

## UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN ASIA: A STATUS REPORT

# Education for All

## Changing attitudes and priorities necessary

In April 2000, about 1,100 representatives of civil society from 180 countries met in Dakar, Senegal's capital, for the World Education Forum. The delegates pledged to achieve education for "every society" by the year 2015. At a forum in Thailand 10 years earlier, delegates pledged a similar objective—Education for All (EFA) by the year 2000. Thirteen years later, the objective clearly has not been met.

Success in meeting the Dakar objective will require attention from all countries, particularly the large and densely populated developing countries of Asia and the Pacific. Achieving universal primary education in this region poses many complex challenges; yet the lack of progress on the EFA in Asia affects 60% of the world's population. Some countries—such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, and Pakistan—lag far behind their cohorts in other parts of Asia and the rest of the world in terms of lack of resources, poor social policy, and economic and social disparities. Gender inequalities have worsened the situation for girls and women in many Asian countries, leaving them less educated than their male peers.

Highlights from the Dakar meeting revealed positive global trends between 1990 and 2000, including adult literacy rates of 74% for women and 85% for men, decreased repetition and dropout rates, and an increase in primary school enrollments by 82 million pupils (including 44 million girls). However, data for South Asia were less flattering: in 1998, adult literacy rates were only 39% for women and 61% for men; 72% of girls versus 90% of boys were enrolled in primary school; and for every 100 children enrolled in grade

one, fewer than 60 were expected to complete grade 5 within the prescribed time. This underachievement reflects the many challenges to the EFA in South Asia, including lack of access for the rural and urban poor, and ethnic minorities; difficult geographic access for upland and island communities; poor teacher training; substandard facilities; lack of opportunities for continuing education; gender biases; and high dropout rates.

## The Dakar Framework Goals

The six major goals set out in the Dakar Framework mirror sections of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) pertaining to education, gender equity, and poverty reduction. The MDGs were adopted as global development targets by the United Nations and associated agencies in September 2000. In addition, many bilateral and multilateral development institutions, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), have committed to helping countries meet these goals. The Dakar Framework focuses on six key areas:

- Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood education.
- Provide universal access to education for all regardless of gender, ethnicity, or financial standing by 2015.
- Equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs.
- Achieve a 50% improvement in the levels of adult literacy by 2015.
- Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005.
- Improve all aspects of the quality of

(Continued on page 2)



T. Takahara

**EDUCATION FOR WOMEN** ADB seeks to provide opportunities for girls and women to obtain quality education.

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## Education for All

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education.

The challenges of universal primary education must be properly addressed in Asia, where nearly 40% of the population is under the age of 18, three fourths of the world's illiterates live (two thirds are women), and one in every four South Asian children is not enrolled in primary school. Much work remains to be done in changing attitudes and priorities to ensure, as United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan stated in his July 2002 Millennium Declaration Progress Report, that education is an indispensable investment "that every society needs to make today in its

economic future—that is, in the capacity of its children to grow up as productive members of the world economy."

Within underperforming countries in Asia such as Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor), there are encouraging signs of real progress and hope. For instance, a small village school, the Maumeta Primary School in the coastal district of Liquica is now flourishing with 465 boys and girls enrolled, thanks to the efforts of parents, teachers, children, and the donor community. A similar scene unfolds in the Borikhamstay Province in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) where 200 children in 5 grade levels and 3 teachers are gathered in a rural school under the ADB-assisted Basic Education Project, which provides several strategies to enroll and retain more ethnic minority girls in school.

At the International Conference on Financing for Development held last year in Monterrey, Mexico, world leaders met once again to review the future of development assistance. The leaders recognized that developing countries have the primary responsibility for their own development and that the way to achieve this is by establishing an economic environment conducive to private investment and economic growth. Taking

this responsibility is crucial as official development assistance has been declining for the past decade, according to statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 1990, South Asia received \$7 billion of aid from bilateral and multilateral agencies. This figure dropped to \$5 billion in 1998 and continued to decline in 2002. Countries will thus have to rely more on their own resources to achieve universal primary education.

ADB's Education Policy emphasizes the importance of private sector partnerships and diversification of national sources of education finance to

increase the level and quality of education. Funding quality education in many countries will require innovation, particularly in countries where the national budget allocated to education falls short.

ADB supports funding policies that encourage local participation and ownership, and reduce the government's burden, while not disadvantaging poor communities who cannot afford the often imposed user fees on primary education. An alternative for poor students may be the experimental voucher system used in some developed countries to offer poor students more choices for a quality education.

Public-private partnerships are also becoming more popular, but underutilized in developing countries. The Government of the Philippines, for example, has developed a novel solution to overcrowding in public sector schools by buying student places from privately owned schools. Private schools benefited by filling vacant spaces while the government saved by not having to construct new schools.

