance teacher training, address resource deficiencies, and improve monitoring mechanisms, with the aim of fostering greater inclusivity and equitable access to educational opportunities. Overall, the research underscores the significant potential of initiatives dedicated to the reintegration of out-of-school children into the educational system.*

**Keywords:** *out-of-school children, reintegration, learning centers, education, quality of learning, teacher training, geographic distribution, challenges*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, ensuring access to quality education for all children remains a paramount goal in the pursuit of sustainable development. Despite significant progress in educational attainment over recent years, a persistent challenge persists in the form of out-of-school children (OoSC), who are excluded from the formal education system. Reintegrating these children into mainstream education or learning centers (LCs) is imperative for fostering inclusive and equitable educational opportunities (OoSC, 2020; Habib, 2024). This study delves into the multifaceted process of mainstreaming OoSC into formal education or LCs in Bangladesh, aiming to understand the underlying dynamics, identify challenges, and propose effective strategies for reversing this concerning trend (Yasunaga, M., 2014; Shinohara, T., 2021). By analyzing both quantitative data, which reveals enrollment rates and dropout trends, and qualitative insights obtained through focus group discussions and key informant interviews, this research endeavors to provide comprehensive insights into the complexities of mainstreaming initiatives. Through a nuanced examination of the educational landscape in Bangladesh, this study seeks to contribute to the discourse on educational equity and pave the way for informed policy decisions and interventions to ensure the holistic development of all children.

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite concerted efforts by the government of Bangladesh to enhance educational inclusivity, a significant challenge persists in the form of Out-of-School Children (OoSC) who remain disengaged from formal learning

environments. The Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP4), spanning the period from July 2018 to June 2025, underscores the nation's commitment to providing quality education to all children (DPE, 2022). However, within the broader framework of PEDP4, the reintegration of OoSC into the formal education system through Learning Centers (LCs) emerges as a critical issue demanding focused attention.

The Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) plays a pivotal role in addressing this challenge, implementing targeted programs aimed at bringing Out-of-School Children (OoSC) back into the educational fold (Shinohara, T., 2021). Despite the implementation of these initiatives, questions persist regarding the effectiveness of the strategies employed, the approval processes, and the overall impact on the lives of the targeted beneficiaries. The revised target, which aims to reintegrate a cumulative 650,000 out-of-school children into schools or learning centers since year 1 of PEDP4, underscores the need for thorough evaluation and assessment of the mainstreaming efforts.

This research aims to address several critical problem areas within the context of the reintegration of Out-of-School Children (OoSC) into the formal education system through Learning Centers (LCs) under the Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP4). The primary focus is on evaluating the efficacy of the strategies implemented by the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) in enrolling and reintegrating OoSC into both Learning Centers and formal schools (Shanker et. al., 2015; Brede et. al., 2017). Additionally, the study seeks to examine the robustness and transparency of the approval processes conducted by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) in endorsing BNFE's reports on OoSC reintegration. It delves into the mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and accuracy in reporting. Furthermore, the research investigates the overall quality of the teaching-learning environment within Learning Centers, exploring its contribution to the successful reintegration of out-of-school children. Specific challenges and strengths identified in these environments are examined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the reintegration process (Hossain, T., 2021; Aiyedun et. al., 2023). Through these inquiries, the research aims to contribute valuable insights to inform policy decisions and enhance the effectiveness of PEDP4 in fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational system.

By addressing these questions, this research aims to shed light on the intricacies of the reintegration process, identify potential barriers, and provide valuable insights that can inform future policy decisions. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to the ongoing efforts to create an educational landscape where no child is left behind, ensuring the success of PEDP4 in reversing the trend of out-of-school children and fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational system.

### 3. OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

This study aimed to assess the extent to which the strategies implemented by the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) have succeeded in enrolling and reintegrating out-of-school children into Learning Centers (LCs) and formal schools under the Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP4). Evaluate the overall quality of the teaching-learning environment within Learning Centers (LCs) and its role in contributing to the successful reintegration and mainstreaming of out-of-school children. Identify specific challenges and strengths in these environments.

### 4. METHODS

This research employs a multifaceted approach to investigate the mainstreaming of out-of-school children under PEDP4:

**(1) Quantitative Surveys:** Conduct large-scale surveys targeting parents, teachers, and community members to gather quantitative data on the enrollment and reintegration of out-of-school children. Use structured questionnaires to assess the effectiveness of BNFE strategies, focusing on key indicators such as enrollment rates, academic progress, and attendance records.

#### Sample Size Determination

To conduct the verification study, a survey has been executed to collect information from eight administrative divisions using appropriate statistical formula for the survey as required by the objectives. With an admissible/allowable error of 5% and an accuracy of 95 %, a survey was conducted in a sample size of 136 LCs with related stakeholders in the study area. The formula (Cochran, 1993)<sup>1</sup> is given below:

<sup>1</sup> Cochran, W. G. 1963. *Sampling Techniques*, 2nd Ed., New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} * deff$$

**Where,**

$n_0$  = sample size without considering the finite population correction factor

$z$  = Standardized normal deviate usually set at 1.96, which corresponds to the 95% confidence interval at 5% level of significance

$p$  = Expected proportion in population based on the previous studies or baseline study or pilot study or simply expected outcome. To the best of the knowledge, the consultant team considered the rate of Out of School Children rate from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) published by BBS in 2019 is 6.4 (APSC, 2021)<sup>2</sup> i.e.,  $p = 0.064$

$q = 1 - p = 1 - 0.064 = 0.936$

$d$  = Allowable margin of error is the maximum risk in the sample size estimation. Conventionally, an 'absolute' allowable error margin 'd' of  $\pm 5\%$  is chosen, but, as is common, if expected 'p' is  $< 10\%$ , the 95% confidence boundaries may cross 0, which is impractical. Hence, for an expected value 'p' 10 to 90% then the value of 'd' is  $\pm 5\%$  might be a reasonable choice. The choice of 'relative' allowable margin error as opposed to an absolute value is independent of expected 'p' and one might choose it for mid-range values of 'p' which is a valid approach. In this study, the allowable error of margin,  $d = 5\%$  is 0.05. the above information, the sample size was determined approximately as follows:

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 * (0.064)(0.936)}{(0.05)^2} * 1.5$$

$$n_0 = \frac{.23012}{.0025} * 1.5$$

$$n_0 = 92.05 * 1.5$$

$$n_0 = 138.07 \sim 138 \text{ in round figure.}$$

Applying the finite population correction factor (PCF) results in the actual sample size using the following formula recommended by (Israel, 1992)<sup>3</sup>

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0 - 1)}{N}}$$

Where,  $N = 26021$  No of Learning Centers [The project covers 802436 only 5<sup>th</sup> year total student enrollment (approximately 100% of the total population from the project list)]. Target beneficiaries are the children in LCs since Year 4 remaining enrolled in the LCs or back to school)

Using the above information, the actual sample size is determined approximately as follows:  $n = \frac{138 - 1}{1 + \frac{(138 - 1)}{26021}} =$

136.28 ~ 136 in round figure.

