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Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development (PLCEHD) Project-1 in Bangladesh

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Abstract: The study was conducted to find out the activities of Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development (PLCEHD) Project-1, which is to involve the target population in a life long educational process. There is a provision of 6 months duration learners need based life skills technical trade training courses in the PLCEHD Project-1”. It will be benefited about 1.656 (revised 1.37) million rural peoples aged between 11-45 years from 6900 training centers, 232 (revised 205) upazilas, 32 districts under 6 divisions of Bangladesh. The general objective of the project was development of human resources of the country by providing post literacy and continuing education. It emerged that children of the poor people of the country were also hard to reach in the education system because investment flows were against them and because their communities did not think that their education was necessary.

Key Words: Post Literacy, Continuing Education, Non-Formal Education.

Introduction

Bangladesh is the country of about 130 million people, with four-fifths of the population living in rural areas (sources: Census Survey Report, 2001 of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics). In view of the overwhelming number of illiterates and the breadth of poverty in the country, government of Bangladesh has put high priority to non-formal education. There is a growing consensus on providing educational opportunities for the excluded and un-reached population, namely who did not complete formal education.

According to the government estimates in the year of 2000 there are 40 million illiterates between 8 and 35 years old. Despite the considerable progress about 10% of the primary age group never enrolls 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.

The project was initiated in 2001 and was due for completion December 2005 (revised 2007). The 1st phase of the project was implemented by the Directorate of Non-formal Education (renamed as Bureau of Non-formal Education) through 460 partner NGOs. The World Bank, Swiss Agency for Development cooperation (SDC) and Government of Bangladesh financed the project. In response to the request of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) to fund this project the World Bank sent Identification Mission during 30 October to 15 November 1998. From 4 – 18 July 1999 and 23 October to 04 November 1999 two missions of the World Bank visited the country for preparing the project. During 31 January to 17 February 2000 Pre-appraisal Mission completed the mission activities successfully. At this stage Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) came forward to fund the project as a co-financer with the World Bank. Development Credit Agreement (DCA) signed between Bangladesh and IDA on 14 March 2001 to support the Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development (PLCEHD) Project-1.

The total amount budgeted for the project was an amount of Taka (Tk.) 36516 lakh (revised Tk. 34112 lakh). World Bank, SDC and GOB would fund the project an amount of US\$ 53.3 million (75% of the total project cost), US\$ 7.0 million (10% of the total project cost) and US\$ 10.5 million (15% of the total project cost excluding all taxes) respectively. (At the project implementation period currency conversion rate was US\$ 1 = BD Tk. 57) Change in financing plan on account of non-extension of SDC grant beyond 30 June 2006 and re-allocation of IDA credit (unallocated amount) towards cost coverage for the shortfall in SDC cost sharing for the period from 01 July 2006 to 31 December 2007.

Process of PLCEHD-1 Project

The “PLCEHD Project-1” is functioning in 6900 ‘Post Literacy and Continuing Education (PLCE)’ training centers in 232 (revised 205) upazilas, 32 districts, 6 divisions of Bangladesh after the formalities of the selection of the NGOs for the project activities. The subvention committee had contracted 460 NGOs to run 6900 PLCE learning centers where large numbers of learner lived. The NGOs, selected by the subvention committee were sub-contracted to run the ‘Post Literacy and Continuing Education (PLCE)’ Centers. This is an inter-ministerial body headed by the secretary, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.

Directorate of Non-formal Education (renamed as Bureau of Non-formal Education, BNFE) is the executing authority of the project. Senior Management committee (SMC) chaired by Director General, BNFE formed to oversee the functioning of the project. Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) was the executing authority of the project and facilitated its implementation through following various committees setup for the purpose:

A. National Council for Primary & Mass Education: The Government has set up a National Council for Primary and Mass Education headed by the honorable Prime Minister. This council acted as an advisory and guiding forum for policy, planning and other matters related to primary education and non-formal education.

B. National Advisory Council for Non-formal Education: The Government has set up a National Advisory Council for Non-formal Education headed by the honorable Advisor/Minister, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) consisting of Secretary, MOPME; Secretary, Ministry of Education; Secretary, Ministry of Religion Affairs; Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare; Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Ministry of Labor and Manpower; Joint Secretary (Dev), MOPME; Director, IER, DU; Executive Director, BRAC; Executive Director, Dhaka Ahsania Mission and Executive Director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) as members and DG, BNFE as member secretary.

