Regional: Targeted Capacity Building for Mainstreaming Indigenous Peoples’ Concerns in Development

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For Asian Development Bank
  Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affair of the Government of Bangladesh

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How to Apply Safeguards for Indigenous Peoples in Education Sector Programs and Projects in Bangladesh

Final Report

Prepared under ADB Regional Capacity Development Technical Assistance Program, “Targeted Capacity Building for Mainstreaming Indigenous Peoples Concerns in Development”

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# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>BMEB</td>
<td>Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board</td>
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<td>BNFE</td>
<td>Bureau of Non Formal Education</td>
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<td>BRAC</td>
<td>Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee</td>
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<td>CHT</td>
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<td>CHTF</td>
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<td>Ethnic Community Development Organization</td>
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<td>IDA</td>
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<td>Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework</td>
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<td>MLE</td>
<td>Multilingual Education</td>
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<td>MoCHTA</td>
<td>Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affair</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
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<td>Ministry of Primary and Mass Education</td>
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<td>NCTB</td>
<td>National Curriculum and Textbook Board</td>
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<td>National Education Policy</td>
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<td>Non-Formal Primary Education</td>
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<td>Primary Education Development Programme</td>
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<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>Secondary Education Sector Development Project</td>
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<td>Upazila Education Officer</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The ADB has long played a leading role in providing support for education sector programs in its Asian developing member countries (DMCs). It has done this at all levels: from primary through to secondary, higher, post-literacy and continuing education; embracing non-formal as well as formal education; or covering rural and vocational training. Its loans and programs in Bangladesh have covered all these areas. They have addressed concerns ranging from school construction and rehabilitation, through to management and governance of education, teacher training and curriculum development. Working together with a large number of development partners, over the past two decades it has been the leading international agency providing support for education in Bangladesh.

Moreover, ADB has recently identified education as a core area of future operations. A sector operations plan, Education by 2020, was published as part of the long-term strategic vision of the ADB for 2008-2020, known as Strategy 2020. This affirms that ADB will increase and continue to align its support in the education sector to meet the changing needs and priorities of its DMCs, scaling up its programming of loans, grants and technical assistance, and strengthening its economic and sector work. It will emphasize relevant skills at all levels of education, while a larger share of ADB’s education sector portfolio will be dedicated to postsecondary education.

Importantly, the strategy seeks to strengthen social protection measures that help girls and disadvantaged students to attend school. It notes that children and youth who belong to ethnic and linguistic minorities are at a disadvantage in education in most DMCs. Responding to such exclusion calls for strategies quite different from simply expanding the mainstream education system. “Lessons indicate that the excluded do not adapt to the mainstream system. On the contrary, the system must adapt to excluded groups”.

The ADB’s Education by 2020 strategy should be considered together with its updated policies to apply social and environmental safeguards in all Bank financed projects and programs. ADB is committed to ensuring the social and environmental sustainability of the projects it supports, affirming that this is a cornerstone of inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. An important part of its safeguards policies, updated in 2009, concerns indigenous peoples. ADB first adopted a Policy on Indigenous Peoples in 1998, stressing that their potential vulnerability must be regarded as significant in the Bank’s development efforts and interventions. The policy defined approaches that recognize the circumstances of indigenous peoples and that identify measures toward satisfying their needs and developmental aspirations. It focuses on the participation of indigenous peoples in development and the mitigation of undesired effects of development.

In mid-2009 the ADB adopted a new Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS), which entered into force in early 2010. This integrates the three existing policies on social and environmental safeguards, namely the 1995 policy on involuntary resettlement, the 1998 policy on indigenous peoples, and the 2002 policy on the environment. The SPS outlines in detail (Appendix 3) the safeguard requirements for indigenous peoples. The objective is to design and implement projects in a way
that fosters full respect for indigenous peoples’ identity, dignity, human rights, livelihood systems and cultural uniqueness as defined by indigenous peoples themselves so that they (i) receive culturally appropriate social and economic benefits, (ii) do not suffer adverse impacts as a result of projects, and (iii) can participate actively in projects that affect them.

While the SPS and its sections on indigenous peoples do not specifically address the education sector, they contain several provisions of relevance to the design and implementation of sector programs or projects in this sector. There is an important general requirement to undertake meaningful consultation on projects with affected indigenous peoples. The SPS also identifies various issues for which DMCs could request ADB support, to enhance indigenous participation in the development process. Such support can also strengthen the capacity of government agencies responsible for providing development services to indigenous peoples.

What is the significance of all this for Bangladesh, a country with a strong commitment to universal education, and a country with a largely uniform culture? When there is a small proportion of indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities, how can education sector programs best address their needs in substantive or logistical terms? What are the key priorities, in terms of access to education, language, curriculum and teacher training? Moreover, how can broader sector programmes on education development best accommodate the concerns of the minority indigenous groups which reflect the diversity of Bangladeshi culture, society and its population groups, contributing to the richness of a multicultural nation?

A final question might be what can be learned from the experience of past ADB projects and programs, when ADB has been such an important donor to the education sector in Bangladesh. Although there have been sporadic attempts to incorporate specific plans for indigenous peoples within educational sector programs in Bangladesh, these have not in the past been fully developed, and little has actually been implemented.

For the future, however, there are encouraging signs that the time is ripe for more systematic efforts in this area.

First, there is explicit recognition in a number of recent policy documents in Bangladesh that indigenous education is a matter of importance. The 2010 National Education Policy affirms that indigenous teachers and textbooks should be made available in the mother tongue of the different groups, with indigenous involvement in the production of such learning materials. Primary schools should be established in areas where indigenous peoples reside, and where no schools exist at present. The National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, PRSP-11, highlights indigenous education in the mother tongue among its recommendations. The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord contains a number of pertinent provisions, inter alia urging more scholarships for tribal students in educational institutions, education in the mother tongue, and a quota system for tribals at different levels of education.

Second, there have been extensive programs run by civil society and NGOs, proving useful material and lessons of experience for replication by official agencies. An example is the extensive

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1 For operational purposes, the ADB has chosen to use the term indigenous peoples for groups who possess certain characteristics set out in 2009 Safeguard Policy Statement. It notes however that these groups may be referred to in different countries by other terms, such as indigenous ethnic minorities, indigenous cultural communities, aboriginals, hill tribes, scheduled tribes, or tribal groups. Bangladesh has tended to use different terms in policy documents, though there has been a recent tendency in some official documents to refer to small ethnic minorities. This toolkit henceforth follows ADB practice, by using the term indigenous peoples.
program of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), particularly developing schools for indigenous children in the non-formal education sector, together with increasing the enrolment of indigenous children in mainstream education, and creating new materials in both Bangla and the students’ mother tongue for use in indigenous classrooms. BRAC has also sought to sensitize Bangladesh society at large to indigenous cultures and values, for example including an introduction to indigenous languages and cultures in its Basic Teacher Training Module, integrating indigenous songs and stories into the mainstream curricular activities for non-formal primary education (NFPE), and integrating all materials prepared for and about indigenous groups into the NFPE curriculum. This is a good example of an integrated approach, on the one hand adapting teaching curricula and methods to the particular needs of indigenous communities, on the other hand reaching out to the wider national community in order to overcome any prejudice against indigenous peoples. Similar initiatives by NGOs and civil society, though on a smaller scale, are to be found all over Bangladesh.

Overall, there appears to be growing awareness that, despite their small number in proportion to the total and predominantly Muslim population, the diverse indigenous peoples of Bangladesh have special needs, which should be carefully addressed in public policies and programs including the crucially important question of education. The question is how best to do this in practice in the context of Bangladesh, ensuring that those officials responsible for the identification, design, planning, preparation and implementation of programs are duly sensitized.

This toolkit aims to provide such guidance. It is concerned primarily with the formal educational system and structure, and does not address the traditional learning systems of indigenous groups. It is targeted at the various officials involved in educational planning, curriculum development and teacher training, as well as consultants. It is hoped that it will also be of value to ADB officials and consultants who have technical expertise in education, but may have limited familiarity with indigenous rights, cultures and values.

The toolkit is structured as follows. The next section discusses some of the principles that are now being recognized internationally, regarding the provision of culturally appropriate education, including where possible teaching in their mother tongue, for indigenous peoples. It then reviews aspects of indigenous culture and language in Bangladesh, which need to be taken into account in educational planning and programmes. It follows with an overview of educational policies, programs and challenges in Bangladesh, with a particular emphasis on those aspects of the educational system likely to be most relevant for indigenous peoples. The toolkit then turns to the experience of the ADB itself, as a major investor in the education sector in Bangladesh. It examines the kind of projects that the ADB has supported and now expects to support for the foreseeable future; its safeguards policies of relevance to indigenous peoples, including operational procedures and processes for applying them at the country level; and the experience to date in Bangladesh in applying safeguards for indigenous peoples in the education sector.

A final section looks forward, discussing the issues that need to be addressed in an education sector program or loan in Bangladesh, in full consultation with indigenous peoples and their representatives. Because these concerns are only now rising higher on development and educational agendas in Bangladesh, most attention is given to the identification and design of a project, rather than actual implementation. For unless the concerns of indigenous peoples are very carefully incorporated in the initial stages of project preparation, there is very little chance that they will be genuinely involved in the wide range of education sector projects that the ADB and other development partners are now supporting. Particular attention is given to the policy framework, baseline surveys, and consultative mechanisms. The toolkit includes a proposed
framework for conducting baseline surveys; and for a possible Taskforce on Indigenous Education which can do the often complex groundwork needed to ensure that stakeholder consultations with indigenous peoples are truly meaningful, and can lead to concrete results.
EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:
POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

There has been a steady growth of international interest in the subject of culturally appropriate education for indigenous peoples. It is a question not only of securing improved access to the mainstream educational system for indigenous children and also adults, who tend to be marginalized in remote areas and disproportionately poor with respect to the remainder of the national population; it is also a question of content and curriculum, ensuring that indigenous peoples exercise some control over the educational system and curriculum that affects them, and also have some say in the development of the national curriculum and educational policies.

Many initiatives have been taken, notably in some of the more developed countries (for example Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway and the United States), whose proportion of indigenous peoples in their overall national population is not so different from that in Bangladesh. Special government agencies have been established to address the issues; specific policies have been adopted; and in some cases specific educational institutions have been created for indigenous peoples, even at the level of higher education. Also in developing countries there have been a wide range of initiatives, as part of efforts to promote linguistic and cultural pluralism, but also through recognition that culturally appropriate strategies for indigenous education can be a key component of poverty reduction programmes.

From a rights and safeguards perspective, the issues have been well summarized in a study issued by the UN Human Rights Council. As a basic right, States are obliged to ensure that education is flexible and adapted to the specific needs, cultures, languages and situation of the indigenous peoples concerned and responds to their diverse social and cultural settings. The form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods, have to be culturally appropriate and acceptable to indigenous peoples.

