

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ON THIRD PARTY VALIDATION (TPV) OF BASIC EDUCATION COMMUNITY SCHOOL PROJECT, 2014-15

Assessment of any program redirects and improves its workability in field. So as to promote quality education and determine a better future for Basic Education Community School (BECS) beneficiaries, a Third Party Validation (TPV) of the project was carried out all over Pakistan during April-June 2015. The basic purpose of this exercise was to evaluate the functionality & performance of BECS schools by an independent appraisal.

The immediate objectives of TPV were to verify:-

- On ground existence and working of all BECS schools, as per given criteria
- Gender and class-wise total enrolment
- Performance of BECS teachers, students and NGOs
- Quality, extent & need of training for BECS teachers
- Accessibility of Teaching Learning Material (TLM) / text books etc.
- Status of Village Education Committees (VECs)
- Achievements and areas for improvement

TPV Key Findings:

Overall, TPV has documented an encouraging trend about functioning of BECS schools. It principally established the fact that BECS teachers are doing a tremendous job by ensuring gender equity amongst learners and imparting satisfactory education to the unreached and out of schools children in thousands of disadvantaged areas across Pakistan. However, certain domains were also highlighted for improvement in future such as lack in provision of some important TLM items like mats, attendance registers and blackboards, insufficient & delayed teachers' honorarium, need for extensive teachers' training/refresher courses in specified subjects etc.

- Less than 1% (only 41 out of 12,204) schools were found non-functional. There were 134 schools located in North & South Waziristan where military operation was underway. Therefore, these schools were temporarily closed. So total enrolment of remaining 12,029 BECS was 472,270 which is almost 39 students per teacher as against pupil: teacher ratio of 1:34 in Formal Sector. At large, 97% of BECS were reported satisfactory in performance.
- The female ratio of students in BECS was more than 55% as against 44.8% in Formal primary schools. Trend showed 4% increase in girls' enrolment in FATA for current year in spite of the fact that Formal sector was giving food items and scholarships to girls students.
- Around 10% students of the total were in class-V whereas 27% were in pre-primary (Kachi). The passed-out percentage of class-V was 89% while it was 86% during 2007-2013. Mostly 5th class examinations were conducted by either Provincial Governments or Educational Boards.
- The learning standards and overall exam results of the students were found satisfactory.

- Majority of teachers (over 80%) were females. The academic qualification of BECS teachers was found to be satisfactory as most of them 35.5% were Higher Secondary Certificate (FA/FSc) holders, Graduates 31% (BA/B.Sc) and almost 8% M.A/M.Sc while the rest were Matriculates (22.4%). It was noticed that a higher proportion i.e. 43% of professional teachers belonged to Punjab.
- More than 50% teachers did not possess any professional qualification as mentioned above. However, the overall results of good retention in class-V and low dropouts proved their commitment with school.
- It was further observed that a significant number of teachers got training in multi-grade teaching methodology from BECS. Based on this, overall school performance of most of them (above 90%) was found satisfactory.
- Text books were provided to 100% schools. Majority BECS (70-80%) received multiple TLM items though during varying periods of time.
- In most of the BECS communities (72%), Village Education Committees (VECs) were found satisfactorily functional and were able to perform their role in making strong school-community relationship. However, more efforts are needed to activate almost 15-20% dormant VECs.
- Community participation regarding provision of free room for school was quite fruitful as most of the schools (68%) were established in community-based building/teacher house which is one of the major features of BECS schools.

TPV Perceptions:

- Parents and community at large expressed satisfaction over the performance of BECS in their respective areas.
- BECS Schools were mostly found in far flung and backward areas where there was no Formal school in the vicinity.
- Community appreciated the efforts made by BECS administration for better monitoring despite inadequate funds. It was also suggested that BECS located near Government schools need to be shifted to un-served areas.
- The hiring of local teachers in BECS was regarded very effective in smooth running of schools for achieving desired results.
- TPV observed that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism needs revolutionary changes at field level. BECS Staff and NGO supervisors are required to be trained in monitoring techniques.
- Low and delayed status of teachers' honorarium was feared to be affecting school level performance in future.
- Most of teacher desired frequent training programs in multi-grade teaching and number of curriculum subjects (Maths, English, General Science) for better class management & overall working of BECS.
- Performance evaluation of the teachers has not been addressed at any stage by field supervisor.

FUTURE WORK PLAN:

- Base-line surveys may be initiated to reinstate/replace non-functional schools. Similarly feasibility appraisal for opening new schools may also be commenced to highlight need based areas. Meanwhile, weak schools require strict monitoring on regular basis.
- Monthly attendance data should be taken during the first week of each month for the previous month to have an average attendance and monitor the increase in enrolment.

- Monitoring & evaluation budget of field offices may be increased during the revision of PC-I which is Rs.7000 per month for each division.
- Presently, quantitative evaluation techniques are used to judge the quality of teachers/schools. Qualitative tools may also be applied to achieve optimal results. New proformas need to be developed / modified to address the field status.
- Special complaint cell may be established either at Head Office or Regional offices for quick response to dispose-off teachers' issues and on ground inquiries.
- Enhancement in teachers' honorarium for improving quality education would be a fair gesture. Proposals for payment of teachers' honorarium on monthly basis may also be seriously considered.
- Teacher training contents may be focused on core subjects (Mathematics, General Science, English & multi-teaching methods) to upgrade their professional skills.
- Supervisors of the NGOs may also be trained in field administration during teacher training sessions of BECS.
- MOUs of weak NGOs as identified by TPV may not be renewed. Engagement of new NGOs with good experience in education may be preferred after due process. The criteria/TORs for the selection of NGOs also need to be reviewed.
- Steps may be taken to constitute vibrant and target-oriented VECs. More efforts are required to mobilize the community through frequent meetings at field level.
- 100% availability of TLM may also be made possible gradually.
- Incentives for best teachers and learners may be introduced in BECS for motivation.
- 7% teachers were involved in fee collection in AJK which is against the project policy. In this regard parents & community through VECs may be taken into confidence to pursue the issue.
- Cluster meetings of BECS field staff and partner NGOs may be scheduled to resolve routine matters as lack of coordination deteriorates mutual understanding.

BECS Achievements:

- The Project has imparted basic education to over 5.2 million out of school children so far.
- As like, 401,734 Primary Graduates have been produced by BECS to date.
- Class 5th results for the year 2014-15 remained quite encouraging.
- In past donors like UNICEF & UNESCO have also appreciated the performance of BECS and have funded its activities on ground.
- Average cost per student in BECS (2013-14) is Rs.2,772/- (almost five times less) as compared to Rs.13,358 of Formal school system.
- The project has helped thousands of women by providing them employment opportunities at their doorsteps. Presently 9,949 lady teachers are employed in BECS schools.

In last eight years, BECS Schools have made creditable achievements in educating Out of School children, especially girls. Five million disadvantaged children were able to improve their quality of life as a result of literacy provided to them by BECS, and that too at a low cost. Despite adverse security situation, terrorism and social taboos, BECS strived hard to educate the most deprived segments of society and contributed significantly to "Gender Empowerment".

In case an education emergency is imposed to bring in the out of school children (6.2 million), BECS is the best solution as it's cost effective and the establishment period of the school is less than a month. As well, it is easily accessible and owned by the community.