So, in our study, we have visited 136 Learning Centers in 8 divisions.

The sample size for the study was determined using the Cochran formula, considering a 5% allowable error and 95% accuracy. Initially calculated at 138, it was adjusted with the finite population correction factor, resulting in a final sample size of 136 learning centers across eight divisions. With a design effect of 1.5, the total representative sample size became 1090, ensuring a high precision level. Respondents included students, members of Center Managing Committees (CMCs), guardians, and community members from learning center catchment areas, totaling 1090 individuals interviewed face-to-face.

**(2) Documentary Analysis:** Analyze official documents, reports, and records provided by BNFE and other relevant educational authorities to understand the formal processes, approval mechanisms, and reporting structures associated with out-of-school children's reintegration under PEDP4.

<sup>2</sup> MICS (2019), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, BBS, Ministry of Planning, 2019

<sup>3</sup> Israel, Glenn D. 1992. Sampling the Evidence of Extension Program Impact. Program Evaluation and Organizational Development, IFAS, University of Florida. PEOD-5. October.

3. an 'absolute' allowable error margin 'd' of  $\pm 5\%$  is chosen. If expected 'p' is  $< 10\%$ , the 95% confidence boundaries may cross 0, which is impractical. The value 'p' 10 to 90% then the value of 'd' is  $\pm 5\%$  might be a reasonable choice.

**(3) Interviews with Stakeholders:** Conduct in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including BNFE officials, teachers, parents, and community leaders. Explore their perspectives on the success of reintegration strategies, the challenges faced, and their involvement in creating a conducive teaching-learning environment within Learning Centers.

**(4) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Organize focus group discussions with teachers, parents, and community members to delve deeper into specific challenges and strengths within Learning Centers. FGDs can facilitate a qualitative exploration of perceptions, experiences, and opinions related to the teaching-learning environment.

Combining quantitative analysis with qualitative insights allows for a comprehensive examination of the effectiveness of BNFE strategies and the overall quality of the teaching-learning environment within Learning Centers under PEDP4. The quantitative approach enables the measurement of enrollment rates, dropout rates, and other key metrics, providing tangible evidence of program success or challenges. Meanwhile, qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews offer nuanced perspectives and contextual understanding, shedding light on the intricacies of the learning environment, teacher-student dynamics, and the impact of BNFE initiatives on out-of-school children. This combined approach enhances the depth and breadth of the analysis, offering valuable insights for program improvement and policy development.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

The study analyzes data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are gathered through field surveys, while secondary data are sourced from the BNFE Database of Out-of-School Children (OoSC). Although our primary focus is on bringing out-of-school children back into the educational fold, the study also collects and analyzes data on other relevant issues. The breakdown of the study's analysis includes:

### 5.1 Document Review

Three types of documents are reviewed: BNFE Database on OoSC, BNFE documents, and MoPME Approval Letters.

#### A. BNFE Database on OoSC

The BNFE provides a real-time visualization database on out-of-school children enrolled by 2023, featuring a Dashboard and Report section.

**Dashboard:** Provides insights into students' summary and status, teacher summary, and LC information.

**Report:** Contains learners' bio-data, LC and Teacher Statistics, IVA and Monitoring Reports, and Administrative Tools.

#### B. BNFE Documents

Reviewed documents include reports on enrollment and mainstreaming figures.

#### C. MoPME Approval Letters

MoPME approval letters validate BNFE enrollment achievements.

### 5.2 Enrolment of OoSC under PEDP3

Data on enrollment, mainstreaming, and dropout rates under PEDP3 are presented in Table 4.

**Table 1: Enrolment of OoSC under PEDP3**

Year	Total Enrolled Learners	Mainstreamed	Remained Learners
2018	98,664	0	0
2019	0	0	0
2020	0	12,742	2.78%
2021	0	58,257	59.04%

\*27,765 learners have dropped out/migrated due to COVID-19 Pandemic.

Table 1 presents the enrollment data of out-of-school children (OoSC) under the Primary Education Development Program 3 (PEDP3) for the years 2018 to 2021. In 2018, a total of 98,664 OoSC were enrolled, with none being mainstreamed into formal education, and none remaining in the program. However, in

subsequent years, there were no enrollments recorded until 2020. In 2020, while there were no new enrollments, 12,742 OoSC were mainstreamed into formal education, representing 2.78% of the total enrolled learners. In 2021, although no new enrollments occurred, a significant number of OoSC, 58,257 in total, were mainstreamed into formal education, constituting 59.04% of the total enrolled learners. It is important to note that in 2021, 27,765 learners dropped out or migrated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the challenges and disruptions faced by the education system during this period. Overall, the table provides insights into the progress and outcomes of the PEDP3 in terms of OoSC enrollment and mainstreaming.

### 5.2.1 Enrolment of OoSC under PEDP4

Under PEDP4, enrollment began in 2021. Table 5 outlines the enrollment figures.

