

The Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II)

KEY STATISTICS

Basic data (2003 unless otherwise stated)	
Child population (aged 6 to 10)	18.1 million
Number of children enrolled in school (aged 6 to 10)	17.7 million
Primary school enrolment (% net, boys/ girls)	82/ 86
Primary school children reaching grade 5 (%)	65
Never been enrolled in school (boys/ girls)	15/ 13
Enrolment by types of school	
Formal school (boys/ girls)	85/ 86
Non-formal school (boys/ girls)	8/ 9
Madrasa (Islamic school) (boys/ girls)	7/ 5
Teacher - student ratio	1:67
Average contact time at school per year	587 hours
Adult literacy rate (older than 15, male/ female)	50/ 31

BACKGROUND

Bangladesh has one of the largest primary education systems in the world with an estimated 18 million primary school aged children (6 to 10 years) and 320,000 teachers in more than 78,000 schools. The Primary Education Compulsory Act passed in 1990 made primary education free and compulsory for all children up to Grade 5.

The Government of Bangladesh recognizes education as a means of reducing poverty and improving the quality of life for children. As a signatory to the Convention of the Right of the Child, the Government of Bangladesh, with assistance of development partners, has made positive steps towards fulfilling children's rights to education, the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals. As a result, the country has made significant progress towards universal primary education, achieving gender parity with high enrolment rates (Net Enrolment Rate: 82% for boys, 86% for girls, State of the World's Children, 2007). The completion rate has also increased at primary level.

ISSUES

Despite many achievements during the past decade, major improvements are still needed in order for all children to receive the benefit of quality education. The major challenges are access, equity and the quality of education.

In terms of **access**, the high enrolment rates achieved for both boys and girls do not yet equate to covering ALL the children in Bangladesh. There are still more than three million out-of-school children throughout the country. The net enrolment rate of the children in urban slums is 20 per cent lower than the national average. Schooling opportunities are very limited for some specific groups, such as working children, disabled children, indigenous children and those in remote areas or living in extreme poverty. And even for those who are enrolled, completion of the primary education cycle is another critical issue; only two-thirds of them eventually reach Grade 5.

Equity is a major issue in the aspects of gender and inclusiveness for disadvantaged children. While gender parity has been achieved in primary and lower secondary enrolments, the number of girl students significantly decreases through secondary school. In general, girls participate, complete and achieve less than boys.

The school environment is far from fully inclusive. Disadvantaged children - those groups mentioned earlier such as children with disabilities or from ethnic minorities - are particularly vulnerable to exclusion from educational opportunities. For example, it is estimated that approximately 1.6 million primary school age children have some form of disability in the country and among them only 10 per cent participate in some form of education. There are many children who are not going to school but who could attend if schools were more inclusive and child-friendly.

The **quality** of the teaching-learning process, the school environment and children's learning achievements also remain as major challenges. For example, the traditional and dominant way of teaching tends to focus on memorizing facts. There is little emphasis on developing analytical, practical or vocational skills.

The teacher-student ratio is high, with nearly one teacher for 70 students. This is because of a chronic shortage of teachers and school facilities. Poor qualifications and a lack of motivation for teachers are crucial issues.

The number of contact hours students spend at school is also limited. Grade 1 and 2 students (at least 6-years-old) in formal school attend class for 2.5 hours a day. Grades 3, 4 and 5 spend four hours a day at school. The annual contact time is fewer than 590 hours, one of the lowest in the world. In China, students spend 1200 hours per year in school.

As a result of all these factors, children's achievement levels are far below the national targets. Only about half of the primary school graduates achieve the minimum national curriculum competencies.



ACTION

UNICEF, with the Government of Bangladesh, has been taking innovative measures during the past decade to achieve education for ALL Bangladeshi children.

Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL) Project (1996-2004)

In the First Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-I) led by the Government of Bangladesh, UNICEF supported the IDEAL project covering 38 districts (out of 64). The project's main goal was to improve the quality of primary education. This was achieved by enhancing teaching-learning methods; improving the school environment and facilitating children's learning achievement.



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The other main theme of the project was the decentralization of school planning, management and monitoring, to make these processes more responsive to local needs and to restore the traditional school-community link.