C. The Project Co-ordination Committee (PCC): With the secretary of MOPME as convener, consisting of Joint Secretary (Dev), MOPME; DG, BNFE; representative (Deputy Secretary level) of Ministry of Planning; Deputy Chief (Education Wing), Planning Commission; representative (Deputy Secretary level) of Ministry of Finance; Deputy Secretary (Dev), MOPME; Deputy Chief (Planning),

MOPME; 2 NGO representatives as members and PD, PLCEHD-1 as member secretary formulated policy guidelines and directives. The PCC would oversee the project and ensure effective co-ordination of project activities with other projects and activities in the MOPME. The PCC would help develop partnerships and linkages with the other ministries and Government departments, NGOs, credit organizations, banks and private sector organizations to support the project if would review and approve the annual implementation plan of the project. It also facilitated the development of national framework for NFE.

District Implementation and monitoring Unit (DIMU) chaired by Deputy Commissioner formed to monitor the implementation of the project at the district level. Upazila Non-formal Education Committee (UNFEC) chaired by Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) formed to monitor the implementation of the project at the Upazila level which is the second tier of the project implementation system at the local level.

Each center was based in a small room that was used for a two-hour daily class for 30 (thirty) learners per shift. The rooms were used to run 2 (two) shifts of classes (one shift for male learners and other shift for female learners) during the day. Supervisors were assigned to support the work of about fifteen centers they operated. They were also to assist teachers/facilitators in maintaining student's attendance and in establishing Center Management Committee (CMC) of parents/learners and representatives of the local community that would help in running the school and direct the center's development and program. Center Management Committee (CMC) were also setup to help recruit students to ensure regular attendance of the learners, teachers/facilitators and to serve as a link between the centers and local authorities.

Facilitators were then to identify and recruit 30 (thirty) new literate or school dropout people to come to the learning (PLCE) center for the daily two-hour class per shift (male/female shift). If learners dropped out of the class or attended infrequently, facilitators were expected to persuade parents/learners to encourage the learner's return.

Implication of the Program

The facilitators and supervisors initially received six days training in the use of the enhanced curriculum of 3 months long Post Literacy (PL) stage specifically developed for the project target group. It covers basic elements of the grades I-III non-formal education curriculum and included additional material on Bangladesh history and culture, health, nutrition, hygiene, environment, basic human rights, numeracy and other life skills. The project also attempts to provide social mobilization towards the elimination of

poverty. Supplementary reading materials developed by government and non-government institutes such as BNFE, BRAC, Dhaka Ahsania Mission etc. are available to learners.

Post-literacy (PL) course:

a). Aim: To enable the selected learners by developing, practicing and sharpening their literacy skills for take part in the continuing education (CE) program.



b). Objectives:

- To develop and sharpen the literacy level acquired earlier
- To make more aware
- To grow as worthy citizens
- To make conscious about self rights
- To make appropriate for participating in continuing education (CE) program

c). Duration of courses:

- Total period – 3 months
- Six days a week (one day weekly holiday on Fridays or any other day convenient to the learners)
- Two hours every day
- Total 144 hours allocated for post-literacy period

d). Curriculum:

- 20 issue-based discussions (8 on general topics and 12 on income generation)
- 150 follow-up books

e). Topics of lessons/discussions:

- Impart post-literacy education in the light of the reference books
- Issue-based discussions
- Discussions on income generation activities
- Provide practical and comprehensive idea about different income generation activities considering their suitability, income-expenditure, loss & profit and limitations.
- Strategy for marketing of the products
- Use of follow-up materials
- Discussion/administer other issue-based and income generating follow-up materials

f). Method of issue-based discussion

Teaching-learning method, group discussion, group work, debate, question-answer, general discussion, brain-storming, etc.

g). Extra Curricular Activities:

In order to unfold the latent potentials of the learners along with the prescribed education curriculum, various activities are organized and conducted in the centers, such as, listening to radio, viewing television, reading daily newspaper & magazine, taking part in cultural activities, inter center study tour, organizing sports, displaying Learner Generated Materials, Real Literacy Materials, Participants Generated Materials, publishing wall magazine, organizing debate, arranging telling rhyme, jokes, story, etc.

