

Decentralised School Management and Governance

Issue

Bangladesh has a population of over 160 million people who live in a range of geographic and cultural settings. Existing school planning mechanisms are “top-down” and follow a “one size fits all approach, rather than allowing schools the flexibility to provide services and facilities that best meet the needs of their local communities. Decentralising school planning provides benefits to both schools and communities.

As part of the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP2) steps were taken to support decentralised school management. Decentralisation has been facilitated through the creation of School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) and Upazila (sub-district) Primary Education Plan (UPEP) templates and implementation guidelines. These plans provide resources to School Management Committees (SMCs) and Upazila Education Offices that assist them in identifying priority areas for the improvement of education services.

Despite the operationalization of these tools many challenges remain in the implementation of SLIP. The planning process remains legalistic with limited consultations and participation, particularly in schools that have not yet been supported. Further training and capacity building is also required at the local, district and national level to ensure these tools facilitate effective and efficient decentralised school management.

Action

To facilitate more effective decentralization UNICEF is supporting the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) to develop more comprehensive SLIP and UPEP guidelines that will allow School Management Committees (SMCs) to effectively implement SLIPs

and strengthen local level planning capacity. DPE is using the revised guidelines to allocate SLIP and UPEP grants to schools and Upazilas.

UNICEF Education Officers in the six field offices are working with the District Primary Education Officers (DPEOs), Upazila Education Officers (UEOs), SMCs and other local representatives to support the implementation of SLIPs and UPEPs. The engagement enhances local level planning capacity and helps to improve the quality of education in schools. It also reduces disparities and strengthens the decentralization process. This ensures balanced and holistic planning and take into consideration all factors that may affect children’s learning.

SLIP and UPEP are complementary interventions that are implemented together to strengthen local planning and action. Therefore, UNICEF technical support will involve piloting and modelling UPEP in order to ensure SLIP and UPEP can operate in harmony. This will strengthen piloting and also help to establish evidence that school autonomy in planning



and flexible financing can contribute to increased equity and school quality, particularly in the most marginalized areas/Upazilas. The feedback and evidence from this process will guide DPE annual



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planning, which will be mainstreamed within PEDP3 once a successful model is finalised.

Key Challenges

While SLIP has been endorsed by DPE to support decentralized school management and improved local level planning, much work still needs to be done to develop both local community and government capacity to support programme implementation.

Strategic Approach

Engaging DPEOs, UEOs, SMCs and other representatives from local government in the school level planning exercise ensures balanced and holistic planning and considers all factors that may affect a child’s learning and addresses multiple deprivations.

The involvement of other local representatives, beyond the SMCs is also a major step in attracting local contributions, creating ownership of schools and establishing sustainability. Mobilizing and utilizing local resources is a cost-effective way of accomplishing the school improvement.

Geographic Location

The decentralized school management and governance programme covers the whole of Bangladesh; however, the piloting and modelling is focused in 20 low performing/ United Nations

Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) districts.

Achieved

Guidelines for the SLIP, UPEP and SMC have been revised to further strengthen the decentralization process and improve access, equity and quality aspects of education.

Based on the revised guidelines DPE has distributed SLIP grants to 60 per cent of schools in Bangladesh. UNICEF also provided financial support to enable 50 Upazilas across Bangladesh to undertake activities necessary for developing their Upazila Primary Education Plans (UPEPs).

Expected Results

Projected benefits include the ability for School Management Committees (SMCs) and local communities to:

- Implement changes that respond to the individual needs of each school and the dynamics of the local community.
- Focus on countrywide issues manifested in the local context. For example, the impact of cultural segregation changes in different locales.
- Better engage in the school system leading to a better understanding of the benefits of schooling as well as an increase in local capacity development.