**Table 2: Enrolment of OoSC under PEDP4**

Year	Enrolled Learners	Cumulative Number Learners	Remarks
2021	318,240	318,240	Enrolled in December 2021
2022	460,201	778,441	Enrolled in December 2022
2023	24,095	802,436	Enrolled in January 2023

Table 2 provides information on the enrollment of out-of-school children (OoSC) under the Primary Education Development Program 4 (PEDP4) for the years 2021 to 2023. In 2021, enrollment began with 318,240 OoSC being enrolled, marking the start of the program. This figure represents the cumulative number of learners enrolled in December 2021. In the following year, 2022, enrollment continued, with an additional 460,201 OoSC being enrolled, bringing the cumulative total to 778,441 learners by the end of that year. In 2023, enrollment persisted, albeit at a lower rate, with 24,095 OoSC being enrolled. This brought the cumulative total to 802,436 learners by January 2023. The table highlights the progress of enrollment under PEDP4, indicating a significant increase in the number of OoSCs being brought into the education system over the specified period.

### 5.2.2 Cumulative Enrolment of OoSC

The cumulative enrollment data, presented in Table 6

**Table 3: Cumulative Number of Enrolment**

Year	Enrolled of OoSC	Back to School/LC
Year 1	98,664	85,922
Year 2 to 4	8,02,436	-
Year 5	-	8,02,436
Total	9,01,100	8,88,358

Table 3 illustrates the cumulative number of enrollments of Out-of-School Children (OoSC) and their subsequent return to school or learning centers (LC) over five years. In the first year, 98,664 OoSC were enrolled, out of which 85,922 returned to school or LC, signifying successful reintegration efforts. Over the subsequent years (Years 2 to 4), a total of 802,436 OoSC were enrolled, but no data was provided regarding their return to school or LC during this period. However, by Year 5, the cumulative enrollment reached 802,436, indicating that the same number of OoSC who were enrolled in the preceding years remained in the education system. Consequently, the total cumulative enrollment over the five years amounted to 901,100, with a total of 888,358 OoSC successfully reintegrated into formal education or LC. Overall, the table underscores the significant progress made in enrolling and retaining OoSC in the education system. Overall, the table highlights the significant progress made in enrolling and retaining OoSC in the education system, as evidenced by the successful reintegration of a substantial number of initially out-of-school children.

### 5.3 Analysis of Quantitative Data

The analysis encompasses quantitative data pertinent to an enrollment of 650,000, which includes enrollment database, attendance records, and instances of absence or dropouts, covering a total of 136 Learning Centers (LCs).

#### 5.3.1 Enrolment Database vs Physical Presence of the Learners

Table 4 presents a comparative analysis between the enrollment data in the BNFE database and the actual physical presence data.

**Table 4: Enrolment Database vs Physical Presence (136 LCs)**

	Enrolment database of the BNFE	Physical Presence of Learners
LC	Boys	Girls
136	1851	1970
Mean Value	28.09 (29)	Mean Value

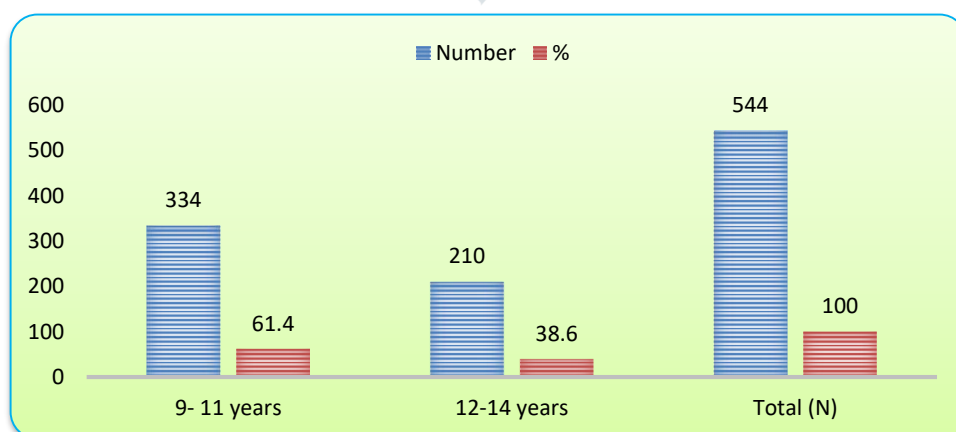
Table 4 provides a comparison between the enrollment data recorded in the BNFE database and the actual physical presence of learners in 136 Learning Centers (LCs). The table shows the number of boys and girls enrolled in each LC according to the BNFE database, as well as the mean enrollment values. On the other side, the physical presence of learners is also represented, but only the mean value is provided. The analysis indicates that the total enrollment across all LCs matches the target of 650,000, with both enrollment and physical presence exceeding this figure. However, a deviation value is noted, suggesting an absence rate of approximately 11%. This discrepancy between enrollment and physical presence highlights potential issues such as absenteeism or discrepancies in data recording.

### 5.4 Additional Information on the OoSC Education Program

The study has comprehensively investigated multiple facets of the OoSC Education Program, encompassing factors such as the age range of the learners, the caliber of the teaching-learning environment within the LCs, the academic qualifications and training of teachers, and the prevailing sense of safety and security among learners. The ensuing sections delve into a detailed analysis of this gathered data.

#### 5.4.1 Age Range of the Learners

In alignment with sub-component 2.5 of the PEDP4, which outlines the age range for Out-of-School Children (OoSC) as 8-14 years, this study undertook a survey involving 544 learners across 136 Learning Centers (LCs). The structured questionnaire utilized in the survey aimed to gather comprehensive insights into various aspects related to the education of OoSC within the specified age bracket. Through this survey, the study sought to analyze the educational landscape and address pertinent issues concerning OoSC within the targeted age range.

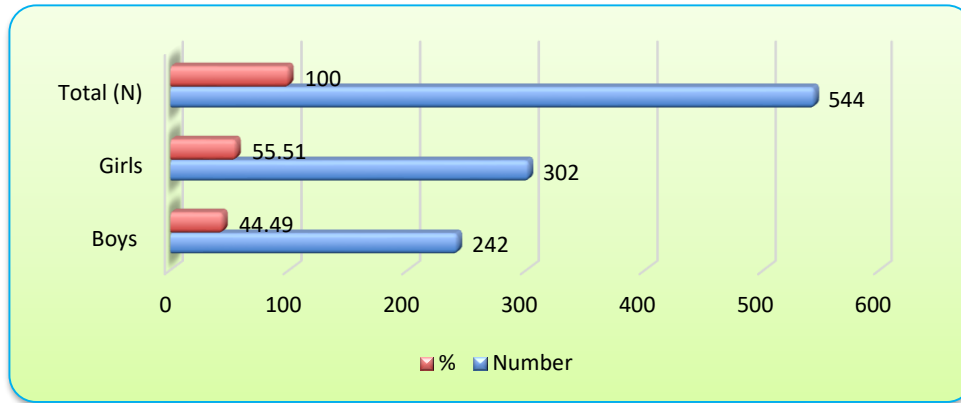


**Figure 1: Age Range of the Learners of LCs**

The breakdown of respondents' age distribution in the survey reveals notable patterns. The majority, totaling 334 individuals (61.40%), fall within the age bracket of 9 to 11 years, indicating a substantial representation

