

[UNICEF Bangladesh website]

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Child Development and Education (CDE)

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The issue

Child Development and Education are crucial elements in ensuring that children achieve their rights, particularly their right to personal **[check]** development. Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a new area of interest and activity for UNICEF in Bangladesh.

Over recent decades, families, service providers and policymakers have seen the survival and physical development of young children as their first concern. Only recently have they started to recognise that it is just as important to research and intervene on other aspects of children's lives, such as their cognitive, emotional and social development.

Children are usually cared for by several members of their family, but mothers are generally the primary carers. There are many positive practices in the care of young children in Bangladesh but there are also important gaps in what many families know and understand about childcare. A Knowledge, Attitude and Practise (KAP) survey carried out in 2001 highlighted the need for an ECD project in Bangladesh.

With reference to 12 guiding principles identified for ECD in Bangladesh **[are these the 12 principles?¹]**, the survey indicates that most caregivers do not know enough about the importance of nurturing and age-appropriate early learning in early childhood development.

¹ The **ECD** unit's **guiding principles** for programme development are:

1. + The objective of early childhood intervention is to establish a foundation for life-long learning.
2. + Children's two basic developmental needs are, on the one hand, love and acceptance, and on the other, exploration, activity and expression as independent beings.
3. + Every child should have the opportunity for participation in family and other social environments like pre-school, daycare centres, etc.
4. + Areas of development are intertwined, as they make up the whole child.
5. + Through play children practice skills they have acquired and learn new ones.
6. + Providing a stimulating environment is the key to learning and development.
7. + Interest, praise and encouragement from adults is very important to children.
8. + For young children, it is the process of creating that is important, not the product. In other words, process is more important than product.
9. + The basic needs of child development go beyond protection, food, and health care and include the need for affection, interaction, stimulation, security, and play, allowing for exploration and discovery.
10. + Every child is unique. Two children of the same age are not exactly alike, and every child has an individual learning style.
11. + It is essential to create equal opportunities for both girl and boy children for their maximum development.
12. + Cultural appropriateness is a major criteria for a successful child development programme.

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Primary education

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in primary education over last few years. This has been due to introduction of compulsory primary education (CPE) in 1992 along with many other innovative educational initiatives at this level.

There are more than 18 million children of primary school age (age 6-10) in Bangladesh, out of a total population of 137 million. Almost half of them are girls. [Gross enrolment](#) has increased to 97.5 per cent, whereas [net enrolment](#) is 82 per cent, and there are equal numbers of boys and girls in primary education.

One third of children drop out before they have completed five years of primary education, and of those who do graduate from primary school, most do not acquire the nationally defined basic competencies **[does this mean in reading and writing, mathematics, life skills -- anything else?]**.

The main focus of UNICEF's activities for this age group, therefore, is to improve the quality of education, to increase the net enrolment and reduce the dropout rate.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has recently initiated the second phase of its Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP), which is due to introduce major reforms between 2003 and 2009.

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Working children

In Bangladesh nearly **4.9 million children** between the ages of 5 and 15 are involved in different types of work, many of them with little or no pay. Of the 301 occupations children are engaged in, 48 are categorized as hazardous. Many working children of both sexes have no access to education, with the result that they become trapped in low-skilled, low-paid work that further cements them into the cycle of poverty.

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Action

The overall goal of the child development and education initiatives is to make it possible for children to participate effectively in learning activities that are appropriate for each stage of childhood. This will enable them to develop mentally and socially, so they can become creative, responsible members of society.

To achieve this goal, UNICEF aims to work with the government and communities to provide:

- a safe, secure and stimulating environment for the child

- high quality primary education for all children, which will result in
 - 95 per cent net enrolment
 - 80 per cent completion of the 5-year cycle
 - successful learning, leading to competence in all the basic educational skills.
 - quality basic education for working children and a reduction in child labour.
- These objectives will be achieved through the projects outlined below.

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Early Childhood Development (ECD) Project

Existing development programmes prioritize young children's survival and physical growth, and there is a lack of national initiatives which address the mental development of young children.

The government has undertaken this ECD project in co-operation with UNICEF and other partners. It is designed to develop and implement interventions that empower families with the aim of raising survival rates and giving children the best possible start in life, by promoting both physical growth and mental development.

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Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL) Project

This project is a part of the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. Its aim is to ensure high quality education through improved teaching and learning methods, better supervision, and participatory planning and community involvement at local level.

The project started in one district in 1996. Now it covers 9 million children who attend 36,826 schools in 36 districts.

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Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Children (BEHTRUC) Project

This project aims to provide 351,000 urban working children in six divisional (provincial) cities with two years of non-formal education. This would bring them up to the educational level of children in Grade III, and enhance their life skills. The project targets children aged 8-14, who are engaged in hazardous working conditions in urban areas.

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Achievement and future course of actions

Over the past decade, the gender gap in primary school enrolment has been eliminated. However, the quality of education — particularly teaching and learning in the classroom, and learning outcomes — has become a matter of concern.

The IDEAL project has popularized an educational approach called Multiple Ways Of Teaching and Learning (MWTL), and this has been incorporated into the non-formal, basic education being offered to urban working children.

The involvement of the community, parents, employers and children is crucial for achieving universal primary education.

Communication and social mobilisation have become important for the success and sustainability of the programme. **[explain]**