



Impact of “Basic education for hard to reach urban children (non-formal education project–3) project” to provide basic education equivalent to class three (grade-III) for urban hard to reach children of six divisional cities of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT. This paper focuses on the national attention on working urban children and their educational needs. Through implementation of the “Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Children Project” it has benefited about 346500 children aged between 8-14 years by providing non-formal basic education across the six divisional cities of Bangladesh. The main objective of the project was established ways for children engaged in hazardous labor to gain access to education. It emerged that working urban children were also hard to reach because the education system has not regarded them as potential clients, because investment flows were against them and because their communities did not think their education was necessary.

Key Words: Basic Education, Hard to Reach, Non-Formal Education.

INTRODUCTION

According to the government estimates in the year of 2000 there are 40 million illiterates between 8 and 35 years old. About 6.3 million of these are working children between the age of 5 and 14 years, many of whom are involved in hazardous child labor. Despite the considerable progress about 10% of the primary age group never enroll in school. For the most part these are the children of very poor families. Only about 40% of the children of very poor families enroll in school. The reasons for non-enrollment are mainly economic. Poor parents cannot afford the direct costs of attendance. Parents of the very poor children cannot afford the opportunity costs of school attendance such as their children must work in the home cooking, gathering fuel, child rearing, or outside in petty trading.

“Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Children (Non-formal Education Project-3) Project” sought to provide quality non-formal basic education up to the equivalency of formal education grade III (three) to 351,000 urban working children aged between 8-14 years in the six divisional cities of Bangladesh.

The project was initiated in 1997 and was due for completion June 2004. It was implemented by the Directorate of Non-formal Education (renamed as Bureau of Non-formal Education) through about 151 partner NGOs, the project was financed by the Government of Bangladesh, SIDA, DFID, and UNICEF.

The total amount budgeted for the project was Tk. 805.799 million (the GOB contribution was Tk. 27.207 million and the donor’s contribution was Tk. 778 million). Out of this budgeted amount the total expenditure so far has been Tk. 758.621 million (GOB contribution Tk. 24.725 million and Donor’s contribution Tk. 733.896 million).

METHODOLOGY

The “Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Children Project” functioned through 11550 centers between October 1997 and October 2003, though 157 of these centers ran till 31st December 2003 in the six divisional cities of Bangladesh after the formalities of the selection of the NGOs for the project activities.

The NGOs sub-contracted to run the hard to reach learning centers were selected by the subvention committee. This was an inter-ministerial body, headed by the secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. It was assisted by the six member sub-committee led by the Director General of the Directorate of Non-formal Education. The NGOs were responsible for conducting a baseline survey of child workers in the communities where they were assigned.

Both of the teachers per center and supervisors initially received twelve days training in the use of the enhanced curriculum specifically developed for the project target group who were working and aged 8-14 years who had little or no previous school experience. It covers basic elements of the grades I-III curriculum with flexibility and included additional material on Bangladesh history and culture, health, nutrition, hygiene, environment, basic human rights, numeracy and other life skills developed by UNICEF, Bangladesh. After independence of Bangladesh, according to the principle of the National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB), the first five years duration curriculum of primary education (grades/classes I-V) of Bangladesh was prepared at 1976. In this curriculum the eight subjects such as Bangla as a mother language, mathematics, Environment, English, Religion Education, Arts and Drawing, Physical Education and Songs were included as subjects. At the time of third 5 years planning of Bangladesh (1991) this curriculum was revised. This revised primary education curriculum was known as competency based curriculum. At 2002 this curriculum was again revised and introduced goal, 22 objectives and 50 terminal competencies of primary education within these above mentioned eight subjects. The project also attempts to provide social mobilization towards the elimination of child labor. Supplementary reading materials developed by government and non-government institutes such as BRAC, Dhaka Ahsania Mission etc. are available to learners.

Teachers were then to identify and recruit 30 (thirty) working children to come to the learning center for the daily two-hour class. If children dropped out of the class or attended infrequently, teachers were expected to persuade parents and employers to encourage the child's return.

RESULTS and INTERPRETATIONS

By 2001, the subvention committee had contracted 140 NGOs to run more than 5000 learning centers in the slum areas where large numbers of working children lived.

