



2008/ED/UNLD/PI/EP/20

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: Empowerment of Adolescent Girls for Social Transformation (EAST)

Implemented by: Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)

Basic facts

Country: Bangladesh

Starting year: 2004

Outreach: between 2004-07, 11,000 adolescents with an annual intake of 3,000

Target Population: Adolescent girls from the ages of 12 to 18

Language of instruction: Bangla, the major language of the country, is used as language of instruction

Operating in: Five districts covering 597 communities

Facilitator/Beneficiary ratio: 1/20-30

Main Funding: Cordaid, Netherlands

Website: www.ahsaniamission.org

Contact: Mr. Ehsanur Rahman - ehsanur@bdonline.com

Brief Description

The programme *Empowerment of Adolescent Girls for Social Transformation (EAST)* is targeting adolescent girls (aged 12-18) who are considered to be potential actors for social change and a decisive population group for national poverty eradication strategies. The EAST Programme is implemented with four inter-related components: literacy and continuing education, training and information services for life skill development, advocacy for social changes, and micro-finance for economic activities. Education is the critical aspect for the development of individuals and thereby has been at the centre of the EAST programme, which aims at acting during the critical stage of human growth and development and thus using the untapped potentials of the target group in social transformation process.

Rationale

Lack of access to education and health care, lack of gainful employment and lack of voice in family and social life characterize the majority of adolescent girls' life in Bangladesh. Millions of young girls in Bangladesh with little or no education and skills face aggression, exploitation and deprivation. There is so far no organized national programme to address the physical and mental health and social and economic needs of this promising group of the population.

The EAST programme combines direct intervention at the community level to understand the situation of the target group for implementation of the activities specifically designed to empower them, and mobilization of the community to have a supportive surrounding. The process is institutionalized through organizing community learning centres (CLC) to facilitate learning and linkage of support services from government and non-government sectors.

Objective

The programme's objective is to break the poverty cycle of women through a coherent set of activities aimed at empowering adolescent girls to generate a process of social transformation as they are considered as potential actors for social change and a decisive population group for national poverty eradication strategies.

Conceptual Model and Methodology

A centre-based participatory teaching-learning process is used in the literacy class. The learners get opportunities for interaction among themselves through group learning and peer education approach. Community-level social activities are arranged by the adolescent groups on specific local problems affecting their life, such as early marriage and dowry.

Besides literacy and post-literacy education, all adolescent girls are provided orientation on possible income generation activities. CLC-based discussion sessions are arranged with the participation of local resource persons. Information materials on various income-generation activities and reference material are supplied to the centres for discussion and consultation by the learners. Vocational training is provided on different skills as per their choice from the selected trades. Before organizing the training, a needs assessment survey is made and the courses organized accordingly. Training is organized in collaboration with local crafts persons and training institutions with technical back-up support from DAM training institutes for vocational education. The courses are organized at the community level according to the convenience of the trainees. The selection of girls is made after the assessment of their economic condition, educational level, interest and potentiality for application of the skill.

Innovative features

The programme is a combination of preventive, participatory and partnership approach. The preventive approach implies providing leverage against degeneration and loss of potentials and prevention of social vices like early marriage, dowry, unsafe sex, depression etc. in the programme participants' life and also in the larger community relying on the active role of the girls. Through the participatory approach, an opportunity is created for active involvement of the target group in planning and managing the activities; and finally, the partnership

approach implies facilitating partnerships at all levels, with other local NGOs and national policy maker and planners.