Extra-curricular activities taken/done by the implementing NGOs:

Publicity: Posturing and distribution of leaflets were done by the PI-NGOs while hoarding signs, billboards and signboards were erected in the project areas on behalf of concern NGOs.

Meetings: Orientation meetings, meetings with the guardians of the learners and CMC meetings are held regularly.

Rallies: Large rallies were held before the inauguration of the center with the cooperation of the government and non-government officials, local union parishad chairmen and members and local elites. Occasional education rally were held by the initiative of the concern organizations and with active participation of the learners, teachers, local public, CMC members and officials of the local administration.

Wall magazine: Occasional/monthly wall magazines were prepared and published during the project period with the involvement of the learners.

Newsletter: Published newsletters by some NGOs every month with literacy contribution from the learners, teachers and officials of the organization.

Field Visit: Organized field visit for the learners, teachers and CMC Members in various places in the concern Upazila and District levels. Particularly arrangement has been made for the visits of the learners in different offices in the concern Upazila.

Cultural functions: During the project period, with the support of PI-NGOs, occasional cultural functions were held with participation of the local people, teachers and learners. The items included in the cultural function were songs, folksongs, film shows, plays. The successful performers were awarded prizes.

Display of materials developed by the learners: Day long material displays were held with the materials developed by the learners.

Observance of International Days: All of the PI-NGOs along with the teachers, learners, guardians, CMC Members observed Language Day (21 February), 26 March (Independence Day), 16 December (Victory Day), etc.

Continuing Education (CE) course:

The facilitators and supervisors also received another six days training in the use of the enhanced curriculum of 6 months long Continuing Education (CE) stage specifically developed for the project target group. The neo-literates were given skill training on the basis of the existing and future demands of the local labor and industrial market.



a). Aim of Continuing Education (CE) course:

- ◆ Conducting trade based skill training for improving the skills of the learners.

b). Objectives:

- ◆ To make the learners self-reliant through different income generating training
- ◆ To enable them to improve their standard of living
- ◆ To enable them to play due roles for the development of their family, society and nation
- ◆ To build the learners as human resources

c). Target population:

The learners who have completed Post-Literacy (PL) course.

Duration of the course:

- ◆ Duration : 6 months
- ◆ Weekly days : 6 days
- ◆ Total workdays : 144 days
- ◆ Skill Based Trade Training Course (65-80 days classes) hours: 2 hours per day
- ◆ Total hours (trade course training including Chetona-3) : 288 hours.

d). Selection of trade and formation of trade based group:

The groups of the learners were formed by the set rules based on the 15 income generating issues, selected trades and acquired knowledge. The rules for forming groups were as under:

- ◆ Appraising the learners about the findings of the need assessment conducted by the concern implementing NGOs.
- ◆ Forming a group with maximum 30 learners on one trade under a single unit.
- ◆ Forming more than one group if the numbers of learners exceed 30 in one trade.
- ◆ Giving importance to the opinions of the learners in forming trade groups.
- ◆ Providing assistance by the Teacher/Supervisor/Field Coordinator in forming groups.
- ◆ Holding group discussion by the learners in forming groups.
- ◆ Provision of one learner can participate in one trade only.
- ◆ The lists of the trade-based groups were submitted to the UNFEC for approval.

e). Factors considered for the selection of trades and trade based groups for the learners:

- ◆ Current and future demands of the trade
- ◆ Training facilities
- ◆ Easy availability of raw materials
- ◆ Credit facility
- ◆ Employment opportunity
- ◆ Self-employment opportunity
- ◆ Demands of the learners
- ◆ Discussion in the CMC

f). Selection of trade based trainers:

Through advertisement and miking in the working areas, discussion with the CMC members, Teachers, Learners, local people and in the UNFEC meetings, following organizations and persons were invited to act as trainers:

- ◆ Professional trainers
- ◆ Trade-based trainers
- ◆ Concerned persons of the training providing GO/NGOs
- ◆ Some non-professional skilled persons.

g). Materials prepared by the learners at the centers:

The materials produced by the learners at the male and female centers were embroidered quilt, common quilt (kantha), designed sheets, table covers, designed pillow covers, designed shalwar-kamiz, panjabi, baby frocks and different dresses. Other materials produced by the learners were: Bamboo and cane products, such as, basket, *mora*, *dala*, *dula*, bed, *ocha*, *kula*, *chatai*, *pura*, *poloi*, sieve, etc. Agricultural implements like scythe, axe, *dao*, *boti*, weeder, bird's cage, ladder, plough, yoke, basket, cloth, fan, designed fan, designed handkerchief, flowers, children's dresses, earthenware etc.

