

Inclusive Education

Issue

In Bangladesh, improving and supporting equity and access to quality schooling is one of the most important components of the education sector programmes. The Government has demonstrated its commitment through the country's endorsement of Education for All (EFA), its commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015 and the development of a Strategy Action Plan on Inclusive Education.

The Third Primary Education Development Programme's (PEDP3) Inclusive Education Framework recognises that marginalised children that are segregated from mainstream schooling often remain excluded in adult life from the society and community in which they live. Consequently, the government aims to mainstream Inclusive Education (IE) in formal schools attended by children from tribal areas, ethnic minorities, and children with learning and physical disabilities.

Despite these efforts there are still major challenges related to inclusiveness in the education sector. The 2010 Child Education and Literacy Survey found that 59.4 per cent of children with a disability aged three to 14 were enrolled in school. The enrolment rate for rural children with disabilities (60.7 per cent) was higher than for urban children (54.3 per cent). This contrasts with a national net enrolment rate of 96.7 per cent in 2012.¹ Other vulnerable children including ethnic minorities and children in geographically isolated areas also continue to show lower enrolment rates than other children.

Action

This intervention provides pre-primary and primary education services that address the particular needs of marginalised populations in formal schools.

As part of the PEDP3's focus on disparity reduction, UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) to mainstream IE. This will be achieved by the development and operationalization of a Gender and Inclusive Education Action Plan. The goal of this plan is to

improve learning outcomes and completion rates for both boys and girls by creating a gender-friendly and inclusive learning environment. The four major components of the plan are:

- a) Learning outcomes;
- b) Participation and disparities;
- c) Decentralization; and
- d) Planning and management.

UNICEF field offices are also working with local level government officials to implement School Level Improvement Plans (SLIPs) utilising the Child Friendly School (CFS²) approach. SLIPs drive decentralised management of schools to ensure that schools implement initiatives that support the inclusion of all children in the local area. This addresses the needs of all children from tribal areas, ethnic minorities, economically deprived homes and those with disabilities.



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² CFS is a quality framework which goes beyond pedagogy, promotes a holistic approach to education that also includes other elements such as provision of water and sanitation, health and safety measures, protection of children from risky situations and links the school to community. The CFS approach responds to issues of access, quality and equity in education.

¹ Directorate of Primary Education, Annual Sector Performance Report, 2012.



Key Challenges

Stigmatisation and discrimination against children with disabilities exists among communities in Bangladesh. Overcoming this requires a concerted effort from all levels within the education sector.

IE is, in most cases, seen in terms of including vulnerable and marginal groups into the mainstream system, however, this should not be the case. IE should be viewed as developing the capacity of schools to meet the learning needs of all children in their communities. This reduces the possibility of marginalisation, stigmatisation and discrimination.

Strategic Approach

UNICEF is working with education partners to implement a multi-pronged approach that aims to increase the awareness of and action within the IE space. Elements of the strategic approach include:

- Technical assistance provided to help government better understand the benefits of and rationale for IE.
- Teacher training that increases awareness of IE issues.
- Provision of IE teaching/learning materials (Braille materials, visual impairment, etc).
- Mobilisation of communities to ensure marginalised children are enrolled in schools.
- Advocacy to break the conception that marginalised children should not be part of the mainstream school group.
- The inclusion of IE issues within the School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP).

Geographic Location

The IE programme is implemented country-wide with a specific focus on marginalized areas including 20 low performing/United Nations Development Assistance Framework districts.

Expected Results

The IE intervention has a number of expected results. These include:

- Development of materials for remedial teaching and a strategy on primary education in urban slums will be given priority in 2014.
- Orientation of the Directorate of Primary Education officers, District Primary Education Officers, Upazila Primary Education Officers, and both union and school level education personnel (including SMCs) on IE.
- Incorporation of IE elements in the next review and revision of the Diploma in Primary Education course in 2014.
- Gender and Inclusive Education Action Plan implemented.
- MLE materials developed and introduced for PPE in five languages and gradually expanded for grade I and II.
- Training of teachers on IE in UNDAF districts.

DPE has incorporated IE into all key policy, strategy/plan and curriculum documents to address learning needs of all children. This includes the curriculum of the Diploma in Primary Education.

DPE has developed guidelines for the implementation of the Gender and Inclusive Education Strategy and diagnostic tools for identifying children with special education needs.