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## A Social Development Saga: India Uttar Pradesh Basic Education and India District Primary Education Projects

### Social Development Best Practice Elements

- Formulation of social development outcomes
- Institutionalized mechanisms for participation and decentralized implementation
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of social development outcomes by the government and community

The Uttar Pradesh (UP) Basic Education Pilot Project and the national India District Primary Education Project exemplify good social development practices. The pilot project in UP to assist girls to achieve better education proved so successful that it was scaled up to a national project. The guiding principle of both projects is to improve education by building capacity at the community level.

#### **From a Pioneering Pilot to a National Project**

In 1992 the Government of India presented an educational reform proposal to the Bank. The objective was to assist UP, one of India's poorest states, through a statewide primary educational initiative targeted at improving the status of women and girls. The female literacy rate in UP is the third lowest in India, and the estimated enrollment rate of 6-10 year olds is the fourth lowest. The project aimed to increase female enrollment, reduce dropout rates, improve learning achievement, and strengthen community ownership of schools.

From its inception, the project sought community involvement. Social assessment aided a decentralized approach to project preparation. Surveys and focus group discussions identified a wide-range of educational issues at the village level. Problems ranged from caste discrimination to debate on the language of instruction to the impact of weather on educational opportunities. In some villages, girls were not attending school because of their responsibility to care for younger siblings. In other places, the issue was girls' safety.

One of the key elements of the UP pilot project was the development of local Village Education Committees (VECs) with representation of women and minority groups. VECs are involved in school construction, community mapping, monitoring teacher attendance, and processing the funds from the government.

Capacity building through NGO involvement also occurs through *Mahila Sakhya*, the women's empowerment movement. It works to improve

This project was recognized as Best Practice in Social Development by the Social Development Family and received an award for Excellence in Supervision (QSR) from the Quality Assurance Group (QAG). John Middleton and Marlaine Lockheed were the task team leaders. This best practice note was prepared by Kathleen Kuehnast.

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enrollment, to increase attendance retention of girls, and to make accessible early childhood education and alternative schooling. NGOs are involved in decisionmaking through representation on the General Council and Executive Committee of the UP Education for All Project Board. Teacher Associations, including district-level chapters, are consulted and involved in implementing curriculum, instructional materials development and training programs.

By the mid-term review in 1993, the UP project had developed an in-service teacher training program, which was also decentralized at the level of village blocks and clusters. These local efforts were supported by improved capacity building for Institutes of Education and Training at the district level and through the creation of a State Institute of Educational Management and Training. Capacity building also occurred for Indian scholars through grants to conduct research and assessments. The Bank compiled an implementation training manual to translate Bank experience into applicable steps.

The UP project built on good practices from prior Indian primary education projects. Throughout the UP project, the Government of India independently hired highly trained educational specialists to shadow the Bank staff. The government had been accustomed to running top-down programs, so developing a program that took its directions from the ground up was a new approach.

Local politicians have promoted the UP project's educational objectives. Local politicians were pleased to find an approach that worked at the community level and that they could champion as their own, regardless of which government was in power at the state level.

Targets set for female participation in primary education were exceeded. The enrollment gap between boys and girls decreased, and dropout rates for girls were halved. Learning achievement improved in 8 of the 10 districts, particularly in the second grade. Due to this project, two million girls are in school who otherwise would not be.

One of the major hurdles in the project was convincing the central government that the Bank could provide useful technical advice to an educational project. In reviewing the outcomes of

the UP project, the government agreed that the decentralized approach worked effectively and decided that the UP project was exactly the kind of primary education program needed nationally. By scaling up the project to the national level, this proposal became the District Primary Education Program Project (DPEP), which was implemented in 1995.

#### Lessons Learned

- Community support for education is a central element of a successful school development program.
- Community implementation is a cost-effective way to achieve large-scale school construction.
- Block Resource Centers and Cluster Resource Centers can serve as effective mechanisms to provide recurrent in-service training and school-based professional support for teachers.
- Improving the quality of education and strengthening institutional capacity are long-term processes.
- Microplanning is necessary to assess the need for new schools and additional classrooms and teachers.

During the preparation phase, the DPEP relied heavily on beneficiary assessments that included an emphasis on girls and tribal children. In addition, Indian educational institutes conducted learning achievement tests of 40,000 children and extensive teacher interviews.

Given India's geographic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, a major challenge for the DPEP was how to supervise the national program. The project benefited from the collaboration of India's education officials and researchers, who possessed specific regional and local expertise, with Bank staff, who provided technical advice. Foreign donors collaborated through creating one vehicle for channeling funding, which enabled institutions to work together toward the same objectives.

The two projects are good examples of flexibility in project design, scaling up and increasing the capacity of a successful pilot program, and sustainability of the program over the long-term. These projects also offer a model for country-centered ownership. The project has helped establish monitoring and evaluation systems that have been adopted by the state governments.