The distribution of centers, learners and NGOs are given in the Table-1:

City	Dhaka	Chittagong	Khulna	Rajshai	Sylet	Barisal	Total
Centers	6765	2085	1335	810	300	255	11550
Percent (%)	66.2	18.2	11.7	7.1	2.6	2.2	100
Learners	202950	62550	40050	24100	9000	7650	346500
Percent (%)	66.2	18.2	11.7	7.1	2.6	2.2	100
NGOs N	98	12	36	24	14	10	194*

Source : Directorate of Non-formal Education (renamed as Bureau of Non-formal Education).

*: Some national NGOs work in more than one city.

The project could not cover 351000 children. It has benefited about 346500 children aged between 8-14 years by providing non-formal basic education equivalent to class three (Grades III) of formal education. About 150 learning centers could not be opened because some NGOs backed out from running the learning centers allocated to them at the last moment. Others had to merge some learning centers because of very few learners in those centers.

DISCUSSION

Each center was based in a small room that was used for a two-hour daily class for thirty children. Some rooms were used to run several shifts of classes during the day. Supervisors were assigned to support the work of about fifteen teachers and the centers they operated. They were also to assist teachers in maintaining student's attendance and in establishing Center Management Committee (CMC) of parents and representatives of the local community that would help in running the school. Center Management

Committee (CMC) were setup to help recruit students to ensure regular attendance of the children, teachers and to serve as a link between the centers and local authorities.

Apart from the initial 12 days of training for both supervisors and teachers, it was given refresher training for four days per year. Additional training was given to supervisors for two days on their roles and responsibilities. But in Bangladesh provision of five types of professional training for formal primary school teachers. The time schedule of the course was 24 months in three phases of eight months each. The classes were of two hours duration, six days a week. According to this estimation the children of the project set only about 450 -500 hours annually to interact with their teachers. According to the international standards, contact hours between teachers and pupils at primary level should be at least 900 hours annually. However, in Bangladesh children in classes I and II set only 500 hours annually to interact with their teachers while students from classes III to V set about 700 hours, according to statistics of Directorate of Primary Education of Bangladesh.

Teachers received an honorarium of Tk. 800 per month and supervisors Tk. 1200 per month plus a travel allowance of Tk. 300 per month. The costs of co-ordination were to be carried by the NGOs themselves. The costs per learner have been established between Tk. 1850 and Tk. 2250 for 24 months. According to the UNICEF and DFID study the costs per learner was Tk. 1853. The assumptions behind this are that each center had 30 learners. The costs per learner considered was the actual program costs and did not include the administration costs, such as those incurred by the Bureau of Non-formal Education. The total expenditure per learner was between Tk. 2161 and Tk. 2189 respectively including program and administration costs.

The learning center curriculum was designed to allow the students to learn more quickly than the curricula used in other formal school. In recognition of the realities of the working children's lives, the two years program was broken into three eight months modules that would allow working children more time to complete the course. Considering the highly mobile lives of the learners in the slum areas, modular teaching that incorporates differential learning methods was most useful. This will help in creating equivalencies that will enable any learner to enter another non-formal or a formal school if they so desire. This program introduced modular, multi-grade flexible teaching and learning strategies.

Recommendations

After graduating from learning centers, learners may aspire for better life options, either in terms of continuing education or vocational skills that will help them to get better jobs. The center needs to be located in spacious, safe and hygienic rooms and surroundings. There has to be adequate provision of drinking water and access to toilets. To be provided a snack to the learners daily with community support. Every center to have a wall magazine with contributions by the learners. Corporal punishment has to be banned from the hard to reach learning centers if any such incidence exists in the center. Urban working children need basic education, to improve their life chances.

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Bangladeş'te 6 şehirde 3. Sınıflar üzerinde uygulanan “erişilmesi güç şehir çocuklarının temel eğitimi (nonformal eğitim projesi-3) projesi”nin etkileri

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ÖZ. Bu yazının amacı ulusal dikkati kentsel çocuklar ve onların eğitim ihtiyaçlarına odaklanmaktır. Kentsel Çocuklara Ulaşma Projesi uygulamasıyla Bangladeş'te altı şehirde 8-14 yaş arasında toplam 346.500 çocuk yaygın temel eğitimden faydalanmıştır. Projenin ana amacı, tehlikeli işlerde çalışan çocukların eğitime erişmelerini sağlamaktır. Eğitim sisteminin bu çocukları potansiyel müşteri olarak kabul etmiyor olması, yatırımların onlara dönük olmayışı ve içinde buldukları toplumun onlar için eğitimin gerekli olduğuna inanmamaları nedeniyle kentsel çocuklara ulaşmanın oldukça zor olduğunu ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Temel Eğitim, Erişilmesi güç, Non-Formal Eğitim.