A distinction is made between two main categories of indigenous education systems and institutions, first the traditional education or ways of learning and institutions, and second the integration of indigenous perspectives and language in mainstream education systems and institutions. A law and policy framework is important. Some existing legal provisions give recognition to pluralistic systems of education, equal importance to traditional ways of teaching and learning, indigenous peoples’ control over their own curricula and learning institutions, and adequate financial and infrastructure support for the implementation of these initiatives. Some other national laws recognize the integration of indigenous perspectives and languages into mainstream education, of culturally appropriate curricula, of bilingual education based on the

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3 Examples are cited from Canada, Norway, the Philippines and several Latin American countries.
mother tongue, and of the effective participation of indigenous peoples in designing education programmes. Thus the Expert Mechanism urges States to adopt a policy framework for quality education for indigenous peoples; to set clear goals, targets and priorities; and to measure achievements, together with indigenous peoples, that could include greater participation, improved literacy skills, lower truancy, and the gaining of meaningful qualifications.

To make such policies and laws effective, the provision of resources and the attaching of a high priority to the education of indigenous peoples are of utmost importance. The improvement of infrastructure, particularly of education centres in remote villages, is necessary to allow indigenous children equal access and opportunities to obtain quality education. Funding priorities should include providing quality education to nomadic communities and indigenous peoples in remote areas and to women and girls through mobile schools and scholarships. Other effective initiatives include allocating financial resources for the development of materials, testing proposed culturally appropriate curricula, teaching indigenous languages, providing support for training and incentives for teachers in rural schools, and developing education programmes in cooperation with indigenous peoples. An important consideration for communities in remote areas is that the allocation of funding for infrastructure should not be based on a school-to-population ratio.

Reference is made to the role of civil society in Asia⁴, where NGOs and other organizations have found that successful work with indigenous communities in remote areas has to be provided in a holistic way. Support may be provided in the form of construction materials to renovate or build schools, assistance to develop curricula, teaching aids and materials, teacher training, capacity building and poverty alleviation. Culturally appropriate curricula have been developed and taught in community schools by teachers selected from the communities themselves. The courses offered have ranged from pre-school to tertiary level, including full-time degrees and short-term training courses.

Joint curriculum development between indigenous peoples and education ministries has had a major impact, not only in terms of achieving results, but also of building relationships and commitment to partnership and inclusiveness. A Canadian example illustrates how close collaboration with mainstream education authorities is needed to bring about a change in attitude by education officers and State institutions.

⁴ Specific examples are cited from Laos, Malaysia and the Philippines.
Most indigenous children are disadvantaged when they join primary schools and cannot speak the national language, which is usually the teaching medium. Bilingual education based on the mother tongue has had a positive impact in many countries, and initiatives by indigenous organizations in this area are now recognized by governments and donors as effective strategies to bridge education for indigenous children in mainstream educational institutions. In many countries, these have received financial support from the State. The main concept is that, once a child learns an indigenous language well, it will be easier to learn a second language. The benefits include a better personal and conceptual foundation for learning, and more flexible thinking processes, thanks to the ability to process information in two languages. There are also good examples of teaching indigenous languages at higher levels of education, such as in Sami University College in Norway.

Next, teacher training and capacity building initiatives allowing communities to manage education projects independently are essential for the successful implementation of any curriculum. Successful teacher training programmes include strategies for teachers to teach culturally appropriate curricula and indigenous languages, and to enhance the engagement and academic achievement of indigenous learners. The experience of many schools reflects the need for stricter rules on discrimination against indigenous pupils by teachers. Furthermore, community involvement (by parents, particularly mothers, elder members and indigenous community organizations) contributes to better monitoring and supervision of teachers. Increased funding and incentives for teachers to remain in remoter areas were to some degree found to be successful. The most effective strategy is the recruitment and special training of teachers from indigenous communities to teach in their localities, which may require flexibility in interpreting formal recruitment criteria.

Finally the UN study identifies a number of concerns raised by indigenous peoples organizations and civil society groups throughout the world, related to indigenous education. Major concerns were their lack of control over education initiatives for indigenous children, the lack of consultation on the development and implementation of educational services provided to indigenous peoples, and the failure to consult with indigenous leaders on proposals for legislation on indigenous education. Other concerns – in addition to a generalized concern about poor quality schools and the lack of adequate teachers – were the limited opportunities of access to quality bilingual education, educational materials that only reflect the culture of dominant groups, and the inadequate development of culturally appropriate curricula.

Of the conclusions, a key one concerns fiscal allocations, and the need for more public information on these. Public spending on indigenous education is generally inadequate and lower than for other sectors of the population, and teachers of indigenous children tend to receive lower pay and incentives than other teachers. In remote areas where many indigenous communities reside, basic infrastructure, including schools and roads, is still lacking. Financial support for the development of materials, testing of curricula, and adequate support and incentives for teachers to teach in rural schools, is limited and in some countries unavailable. As disaggregated data on government spending in education for indigenous peoples are often limited and difficult to obtain, it can be a challenge to convince States to invest more in this sector. There is a need for States to conduct a study to measure outcomes of government spending, such as the number of teachers, infrastructure and equipment.
Box 1
Indigenous Education Programme in Australian Capital Territory, Australia

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is the smallest of the self governing territories in Australia, comprising the national capital Canberra and adjacent areas. The territory has a sizeable indigenous population. A decade ago, the regional government introduced a programme in its public schools which targeted indigenous children. Besides ACT, the programme also included the territories of Jarvis Bay and Torres Strait. The objective was to improve the performance of the aboriginal pupils in pre and primary schools and close the gap with the non-indigenous children.

The programme tried to achieve the objectives through a variety of means; early childhood education in the kindergarten and primary schools, school and community educational partnerships with the indigenous groups, promoting school leadership among the students, and improvement of teaching quality and training of the teachers.

An Indigenous Education Officer and Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Officer were specifically recruited for the programme, with responsibility for improving school attendance and performance in classes of the indigenous children as well as building relations with parents and families. Furthermore, an 'Indigenous Education Consultative Body' was established with representatives of indigenous communities and parents. The Body had as its tasks to advise the government on strategic and policy choices and priorities to achieve the success of the programme. The government took additional steps to encourage the students and teachers through various awards and incentives (including scholarships, leadership promotion and training) as well as ensuring support from all relevant government departments and officials of ACT. These were followed by activities to heal the collective memory of aboriginal peoples, such as observance of the National Reconciliation Week. Such commemorations are meant to impart a sense of dignity, educating the children about past injustices against aboriginal peoples in Australia.

The programme saw significant improvement in the school enrolment and class performance of indigenous pupils, giving the ACT Government the confidence of achieving its targets “to halve the gap for indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade and at least halve the gap for indigenous students in year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020”.

Source: http://www.det.act.gov.au
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THEIR CULTURE IN BANGLADESH: RELEVANCE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Indigenous peoples or *adivasi* are a very small minority of the national population of some 160 million. The vast majority, over 85%, are Bengali Muslims. Next in number come Hindus, approximately 10%, with small numbers of Christians and Buddhists. It is often estimated that indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities account for between 1-2% of the population, perhaps amounting to some 3 million people. But the figures are approximate, given lack of updated census data and also uncertainties of definition. As for the actual number of diverse ethnic groups, figures also vary. A Small Ethnic Minority Cultural Institution Act, adopted in April 2010, lists 27 different ethnic groups. Other sources recognize 45 different ethnic groups living in 28 districts of the country. What is certain, however, is that over the past decade there has been a growing tendency for marginalized groups to become aware of and to assert their indigenous identity.

Moreover, in all parts of Bangladesh these indigenous groups make extensive use of their own language. A 2007 NGO study\(^5\) observes that more than half of indigenous peoples speak their own language at home more than 80% of the time, and usually all the time (the other language used might be another indigenous language, or Bangla). Most indigenous peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts used their mother tongue all the time, while in North Bengal most indigenous households used their language less than 60% of the time. Some indigenous people in the plains have already lost their language, and use Bangla for most communication in the home and the wider community.

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A. CHT groups

The largest concentration is in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), in the south-eastern corner of Bangladesh, adjoining the Indian and Myanmar borders. The original inhabitants belong to 12 different ethnic groups, each of which has a distinct language. The Chakma, the largest group, and the Tanchangya (a subgroup of the Chakma, which is sometimes listed as a separate ethnic group) speak a language which has close relations with Bangla. The second largest groups are the Marma, who speak a Burmese dialect; and the Tripura who speak a Bodo language. These three tribal groups constitute more than 88% of all indigenous peoples in the CHT. Smaller groups include the Bawm, Pankhua and Lushai, whose language is classified as central Chin; the Khumi and Khyang, whose language is classed with the southern China; and the Mru and Chak, who speak comparatively isolated Tibeto-Burman languages. The ethnic groups also display religious differences. The Chakma and Marma are mainly Buddhists, while the Tripura are largely Hindus, with some Christians. Of the smaller groups, the Lushai and Bawm are predominantly Christians.

As for location, some ethnic groups are concentrated in particular areas, while others are more scattered around the CHT. The CHT has three significant towns and administrative districts - Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati – which are the centres of both normal national administration in the form of District Commissioners, and decentralised structures of largely indigenous governance in the form of the newly created Hill District Councils. Most of the indigenous population lives in rural areas. The Chakma are concentrated in the Chakma circle of Rangamati, and also part of Khagrachari. The Marma are almost evenly distributed in all three districts. The Tripura are concentrated in Khagrachari, though larger numbers live in the Indian state of Tripura. The smaller ethnic groups are mainly concentrated in Bandarban district.

Between the CHT groups there are considerable differences with regard to educational access and aspirations, livelihoods and occupations. There is a highly educated and emerging middle class among the Chakma, Marma and Tripura, including such professions as doctors, engineers, teachers and civil servants. Of the smaller groups, some are considered less vulnerable than others. The Bawm and Lushai for example have a high literacy level and standard of living, having become successful commercial farmers of fruits and other cash crops as well as traders.
Others are traditional *jhum* shifting cultivators living on ridge tops, with high levels of poverty and illiteracy.

A significant feature of CHT society is the continued existence of traditional authority systems, and forms of indigenous representation at different levels. The Chakma, Marma and Tripura have a longstanding and three-tiered system of authority, dating back to the Moghul period. It consists of the circle, Mouza and para (village) systems, each with their own traditional authorities. At the apex are the Circle Chiefs in the Bohmong, Chakma and Mong circles. Among their declared functions are the promotion of the “education, health service and material development” of their people. The Headman or Mouza Chief is the extension of the authority of the Circle Chief. Though their main tasks relate to law and order, or to land and forest administration and local tax collection, they have some authority over all aspects of development within the Mouza area. The lowest level traditional authorities are the Kabaries at the village level.