It is expected that the literate farmers will be able to adopt modern techniques of cultivation. People of other professions will also be able to develop their skills so that they can start new type of income generating activities. Moreover, scope for employment and self-employment for hundreds of educated unemployed youths would be created under this project. About 50% of the participants were women. Different types of life oriented skill training would be imparted to them so that they can generate income and be self-dependent in the society. Increased awareness through the project will have a positive impact on environment and environmental protection. Provision of skill based training on different trades was in the project for employment and self-employment for the target people. Because, the incidence of national poverty in 2000 was 44.3%, and about 20% of the poor lived in 'hardcore poverty (defined as consuming less than 1805 kcal as per the direct calorie measure) (sources: BBS, Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000). Poverty and illiteracy are interwoven in Bangladesh. Each is the cause and effect of the other.

About 972,900 learners aged between 11-45 years were covered within stages 1 to 5 out of 8 stages of PLCEHD-1 Project up to December 31, 2007 (71.4% of total target). The project could not yet cover 1.656 (revised 1.37) million targeted learners due to abolition of then Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE), [Which is restarted and renamed as Bureau of Non-Formal Education, (BNFE)] delayed start and lapsing too much time to select Project Implementing (PI)-NGOs, last three stages (6, 7 & 8) were not implemented. It has benefited approximately 972900 learners aged between 11-45 years by providing non-formal basic education approximate equivalent to class three (Grades III) of formal

education. Due to delay in the processing of the recruitment of NGOs (including approval of NGO lists by World Bank) for start of stages 3A & 4A, stages 3B & 4B stages 5, achievement in PLCE training delivery as at the end of project period on 31 December 2007 was not exceed 72% of learners' target. The learners also have taken each one of the training per learner of the following 15 (fifteen) number of 6 months duration trade based technical training:

1. Dairy, 2. Cow Fattening and Goat Rearing, 3. Bee Cultivation, 4. Food Processing, 5. Tailoring, 6. Chalk, Candle and Soap Manufacturing, 7. Poultry Farm, 8. Bamboo and Cane Product, 9. Fish Cultivation, 10. Nurture, Vegetable, Fruits and Flower Cultivation, 11. By-cycle, Riksha, Van, Key and Lock Repairing, 12. Masonry and Pipe Fitting, 13. Shallow Machine Repairing and Welding, 14. Electric House Wiring and 15. Block Batik, Screen Printing and Embroidery.

Conclusion

Government of the Bangladesh implemented integrated non-formal education during 1991-97 to introduce a non-formal system supplementary and complementary to the formal education in the country. More than 2.47 million people participated in the program against the target of 1.67 million. Community awareness was increased to a great extent. A mechanism for the GO-NGO collaboration and co-operation was established. Experience and expertise were gained to formulate and implement continuing education program. In 1991 the rate of literacy in the country was 35%. The data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) indicate that the adult literacy rate in Bangladesh was 51.6 percent in 2004 (Statistical Year Book, BBS: 2006). The consequence is that around half of the population of the country is still illiterate. At this point of time, there are about 52 million adults and adolescents who do not know how to read and write (UNESCO: 2007). The goal of NFE policy is to 'contribute to fulfilling EFA goals and alleviating poverty as spelled out in the National Plan of Action II, 2004-15 and PRSP, aimed at reducing illiteracy by at least 50% by 2015. Except these the following were the criteria's for justification of the PLCEHD-1 project:

- Constitutional obligation.
- International commitment.
- Expansion of education in the country.
- To check relapse into literacy and to help neoliterates upgrade their life style.

- Asserting the strategic needs of literacy and continuing education in reaching the national and global target of Education for All, the national Non-Formal Education Policy was adopted by the government of Bangladesh in 2006.