In an increasingly competitive international economic environment, innovations such as this will be paramount in not only meeting the EFA objective but also in ensuring economic development and sustainability. ■

**Education is an indispensable investment "that every society needs to make today in its economic future."  
—UN Secretary General Kofi Annan**

## NGOs IN ACTION

### Partnering for Literacy in Bangladesh and the Philippines

Successful partnership initiatives have been launched in several communities, including Bangladesh and the Philippines. In Bangladesh, about 44% of men and 23% of women are literate. Non-government organizations (NGOs) have long taken the lead in providing literacy courses for adults at the village level, but NGOs are chronically underfunded and often lack the technical skills needed for effective program design and monitoring.

In 1995, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided a \$26.7 million loan for a project (cofinanced by the International Development Association and the Government of Switzerland) to enhance the Government's capacity for providing technical support to literacy programs by strengthening policy, planning, and monitoring capacity, while leaving the delivery of literacy programs to NGOs.

In the Philippines, ADB provided a \$25.2 million loan to set up a learning fund to which NGOs and community groups could apply for funding to conduct local literacy programs. Under the program, 300,000 learners have benefited, where success was measured by a standard literacy test. The Philippines project was awarded the Noma Literacy Prize of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization for 2000. ■



Richie Abrina

**PARTNERS FOR EDUCATION** Collaboration between the public and private sectors is needed to provide greater access to education.

## ADB'S EDUCATION POLICY

# Learning Through Change

Shift in policy recognizes importance of holistic human development

**M**uch has changed in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approach to education policy from 1970, when it first addressed education issues, to the 1980s, when two significant events occurred. In 1988, the first education policy was passed, officially recognizing basic education as a human right and in 1990, ADB participated at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA), which was a precursor to a shift in the world community's approach to education.

The new paradigm increased emphasis on basic education rather than technical and vocational training and higher education, which signified a shift to holistic human development that is responsive both to industry requirements for trained technical personnel and the demand for basic literacy and education. Basic education, particularly for girls and women, is acknowledged as being closely linked to lower infant mortality rates, reduced fertility rates, more income choices, and ultimately, escape from the poverty cycle. ADB's vision of education is for all children and adults to have equitable access to and complete education of sufficient quality to empower them to break the poverty cycle, to improve their quality of life, and to participate effectively in national development.

### ADF's Vital Role

This shift in priorities is reflected in ADB's lending and technical assistance levels. From 1970 to 1990, ADB provided a total of \$1.5 billion in loans to the education sector, of which 48% was allocated to technical and vocational education and 28% to higher education. Technical assistance followed a similar pattern. In contrast, from 1991 to 2001, ADB lent \$3.8 billion, with basic education accounting for 41%, and technical and vocational education representing 14% of lending

(see figures A and B). On average, about 10% of total ADB projects have been for education, with 41% of all education loans coming from the Asian Development Fund (ADF), the concessional lending window.

Resources for development are shrinking, with about 72% of education

some countries—factors that have implications on the type of basic education required in each community. In response to these changes, ADB revised its education policy to maximize the effectiveness of its investment in education. In helping meet these challenges, ADB's role is twofold—provide funds that are carefully targeted at maximizing impact on system development through long-term initiatives, and to provide policy and technical advice appropriate to each country's needs.

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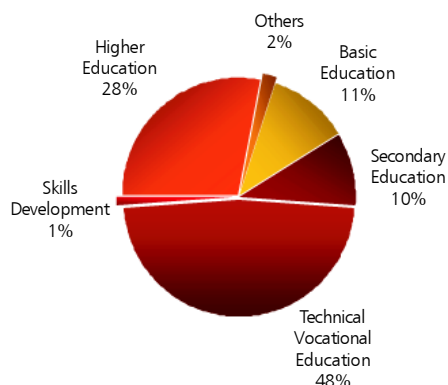
—ADB's Education Policy

### Girls' and Women's Education Emphasized

To better accommodate the changing needs of its developing member countries, the pattern of ADB's education lending and technical assistance since 1991 has also shifted in terms of subsector focus, allocation of resources, and project identification and preparation. Within the basic education subsector, ADB has diversified its lending with support for primary education, lower secondary education, and upper secondary education. (Continued on page 4)