A comprehensive baseline survey of the CHT was prepared in 2008-9 for the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility, in the context of preparing a UNDP project. It was conducted to explore the real situation of both the indigenous and Bengali population in the CHT, in several broad areas including education, using both qualitative and quantitative survey techniques. Some main findings are presented below:

**Box 2: Education in the CHT: Main Findings of a Baseline Survey**

About 82% of children between 5-16 years are enrolled in primary or secondary schools, Bengali enrolment being marginally higher than that among indigenous peoples. 60% of children go to government primary schools, irrespective of the distance from their residences. 65% of children discontinue their education before completion of primary schooling, and 19% after completing it. More than half the household members aged five years and above are illiterate, irrespective of ethnicity, with little variation between indigenous peoples (54%) and Bengalis (47%). Among indigenous communities, the highest proportion of illiterate persons with no education was found for Khumi (88%), followed by Mro (87%) and Khyang (74%).

Average duration of schooling is low at only 2.8 years, again irrespective of ethnicity and with no significant variation between indigenous peoples and Bengalis. Those completing primary education are higher among Bengali than indigenous, while those completing secondary education are marginally higher among the indigenous than Bengali. Among the indigenous peoples the highest status of education is among Lushai (with a 10.7% primary completion rate and a 6.7% secondary completion rate), while the lowest is among Mro with a 0.7% primary completion rate and none completing secondary schooling. Other respective rates are 6.4% and 4.5% for Bawm, 7.5% and 4.8% for Chak, 7.3% and 3.5% for Chakma, 3.9% and 0.8% for Khyang, 1.5% and 0.4% for Khumi, 6.5% and 2.5% for Marma, 8.8% and 4% for Pangkhua, 6.2% and 1.5% for Tanchangya, and 5.4% and 1.4% for Tripura.

The medium of instruction in government schools was almost exclusively Bangla. Only one per cent of indigenous respondents reported the use of the mother tongue in school books, while 2% reported the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools.

Financial problems were reported as the main reason for drop-outs from school. Other reasons included distance from the schools, the fact that children are not welcome at school, that the medium of instruction is not comprehensible, the need to help parents, insecurity, and lack of interest on the part of the children.

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6 Socio-Economic Baseline Survey of Chittagong Hill Tracts, prepared by Human Development Research Centre for CHTDF, April 2009.
Over the past decade, backed by a growing NGO and international presence in the CHT, indigenous groups have made some progress in placing indigenous education on development agendas. While indigenous and other NGOs have often taken the initiative (developing materials, selecting indigenous scripts for pilot programmes, and strengthening community participation in education), a challenge has been to find the institutional mechanism through which to incorporate these concerns on a more systematic basis. And an obvious logistical challenge has been to address the concerns of the smaller and remote indigenous groups, both in terms of access, and in terms of culture and language preservation. One dilemma is how best to identify the respective roles of the state ministries and agencies responsible for national education, and the new administrative structures in the CHT. One NGO, Zabarang Kalyan Samity, has been able to work well with the new structures, and seek to integrate its initiatives with the formal schooling process.

**Box 3: Zabarang Kalyan Samity: An NGO Pilot Programme in Three Indigenous Languages**

This NGO, with the support of Save the Children and as part of a UNDP education project in the CHT, has initiated a pilot programme on education in three major languages to ensure inclusive quality education. The “quality” means that children have the opportunity to learn in their own language, and that the contents of the curriculum address their culture and daily life. Since 2006, 60 pre-primary centres have been covered in the most remote villages, in the three major languages of Chakma, Marma and Tripura. The ultimate ambition is to bridge the process with the formal schooling process. Moreover, the programme has been implemented with close cooperation of local government bodies and line departments. From the inception, the Hill District Council was closely involved in the entire process, and through it the line department officials have been engaged in project activities. The HDC has agreed to introduce the mother tongue as the language of instruction in primary schools, and is also seeking to recruit local teachers.

Respective communities have participated in the entire process of curriculum development, selection of themes and contents of materials, material development, school site and teacher selection, orthography decisions, and the process of language development.

The methodology is as follows. In the first year, the programmes use the mother tongue to build the confidence of children. In their second year, they begin reading and writing in the mother tongue. They spend 90% of their time on exercises in the mother tongue, and the other 10% on introduction to Bangla. Use of the national language in the classroom will gradually increase, and the students will gain confidence in using both the mother tongue and the national language in the classroom.

An assessment by Zabirang has detected satisfactory results from the programme to date. The enrolment rate of school-age children has increased from 83% to 95%, while the retention rate has increased from 35% to 80%. There has also been increased support from local government.

*Source: Mathura Bikash Tripura, Executive Director, Zabarang Kalyan Samity, presentation to UN Forum on Minority Issues, Geneva, December 2008. www.zks-bd.org*

**B. The plains districts**

Throughout the plains districts, the groups who are increasingly claiming indigenous or *adivasi* status are more scattered, and less concentrated in any one geographical area, than in the CHT. They are nevertheless mainly located in particular regions: Rajshahi and Dinajpur in the northwest, Sylhet in the north east, Dhaka and Mymensingh in the central region, and Barishal and Patuakhali in
the south. The predominant group in the northwest are the Santals, who alone constitute more than half the indigenous population in the region. As many as fifteen other indigenous groups also reside there, but the indigenous population nevertheless constitutes less than 4% of the total population of the respective districts. In the hillocks of Sylhet Division, mainly the Khasi, Garo, Manipuri, Pathro and Tipra communities account for an estimated 8% of the total indigenous population of Bangladesh, but less than 3% of the district populations. The Garos are the predominant indigenous group in the Mymensingh, Netrokona and Tangali region, along with the Hajong, Banai, Hodi and the Koch Barmans. They may account for some 10% of the national indigenous population, but are less than 2% of the district populations. Smaller tribal groups inhabit parts of Barisal and Chittagong Divisions in the south, or the sparsely inhabited mangrove forest area of the Sundarbans.

There is very little data available, concerning the socioeconomic characteristics of indigenous peoples in the plains, including levels of education, or aspirations in this area. Attempting to fill the gap, the development agency OXFAM sponsored a baseline survey of 38 indigenous communities of eleven districts, the results of which were published in 2009. Involving almost 17,000 respondents in north and north-eastern regions, the survey documents demographic profiles, the structure and functions of customary organizations, knowledge of and access to institutional facilities provided by both government agencies and NGOs, and educational status and its facilities including the scope of bilingual education. For data collection, interviewers were selected from respective indigenous communities and properly trained in advance of their work. The survey covered the larger indigenous groups (Santal, Garo, Oraon, Khasi, Mahato, Hajong and Pahan), as well as a number of smaller ethnic groups.

As regards language and education, general findings are that most indigenous peoples are in a backward situation, except where missionary activities are being carried out. Moreover, due to the lack of educational opportunities in the mother tongue, the student loses interest in attending schools where classmates and teachers are from the wider society. Field observation shows that many parents prefer their children to assist them with their work, rather than attending school. Regards facilities, the schools are located far from the homes of children, and this restricts school attendance. Lack of education is an important factor that impedes mainstreaming of indigenous people. While most respondents in the 38 observed communities understood the language spoken by the wide Bengali community, and almost 80% had no access to learning in their own language, the survey detected a strong demand among most members of the communities to receive education in their respective mother tongue. The main initiatives in this area came from NGOs, with experimental programmes among the Santal, Oraon, Hajong, Khashi, Koch and other ethnic groups.

While education levels, aspirations and challenges for indigenous peoples in the plains have much in common with the CHT, the situation is in many ways yet more difficult. First, unlike MoCHTA in the CHT, there is no national government agency to represent their interests. Though a Special Affairs Division under the Office of the Prime Minister takes certain initiatives to improve the quality of life of indigenous communities, it is little known. Second, there are no uniform traditional institutions to act as a vehicle for representing the interests of indigenous communities before local or national government. With a strong missionary presence in these areas of the Plains, they have often assumed many of the functions of the earlier customary institutions. Third, the

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8 In the OXFAM survey referred to above, only 4.9% of respondents were found to possess knowledge about the Special Affairs Division.
diversity of the ethnic groups and languages may create logistical difficulties for delivering education in the mother tongue. There is still a gradual and significant momentum towards an educational system that is culturally appropriate for ethnic communities now reaffirming their distinct and indigenous identity.

Box 4: Civil Society Initiative for Indigenous Education in the Plains: OXFAM’s Work with Pre-Primary Schools

OXFAM GB has been working in Bangladesh since independence in 1971. In 2003 it began to implement a project – Adhishi Gono Unnayan Prokolpo (AGUP) – focusing exclusively on indigenous peoples in the plains region. The project was expanded in 2007, with support from Danida, and is currently working in 12 districts covering Dhaka, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions with 26 partner organizations, most of which are run by indigenous peoples. The project covers the regions in the plains where indigenous peoples are most concentrated.

The project has several components, one of which focuses on pre-primary education in the mother tongue. OXFAM provided support in establishing the pre-primary schools, run by the partner organizations in the indigenous communities, of which there are now over a hundred. It developed bilingual primers for the schools, and mainly women teachers were recruited from the indigenous communities. School Management Committees (SMCs) were set up to supervise the school operations; and a separate Mothers’ Forum, comprising the mothers of children enrolled in the schools, was formed to ensure regular school attendance. OXFAM also organized regular visits of the children to nearby primary schools, encouraging them to enrol for primary education.

The local government administration was also extensively involved in the process. OXFAM organized regular visits to the project’s pre-primary schools by government officials and representatives of local government institutions, keeping them informed of the achievements and constraints of the pupils and communities. This helped to build a strong partnership and cooperation between the project and the government.

The initiative has brought dramatic improvement. Some 3,000 children have so far attended the pre-primary schools, and all have continued in the primary schools. There has also been a marked improvement in the performance of the children attending primary school. Most have a better academic performance and, most importantly, they are continuing in education. The overall dropout rate after three years of schooling, which was previously as high as 80% in some communities, has now fallen to around 20%.

Source: OXFAM project reports and interviews.
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN BANGLADESH: CONTEXT, CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES

Education is key to improving the situation of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh, both in terms of securing greater equality of access to the existing educational system and facilities, and in terms of adapting these as necessary to their cultural, social and economic needs and aspirations.