of this demographic. Additionally, 210 respondents (38.60%) belong to the 12-13 age group, showcasing a slightly smaller but still significant portion within this range. Notably, none of the surveyed learners fall below 9 years or exceed 14 years, underscoring the precise alignment of the sample with the specified age range mandated by the program guidelines. This adherence to the guidelines ensures the survey's accuracy and relevance to the targeted population, reinforcing confidence in the data's reliability and the study's validity within the designated age demographic.

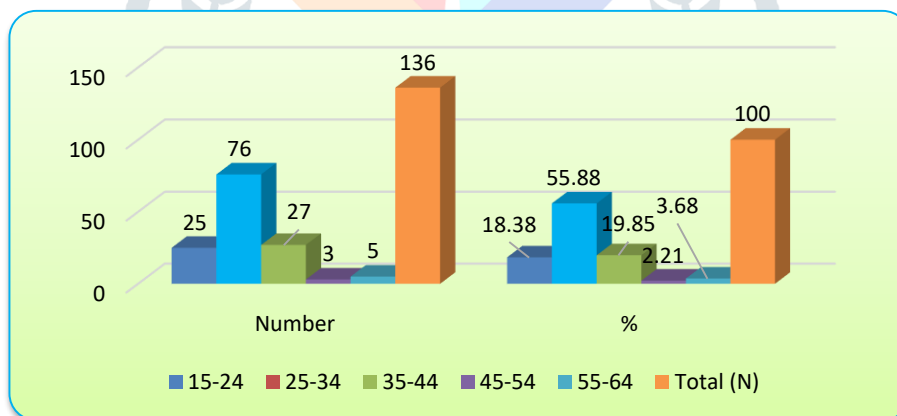
### 5.4.2 Gender Division of the Learners



**Figure 2: Gender Division of the Learners**

Among the surveyed learners, there is a slight disparity in gender distribution, with 242 respondents (44.49%) being boys and 302 respondents (55.51%) being girls. In contrast, the database shows that the total number of boys is higher at 414,268 (51.62%), compared to 388,168 girls (48.38%). This suggests a relatively higher representation of girls among the surveyed learners compared to the overall database.

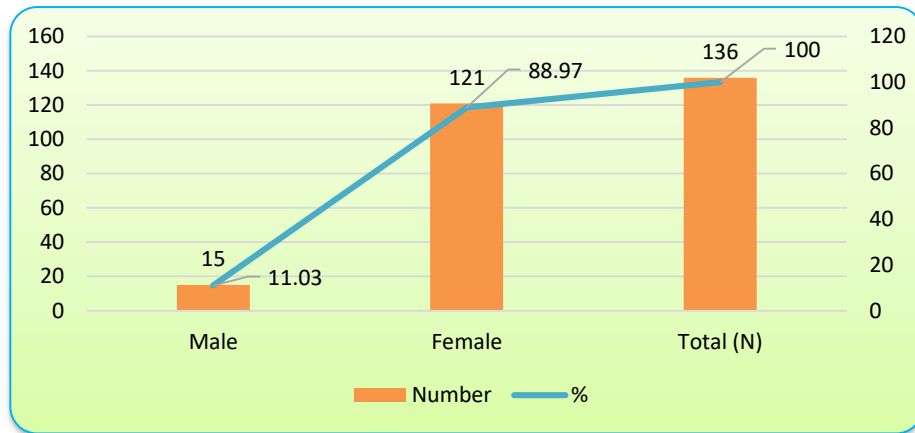
### 5.4.3: Age Range of the Teachers of LCs



**Figure 3: Age Range of the Teachers**

Out of the total 136 teachers surveyed, a significant portion, comprising 76 individuals (55.88%), falls within the age bracket of 25 to 34 years. Furthermore, 27 teachers (19.85%) are between the ages of 35 to 44 years, and 25 teachers (18.38%) are relatively younger, aged between 15 to 24 years. This distribution indicates a diverse range of age groups among the surveyed teachers, with a notable concentration in the 25 to 34 age range.

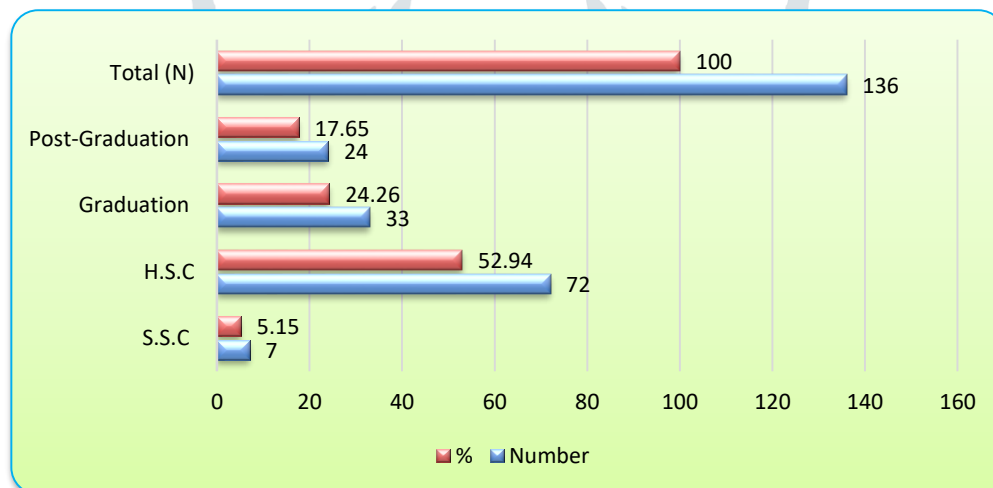
#### 5.4.4: Gender division of the Teachers of the LCs



**Figure 4: Gender Division of the Teachers**

Among the surveyed teachers, the male-female ratio is 88.97% to 11.03%, highlighting a notable gender imbalance in teacher recruitment, with a significantly higher proportion of female teachers compared to male teachers. This suggests a tendency towards greater representation of female educators within the surveyed sample.