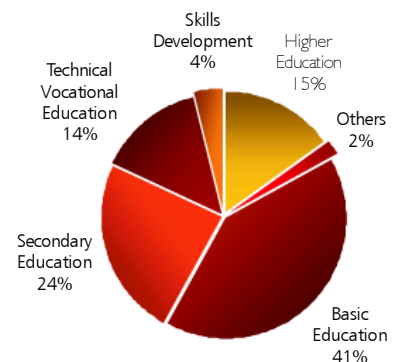
finance globally provided by governments, 25% by the private sector (including parents and communities), and about 3% by development agencies. ADB is thus faced with the challenge to do more with less. In addition, the region has undergone rapid changes during the past decade such as urbanization and a growing proportion of school-aged and aging populations in

**Figure A: Cumulative Education Sector Lending 1970–1990**



**Total lending = \$1.5 billion**

**Figure B: Cumulative Education Sector Lending 1991–2001**



**Total lending = \$3.8 billion**

## Education Policy

(Continued from page 3)

education, nonformal education, and early childhood development, with girls' and women's education receiving more attention.

The nature of the allocation has also changed from the traditional hardware of facilities and equipment to the software—teacher training, curriculum development, provision of instructional materials, planning and management, and institutional capacity building. Lastly, the process of identifying and preparing projects now places participatory planning and beneficiary consultation at the forefront to ensure that projects are designed to encourage local ownership and local management. To this end, ADB is encouraging governments to partner with the private sector, nongovernment organizations, and local communities.

### ADB: Providing More Balanced Education

In an education sector evaluation report issued in August 2000, of the 108 ADB loans (98 projects) for 21 developing member countries (DMCs) amounting to \$4.2 million, two thirds of this amount had gone to just three countries—Indonesia (43%), Bangladesh (12%), and Pakistan (12%). However, since the 1990s, ADB's education portfolio has shifted to a more balanced lending pattern that accounted for 11 basic education pipeline projects in 9 DMCs between 2000 and 2002.

Given its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and the recognition that education is a necessary component in addressing poverty reduction—ADB's overarching goal for Asia and the Pacific—ADB will continue to assist its DMCs reach their target of universal primary education by 2015, with the assistance of governments, local communities, nongovernment organizations, and the private sector.

*For more information on ADB's education policy, go to <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Education/>; or [http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Education\\_NatDev\\_Asia/Priorities\\_Policies\\_Planning/](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Education_NatDev_Asia/Priorities_Policies_Planning/)* ■



Rollie del Rosario

**ACQUIRING SKILLS** ADB supports technical education and vocational training in Nepal to develop new skills that can be a possible source of livelihood.

## ADB Projects to Help Nepal Overcome Obstacles in the Education Sector

**T**he 2002 Education for All (EFA) status report submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) revealed that, given Nepal's current rate of progress in enrollment in primary education—1.3% between 1990 and 1999—"it is unlikely that Nepal will achieve universal access to primary education by 2015." The current rate suggests that only about 89% of children will receive access to primary education in 2015. The report cited several challenges to success: reducing severe poverty; making primary education more relevant to the local, rural, and agricultural lifestyles; raising the quality of education; increasing retention and completion rates; shifting school management responsibilities to school boards comprising community and parental groups; and investing more resources for the promotion of primary education.

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 144<sup>th</sup> of 174 countries in the United Nations Development Programme's 2000 *Human Development Report*, with approximately 42% of the population living below the national poverty line (of these, about 44% are concentrated in rural areas).

To assist the country in addressing these problems, ADB's proposed loan program for 2002–2004 is focused on achieving a sustainable reduction in poverty through work in several sectors, including formal and nonformal education. Because Nepal is among the poorest DMCs in the region, it receives loans from the concessional Asian Development Fund (ADF). The proposed ADF lending program for this period—depending on performance and the approval of the Board of Directors—will total about \$306 million (\$102 million per year)—an increase of about \$8 million over annual averages between 1994 and 2000.

Projects resulting from the loan program include several education projects such as the Nonformal Education for Women Project that will address the learning needs of communities that have not been able to go through the formal school system.

The Capacity Building for Teacher Education Project will focus on increasing the sustainability and quality of the nine primary teacher training centers and the National Center for Educational Development, which was built with ADB assistance. ■

### PROJECT PROFILE

#### Pakistan: Decentralized Elementary Education

##### Description

**T**he Project will help districts seek assistance to upgrade education of facilities and provide training to better manage and administer schools in Sindh. Schools will work in collaboration with school management committees to ensure better attendance and a healthy learning environment.

##### Objective and Scope

To increase children's access to a high-quality, pro-poor, and decentralized public elementary school system. Improved elementary education throughout Sindh Province will result in a strong education foundation for future socioeconomic development and poverty reduction. Increased inputs to elementary education will raise retention rates, especially for girls and the rural poor, leading more children to continue schooling and to widen job opportunities for those leaving school after grade 8. The Project will raise the quality of elementary education to enable students to reach their potential to participate in human-centered economic development. By providing universal access to quality education, the Project is aimed at reducing inequities between public and private schools, and girls and boys in Sindh Province.