A. Education policies and constraints: a brief overview

The Government of Bangladesh has shown a strong commitment to increasing access to, and the quality of, education at different levels. In recent years, the budget allocation to education has been approximately 15% of the total government budget. A key policy framework has been the Education for All: National Plan of Action 11 (NPA 11), 2003-2015, which has highlighted the need to improve quality while retaining the focus on equitable access to basic education. In its National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction, 2009-2011, the Government identified education as key to poverty reduction. It seeks to ensure completion of quality primary education, irrespective of social, geographic, gender or ethnic differences. It provides for specific initiatives to ensure equitable access to education for all, including: a primary education stipend for children from poor families; expanding the non formal education which is targeted at the extreme poor and those living on remote areas; covering underserved areas; a needs-based program for vulnerable children; and introducing the school feeding program.

A new National Education Policy (NEP) was approved by Parliament in 2010. Seeking to make the educational system more inclusive, it provides among other things for an extension of the period of fully free primary education. The NEP emphasizes an urgent need to enrol all students in primary education, raise the literacy level, reduce existing disparities, and improve the quality of education. It aims to ensure that all children complete primary education – irrespective of their geographic, socioeconomic, ethnic, linguistic or other conditions – with acceptable learning outcomes. The government recognizes the need to expand the secondary education system to provide better access for primary school graduates. It is also focusing on mainstreaming the madrasah system to ensure equitable learning outcomes for all.

The NEP contains specific provisions for adivasi indigenous peoples. Indigenous teachers and texts in the mother tongue are to be made available, so that indigenous children can learn their own language. The involvement of indigenous society is required for these activities, particularly in the production of text books. Special assistance shall be provided to indigenous marginal children. And up to 1,500 primary schools are planned in the areas with indigenous peoples, in both hill and plains districts, where there are no primary schools. In other cases, hostels are to be constructed to facilitate admission of indigenous students to nearby schools.

Reference can also be made to the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, signed between the Government and insurgent tribal groups in 1997, which contains provisions on indigenous culture, including the proposed introduction of primary education in indigenous mother tongues, more scholarships for indigenous children in educational institutions, and a quota for tribals in higher education until they attained a similar level as other population groups. The following year in 1998 – at a Conference attended by national and regional political leaders, and prominent indigenous leaders from the CHT – the Rangamati Declaration, set out a broad framework for development in
the CHT, which contains a significant focus on education. This reaffirmed the principle of primary education in the indigenous mother tongue, while the Bengali language should be introduced gradually into primary schools. The Declaration attached importance to the selection of teachers, and to teacher training. Teachers of primary schools should be employed from among the local people speaking the same language as the majority of students from the area, on a priority basis by relaxing the necessary qualifications. Training institutes for primary teachers should be established in the CHT district headquarters of Bandarban and Khagrachari. The teaching curriculum was also addressed, with calls for the improvement and updating of teaching material on the CHT and its inhabitants in primary learning materials. And finally the Declaration stressed the importance of new administrative structures, establishing the necessary linkages between education authorities and the new bodies, with majority indigenous participation, that were to be set up under the 1997 peace agreement. The role of local government in education, especially the Regional Council and Hill District Councils, should be strengthened in addition to the upazila and district education officer. And a Board of Secondary and Primary Education for the CHT should be established under the supervision of the Regional Council.

In 2006, in the context of the second phase of the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II), the Ministry of Mass and Primary Education issued a “Primary Education Situational Analysis, Strategies and Action Plan for Mainstreaming Tribal Children”. This appears to be the only comprehensive government plan to address indigenous education, at any level. Its ten recommendations are as follows:

<table>
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<th>Box 5: Recommendations for Mainstreaming Tribal Children (MOPME, 2006)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recruit community based teachers: Locally recruited teachers will be able to use the local language to explain concepts and key learning points. This should be seen not only in terms of ensuring an increase in the number of tribal teachers, but also as supporting the enrolment of tribal persons in the educational sector.</td>
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<td>Organize training and orientation courses for teachers: Teacher training needs to address the issues of child-friendly learning and inclusive education. Teachers need to understand the importance of recognizing differences in culture and identity, such as their use of tribal names and traditional dress in schools. Locally available materials need to be used in teaching and local stories told in the classroom. Teachers need to be trained to accept all children in their classrooms, and to encourage children to recognize difference and diversity as a positive factor.</td>
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<td>Introduce pre-primary school with language education: Pre-primary schooling as a preparation for primary schooling may help reduce some of the disadvantages faced, especially by providing early schooling in mother tongue. This would introduce the child to the school and learning environment and offer gradual introduction to the Bangla language. Language is a crucial issue in promoting education for tribal children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review curriculum and textbooks: Review national curriculum and textbooks to enhance knowledge of tribal cultures. This should be done in consultation with tribal experts in designing and developing appropriate teaching materials and methods. There are many important things that could be presented to all the students on tribal issues, including traditions of thousands of years, dances and music, stories based on nature and earth, knowledge in protecting environment and forests.</td>
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<td>Improve infrastructure of the schools: In many schools in remote areas it was found that the buildings are poorly maintained and require repair and adequate furniture. Many primary schools do not have electricity, there are fewer facilities for drinking water and toilets. Based on local conditions residential schools may be constructed in some areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide stipends. Provision of stipends and other incentives, such as Tiffin for students, may</td>
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help to overcome the difficulties faced by their situation and encourage them to enrol and maintain them in school.

- **Strengthen supervision and monitoring**: Teachers need support to change their teaching practice and create a more child-friendly and inclusive environment. Ensuring supervision and monitoring is an essential part of educational change management. Tribal community organizations and traditional social institutions can be strengthened and encouraged to monitor the educational services for their children.

- **Strengthen the School Management Committees (SMCs)**: Tribal parents have almost no participation in SMCs. It is essential to establish effective arrangements for the active participation of tribal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education services. Regular refresher courses are needed for SMC members.

- **Establish new primary schools**: In areas where there are no schools, new schools need to be established. This is particularly the case in the tea estate area. It is also important to provide high schools close to the primary schools.

- **Allow for flexibility**: Allow schools to adjust the school calendar according to local traditions, religion and work. Allow use of supplementary reading materials in local languages and encourage use of local materials as teaching aids.

### B. Educational system and structure

Formal school education in Bangladesh consists of pre-primary education (ages 3-5), five years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education, two years of secondary education, and two years of higher secondary education. The non formal education systems may have a different structure. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) is responsible for primary and non formal education. The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) is responsible for several types of formal primary school, while the Bureau of Non formal Education (BNFE) has responsibility for non formal education. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for secondary, higher secondary and tertiary education, technical education and vocational training; and also for the religious educational institutions such as the *madrasahs*. Under the MOE, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) have responsibility for the curriculum and textbooks for both primary and secondary education.

At the primary level moreover, the curriculum is diverse. Ten different types of primary educational institutions follow three different curricula. The government schools, non-government schools (both registered and unregistered), community schools, experimental schools, non-formal schools, and primary schools attached to high schools, follow the curriculum of the NCTB. The *madrasahs* follow the curriculum of the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board (BMEB). English medium schools follow the British London and Cambridge curriculum. There are considerable similarities between the NCTB, while the English medium is rather different.

The main schools serving indigenous peoples, except for the more educated minority, tend to be government primary, registered primary, non-registered primary, private primary schools, community and non-formal schools. While there is limited systematic information on the education of indigenous peoples, both the 1991 census and other studies indicate that literacy levels and school enrolment of indigenous peoples are lower than the national average. There are exceptions to this, given that groups such as the Chakma in the Chittagong Hill Tracts actually have higher
literacy rates than the national average, and extensive participation in both secondary and higher education.

A prime example has been the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), whose schools account for some three quarters of all NGO primary schools. BRAC started its Education for Ethnic Children (EEC) initiative in 2001, to adapt Bengali materials and develop teaching methods for ethnic children. Teachers from the indigenous community were recruited to teach the pupils in their native languages, alongside Bengali. In 2008, a pilot project on bilingual education was undertaken in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, beginning with the production of educational materials in the Chakma script with the support of the local indigenous community. Teaching materials have been prepared from pre-primary level through to grade 2 of primary school, with further plans for extending this to grade 5. There are also plans to develop teacher-learning materials for other ethnic minorities that have their own script. By early 2011, BRAC was operating no less than 2,015 schools with more than 49,000 children from 42 ethnic minorities in the north, northeast and southeast of the country. Careful attention has been given to hiring indigenous personnel for these schools, at all levels. Several hundred indigenous staff has been recruited as school supervisors, with additional staff and teachers recruited for the Chittagong Hill Tracts. All teachers must be of indigenous background.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has also given emphasis to indigenous education, as part of its overall development work in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Under a pilot programme to promote multilingual education (MLE) between 2007-2009, 150 schools were selected from two Upazilas in each of the CHT districts. Seven out of eleven language groups were selected for the development of MLE programmes based on the mother tongue in the project schools. The project was implemented by local NGOs under the supervision of, and with support from, UNDP’s Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility. The pilot phase served to demonstrate how new systems can be established and supported, such as the production of curriculum materials in indigenous languages and sensitive to their cultures. It was also seen as successful in demonstrating that it is possible to strengthen and support existing systems, such as the School Management Committees, to achieve much more than previously.

In December 2009, with funding from the European Union, the programme began a new and more ambitious second phase, focusing on making education relevant and accessible to young people. The project’s specific objective is the establishment of a quality primary education system in the CHT, with improved teaching, learning materials and an effective decentralized management system in line with the principle of the PEDPII and Government priorities. It thus aims to achieve educational objectives in the CHT.

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9 Strengthening Basic Education in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Phase II.
to which the Government is already committed. Letters of agreement were signed between UNDP and the CHT’s Hill District Councils (HDCs), to support the project’s implantation. The HDCs were to hold responsibility for the recruitment, remuneration and supervision of teachers; and for the provision of grants to the School Management Committees for the renovation and construction of schools or classrooms, and the implementation of school development plans\(^\text{10}\).

The project supports development of a quality primary and basic education program for the CHT by focusing on five clusters of issues, each of which includes a set of activities as outlined below:

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**Box 6: EU/UNDP Project for Strengthening Basic Education in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Phase II: Expected results and main activities**

- **Mainstreaming policy implementation and advocacy agendas in the CHT:** This pursues the development of an improved educational policy, adapted and more relevant to the CHT context.

- **Strengthening the systems through research and capacity building:** This seeks to enhance the effectiveness of institutions at both national and local levels to deliver educational services in CHT. Educational planning will be improved by equipping both Government and community officials with data and skills to prepare plans and policies, and hold duty-bearers responsible for efficient delivery of services. Updating baseline studies, studies and expenditure analysis, training, and technical assistance for developing strategic educational plans, are the planned activities.

