

## 2.8 Pakistan: Punjab Education Sector Reform Program (PESRP)

With a population of 80 million, the Punjab province comprises almost 60 percent of the total population of Pakistan. The provincial government launched the Punjab Education Sector Reform Program (PESRP) in 2003 with the objective of improving access, quality and governance in the education sector.

At the time of its launching, the Punjab had been witnessing insignificant improvements in the education sector with net primary enrollments rates of only 45 percent. The education reforms focus on increasing enrollments and retention, especially for girls, and in improving sector governance and monitoring.

The program has been supported by three IDA development sector policy credits, with the third credit, PEDPC III, approved in June 2006. In a period of three years, enrollment increases have been registered for both boys and girls, although at a higher rate for girls as a result of which Punjab is seeing a narrowing of the gender gap. Sector governance has improved through robust monitoring, independent validations, and improvements in financial management.

### Outcomes Influenced by the Project

In a period of three years, there have been impressive increases in public sector enrollments and progress in moving towards gender parity. Key areas are:

- Total enrollments (Pre-Primary – Grade 10) have increased at a respectable rate of 20% since the start of the reform program from 8.8 million students to 10.6 million students (*1.8 million more students*).
- *Progress towards gender parity:* In October 2003, girls made up 43% of total public school enrollment (Grades 1 – 12), moving to 44.5% in 2004, and 45% in May 2005, closer to the Government's target of 49%.
- Primary girls' enrollment in government schools has moved from 44% to 46% of total primary enrollment during the same period, and at the middle level, girls now account for 41% of total enrollment, up from 36% in October 2003.
- Household survey data also show improvements in net enrollment rates (NER), echoing the trends in public sector enrollments as reported by administrative data. The primary NER in Punjab has increased from 45% in 2001/02 to 58% in 2004/05<sup>2</sup>.
- Primary completion rate in government schools has increased from 58% to 61%.

The following inputs have contributed towards the success highlighted above:

- Toilets, boundary walls, and additional classrooms provided to about 30,000 schools
- 11 million students in grades primary- grade10 annually receive free textbooks.
- 50,000 additional school teachers hired and posted to schools
- Almost 300,000 eligible girls annually receive monthly stipends pegged to school attendance
- Provision of financing to 300 low cost private schools using a public-private partnership model to support students from lower income quintiles
- Community based school councils established in 43,000 primary schools
- NGOs providing capacity support to 2,400 School Councils
- Sector budget has increased by almost 50% in a three year period.
- One thousand closed schools have been made functional
- New arrangements for sector governance established for the first time in the country through signing of performance based monitoring and financing agreements between the province and the 35 district governments.

<sup>2</sup> 2001-02 data based on Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS); 2004-2005 data based on Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLSM) Survey 2004-05, Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan.

- Teacher absenteeism improved through hiring teachers on school-specific contracts.
- Implementing a strong monitoring system to ensure transparency and allow credible measurement of results which is being cited as a ‘best practice’ in the country and has been showcased in regional events

### **Bank Contribution and Key Factors for Success**

Bank support enabled continuity of policy dialogue with government. The Bank team was also instrumental in providing quality technical support and advice in the education sector as well as in supporting strong reforms to improve sector governance through better sector monitoring and expenditure management. Maintenance of regular and annual IDA financing supported smooth implementation of reforms, and enabled the province to stay the course, maintain momentum and show results.

In addition to this, the following inter-linked factors have ensured good results. **First**, there has been the highest level of Government commitment and championship. This has been backed by strong leadership at the sector level, supported by technical teams. **Second**, participation of key stakeholders, including parents/communities, civil society groups, and private sector has been instrumental in maintaining the momentum of reforms. **Third**, strong monitoring systems have been established for measuring results. This has enabled ongoing analysis and dissemination of results. Continuity of Bank team, largely decentralized to the country office, as well as that of counterpart government team, has been an important factor in keeping the agenda focused.

The program has created a **country-wide impact**. The Government of Pakistan has acknowledged Bank’s positive role, and has requested similar programmatic support for other provinces of the country, including for Sindh province. The monitoring systems established under the program have become a flagship and are being replicated in other provinces

### **Lessons Learned/Strategy Going Forward**

Improvements in the education system require institutional changes which take time. Quality improvements especially occur over a much longer time frame. In a sector such as education, it is not possible to tackle all challenges at one go and phasing of reforms is important. This is a long term program requiring long term engagement. Building upon the early successes of PESRP, the Government has extended the reform program into a second phase and has requested continued IDA financing from the Bank.

Going forward, the second phase is sequencing specific actions aimed towards:

- Improving quality of learning while also continuing with the ongoing program to further increase access;
- Focusing education service delivery improvements in rural areas (especially for rural girls) which are predominantly dependent on the public sector;
- Strengthening public private partnership to support low cost private sector providers;
- Improving capacity, especially at district levels and below;
- Providing increased access to primary school graduates at elementary, secondary and college level education;
- Strengthening evaluation capacity, and undertaking regular impact evaluations;
- Focusing on quality of education through improvements in the textbooks and through better teaching and testing practices; and
- Sustaining increases in education sector expenditures.

### **For more information:**

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