##### Consulting Services

International consultants are required for a total of 9 person-months to carry out detailed facilities and staffing inventory of elementary schools to determine the long-term budgetary implications of sustaining the elementary school system in Sindh Province.

For more information, visit <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Profiles/LOAN/30208013.ASP> ■

## Growth Cut in Forecast for East Asia

**T**he Asian Development Bank (ADB) has downgraded the 2003 economic growth forecast for East Asia due to uncertainties brought by the war in Iraq and the decline in export momentum. The average gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the region is expected to moderate to 5.6% in 2003 from 6.1% in 2002.

Tensions over Iraq have now led to rising uncertainty, dampening business and consumer confidence and pushing oil prices 30% higher since mid-June 2002.

GDP growth forecasts were revised downward for Singapore from 4.7 to 3.8%, Republic of Korea from 5.6 to 5.0%, Malaysia from 5.2 to 4.7%, and Indonesia from 4.0 to 3.6%. Growth rates for the People's Republic of China, Philippines, and Thailand were largely unchanged at 7.5%, 4.1%, and 3.9%, respectively.

ADB also issued a warning on the region's moderating export growth momentum due to less imports from the G3—US, Europe, and Japan—furthering the theory that the decrease reflects the region's dependence on the G3 for its exports. ■

## On the Money

A new quarterly column by Consultant Janet Thomas

**N**avigating through pages of information can be frustrating for companies and consultants interested in participating in the projects of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The main purpose of this column is to simplify that process by offering useful information to help in successfully bidding on projects.

##### • Do your homework

Your chances increase when you visit ADB and the borrowing country. Use your visit to brief them on your qualifications, learn the exact specifications of the project, and establish positive working relationships. Face-to-face meetings and the strength of personal relationships are very important in the Asian market.

##### • Know who to deal with

Familiarize yourself with the executing agency in the borrowing country.

##### • Obtain representation

Get a local agent or representative in the borrowing country. Contact the commercial office in your embassy to obtain recommendations.

##### • Obtain necessary expertise

Consider subcontracting with experienced Asian firms, especially if you lack country experience.

##### • Understand ADB's project cycle

Learn the project cycle. Go to the Bank's web site and look at project opportunities, follow a project through each stage of the project cycle.

##### • Limit creativity

Understand and follow ADB's procurement guidelines to the letter. Consult ADB's web site or obtain guidelines on consulting and procurement.

##### • Obtain early market intelligence

Obtain 5-year plans and other development strategies for the country or region. ADB plans its loan portfolio in 3-year cycles, updating it annually, providing valuable lead time in formulating business plans.

##### • Follow the specifications

Ask any questions regarding specifications before you submit your bid. Specifications are not altered after the bidding process has started.

##### • Pricing

Make sure the product or service is competitively priced, reflecting the price level of the economy in which you are competing.

##### • Bid opening

If at all possible, attend the opening to learn about the competitors' pricing.

##### • Follow-up

Offer strong equipment servicing and training. ■

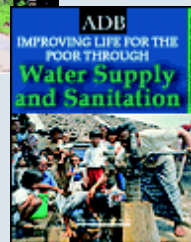
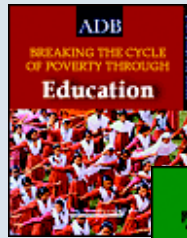
## ADB Publications

### Assessing Development Impact Series

This series of evaluation studies provides a synopsis of ADB's experience in various sectors. The reports summarize and analyze the impacts, lessons learned, and recommend actions for the future, based on the findings of existing evaluation reports.

Each digest affords another avenue for understanding the Operations Evaluation Department's role in promoting economic and social development within ADB's developing member countries through its feedback to ADB operational departments and to executing and implementing agencies.

- ADI Series No. 1: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty through Education
- ADI Series No. 2: Fighting Poverty through Better Health Care
- ADI Series No. 3: Paving the Way to Poverty Reduction through Better Roads
- ADI Series No. 4: Improving Life for the Poor through Water Supply and Sanitation



For these and other publications, contact Asian Development Bank, Publications Unit, P.O. Box 789, 0980 Manila, Philippines, Facsimile (632) 636-2648; E-mail: [adbpub@adb.org](mailto:adbpub@adb.org); or visit <http://www.adb.org/publications/>.

# ADB

NEWS FROM

# NARO

The quarterly newsletter of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) North American Representative Office (NARO) aims to enhance communications between ADB and its client groups in North America. Articles in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official ADB view. We welcome readers' comments and suggestions.

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