- **Increasing access to education:** Working together with NGOs active in non formal education, this cluster should increase enrolment and decrease dropout rates through a strategy which includes construction and renovation of schools, and non formal education opportunities for drop out and illiterate adults. Activities consist of the construction of 60 schools (in addition to a further 60 schools already built during the pilot phase) and renovation of 270 classrooms, benefiting some 22,000 children. Other activities are to include: establishment of 60 additional pre-primary centres; development of a curriculum for adult education with a focus on female students; training and technical assistance to School Management Committees; and support for the Hill District Councils in recruitment of teachers. Students in schools and communities with the highest problems of access due to poverty will be covered by a school feeding programme, implemented in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP).

- **Improved quality of teaching:** The expected result is the establishment and functioning of an improved education system. Activities include technical assistance to the Primary Training Institute in Rangamati for improving the quality of training of the Institute’s instructors.

- **Multilingual education:** The programme is designed to make the early school experiences for young children more relevant by using a comprehensible language. Curriculum materials are to be developed in seven different languages. Activities also cover consultation and advocacy for official recognition of inclusion of indigenous language and culture in the Primary Training Institute’s curriculum by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

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\(^{10}\) See UNDP, Chittagong Hill Tracts Annual Report, 2009.
At the national level, despite the various policy provisions that recognize the importance of indigenous education, no agency of government has been given official responsibility for the subject. Moreover, some analysts have detected a past government preference for NGO school provision to focus more on socially and geographically marginal groups that the state system does not reach, rather than attempting to cover the wider population. More recently however, assisted by ADB and other international organizations, the Government has been making a more determined effort to extend universal educational coverage to all marginalized groups, including those in remote geographical areas (see below).

The Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA), set up after the 1997 peace agreement, has general responsibility within the national government for all aspects of development in the CHT, including education. Its roles are largely those of coordination and advice, policy formulation and support, monitoring and observation, and liaison. For example it is mandated to coordinate with inter-Ministerial and other Government agencies with regard to the CHT; to provide advisory services to CHT local governments on regulatory and other issues; to formulate policies and laws, and provide policy support to relevant branches and agencies of government; to monitor and supervise all development activities in the CHT region; and to liaise with donors and pertinent international institutions, as well as representing the government in international fora. However, MoCHTA is also mandated to initiate and undertake programmes on socioeconomic development, including those on education and language of the inhabitants of the CHT region.

At the regional level in the CHT, MoCHTA’s role is balanced by that of the new administrative institutions established pursuant to the 1997 peace accord. These are, respectively, the CHT Regional Council, and the Hill District Councils (HDCs) in the three indigenous districts of Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati. The Regional Council was created by an Act of Parliament in May 1998. Its functions include overall supervision and coordination of all development activities carried out by the HDCs and local councils, and also of issues such as “tribal laws, practices, customs and social justice”. Thus it has a broad mandate which will potentially cover subjects related to education in the CHT area.

After the peace accord, the HDCs replaced Local Government Councils which had originally been created by law in the late 1980s. Their mandates were subsequently expanded by separate Acts of Parliament, including responsibility for supervision, coordination and implementation of 33 broad areas of activity, popularly known as “transfer subjects”, including education. A provision of the law states that any institution of work of the Government can be transferred to the Council, with its consent. As of late 2010, 21 government agencies or departments had been transferred to the HDCs. The Department of Primary Education, for example, has been handed to the HDCs, though their authority is limited to staff and school management. Teacher training, the curriculum and textbooks are still managed at the national level.

Despite such policies and administrative measures the challenges in securing adequate education for indigenous peoples remain considerable, in terms of access, quality and relevance. Nationwide, gross and net enrolments in primary education have increased from 93.7% and 87.2% in 2005 to 103.5% and 93.9% respectively in 2009. Yet children from remote and vulnerable areas, including those from minority ethnic groups, do not have access to quality education. In the CHT, UNDP estimated in 2009 that some 82% of children between 5-16 years of age are enrolled in primary or secondary schools, some 60% of these attending government schools whatever the distances from their places of residence. Dropout levels are very high, with some 65% of children leaving

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education before completing primary school, and a further 19% dong so after completing it. The medium of instruction remains the Bangla language, in almost all schools at primary and secondary level.

A serious constraint is the absence of an agency or structure at the national level, to follow through on the ample, well considered and well meaning policy statements and declarations on the subject of indigenous education. It means that there are several experimental initiatives and programmes by national or international NGOs; and, most recently, a comprehensive programme in the CHT, supported by the European Union and UNDP among other donors, which takes its cue from the Government’s policies. The question is how this can be translated into a sustainable and long term programme to increase access by indigenous peoples to relevant and culturally appropriate forms of education.
ADB AND THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN BANGLADESH: APPLYING SOCIAL AND INDIGENOUS SAFEGUARDS

A. ADB support for the Education Sector: an Overview

For several decades ADB has played a major role in supporting education programmes in Bangladesh, increasing access and improving quality through a wide range of interventions. Most recently, it has been increasingly concerned with improving the quality and relevance of education by supporting educational policy improvements, institutional and organizational strengthening, and capacity building. For primary education, ADB has been the lead donor for an ongoing US$ 1.8 billion Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDPII), jointly financed with ten other development partners including the World Bank.

ADB has also been providing substantial assistance for the overall development of secondary education, most recently through two projects. One is the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project, which focuses on teacher strengthening. ADB is helping the government to strengthen the national system and capacity for training secondary school teachers, including madrasah teachers. The other is the Secondary Education Sector Development Project, which is helping the government to reform the sector. As emphasized in the ADB’s Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Bangladesh, a top priority is providing access to teacher training in remote areas and for disadvantaged groups\(^2\).

A 2008 evaluation\(^3\) provides a longer term perspective of ADB support to the education sector, in cooperation with other development partners, over the past two decades. Support for primary education is usefully broken down into three “investment cycles”. The first cycle, beginning in 1990, involved ADB support for the Primary Education Sector Project (PESP), implemented together with the General Education Project (GEP) of the International Development Association (IDA), and small investments by other donors. Of a total investment cost of US$ 310 million, ADB provided US$ 68.3 million and IDA US$ 159.3 million. Development partners coordinated by dividing responsibilities by component, the ADB financing mainly the “hardware” side, and the other development partners taking most of the “software” side. Responsibilities were also divided by geographical area, with ADB covering the Chittagong and Sylhet divisions. The objectives were to increase equitable access to primary education, especially for disadvantaged children, improve quality, and improve the capacity of agencies including the Directorate of Primary Education. The loan covered six subprojects and seven components, such as construction and renovation of public primary schools and district primary education offices, a satellite schools pilot programme, teacher training, curriculum and textbook development, and strengthening sub sector management.

The second cycle between 1997-2003 saw total investment of US$ 742 million by eight development partners, with ADB contributing US$ 100 million to the Second Primary Education Sector Project (SPESP). Responsibilities were again divided by geographical area, with ADB covering the Chittagong, Sylhet and Barisal divisions. The objectives remained essentially the same. The third cycle, from 2003 onwards, saw the introduction of the ambitious sector-wide approach, with eleven development partners providing a total of US$ 1.8 billion for the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDPII). Eight of the partners including ADB provided pooled


resources, while three provided parallel co-financing. PEDPII objectives are similar to those in the first two cycles, though with more focus on the quality aspect. The programme has four components: supporting equitable access to quality education; improving quality through infrastructure development; improving the quality of schools and classrooms; and developing institutional capacity.

ADB also supported the non formal education sector, through loans approved in 1995 and 2001. The first had two components, to expand and improve delivery of non formal education, and to establish and strengthen a Bureau of Non Formal Education (BFNE). The second was a Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Project.

ADB has also funded a series of co-financed projects aiming to increase equitable access to, and improve quality and institutional management capacity of, secondary education. In 1993 ADB approved a US$ 72 million Secondary Education Development Project, completed in 2002. A US$ 60 million Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) was approved in 1999, and completed in mid 2006. A US$ 68.9 million Teacher Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project was approved in 2004, and a US$ 115 million Secondary Education Sector Development Project and Programme (SESDP) in 2006. The latter includes both a US$ 30 million program loan, to support implementation of policy reforms envisaged by the 2006-2013 Secondary Education Sector Development Plan (itself prepared with extensive ADB assistance); and a US$ 85 million project loan. The project loan has a wide range of components, including infrastructure development (the construction of 56 new schools in underserved areas, and provision of additional classrooms and other facilities for overcrowded schools), together with curriculum improvement, reform of national examinations, and promoting increased decentralization of management responsibilities.

By early 2011, further ADB loans for both primary and secondary education were at an advanced stage of preparation. At the primary level, the Directorate of Primary Education under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) has been preparing a third Primary Education Sector Development Programme (PEDPIII), to be implemented over a three-five year period with the support of several development partners including the ADB which, as before, has been taking a leading role. This aims to reinforce ongoing reforms, with a well developed policy framework based on lessons learned from the previous phase. Its design reflects the inclusive education agenda, with a focus on deepening reforms to address the needs of the poor and other excluded groups. In preparing for the project, a technical assistance project has considered coverage of underserved areas, special measures to encompass vulnerable groups, and ways to expand coverage of a stipend programme aimed to increase access of the poor to education. The proposed PEDPIII also envisages an extensive programme to build the physical infrastructure of primary schools, reconstructing almost 3,000 schools, providing over 30,000 additional classrooms, as well as tube-wells and furniture, and grants for maintenance and repair of school buildings. Other proposed components include the development and distribution of new teacher-learning materials, including textbooks, and training to improve teacher quality.

In the area of secondary education, the ADB and other development partners are supporting the government’s planned move towards a sector-wide approach. To this effect a policy and advisory technical assistance for the Secondary Education Sector Development Project was approved in December 2010, and included in the country operations business plan for 2011-2013. This seeks above all to analyze the implications of the new National Education Policy for secondary education, and to prepare an implementation strategy.
B. Applying social safeguards in the education sector, with particular reference to indigenous peoples

1. ADB safeguards and operational procedures

How if at all have social safeguards for indigenous peoples been applied in the above projects and programmes? What has been done, by whom, at different stages of project design or implementation? What more might have been done? And what lessons can be learned from the project experience to date?

Over more than a decade, ADB (similarly to other development partners including the World Bank) has developed rigorous procedures to assess the likely impact of its projects or programmes on indigenous peoples, and then to incorporate appropriate measures through indigenous peoples' plans (IPPs). These were first set out in the 1998 Policy on Indigenous Peoples, and more recently in the 2009 Safeguards Policy Statement (particularly Safeguards Requirement 3 on indigenous peoples). Only the broad outlines of these operational procedures are provided below, with a particular focus on the safeguards for indigenous peoples, though readers are encouraged to study the full text of the SPS and related operational policies.