#### 5.4.5 Academic Qualification and Training of the Teachers of LCs

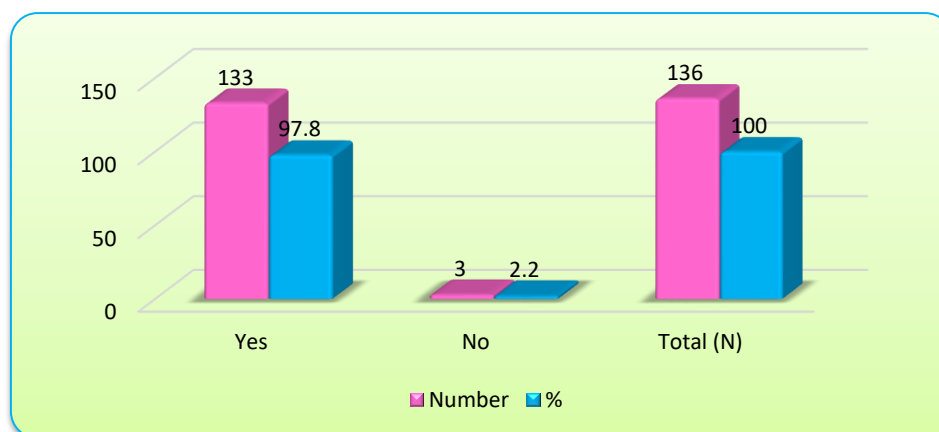


**Figure 5: Academic Qualification of the Teachers**

The survey reveals a diverse range of academic qualifications among the teachers in the Learning Centers. Among the 136 respondents, the majority, comprising 72 teachers (52.94%), have completed their Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). A significant portion, accounting for 33 teachers (24.26%), possess a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, 24 teachers (17.65%) hold a Post Graduate Degree, indicating a notable level of higher education attainment among the teaching staff. However, a smaller proportion of teachers, totaling seven (5.15%), have completed their Secondary School Certificate (SSC). This distribution of academic qualifications highlights the varied educational backgrounds of the teachers, contributing to the diversity of expertise and knowledge within the Learning Centers.



### 5.4.6: Training of the Teachers



**Figure 6: Training of the Teachers**

The survey findings indicate a high level of training among the teachers in the Learning Centers, with a significant majority (97.8%) reporting that they have received training after their appointment. However, it is noteworthy that the training provided appears to be limited, with teachers indicating that they have only undergone a 12-day foundation training. While this foundational training is beneficial, teachers express a need for more specialized, subject-based training tailored to the classes they teach. This highlights a potential gap in the training curriculum, as subject-specific training can enhance teachers' pedagogical skills and subject knowledge, ultimately leading to improved teaching effectiveness and better learning outcomes for students. Addressing this need for targeted training could be crucial in ensuring that teachers are adequately equipped to meet the diverse learning needs of students in the Learning Centers.

### 5.4.7 Location and Geographic Character of the Selected LCs

**Table 5: Location of the Selected LCs and Number of Learners**

Location	Number of LCs	%	Number of Learners	%
Village/Ward Level	97	71.30	422	77.55
Thana/ Upazila Level	6	4.45	21	3.85
District Level	13	9.55	32	5.90
City Corporation	20	14.70	69	12.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>100</b>

The distribution of surveyed Learning Centers (LCs) reveals interesting insights into the geographical representation of the study. The analysis shows that the majority of LCs surveyed, comprising 71.30%, are situated at the village/ward level, indicating a strong presence of educational infrastructure at the grassroots level. This underscores the importance of reaching out to rural communities to address the educational needs of out-of-school children (OoSC) residing in these areas.

Furthermore, the data highlight a notable presence of LCs in urban settings, with 14.70% located within City Corporations. This suggests a recognition of the importance of providing educational opportunities for OoSC in urban areas as well, where access to schooling might be relatively higher but still presents challenges.

**Table 6: Geographic Character of the Selected LCs and Learners**

Area	Number of LCs	%	Number of Learners of LCs	%
Hilly Area	2	1.45	19	3.50
Coastal Area	52	38.25	175	32.20
Haor Area	6	4.40	24	4.40
Chor Area	31	22.80	159	29.20

<b>Slum Area</b>	45	33.00	167	30.70
<b>Total</b>	136	100	544	100

The geographic distribution of the selected Learning Centers (LCs) reveals an interesting trend, with a significant proportion located in coastal areas. Approximately 38.25% of the surveyed LCs are situated in coastal regions, indicating a deliberate focus on addressing the educational needs of communities residing in these vulnerable areas. Coastal regions often face unique challenges, including issues related to accessibility, environmental hazards, and socioeconomic vulnerability. By establishing LCs in these areas, educational authorities demonstrate a commitment to providing educational opportunities to children living in such marginalized communities.

Furthermore, the presence of a considerable number of LCs in slum areas, accounting for 33%, underscores the importance of targeting urban poverty and addressing the educational disparities prevalent in these densely populated, resource-constrained settings. Slum areas often lack adequate educational infrastructure and resources, making it essential to establish LCs to reach out to marginalized children who may not have access to formal schooling.

Additionally, the inclusion of LCs from "Chor" areas, constituting 22.80% of the surveyed LCs, highlights efforts to extend educational services to remote and underserved regions. Chor areas typically refer to isolated or remote islands, presenting unique logistical challenges for educational outreach (Habib, 2024). Establishing LCs in these areas reflects a commitment to inclusive education and reaching the most marginalized populations.

The demographic composition of the surveyed learners mirrors the geographic distribution of LCs, with a significant proportion hailing from coastal, slum, and Chor areas. This underscores the need to tailor educational interventions to address the specific challenges and contexts faced by children residing in these diverse geographical settings. By targeting such areas, educational initiatives can effectively reach and support vulnerable populations, contributing to more equitable access to education and improved learning outcomes.

