

Sindh Education Sector Development Policy Credit **US\$100 million**

Sindh has launched a comprehensive education reform agenda through the Sindh Education Reform Program (SERP) which will be supported by three World Bank credits in the form of the Sindh Education Sector Development Policy Credit (SEDPC) series. The World Bank has approved the first Sindh Education Sector Development Policy Credit for US\$100 million.

Like the rest of Pakistan, Sindh has seen a fall in poverty since 2000-01. Social indicators, such as literacy rates, enrollment rates, and immunization rates have also improved. In particular, net enrollment rates in primary school have increased by one-fifth, from 40 percent in 2001-02 to 48 percent in 2004-05. Despite these improvements, enrollment rates are still low, especially in rural Sindh where gender gaps are also most significant. For every 100 boys who enroll in primary and high school in urban Sindh, only 43 and 17 girls do so, respectively, in rural Sindh. In 2004-05, the net enrollment rate for rural girls in primary schools was only 29 percent. For those who do attend school, quality is low, as reflected in drop out rates, and lower than desired scores in the national achievement tests.

Recognizing the urgency of addressing these challenges, the government has launched the SERP in a significant effort to improve education outcomes. The SERP, builds on the lessons learned from the education sector reforms initiated in 2001 but is a deeper and broader program. Its design reflects the government's conviction that education reforms can only be successful when sector-specific reforms aimed at improving quality and access are included in a broader framework that improves accountability in the sector. It also acknowledges that education reforms cannot be successful in isolation, but need to be embedded in a broader reform framework that ensures fiscal sustainability and improves the fiduciary environment. The objectives of the program are to improve participation, retention, and transition; reduce gender and regional disparities; and improve quality in elementary and secondary education (grades 1-10).

The reform program is built on four complementary pillars. The first pillar includes fiscal, financial management, and procurement reforms aimed at strengthening provincial finances and the effectiveness of public expenditures while increasing education and other poverty-related expenditures. The second pillar includes reforms to strengthen the functioning, capacity, and accountability of provincial and district education management in line with devolution objectives; to provide incentives to district governments to improve service delivery; and to strengthen the role of school management committees in school development and monitoring. The third pillar aims at improving access to quality schooling, with a particular focus on rural areas and girls, by improving the quality and utilization of school physical infrastructure and the implementation of incentive programs (free textbooks and girls' stipends), and by launching partnerships with the nongovernment/private sector to increase access and quality. The fourth pillar aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning, through instituting merit-based recruitment and improved accountability of teachers, establishing a competency-based system of teacher education and continuous professional development, and through strengthening the assessment of student achievement in the provincial education system.