At the project identification stage, project screening and categorization are undertaken to determine the significance of potential impacts or risks that the project might present with respect to indigenous peoples, to identify the level of assessment and institutional resources required to address safeguard issues, and to determine the information disclosure and consultation requirements. The project team uses screening checklists to this effect. A proposed project is then assigned to different categories, depending on the significance of the potential impacts on indigenous peoples. It is classified as Category A, if the impacts are likely to be significant: an Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP), including assessment of social impacts, is required. It is Category B, if considered likely to have limited impacts on indigenous peoples, and an IPP is also required. A proposed project is Category C if not expected to have impacts on indigenous peoples, and no further action is required.

An initial poverty and social analysis is prepared for every project as early as possible in the project cycle. This helps to flag the social dimensions of a proposed project, as well as develop the terms of reference of project preparation consultants, including those that relate to indigenous peoples.

The SPS articulates the role and responsibilities of the ADB on the one hand, and borrowers or clients on the other. The implementation of the provisions of the safeguard policies is the responsibility of the latter. They are required to undertake social and environmental assessments, to carry out consultations with the affected people and communities, prepare and implement safeguard plans (including the IPPs), and prepare and submit monitoring reports. ADB’s role is to explain policy requirements to borrowers and clients, help them meet these requirements during project processing and implementation through capacity-building programmes, ensure due diligence and review, and provide monitoring and supervision.
The SPS\textsuperscript{14} outlines the main points of social impact assessment that should be covered by an IPP. It should, in summary: review the legal and institutional framework applicable to indigenous peoples in the project context; provide baseline information on the demographic, social, cultural and political characteristics of the affected indigenous peoples communities; identify key project stakeholders, and elaborate a culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive process for meaningful consultation, at each stage of preparation and implementation; assess the potential adverse and positive effects of the project; assess the perceptions of affected indigenous peoples about the project and its impact; and recommend measures to avoid adverse effects (or at least minimize, mitigate and compensate for such effects), and ensure that indigenous peoples receive culturally appropriate benefits under the project.

The ADB has special procedures for financing modalities such as program and sector lending. For the former, it requires that the environmental and social impacts of policy actions associated with program loans be evaluated, and that appropriate mitigation measures be identified and incorporated as loan covenants. For any sector investment project that classified as A or B for indigenous peoples, the project team works with the borrower/client to prepare an “Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework” (IPPF). This will guide the selection, screening and categorization of any subprojects; social and environmental assessment; and the preparation and implementation of the safeguard plans of subprojects. Among other things, the IPPF should assess the adequacy of the borrower/client’s capacity to implement national laws and ADB requirements; specify implementation procedures, including the budget, institutional arrangements, and capacity development requirements; specify monitoring and reporting requirements; and describe the responsibilities of the borrower/clients in relation to the preparation, implementation and progress review of safeguard documents of subprojects.

2. Applying safeguards for indigenous peoples in ADB-financed education projects: a review of experience

Potentially, in view of the objectives and geographical location of ADB-financed education projects in Bangladesh, the portfolio of investments over the past two decades – in particular since the adoption of the Policy on Indigenous Peoples in 1998 – could have provided ample opportunity for applying social safeguards with respect to indigenous peoples. ADB investments in the education sector have sought to target the poor, vulnerable and remote groups. Geographical coverage has included Chittagong, in rural districts of which are the Chittagong Hill Tracts with the largest and most significant concentration of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh; and Sylhet in the plains, where there are several groups of scattered indigenous peoples. Components of various projects and loans, covering teacher training materials and curriculum development, could also provide some scope for addressing multi-lingual education and other aspects of indigenous culture.

The PEDPI and PEDPII loans included general provisions to address indigenous education. PEDPI included a number of initiatives designed to increase school participation among tribal communities in the CHT, but little of this programme was implemented. Under PEDPII, priority was to be given in the construction of new schools and classrooms to remote areas, underserved and under schooled areas of CHT, and areas with indigenous peoples in other districts. The project emphasized flexibility in qualification in recruiting teachers; recruiting teachers from the respective indigenous peoples groups; teaching resources and the medium of instruction in the local languages.

\textsuperscript{14} Annex to Appendix 3. The earlier 1998 Policy on Indigenous Peoples also identified key elements in an indigenous peoples development plan. Though there are some changes between the 1998 policy and the 2009 SPS, the key points remain essentially the same.
for the first two grades of primary school; and recruiting community volunteers to assist teachers in the local language. In project implementation, there has been some improvement in the physical infrastructure for indigenous children. In late 2010, for example, ten hostels were under construction in the CHT to provide accommodation for students living in very remote areas with no access to school, thereby enabling them to attend Government primary schools. Data collection methods have also been amended, allowing for the identification of tribal children. However, while an action plan was envisaged for tribal children (together with similar action plans for gender, special needs and vulnerable children), by late 2010 the technical specialists had not been recruited within the DPE's technical support team.

A Tribal Peoples Development Framework was prepared in 2006, under the Secondary Education Sector Development Program (SESDP). Overall, it envisages a positive impact of the project on indigenous peoples. For example, national implementation of the reforms under the program loan should improve the quality of secondary education for all groups. With decentralization of responsibilities and creation of new posts at the zonal and district levels, there will be better understanding of the local situation that should contribute to faster decision-making, benefiting rural communities including tribal people living in remote and rural areas. Revision of curricula towards greater relevance to the labor market should help improve income-earning opportunities of secondary education students, including members of tribal peoples' groups. Poverty-targeted stipends will reduce the cost of school attendance among the poor, including tribals. And the civil works components of the SERSDP project loan will help increase equity in access for the poor. In other words, an assumption of the IPDF is that components targeted at poor and vulnerable groups can be expected to benefit indigenous peoples, no less than other population groups.

At the same time, the IPPF envisaged eight specific strategies to facilitate addressing tribal peoples' issues in the project. These are largely similar to the strategic “clusters” of the EU/UNDP project in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, referred to above. They include: the provision of new schools and classrooms targeted at underserved areas; poverty-targeted stipends; construction of new schools in at least five underserved thanas where tribal peoples live and meet the criteria for civil works; the construction of additional classrooms in at least 25 schools; collection and maintenance of disaggregated data on tribal peoples; regular analysis by the Project Implementation Unit of output and impact indicators, including by tribal peoples; priority to recruiting people from the immediate community, in the recruitment of new teaching staff in new schools serving communities with tribal peoples; and the services of a social development and gender specialist, to help develop a situation analysis, strategy and action plan for the participation of tribal peoples in secondary education. According to ADB procedures, the IPPF notes that the Government will prepare a specific action for tribal peoples’ groups for subprojects with limited impacts on tribal peoples, or when there is a risk that the project may not bring intended benefits to the affected tribal peoples within a specific plan.

A Skills Development Project, approved in June 2008, was also placed in Category B for indigenous peoples, and an IPPF was consequently prepared. Activities under the project loan are not foreseen to have a negative impact on indigenous peoples. Rather, it is anticipated that a vocational training programme of national coverage, some parts of which are targeted in particular to poor people, will be beneficial to indigenous peoples in the coverage area. To ensure that training will not hinder the attendance of any member of an indigenous group, training will take place in publicly accessible venues. The main strategy is to ensure that indigenous peoples have access to any training programmes within their areas of habitation, through the provision of a daily training allowance as appropriate, and accommodation in the training institutions hostels, where available.
Most recently, an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework has been prepared for the third phase of the Primary Education Sector Development Program (PEDPIII). This merits review in some detail, first because it was prepared pursuant to the entry into force of the ADB’s new safeguards policies; and second, because this and the related Social Management Framework were prepared by the Government’s Directorate of Primary Education in close cooperation with both ADB and the World Bank as development partners for the education sector loan. It can thus be said to reflect the combined safeguards requirements of the two agencies.

Interestingly, the strategic focus of this IPPF is mainly on one aspect: measures to ensure that the civil works related to school facilities are not prejudicial to indigenous peoples, and that the consultation mechanisms to this effect are truly meaningful. Applicability of ADB’s safeguard requirement on indigenous peoples in the plain districts and CHT will in general depend on (i) the presence and prevalence of indigenous peoples in the close vicinities of the schools that are undertaken for expansion or improvements, as well as location and sites of new schools; and (ii) whether or not the required physical works would affect them in such a way as to threaten their cultural way of life and restrict access to their livelihood activities. Thus DPE will carefully select and screen all schools and their location and sites, that are to be expanded or built anew, determine the presence of indigenous peoples in the school localities, and ensure their participation in the civil works selection and implementation process.

**Box 7: Key elements of Indigenous Peoples Plans in PEDPIII**

Selection of expansion works and other improvements and location of new schools will largely indicate whether or not, or in what manner, indigenous peoples would benefit or be adversely affected. Wherever affected adversely, in the plains or CHT, DPE will prepare and implement Indigenous Peoples Plans in accordance with the principles, guidelines and procedure outlined below. To avoid or minimize adverse impacts, and at the same time ensure culturally appropriate benefits, DPE will select, design and implement the physical works in adherence to the following principles:

- Fully include indigenous peoples communities in general and their organizations in the process leading to identification, planning and implementation of expansion/improvement works and location and sites of new schools and dormitories for children and teachers
- Carefully screen, together with indigenous peoples, the required physical works on existing schools and locations and sites of new ones for a preliminary understanding of the nature and magnitude of potential impacts, and explore alternatives to avoid or minimize any adverse impacts
- Where alternatives are not feasible and adverse impacts are unavoidable, immediately make an assessment of the key impact issues with indigenous peoples and others knowledgeable of indigenous peoples cultures and concerns
- Undertake the tasks necessary to prepare IPPs with the most appropriate measures to mitigate the adverse impacts and, if opportunities are there, development measures for the general indigenous peoples communities
- Not undertake civil works where the indigenous peoples communities remain unconvinced about the benefits to offer broad support for the project.

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15 This was only in draft form at the time of writing in February 2011.
Careful consideration is given in the IPPF to the consultation and participation strategy with indigenous peoples. The primary objective would be to assess whether there is a broad community consensus for expansion and construction of new schools, and seek their inputs and feedback to avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts associated with the required civil works; identify the culturally appropriate measures to mitigate impact; and assess and adapt economic opportunities which DPE could promote, to complement the measures required to mitigate the adverse impacts. The consultation mechanism is as described below:

**Box 8: Consultation mechanisms and broad community support in PEDPIII**

Consultations will be in two parts. First, prior to selection of schools located in an area predominantly inhabited by indigenous peoples, the DPE and Upazila Education Officer (UEO) will consult the indigenous communities about the need for, and probable impact of, the expansion or reservation works. Second, prior to detailed impact assessment, the objectives would be to ascertain (i) how the indigenous communities in general perceive the need for undertaking physical works for particular schools, and gather any inputs they might offer for better outcomes (ii) whether or not the communities broadly support the proposed works, and (iii) any conditions based on which the indigenous communities may provide broad support for the proposed works, which would eventually be addressed in IPPs and design of the physical works.