#### 5.4.8 Previous Enrolment of the Learners

**Table 7: Information of the Learner's Previous Enrolment**

Name of Division	Yes		No		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Barishal	3	0.55	45	8.27	48	8.82
Chattogram	25	4.60	83	15.26	108	19.85
Dhaka	19	3.49	101	18.57	120	22.06
Khulna	14	2.57	70	12.87	84	15.44
Mymensingh	3	0.55	25	4.60	28	5.15
Rajshahi	1	0.18	74	13.60	75	13.79
Rangpur	6	1.10	46	8.46	52	9.56
Sylhet	27	4.96	2	0.37	29	5.33
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>18.01</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>81.99</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The data regarding the previous education of the surveyed learners sheds light on the educational background of the target population and highlights areas for targeted intervention. A striking finding is that a significant majority, approximately 82% of the respondents, did not have any prior admission to a formal school. This underscores the prevalence of educational exclusion and barriers to access faced by a large segment of the population, indicating the need for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of non-enrollment.

Furthermore, the finding that only 18% of the learners had dropped out of primary school suggests that while some children may have had initial access to education, they were unable to continue their schooling for various

reasons. Understanding the factors contributing to primary school dropout rates is crucial for designing effective retention strategies and preventing further attrition from the education system.

The regional distribution of learners who were not admitted to any school provides valuable insights into geographical disparities in educational access. It is notable that a significant proportion of these learners come from the Dhaka Division (18.57%), Chattogram Division (15.26%), and Rajshahi Division (13.60%). These findings indicate that certain regions face particularly acute challenges in ensuring equitable access to education, potentially due to factors such as socioeconomic inequality, inadequate infrastructure, or cultural barriers.

#### 5.4.9 Learning Environment of the LCs

**Table 8: Learning Environment of the LCs**

Rating	Number of Learner	%
Not Good	00	00
Good	56	10.29
Very Good	488	89.71
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>100</b>

The study aimed to assess the learning environment and academic atmosphere of the Learning Centers (LCs) by surveying the learners. The questionnaire included inquiries about various aspects such as the condition of the house and classroom, location, noise levels, traffic, and other ambient factors like lighting and ventilation. Respondents were asked to rate these aspects on a three-point scale: "Not Good," "Good," and "Very Good."

The findings reveal that an overwhelming majority of the surveyed learners, constituting approximately 90%, rated the learning environment of their respective LCs as "Very Good." This high rating suggests a positive perception among learners regarding the overall quality of the academic atmosphere and learning conditions within the LCs.

It is noteworthy that none of the respondents rated the learning environment as "Not Good," indicating a notable absence of severe deficiencies or concerns reported by the learners. However, a smaller proportion, accounting for around 10.29% of the respondents, perceived the learning environment as "Good," suggesting that there may still be areas for improvement in certain aspects of the LCs' academic settings.

Overall, the overwhelmingly positive assessment provided by the learners underscores the importance of creating conducive learning environments within LCs, which play a vital role in facilitating effective teaching and learning experiences. These findings emphasize the significance of continued efforts to maintain and enhance the quality of learning environments in LCs to support the holistic development and educational attainment of the enrolled learners.

#### 5.4.10 Sense of Safety and Security in the LCs

**Table 9: Sense of Safety and Security in the LCs**

Respondents	Yes/No	Number	%
Teacher	Yes	136	100
Learner	Yes	544	100
<b>Total (N)</b>		<b>680</b>	<b>100%</b>

The study sought to evaluate the sense of safety and security perceived by both teachers and learners within the Learning Centers (LCs). The respondents were asked whether learners feel safe within the LCs, with options to respond either "Yes" or "No."

The findings indicate that all surveyed teachers, constituting 100% of the total teacher respondents, affirmed

that learners feel safe within the LCs. Similarly, all learners surveyed, accounting for 100% of the total learner respondents, reported feeling safe within the LCs.

This unanimous affirmation from both teachers and learners regarding the sense of safety and security within the LCs is a positive indicator. It suggests that the LCs are successful in providing an environment that fosters feelings of safety and security among their occupants. Such a conducive atmosphere is crucial for promoting effective teaching and learning experiences, as learners are more likely to engage actively and participate in educational activities when they feel secure in their surroundings.

The high level of perceived safety and security within the LCs reflects positively on the efforts made to create supportive and nurturing environments conducive to learning. It underscores the importance of prioritizing safety measures and maintaining a positive school climate to promote the holistic development and well-being of learners. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for continued vigilance and proactive measures to address any potential safety concerns and ensure the ongoing safety and security of all individuals within the educational setting.

**Table 9.1: Learning Environment of the LCs and Sense of Safety and Security in the LCs:**

Learning Environment	Not Good	Good	Very Good	Total
Not Good	0	0	0	0
Good		56		56
Very Good			488	488
<b>Total</b>	0	56	488	544

In Table 9.1, the rows represent different ratings of the learning environment (Not Good, Good, and Very Good), while the columns represent the sense of safety and security (Yes or No). The frequencies in each cell denote the number of respondents falling into the corresponding category. For example, 56 respondents rated the learning environment as Good and also reported a sense of safety and security.

**Table 9.2: Learning Environment of the LCs and Sense of Safety and Security in the LCs**

Sense of Safety and Security	Yes	No	Total
Yes	680	0	680
No			0
<b>Total</b>	680	0	680

In Table 9.2, the rows represent the sense of safety and security (Yes or No), while the columns represent the learning environment ratings. This table displays the frequencies of respondents reporting their sense of safety and security, irrespective of the learning environment rating. For instance, 680 respondents reported feeling safe and secure.

The Chi-square test involves calculating the expected frequencies for each cell based on the total frequencies in the rows and columns. Subsequently, the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value is computed using the Chi-square formula. The degrees of freedom are determined based on the number of rows and columns in the contingency table.

Now, Let's calculate the chi-square test:

#### Calculate Expected Frequencies:

To calculate the expected frequencies, Lets use the formula: Expected Frequency = (Row Total \* Column Total) / Grand Total

For example, the expected frequency for "Good" and "Yes" would be: Expected Frequency = (544 \* 56) / 680  $\approx$  44.947

**Calculate Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Value:**

Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) =  $\Sigma [(Observed\ Frequency - Expected\ Frequency)^2 / Expected\ Frequency]$

**Determine Degrees of Freedom (df):**

Degrees of Freedom (df) = (Number of Rows - 1) \* (Number of Columns - 1)

**Analyze the Result:**

Compare the calculated  $\chi^2$  value with the critical value from the chi-square distribution table for the given degrees of freedom and desired level of significance.

