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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: Universal Education Programme (UEP)

Implemented by: PROSHIKA

Basic facts

Country: Bangladesh

Starting year: 1992

Outreach: A total of 11,40,770 learners in 53,743 literacy centers and 8,267 post literacy centers and 6,96,400 disadvantaged children from 22,803 non formal schools have so far been served by UEP of PROSHIKA 66% of the participants are women and girls.

Target Population: Illiterate population of all ages, both women and men.

Language of instruction: Bangla

Operating in: UEP has been operating in 190 rural and urban programme areas spread over 57 districts across the country along with other development programme activities of PROSHIKA

Facilitator/Beneficiary ratio: 1/25

Main Funding: EC, DFID, CIDA and NOVIB

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Brief Description

PROSHIKA's Universal Education Programme is an educational package programme for all the members of the family including father, mother, dropped-out and un-enrolled children. It includes 4 components: 1) Adult Literacy for illiterate group members, 2) Post Literacy for the neo-literates to reinforce and regenerate literacy skills, 3) Non-Formal Primary Education for the dropped-out and un-enrolled children, and 4) Children's Enrolment to formal primary schools to stem further growth of illiteracy.

UEP provides functional adult literacy skills for the adults and educational facilities to their children through formal and non-formal primary education to allow them to acquire literacy and life skills, to make them aware of their rights, society, environment, gender equality, health-

hygiene and sanitation to become effective and conscious citizens of the country and thus be enabled to play a role in creating a prosperous society.

Health and nutrition are an important component of the literacy programme as illnesses and poor health conditions of the poor and their family members further increase their socio-economic vulnerability.

Rationale

Illiteracy is a cause and consequence of poverty, unemployment, alienation and oppressive social structures. It affects both individuals and the society as a whole. Illiteracy and its net of deprivations influence every aspect of social, economical, political and cultural life of the poor. Poverty is thus a multifaceted reality in Bangladesh. Within the framework of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) initiated by the Government, PROSHIKA intends to proceed with the UEP activities as measures to develop human resources, generate employment and income, provide health and literacy education to lead all community members and their children to a better and meaning full human life. The importance of literacy, therefore, has been considered as an important powerful tool for their empowerment. So the illiterate masses have become the focal area of development of PROSHIKA'S Universal Education Programme.

Objectives

The main objectives of Universal Education Programme (UEP) is to bring all members of the popular organisations under literacy so that they can use the skills of reading, writing and accounting in their daily life. To make them aware of the country, the community, gender equality, society, environment and their rights, health and hygiene, sanitation and to be aware of HIV/AIDS and various other necessary preventive healthcare issues.

UEP objective is thus to enable the poor to understand their situation and to be aware of their rights. If the right to basic education is ensured, the poor can become aware of their other basic rights and are able to mobilize themselves to assert those rights. Literacy, therefore, is an important tool for their empowerment.

Conceptual Model and Methodology

The PROSHIKA Universal Education Programme is based on a learner-centred model. The facilitators link the lessons to the learners' life experiences and accompany them with practical experience. Important themes such as gender, HIV/AIDS, preventive healthcare, nutrition, agriculture and balanced food, etc. are added to basic literacy provision. The aim of the programme is not just to make learners literate but to develop all-round life skills enabling the learners to cope with all kinds of problems in their everyday life.

The literacy centre is a place for social gathering where the learners can also share and perform recreational activities.

PROSHIKA has developed a number of manuals for different grades of the universal education programme.

Innovative features

PROSHIKA's literacy programmes are almost absolutely a community enterprise. The primary responsibility of opening and managing literacy centres is taken by the village and slum level federation of the groups. The federations participate actively in planning,

implementing and supervising the literacy centres along with financial contribution to each batch of learners.

Another innovative aspect of UEP is that through this programme, opportunities of education are made available to all members of the family, children, adolescents and adults – the programme functions thus as a family education package.

PROSHIKA books and materials are developed after a thorough needs assessment of the learners.

Role-play and simulation exercise help the adult learners to apply and use the message in their day to day life by which they become able to link their learning to action.