To ensure free and informed consultation, DPE/UEO will:

- Facilitate widespread participation of indigenous communities with adequate gender and generational representation, customary and traditional indigenous peoples organizations, community elders and leaders, civil society organizations, and groups with knowledge of indigenous peoples’ development issues and concerns
- Provide them with all relevant information about the subproject, including that on potential adverse impacts, organizing and conducting the consultations in such a way as to ensure free expression of their views and preferences
- Document and share with ADB and other development partners the details of all consultation meetings, with indigenous perceptions of the proposed works and the associated impacts, particularly the adverse ones; and inputs or feedback offered by indigenous peoples; and any account of the conditions agreed with indigenous peoples for providing the basis for broad community support for the proposed works.

Once broad community support is received, DPE/UEO will assess the impact details at household and community levels, with a particular focus on the perceived adverse impacts, mitigation and community development measures. DPE/UEO will provide indigenous peoples with the impact details of the proposed civil works. Consultations, covering topics of cultural and socioeconomic characteristics as well as those the indigenous peoples consider important, will continue throughout the preparation and implementation period, with an increasing focus on the households that might be directly affected.

In the meantime, as part of preparing the new sector programme, a broad stakeholder consultation was held in early 2011 with representatives of various indigenous peoples’ communities and their representative institutions. Representatives of development partners and key government officials also participated. It served to identify some of the primary concerns of indigenous peoples, as illustrated below:
Box 9: PEDPIII Stakeholder consultation with indigenous representatives: key recommendations and discussion points

- **Bilingual and mother tongue education** was identified as a highly important issue for indigenous peoples. With “acculturation” being a major problem for all indigenous peoples in the country, there is a strong demand to learn their own languages in schools at primary level, along with Bengali and English. While it is recognized that the introduction of bilingual education in the schools for indigenous peoples would not be an easy task, it is hoped that the government will come up with a relevant strategy to respond to this demand.

- **Teachers’ identity and training** are equally important concerns. Schools having a considerable number of indigenous children in their catchment areas should include teachers from these communities. This is particularly the case for the plains regions, where there are no teachers from indigenous communities. Equally important is to include in the teachers’ training curriculum the issues related to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country, so as to make them aware of the rich heritage of Bangladesh.

- **Policy flexibility** is needed for setting up new schools in the CHT. As the region has a sparse population, the number of families and school age children might not justify new schools if the standard rules were to be applied. Moreover, the design of schools should be adapted to local conditions. This is of particular relevance to the CHT, where the terrain is often uneven, and the design should be appropriate in order to avoid hill cutting and environmental damage.

- **Residential schools** should be managed with great care. While there are clear justifications for their construction, particularly in the CHT, it is important to have teachers and caretakers from the same ethnic group as the children. When children are from diverse linguistic communities, caretakers should be able to speak more than one language.

- **School management** should encourage indigenous participation. Schools with a considerable indigenous population in their catchment areas should include their representatives in the School Management Committee.

- **Land acquisition** does not seem a major issue, though it is a potentially difficult matter in the CHT in view of an ongoing controversy over land ownership, where the government definition of khas (state) land is contested by the region’s indigenous peoples. A key issue is to secure appropriate compensation for land acquisition, in cases where there are claims of traditional land rights by indigenous peoples. A useful model can be the land acquisition framework, designed under preparation of the second phase of the ADB-financed Chittagong Hill Tracts Rural Development Project (CHTRDPII). This provides that traditional owners shall be compensated, whether or not they have official ownership titles issued by the government, through a consultative process involving traditional indigenous institutions.

- **Institutional arrangements and capacity building** should provide for a specific budgetary allocation and human resources for implementing a sub component for indigenous peoples. This could consider involving their representative institutions. In the CHT, this could be the CHT Regional Council, the Hill District Councils, and the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA). There should also be adequate support for capacity building of the relevant institutions.

3. **Assessment**

Several questions arise from this brief review of ADB experience. Into how much detail should the IPPF or IPP go? What issues should be addressed? Should they be limited to the primary objectives
of the project or sector loan itself? Or should they make use of the project to address the wider concerns of indigenous peoples? Additional issues arise from the entry into force of the ADB's 2009 safeguards policies, with their strong emphasis on broad community support, meaningful consultation, and ascertaining the consent of indigenous peoples for certain project activities. How wide should these consultation spread, in the context of an education project? How does one identify the appropriate institutions and leadership structures? Moreover, when bodies such as the Regional Council and Hill District Councils in the CHT have a mandate over certain aspects of education, to what extent should capacity building focus on them?

The experience over the past two decades, and particularly since the ADB’s first Policy on Indigenous Peoples in 1998, has been incremental. Though indigenous peoples’ frameworks were prepared in projects during the decade after that, they tended to be very general provisions, and there is no documented evidence of systematic follow-up by either the ADB itself or the various Executing Agencies. Significantly, the ADB’s 2008 evaluation of the education sector in Bangladesh makes no mention of indigenous or tribal peoples.

With the more recent growth in awareness of diverse ethnic identity in Bangladesh, as reflected in national policy statements, there appears to be a correspondingly greater scope to address these concerns on a more systematic basis in education projects and programmes. A key question is how applying the indigenous peoples safeguards of agencies such as ADB and the World Bank can assist a government like Bangladesh in its broader educational planning and programming, helping it implement a holistic approach to the ethnic or indigenous aspects of its education for all and inclusive education policy agendas.
LOOKING FORWARD: LESSONS FOR PRACTITIONERS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

A. Introduction

This section aims to provide practical guidance. In a country like Bangladesh, where indigenous peoples are such a small proportion of the national population, one may not expect them to be the highest of priorities in education sector projects and programmes. But they and their special needs must be considered. And when a project has a definite or likely impact on them, they must be consulted and involved. This is not only a safeguards requirement of such agencies as the ADB and World Bank. It is not only a requirement of national policy in Bangladesh. It is also common sense. Education only works and fulfils its objectives if it accessible and relevant to the target groups, helps them fulfil their aspirations and earn a livelihood, and to do this with dignity and respect for their cultures. Otherwise, it is money down the drain. It is also a lot of money, which a country like Bangladesh can ill afford to waste.

So how does one do it? Let’s go through the various phases of a project or programme. Let’s think who does what, and who provides the necessary support and information.

B. Key issues in project identification and design

The broad objectives of a government’s education sector programming are usually set out in a high profile policy. Bangladesh has had many of these, built on the principles of inclusive and relevant education for all. The 2010 National Education Policy is the latest. The country strategy and program (CSP) of an organization like ADB should take its cue from this, and be updated to match it. Loans and donor support should simply help a country meet its nationally defined objectives, through having certain priority areas of concentration, where they can add most value. In the case of the ADB, its Education by 2020 sector operations plan does this generally. However, beyond references to vulnerable groups, it says little about the specific needs and concerns of indigenous peoples.

For primary and secondary education, in Bangladesh and elsewhere, the tendency for ADB and other investors/donors is to have integrated sector lending. This means a blend of policy and programme support (with support for reforms), physical infrastructure, development of teaching materials, teacher training, curriculum development, and other things. How can the needs of indigenous peoples be addressed in all this?

There are various ways. It is possible to have a special component for indigenous education, at different levels of the educational system. While the logistical and technical difficulties of such an initiative should be recognized, experience shows it can be done efficiently and make a real difference. The ample examples of NGO intervention demonstrate this. The main needs are to secure commitment by the pertinent organizations, and to mobilize the requisite resources and technical expertise.

PEDP II tried to do this for the primary sector by identifying the specific needs and the areas of intervention. Alternatively, once the likely components of a project have been identified, each one
can be examined from an indigenous lens or perspective. Scrutiny, by qualified experts, can assess how components can be adapted to the specific situation of indigenous communities.

In any event, an early stakeholder consultation with indigenous peoples, their institutional representatives and experts is necessary, to see how the concerns of indigenous peoples can be taken into account in the initial stages of project identification. This happened very late in PEDPIII. Such consultations should be based on the national policy framework, and can seek additional guidance from good international experience.

**BOX 10: Key Steps for Formulating Projects and Programmes on Indigenous Children's Education**

| Step 1: Identification of the Needs of the Indigenous Children |
| Step 2: Scrutiny of the project or programme components by a qualified expert |
| Step 3: Review of national and international policies on Indigenous Peoples’ Education |
| Step 4: Consultation with indigenous peoples’ representatives and organizations and experts on indigenous peoples |
| Step 5: Baseline Survey |
| Step 6: Elaboration of Implementation Plan |
| Step 7: Setting up Working Groups for a Task Force on Indigenous Peoples Education |
| Step 8: Monitoring and Information Dissemination Plan |

*The policy framework*

There are different laws and policies concerning indigenous or tribal peoples, or small ethnic minorities, in Bangladesh. Some are general recommendations, which may be difficult to translate into specific programme objectives or components. But other policies and guidelines are precise and well articulated. One example is MOPME's 2006 recommendations for mainstreaming tribal children at the primary school level. The challenge is to translate these into specific measures, with targets, a time-frame, clear allocation of responsibility, and above all a budget. To recapitulate on some important recommendations:

- Introduce pre-primary school with indigenous language education
- Recruit community-based teachers
- Review the curriculum and textbooks
- Strengthen School Management Committees
- Provide stipends, where necessary
- Allow for flexibility to adjust the school calendar to local traditions.

International laws are also important. In ratifying international Conventions, a State commits itself to certain standards, and to incorporating these within its domestic laws and policies. Bangladesh
has ratified a number of relevant international treaties and instruments, including the ILO’s 1957 Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Populations, Part VI of which is concerned with Education and Means of Communication. Some main points of the ILO Convention are that:

- Indigenous peoples shall have the opportunity to acquire education at all levels on an equal footing with the rest of the national community
- The formulation of education programmes for indigenous peoples shall normally be preceded by ethnological surveys
- Indigenous children shall be taught to read and write in their mother tongue or, where this is not practicable, in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong
- The imparting of general knowledge and skills that will help children to become integrated into the national community shall be an aim of primary education for indigenous peoples
- Educational measures shall be taken among other sections of the national community, and particularly among those that are in most direct contact with indigenous peoples, with the object of eliminating any prejudices that they may harbour in respect of indigenous peoples
- Governments shall adopt measures, appropriate to the social and cultural characteristics of the indigenous peoples concerned, to make known to them their rights and duties, especially in regard to labour and social welfare. If necessary this shall be done by means of written translations and through the use of media of mass communication in indigenous languages.