If the calculated  $\chi^2$  value is greater than the critical value, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant association between the two variables (Learning Environment and Sense of Safety and Security). Otherwise, the study fails to reject the null hypothesis.

**5.4.11 Use of Teaching Materials in the LCs****Table 10: Teaching Materials Used in the LCs**

Teaching Material	Number of Respondents		%
Blackboard, chalk, duster, bag, pen, pencil, Eraser, Pencil Cutter, Text Books, and leaflets	Learner	544	100
	Teacher	136	100
<b>Total (N)</b>		<b>680</b>	<b>100</b>

The study aimed to assess the availability and utilization of teaching materials within the Learning Centers (LCs). Respondents were asked about the teaching materials commonly used during instructional activities, with a focus on items such as blackboards, chalk, stationery, textbooks, and leaflets.

The findings reveal that all surveyed learners (100% of the total learner respondents) reported the use of a comprehensive range of teaching materials, including blackboards, chalk, dusters, bags, pens, pencils, erasers, pencil cutters, textbooks, and leaflets. Similarly, all surveyed teachers (100% of the total teacher respondents) also affirmed the utilization of these teaching materials within the LCs.

This unanimous agreement among both learners and teachers underscores the widespread availability and effective use of essential teaching materials in the LCs. The presence of diverse teaching aids, such as blackboards for visual demonstrations, textbooks for reference, and stationery for interactive learning activities, contributes to creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment. These materials not only facilitate the delivery of lessons but also enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning processes.

The utilization of a variety of teaching materials reflects a commitment to providing learners with well-rounded educational experiences that cater to their diverse learning needs. By incorporating multiple modalities of instruction and employing a range of teaching resources, LCs can optimize learning outcomes and promote student engagement and comprehension.

Furthermore, the consistent use of teaching materials by both teachers and learners highlights the importance placed on resourcefulness and innovation in instructional practices within the LCs. It indicates a proactive approach to leveraging available resources to maximize educational opportunities and support the holistic development of learners.

**5.5 Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative data collected through various methods such as FGDs, KIIs, LC observation, Local-Level Workshop, and SWOT analysis have been analyzed to evaluate the quality aspects of the project and to validate the findings obtained from the questionnaire survey. The findings are summarized as follows:

### 5.5.1 FGD Summary

Participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) included learners from the Learning Centers (LCs), parents, guardians, teachers, and local residents. A total of 16 FGDs were conducted across the selected 16 districts, with each discussion group comprising 8 to 10 participants. The FGDs aimed to gather diverse perspectives on various aspects, leading to the identification of major findings.



#### (i) Aspiration of the Learners

Learners express hope for better education in informal primary schools, aiming for further education in high school and colleges. They aspire to pursue various professions such as doctors, advocates, teachers, police officers, army personnel, and engineers.

#### (ii) Facilities Created by the LCS

The participants indicate a good number of Facilities created by the LCs. The significant ones are listed below:

LCs provide a second chance for meritorious but deprived, poor, and dropout children.

Learners receive free education without any expenditure and are provided with necessary learning equipment.

- LCs are conveniently located within the community, reducing transportation costs and facilitating easy communication between teachers and guardians.
- The rate of literacy is increasing, and out-of-school children are receiving modern-stream education.

#### (iii) Quality of Learning

Both the teachers and parents are of the view that the learners are learning well. Most of the teachers say that the learners are achieving competencies in reading, writing, and calculating. The LCs have created a chance for mainstreaming of the OoSC.

- Teachers and parents report that learners are achieving competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Mainstreaming of out-of-school children is facilitated by LCs, with some learners transitioning to government primary schools or madrasas.
- Club-day activities enhance learners' talents and skills, fostering a sense of cleanliness through participation in cleaning activities.



#### (iv) Co-curricular Activities

On national days the authority arranges cultural competitions and indoor sports. Outdoor sports are mostly impossible due to the shortage of playgrounds and wide space. The learners usually participate in singing, dancing, drawing, and reciting poems, and rhymes. They also play Ludo, Chess, and other indoor games.



- LCs organize cultural competitions and indoor sports activities on national days.

- Learners participate in various activities such as singing, dancing, drawing, reciting poems, rhymes, and indoor games like Ludo and Chess.

#### (v) Problems Existing in the LCs:

- Absenteeism among learners, particularly boys, due to early morning work commitments.
- Child marriage contributes to the absenteeism of girl learners.
- Irregular disbursement of stipends and shortages of textbooks.
- Delayed payment of salaries and house rent for teachers.
- Lack of breaks and tiffin provisions for teachers during long class hours.
- Inadequate notebook supplies, with demands for 120-page notebooks for classes two to four.

#### (vi) Demand for Additional Facilities:

- Teachers and learners request more educational charts, monthly training sessions, and vocational teaching on basic computer usage.
- Extension of LC capacity up to class five, provision of tiffin for both teachers and learners and an increase in schooling hours and teaching staff.

### 5.5.2 Key Informant Interviews (KII) Summary

The study has arranged 32 interviews with the key personnel related to the program. KII includes 16 Assistant Directors of DBNFE of the selected 16 districts, eight CMC members, seven program officers of the ISAs recruited for the program, and one high official from the MoPME. Aspect-wise information gathered through those interviews is presented below—

#### (i) Achievement of enrollment

All participants confirm that the target has been met, with enrollment reaching nearly 100% and dropout rates at 0%. Additionally, the attendance of learners surpasses 90%. While acknowledging the challenges encountered in reintegrating Out-of-School Children (OoSC) into Learning Centers (LCs), all interviewees emphasize the program's success in achieving its objectives. Despite ongoing challenges, the program has proven to be effective thus far.



#### (ii) Opportunities Created by the Program

The program has created many opportunities for out-of-school children. The common ones are given below:

- The program provides a second chance for learning to drop out and out-of-school children, with free educational materials and relief from educational expenses for guardians.

