

## Child Friendly Schools (CFS)

### Issue

Despite having made significant progress over the last 10 years in expanding the education sector, Bangladesh still faces challenges to improve the quality and equity of the system. Nearly 50 per cent of children fail to achieve basic competencies in literacy and numeracy leading to a high dropout rate. Large portions of vulnerable children also continue to lag behind in key indicators. For example, only 65.1 per cent of children residing in slums attend primary school. This contrasts with above 83.9 per cent of children residing in urban areas.<sup>1</sup>

Inequity in education is further affected by disparities caused due to location, gender inequality, early marriage, child labour and disability. School facilities in marginalised areas also restrict children's capacity to learn. Only 58 per cent of schools have functioning potable water and only 42 per cent of classrooms in rural areas are in good condition.<sup>2</sup>

### Action

The government, in line with the new National Education Policy (2010), is committed to increasing the quality of and addressing inequities within primary education. UNICEF provides support to this commitment through the Child Friendly School (CFS) intervention.

The CFS intervention utilises a rights-based approach to improve the quality of learning in primary schools through whole-of-school development. CFS translates the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into child-centred classroom and school management practices. It also addresses equity in the provision of education services to all children. This pilot focuses on reducing disparities amongst disadvantaged groups of children in the 20 low performing districts and urban slums targeted through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).



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The entry point for implementation is the School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP). The SLIP has been designed to strengthen the local level school development process. It highlights areas that need to be addressed to minimise inequalities and increase the quality of education and learning achievement.

The CFS approach addresses the whole school environment including physical, socio-emotional and pedagogical aspects and ensures children are healthy, safe, protected and in a gender sensitive environment. CFS provides equal opportunity for each child to learn, develop and realise his/her full potential through education by focusing on teaching and learning processes for children to achieve learning outcomes. CFS attempts to the school development approach from centrally designed national standards to a locally driven holistic approach to school and learner quality.

### Key Challenges

CFS is a revolutionary concept in Bangladesh. Its implementation faces a number of challenges that are being overcome by the strong partnership between the government and UNICEF. Some of the major challenges include:

- Increasing the capacity of the Government of Bangladesh to implement a full package of CFS initiatives. This includes the capacity of implementation staff at the school and local level, facilitators at the district and upazila level and administrators at the central level.
- Ensuring that schools have the capacity to identify critical areas for improvement beyond infrastructure and logistics. This requires teachers to address each child's learning needs by making the classroom truly inclusive.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Directorate of Primary Education, Annual Sector Performance Report, 2013



- Shifting teachers' attitudes from authoritarian, rote-based teaching-learning to participatory activities.
- Providing teachers with the skills and training to properly integrate children from vulnerable backgrounds.
- Identifying local tradespeople who are capable of building identified infrastructure in schools where renovation is required.

### Strategic Approach

The CFS intervention is initially being implemented as a pilot to inform the development of a model that, if mainstreamed, will address access, quality and equity in primary education across Bangladesh. The pilot approach contributes towards reducing disparities in the most marginalised United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) districts by ensuring equitable access to quality education in the short term.

Utilising the CFS approach ensures the engagement of local communities in planning, mobilizing resources and implementation. This helps to ensure the sustainability of the intervention and develop the capacity of all community members.

### Geographic Location

Districts were selected from the UNDAF low performing districts in Bangladesh.

This intervention is also being implemented in the urban slums of Bhaluka, Mirpur and Korail.

### Expected Results

This intervention aims to upgrade the overall quality of participating schools. Expected results include:

- Improved quality of teaching and learning processes in targeted primary schools.
- Increased attendance and higher levels of student engagement amongst children from targeted schools.
- Renovation/construction of classrooms to ensure child friendly standards.
- Renovation/construction of Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities that ensure girls stay in schools.
- Training of teachers (and training of teacher trainers) in child centred/child friendly/ECL pedagogies.
- Orientation for District Primary Education Officers and SMC members on CFS/SLIP to ensure a supportive environment and community engagement for sustainability.
- Provision of teaching/learning materials/supplementary reading materials.
- Provision of facilities for extra curricula activities.