The preparation of specific components for indigenous peoples in education projects and programmes needs to be anchored in the relevant national and international policy framework. In the case of Bangladesh, this should refer to the National Education Policy, 2010 and the recently adopted Sixth Five Year Plan, both of which make ample reference to the need for specific planning for the education of the indigenous children. The reference to international policies and laws (e.g. ILO Convention 107, and International Convention on the Rights of the Child) would serve to give a wider focus.

Baseline surveys

A serious impediment to formulating specific education projects and programmes for indigenous peoples is the lack of reliable data and information. The available information from public and private sources in this regard is generally incomplete and in some cases unreliable. The ADB safeguards policy calls for baseline information on the demographic, social, cultural and political characteristics of the affected indigenous peoples communities for preparation of an indigenous peoples plan or framework in a sector programme or project.

The question is how detailed should this be. What points should be covered? And how can it best be prepared?
The socio-economic baseline survey prepared for the Chitttagong Hill Tracts Development Facility provides a good model. Carefully trained surveyors addressed both qualitative and quantitative aspects of educational level, and also educational aspirations, throughout the CHT. This could capture levels of schooling and literacy, the location of schools, and approaches to mother tongue education. But other issues were not addressed in detail, such as the availability of indigenous teachers, teacher training needs, and approaches to curriculum development.

In ADB-financed projects, the information on indigenous peoples and education, at different levels, has been rather general. It has tended to list the indigenous peoples in a project area, and often to assume that indigenous peoples will benefit from a project or programme of general application, without adapting any of its component to the specific circumstances of indigenous peoples. Significantly, none of the ADB supported projects or programmes in Bangladesh have prepared a baseline survey specifically on the educational needs and concerns of indigenous children.

Ideally, there should now be a comprehensive baseline survey, covering all levels of education from pre-primary through to higher. It can draw on the extensive NGO initiatives in the CHT and plains, as well as considerable academic expertise. Pilot surveys can be implemented in the four regions of Bangladesh where indigenous peoples are concentrated. A framework for such a baseline survey can be approximately as follows:

| Box 11: Baseline Survey for Indigenous Peoples and Education in Bangladesh Proposed Framework and Structure |
| 1. **Access to education, pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher, and non-formal education.** Data collection and analysis on access. Where available, compare access levels between indigenous peoples, Bengalis and other members of the national population. |
| 2. **Main factors affecting access to education.** Assessment of issues including location, availability of teachers, presence or absence of stipends and other benefits, and attitudes towards education. |
| 4. **Teacher training and indigenous cultures.** Availability of teacher training material on indigenous culture and society, and its practical use in teaching. |
| 5. **Forms of schooling and indigenous peoples.** In view of the diversity of forms of education in Bangladesh, particularly at primary level, assessment of the forms of schooling available to indigenous peoples. |
| 6. **Experience with multilingual education.** Assessment of the availability of multilingual education, and its use at different levels and in different forms of education. |
| 7. **Curriculum development and teaching materials.** Perceptions of indigenous peoples on the existing curriculum and teaching materials. Assessment of the current curriculum and materials, and their sensitivity to cultural diversity and the concerns of indigenous peoples. |
| 8. **Community participation.** Assessment of successful experience of indigenous participation in schooling and education, including the participation of traditional indigenous forms of representation and decision-taking. |
Consultative mechanisms

A key element of international standards on indigenous peoples, and also of the ADB safeguards on the subject, is the need for meaningful consultation. In the words of the ILO’s latest Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169 of 1989), governments shall “establish means by which these peoples can freely participate, to at least the same extent as other sectors of the population, at all levels of decision-making in elective institutions and administrative and other bodies responsible for policies and programmes which concern them”.

This should also apply to the education sector, policies and programmes. Most government and international agencies arrange for consultations with indigenous leaders and communities in the locations where they plan to implement school infrastructure, education and other projects. But how can you do this at the higher and national level, when education sector policies and programmes are being developed? When indigenous peoples are a small proportion of the population, as in Bangladesh, in what circumstances is it necessary to do so? At what stage should a stakeholder consultation, or several consultations, take place? What issues should be considered? How should the consultations be prepared? And what follow-up mechanisms should be established, to ensure meaningful participation throughout the duration of a programme or project?

There are many examples of countries with small indigenous populations, who have established consultative bodies with indigenous peoples, or special task forces on indigenous education. In Bangladesh, the challenge is to move from rather ad-hoc consultations towards a more structured mechanism that can meet the needs of the government ministries and other agencies involved in the education sector, the development partners, and the indigenous peoples themselves. Though the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) held a broad consultation in the context of preparing PEDPIII, there are as yet no clear follow-up mechanisms. The stakeholder consultation detected the need for (a) an institutional arrangement with a specific budgetary allocation for an indigenous component of the project, and (b) effective monitoring of project activities pertaining to indigenous peoples.

Thus it is important to consider how a framework for ongoing consultation and monitoring could be adapted to the circumstances of Bangladesh, ensuring that qualified indigenous participants could have inputs into all aspects of the educational system and planning, as well as donor coordination. An effective model may be the one adopted for the implementation of the present ADB technical assistance project, in particular in organizing an ‘Indigenous Peoples Network Forum’ to serve as a venue for discussing indigenous peoples issues and concerns. This was carried out under the overall guidance of the Ministry of CHT Affairs but organized by the Bangladesh Adivasi Forum with the overall support of ADB. This model could be given an institutional structure, proving useful to the government both for education sector programmes and other development activities that have an impact on indigenous peoples.

Implementation arrangements with the participation of indigenous peoples

An appropriate implementation mechanism is essential, to ensure adequate participation by indigenous peoples in all education sector activities. This issue requires careful attention, in particular where there are no institutions in place to provide for representation of indigenous peoples. In the CHT the issues are clearer, given that representative institutions already exist. It is important to involve MoCHTA, together with the CHTRC and the HDCs. Participation by the latter is of particular importance, given its mandate within the respective districts for socio economic development, which includes primary education. Furthermore, it is important also to involve in
decision-taking the traditional institutions, the local NGOs led by indigenous peoples, community leaders and other knowledgeable persons. Their involvement in field level implementation, and also in monitoring, will considerably enhance the participation of indigenous groups in education programmes and activities, and also ensure that intended outcomes are effectively achieved.

In the plains region, an implementation framework poses greater challenges. One option is to involve the various NGOs and community based organizations led by indigenous peoples, as well as their traditional social structures and institutions. The latter are still vibrant among most indigenous groups, although in contrast to the CHT they do not enjoy any formal recognition from the government. The national level coordinating bodies of the indigenous peoples, such as Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, could also have an advisory role.

Implementation mechanisms need to set out a framework for collaboration between government institutions and NGOs with relevant expertise. Some NGOs have developed widespread expertise in providing culturally sensitive education for indigenous peoples, pioneering creative initiatives which can inspire official educational programmes. The framework needs to include, in addition to the better known NGOs at national levels, the NGOs led by indigenous peoples which have gained extensive expertise in both the CHT and the plains.

A strategic implementation plan should also identify the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in design, implementation and monitoring. It should also identify the means and materials to be deployed, including relevant and cost effective technology. An example can be the appropriate use of information technology (IT), particularly in those parts of the CHT where, because of the inaccessible terrain and sparse population in the remote areas, establishment of schools in every locality and village may not be a practical option.

Finally, an issue requiring careful attention during the implementation phase is the protection and welfare of indigenous children. As a result of deep-rooted prejudices, indigenous children can easily be victims of discrimination and maltreatment, not only by fellow students but sometimes even by the school administration. These concerns are of particular importance in the management and administration of "residential schools". Experiences from other parts of the world, including both the successes and failures, can provide useful lessons on issues including the protection of and prevention of abuse against children (particularly girls), acculturation, and the maintenance of family ties.

Effective implementation could best be ensured through setting up a Task Force on Indigenous Education, as illustrated below:
Box 12: Proposed Framework for Bangladesh Taskforce on Indigenous Education

There are complex technical and logistical issues, both in addressing the particular cultural needs of indigenous peoples and in mainstreaming their participation in the national educational system. The issues highlighted in the various policy declarations on the subject need to be disaggregated; and informed proposals and strategies need to be prepared for each of them. This could be best achieved by setting up a Task Force and anchoring it in a relevant government ministry (MoPME, MoE or MoCHTA or all three Ministries with MoPME or MoE in the lead) comprising a number of working groups as elaborated below;

**Working Group 1. Access to education: data collection and analysis.** This group needs to compile all available data on access to education, duration of schooling, levels of education, and drop-out rates. Survey specialists and statisticians need to be involved. It is essential to assess whether there are still major discrepancies between the access of indigenous peoples and other groups of the national population to the educational system, and what have been the recent trends over time. This will be a precondition for effective strategies.

**Working Group 2. Capacity Development, staffing of schools, teaching methods and teacher training.** This group needs to assess capacity development requirements of the institutional stakeholders together with the experience of indigenous teachers and teaching methods in CHT and the plains, and to develop a viable strategy for increasing the selection and placement of indigenous teachers. It should also identify the main needs of teacher training, and the ways that these can be met. The group should be comprised mainly of indigenous teachers, educational planning personnel, and personnel from teacher training colleges with indigenous representation wherever possible.

**Working Group 3. Mother Tongue Education, Curriculum Development and Multiculturalism.** Drawing on experience to date, this group needs to formulate practical recommendations, with regard to the choice of both languages and alphabet, and also ways in which more teaching materials could be developed in the mother tongue and made available to schools. For example, different opinions have been expressed about the choice of alphabet to be used in course materials or text books, if languages of indigenous peoples are introduced as the medium of instruction in CHT primary schools (e.g. the Changma, Marma, Kok Borok and Roman alphabets, among others). These are complex technical issues, which need specialist attention. Further, this group also needs to address not only the curriculum for indigenous children, but ways in which there can be more attention to indigenous culture and concerns in different parts of the national curriculum. This is one of the most frequently made demands of indigenous peoples. It would clearly need to bring together officials of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), other relevant agencies including those supported by ADB projects, and external indigenous experts. The Small Ethnic Group Cultural Institute (formerly, the Tribal Cultural Institute) could play also a useful role in this regard.

**Working Group 4. Consultation, Monitoring, Research and Information Dissemination:** Consultation with indigenous peoples should be an integral part of the implementation strategy of any programme or project rather than an ad-hoc activity. This requires corresponding institutional measures in the implementation arrangements, which can best be addressed through a Working Group. Similarly, effective monitoring is key to successful implementation of projects/programmes. This entails a well-defined framework of collaboration between the government and the NGOs, not only for monitoring purposes but as an integral part of the implementation modalities. With specific regard to education programmes for indigenous peoples, repeated constraints are the absence of: high quality data and detailed documentation, and research reports of past and ongoing activities. This calls for comprehensive research and its dissemination to a wider audience.
List of References


