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# United Nations Literacy Decade

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Presented at the UNESCO sub-regional Conference *Addressing Literacy Challenges in South, South West and Central Asia: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches*. (29 - 30 November 2007, New Delhi, India)

**Programme name:** BRAC Education Programme

**Implemented by:** BRAC

### Basic facts

Country: Bangladesh

Starting year: 1985

Outreach: over 1,5 million learners per year

Target Population: out-of-school children, adolescents, illiterate adults

Language of instruction: Bengali (Bangla)

Operating in: all 64 districts of Bangladesh

Facilitator/Beneficiary ratio: 1/25-33

Main Funding: DFID, CIDA, Royal Netherlands Embassy, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Oxfam NOVIB, UNICEF, AusAid and BRAC

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### Brief Description

The BRAC Education Programme is designed to provide learners with literacy and develop necessary skills for lifelong learning. The programme operates at three levels thus targeting all generations of the illiterate population:

BRAC schools are established for non-enrolled and dropout children. The schools follow national curriculum guidelines and aim at allowing the children to integrate again formal schools.

Kishore Clubs (reading centres) are addressed to adolescent girls and create opportunities for post-literacy and life skills development. In addition to basic literacy skills, the learners receive courses on social, family, community issues, and reproductive health.

Finally, BRAC runs gonokendros (community libraries) giving neo-, semi- and literate youth access to reading materials and IT literacy and providing livelihood enhancement training.

## **Rationale**

Bangladesh is one of the LIFE countries with a total illiteracy rate of almost 60%. The majority of those who are illiterate comes from poor backgrounds and are women. The dropout rate of children in primary schools is very high. While BRAC Education Programme concentrates mostly on children and adolescents through BRAC Pre-primary and Primary Education Programme, post-literacy and continuing education are a significant part of BRAC Education through the Adolescent Development (ADP) and Post-primary basic and Continuing Education (PACE).

## **Objective**

The three components of the BRAC Education Programme work together to provide children with literacy, enable them to complete primary education and ensure post-literacy and continuing education for all generations to create conditions for lifelong learning and a better livelihood.

## **Conceptual Model and Methodology**

The successful concept adopted for the BRAC schools relies on flexible timing, closeness to the students' houses, small class sizes, female local teachers, little or no home work, a child-friendly learning environment, relevant curriculum, and strong involvement of parents and communities in the school management.

The Kishori Clubs are established specifically for adolescent girls. The Clubs offer lifeskills courses on social, family and community issues, sexual and reproductive health, employment, IT and journalism. In addition, the center makes available books, dailies and magazines.

Gonokendros (community library) serve as centers for post-literacy and continuing education services.

The teaching methods of the BRAC Education Programme are based on the following: small group activities, one-to-one discussions with peers, role play methods, story telling methods, demonstration, question-answer-sessions, discussions, field trips, recitation methods and activity-based methods. In the Adolescent Development Programme, peers facilitate the courses contents after receiving intensive training. This is done for three main reasons. Firstly, adolescents get this training and gain leadership qualities and confidence. Secondly, those receiving the course are more comfortable asking questions about sensitive topics to the facilitators. Thirdly, because they are roughly the same age, they have similar problems and can therefore empathize more easily.

## **Innovative features**

The innovative features of the BRAC schools are flexible timing, closeness to the students' houses, small class sizes, female local teachers, little or no home work, a child-friendly learning environment, relevant curriculum, and strong involvement of parents and communities in the school management.

Encouragement and support by the community, the government, the wider society and development partners have been instrumental in accomplishing BRAC's work.