An important objective of the project was the creation of a 'child-friendly' school environment - focusing more on girls, which allowed girls to achieve the same levels of enrolment, completion and achievement as boys. One of the innovations to meet the challenge was introducing the Multiple Way of Teaching and Learning (MWTL) approach, used to promote more interactive and child-centered teaching in the classroom. For instance, this included training the teachers to encourage children to ask questions or to make learning fun through games or songs.

Making the schools child-friendly also looked at the school's physical environment, removing chairs and tables so children could sit on the floor in a semi circle for combined activities, putting up pictures and children's work on the wall.

The project used a wide range of innovative activities, including teacher training on MWTL and subject-based teaching techniques. It also trained head teachers on school management and academic supervision, and School Management Committees (SMCs) on school level planning.

Child survey and school catchment area mapping were introduced while local level planning was promoted at district, upazila (sub-district) and school levels. Upazila Resource Centres were established for decentralizing in-service teacher training focusing on their needs. There was also a national communication campaign promoting quality primary education and girls' education.

The project was closed in December 2004 with outstanding coverage and achievement. It covered nearly 40,000 schools in 38 districts. More than 150,000 teachers were trained in interactive teaching methods. A total of 10.3 million children benefited from the project; more than half of the primary schools and primary students in Bangladesh.



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The Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) (2004-2009)

Following the completion of all the PEDP-I projects, including IDEAL, the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) was launched in September 2004 by the Government of Bangladesh, for 2004-2009. PEDP-II is a coordinated and integrated sub-sector-wide programme with technical and financial assistance from a consortium of 11 donors, led by the Asian Development Bank. Successes from the IDEAL project have been incorporated for adaptation and expansion.

PEDP-II aims to ensure the quality of primary education for ALL children in the country through increasing primary school access, participation and completion. It also aims to improve the quality of students' learning achievements while

ensuring the Primary School Quality Level standard. PEDP-II will be implemented in all the 64 districts covering approximately 17.7 million children and 280,000 teachers in 61,000 schools. Government education officials at different levels, SMC members and local communities will also be involved in PEDP-II activities.

UNICEF has been taking an active role in the development and implementation of PEDP-II as a parallel funder. UNICEF's major programme support areas are:

Local-Level Planning: Training government officials at different levels on participatory local-level planning, and school management training for head teachers, local education officials and SMC members.

In-Service Teacher Training: Training current teachers about interactive teaching-learning approaches, subject-based training, and professional development training for head teachers, URC instructors and local education officials.

Social mobilization and community awareness: Awareness campaigns for quality education and girls' education through mass media, national and sub-national education events and social mobilization initiatives. These include a TV drama series about quality education, promoting UNICEF's animated girl-hero Meena and other printed materials.

Initiatives for educationally disadvantaged groups of children: A groundbreaking study analysing the educational situation of disadvantaged children, including those in extreme poverty, with disabilities, working children and those from ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups. The study will also examine current practices for Inclusive Education.

This area will also include various forms of technical assistance for programmes to improve access, equity and quality for disadvantaged children.

IMPACT

During the past decade, Bangladesh has made great progress in improving the primary education situation. The number of enrolled students increased from 12 million in 1990 to 17.7 million in 2001, and net enrolment rate was boosted from 60 per cent in 1990 to 83 per cent in 2003. The rate of dropouts decreased to 33 per cent in 2001 from 59 per cent in 1991. Girls' primary school enrolment has increased, achieving gender parity. The percentage of female teachers increased to 38 per cent in 2001, up from 21 per cent in 1990.

A study on UNICEF's IDEAL project found its impact was positive in all strategic project areas, especially in the quality of teaching-learning in the classroom. It found:

- There were more interactive teaching-learning practices used in the classroom. Children, parents and teachers were found to appreciate the interactive teaching approaches.
- Awareness was created on quality primary education among parents and teachers.
- School level planning processes encouraged better links among teachers, parents and SMCs. The community and SMCs became more involved in school management and supervision through school planning exercises.
- There were improvements in enrolment, attendance and overall learning achievements.

Under PEDP-II, UNICEF will assist the Government of Bangladesh in achieving its national target of "a primary net enrolment rate of 95 per cent with 85 per cent completion and 65 per cent achievement of nationally defined competencies for girls and boys".