- LCs offer a conducive learning environment, proximity to home, and opportunities for children with special needs.
- Cordial relationships between teachers and learners enhance learning outcomes.

**(iii) Problems in the LCs:** Challenges include delays in book and stipend distribution, irregular salary payments for teachers, lack of DBNFE infrastructure at district levels, weak monitoring due to workforce shortages at Upazila/Thana levels, insufficient teacher training, and the absence of subject-specific training.

**(iv) Steps to be Taken:** Recommendations include establishing teaching and training infrastructure at district levels, increasing workforce presence at Upazila/Thana levels for monitoring, upgrading LCs to provide lifelong teaching, supplying more teaching-learning materials, timely fund disbursement, providing benches instead of mats, offering tiffin for teachers and learners, introducing one-year courses, and providing school bags and uniforms biannually.

The qualitative data analysis highlights the successes, challenges, and opportunities of the program, along with recommendations for further improvement to ensure quality education and enhance learning outcomes in Learning Centers.

## 6. KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The reintegration of out-of-school children into the education system is a vital initiative for promoting inclusive and equitable education. This introduction explores the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs, covering various aspects including the learning environment, safety, teacher training, geographic distribution, challenges, recommendations, and opportunities. Quantitative analysis demonstrates promising outcomes, with nearly 100% enrollment and minimal dropout rates observed among reintegrated children. Complementing these insights, qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) provide nuanced perspectives on program impact, emphasizing factors like the quality of the learning environment, teacher training, and the sense of safety and security within Learning Centers. Despite challenges such as absenteeism and resource shortages, recommendations for improvement include infrastructure enhancements and increased training opportunities, highlighting the transformative potential of programs aimed at reintegrating out-of-school children.

**(a) Mainstreaming of Out-of-School Children:** Quantitative analysis confirms the successful mainstreaming of out-of-school children, evidenced by nearly 100% enrollment and minimal dropout rates. Qualitative insights from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) further validate the program's effectiveness in providing a second chance for education to out-of-school children, highlighting its impact on their educational journey.

**(b) Quality of Learning Environment:** Quantitative data indicates a high level of satisfaction among both learners and teachers regarding the learning environment, with over 89% rating it as "Very Good." Qualitative findings reinforce this positive sentiment, emphasizing the conducive facilities, adequate teaching materials, and engaging co-curricular activities that contribute to effective learning outcomes within the learning centers.

**(c) Sense of Safety and Security:** Both quantitative and qualitative analyses converge on a unanimous perception of safety and security among learners and teachers within the Learning Centers. This shared sense of safety fosters a conducive learning environment, allowing learners to focus on their studies without concerns about their well-being.

**(d) Teacher Training and Qualification:** Quantitative data highlights a high percentage of teachers (97.8%) receiving training post-appointment, although qualitative analysis reveals a demand for subject-specific training. Examination of academic qualifications demonstrates a diverse range, from SSC to Postgraduate levels, with a majority holding HSC or Graduation degrees, indicating a reasonably qualified teaching workforce.

**(e) Geographic Distribution and Learner Background:** The geographic distribution of Learning Centers predominantly focuses on village/ward areas, serving learners from the coastal, slum, and chor areas. Learner backgrounds suggest a substantial proportion (82%) have not previously been admitted to any school, particularly prevalent in regions such as Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi divisions, highlighting the program's outreach to marginalized communities.

**(f) Challenges and Recommendations:** Identified challenges include absenteeism, irregular stipend



disbursement, book shortages, and inadequate teacher resources. Recommendations encompass infrastructure enhancements, workforce expansion for monitoring, increased training opportunities, and improved resource allocation to address these challenges effectively.

**(g) Opportunities and Aspirations:** Learning Centers provide opportunities for skill development, talent promotion, and the mainstreaming of out-of-school children, nurturing aspirations for higher education and diverse professions among learners. These opportunities empower learners to envision brighter futures and contribute positively to their communities, illustrating the transformative potential of the education program.

These key findings reflect the comprehensive analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing insights into the achievements, challenges, and potential areas for improvement within the Out-of-School Children's Education Program.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings elucidated in preceding sections, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the efficacy and influence of initiatives targeting the mainstreaming of out-of-school children. A comprehensive analysis, blending quantitative and qualitative assessments, has delineated challenges spanning from the quality of educational settings to teacher preparation and geographic accessibility. In light of this holistic comprehension of the prevailing landscape, the subsequent recommendations endeavor to rectify present deficiencies, leverage available opportunities, and propel these programs toward heightened efficacy and inclusivity:

**(a) Enhanced Teacher Training:** Implement regular subject-based training sessions for teachers to enhance educational delivery quality and meet the varied learning requirements of students.

**(b) Infrastructure Development:** Allocate resources for improving infrastructure in Learning Centers, including the provision of adequate teaching materials, classrooms, and amenities to create a conducive learning environment.

**(c) Strengthened Monitoring Mechanisms:** Establish a robust monitoring framework at the district and local levels to ensure the timely disbursement of stipends, availability of textbooks, and adherence to program guidelines.

**(d) Addressing Absenteeism:** Develop targeted interventions to address absenteeism among students, particularly in urban slums and char regions, through community and stakeholder engagement to identify and alleviate root causes.

**(e) Learning Centers' Capacity Expansion:** Evaluate the feasibility of increasing Learning Center capacities to serve students up to the fifth grade, thereby easing the progression to advanced educational stages.

**(f) Regularized Stipend Disbursement:** Ensure the regular and timely disbursement of stipends to all eligible students, reducing financial hurdles to education and encouraging consistent attendance.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The successful mainstreaming of out-of-school children into the education system is crucial for promoting inclusive and equitable education. Through a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative insights, this study has highlighted the significant strides made in this endeavor, including high enrollment rates, positive perceptions of the learning environment, and a sense of safety and security within Learning Centers. Despite challenges such as absenteeism and resource shortages, the findings underscore the transformative potential of education programs aimed at reintegrating out-of-school children. By implementing targeted recommendations such as enhanced teacher training, infrastructure development, and strengthened monitoring mechanisms, policymakers and stakeholders can further enhance the effectiveness of these programs and ensure that every child has access to quality education, paving the way for a brighter and more inclusive future.

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