The time schedule of the program course for the target peoples were total 9 months in two phases (3 months for PL and 6 months for CE). The classes were of two hours duration, six days a week.

Apart from the initial 6 days of training for both supervisors and facilitators, it was given additional 2 days-supervisory training only for supervisors on their roles and responsibilities. Senior and Junior Center Facilitators received an honorarium of Taka (Tk.) 825 and 775 per month respectively at the Post Literacy (PL) stage. Senior and Junior Center Facilitators received an honorarium of Tk. 1025 and 975 per month respectively at the Continuing Education (CE) stage. Supervisors received an honorarium of Tk. 1500 per month.

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 people's lives, the 9 months course program was broken into 3 months duration PL course and 6 months duration CE course modules that would allow working people more time to complete the course. Considering the highly busy lives of the learners in the rural areas, modular teaching that incorporates differential learning methods was most useful. This program introduced modular, multi-grade flexible teaching and learning strategies.

All necessary measures have been taken by the PI-NGOs to hand over the centers to the community beforehand and orientation were given to them so that the activities were not cease on expiry of the program rather these should be continued to run properly. If the centers remain operational, the awareness of the learners, the guardians and local people will increase and the continuity of the literacy activities will be sustained. So, it was the responsibility of the UNFEC to maintain the center after the completion of the project. After the completion of the activities, the NGOs handed over the PLCE center to the relevant UNFEC. Accordingly the UNFEC handed over the centers to the relevant Union Council Chairman or a Member of the relevant CMC or a Teacher, local Government Primary School. They should be able to run the centers themselves in the interest of the development of the people.

The researchers identified the following strengths and weakness of the PLCEHD -1 Project through research activities and using primary, secondary and other data analysis:

Strengths:

□Has been created to enhance self-consciousness, self-reliance and quality of life through attainment of learning skill.

- Empowerment of the learners through economic development activities.
- The mass participation has been ensured through the formation of CMC.
- Avenues for receiving facilities from local administration, government and non-government organizations have been created through involvement of the local administration in the program.
- Mass participation have been made easier as the program was people-oriented and development-oriented.
- There are opportunities for practical and demand-driven skills development training.
- Opportunities have been created to express opinions and take decisions independently in the family and society.
- Awareness about developmental issues, law and rights has enhanced.
- There was a process in the program to enhance the self-confidence of the trainees.
- The importance of the trainees has increased in all fields including their own family and the society.
- It has helped the trainees to be aware of the availability of government and non-government facilities and scope to receive them.
- The trainees can be involved in various income-generating agencies to supplement family incomes.
- The program was playing an important role in the country's economic development as it has specific and realistic aims and objects.

Weaknesses

- Some guardians and the learners were gradually losing interest in the program as there was no financial incentive for them.
- The facilitators/teachers lack interest in their work as their monthly honorarium was inadequate.
- Lack of interest of the resource persons who were invited to impart orientation and skill development training as their honorarium were not attractive.
- Inadequate life-based and practical activities.
- Unwillingness of the male learners to attend the center and to give time.

- ❑Lack of provision for giving incentive to the learners.
- ❑Non-availability of competent teacher, supervisor and skilled resource person at the village level.
- ❑Inability of the people to give time for voluntary work.
- ❑Inadequacy of training time, etc.

The researchers identified the following ways to overcome the weaknesses:

- ❑To increase necessary assistance.
- ❑To increase orientation persons involved with field level programs to ensure better participation by them.
 - ❑To increase scope for skill development training on trades which are desired and have market demands.
- ❑To arrange more field visit.
- ❑To arrange rewards for trainees to augment their interest.
- ❑To strengthen public relations to ensure overall participation of local people and to sustain their interest.
 - ❑To further strengthen the motivational activities to involve the learners with income-generating activities.
- ❑To allot more time for the classes and the training.
- ❑To arrange for improved training of the teachers;
- ❑To intensify the GO-NGO relation.

Recommendations

1. Every center to have to be a wall magazine with contributions by the learners.
2. 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.

3. To be introduced credit courses so that if a learner has to drop out at the end of a module due to unavoidable reasons s/he can rejoin later.

4. To be provided a snack to the learners daily with community support.

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