



Photo: Helvetas

GOOD TEACHERS - A KEY TO DEVELOPMENT

Experiences from the Basic Education Projects in Bhutan

“ People in our community are very proud of the school. We have always given our best. We have teachers working even on Saturdays with our students. And parents are very happy about the qualifications their children achieve. ”

Tashi Dawa, Head Master of Peljorling Middle Secondary School in Sipso.

“ If the Swiss projects would not have been there, we could not have improved teacher education that much in terms of quantity and quality. ”

Arjun Chhettri, Head of Mathematics Department at the College of Education in Paro.



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BHUTAN

Bhutan has chosen to embark on the path of modernisation in the early 1960s only. It then started with the establishment of a modern education system. Today, almost 90 percent of all children in the rugged mountainous country go to school and enjoy a good quality education. The Swiss Basic Education Projects have considerably contributed to these unique developments by assisting the Royal Government of Bhutan in the construction and expansion of schools and teacher education facilities, by helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning and by strengthening the capacities of the education administration in Bhutan.



Photo: Helvetas

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College of Education in Paro, Bhutan
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THE CONTEXT

Bhutan is a small country in the Himalaya Mountains about the size of Switzerland (38'394 square kilometres) and a population of 629'700 (2007). Sandwiched between India and China, the country is landlocked with rugged mountainous terrain rising steeply from 100 metres in the south to over 7'000 metres in the north. Because of its geophysical and political situation, Bhutan remained isolated from the rest of the world until the middle of the last century.

Ever since, one of Bhutan's overarching priorities for development has been the establishment of modern education services. At the beginning of this endeavour in 1960, there were only 11 non-monastic schools countrywide with around 400 students. Providing basic education in Bhutan is a formidable challenge given that the population is widely scattered, every third person is younger than 15 years and people speak around 24 different languages or dialects.

Nevertheless, by 1987, just before the Swiss support to the Royal Government of Bhutan in basic education started, expansion of education has already gone a good way. A bit more than half of the children in school age have been enrolled in the 190 schools existing at that time countrywide. However, challenges remained manifold, especially the lack of Bhutanese teachers (many teachers have been recruited in India), the insufficient capacities in teacher education and the widely practiced approach of rote learning in schools.

THE PROJECTS

The Swiss projects, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by Helvetas, assisted the Royal Government of Bhutan in developing its basic education system over the last 20 years (1989-2008) with a total contribution of CHF 33.9 Mio, covering a share of a bit less than 6 percent of the overall Bhutanese education budget. The support consisted of two construction projects and three consecutive pedagogical projects. The overarching aim was to enhance the access and quality of basic education and thus social and economic development of the country.

The construction projects included the construction and expansion of primary and secondary schools as well as the expansion and upgrading of the two existing colleges for teacher education in Bhutan ("Colleges of Education"). It was to improve the accessibility and availability of basic education, especially for disadvantaged students in remote areas and for girls, and, at the same time, to address the shortage of Bhutanese teachers, one of the system's most significant constraint for improving both access to and quality of education.

The pedagogical projects included three main areas of intervention: (1) Improvement of the quality of teaching and

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 6'000 additional study places in primary and secondary schools
- improved school buildings that are conducive to learning
- high quality teaching and learning material and a library available in every school
- improved services of the education administration at central, local and school level
- 500 additional study places for teachers (out of a total of 1'000) at the Colleges of Education
- better trained teacher educators
- modernised curricula and methodology in teacher education
- increased number of graduates from pre-service teacher education (from a yearly total of 76 in 1993 to more than 400 in 2007)
- thrice the number of teachers in basic education (from 2'084 in 1993 to 5'745 in 2008)
- higher proportion of Bhutanese primary school teachers (from 76 percent in 1993 to 99 percent in 2008)
- better trained teachers of which 56 percent hold a bachelors or masters degree
- high impact on the national education policies and laws (most components of the Swiss projects were institutionalised)

learning in teacher education at the two Colleges of Education. The projects enabled, among others, continuous training for Bhutanese teacher educators and a better pre-service as well as in-service teacher education. (2) Improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools. They contributed to better curricula, teaching methods and learning assessments. In addition, the provision of reading material in schools was enhanced by providing facilities, books and training for librarians. (3) Improvement of the quality of the education administration at central, district and school level, particularly in the areas of curriculum development, student assessment, management of personnel, education monitoring, education sector planning and school management.

The projects provided not only the necessary funding for the activities but also the specific expertise which was, among others, crucial in developing a consistent and long-term programme design that ensured the participation and thus the ownership of all relevant stakeholders. In addition, they strengthened the local capacities and structures e.g. for planning and construction of education facilities, for the institutional development of the Colleges of Education or for decentralised quality support to schools by the education administration and head masters.

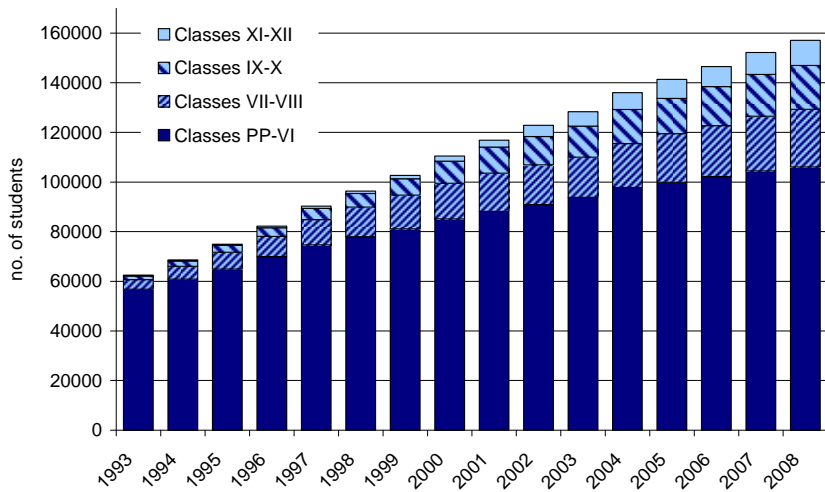


Figure: Number of students enrolled in (pre)primary and secondary schools, disaggregated by level of school, 1993-2008 (Source: Ministry of Education)

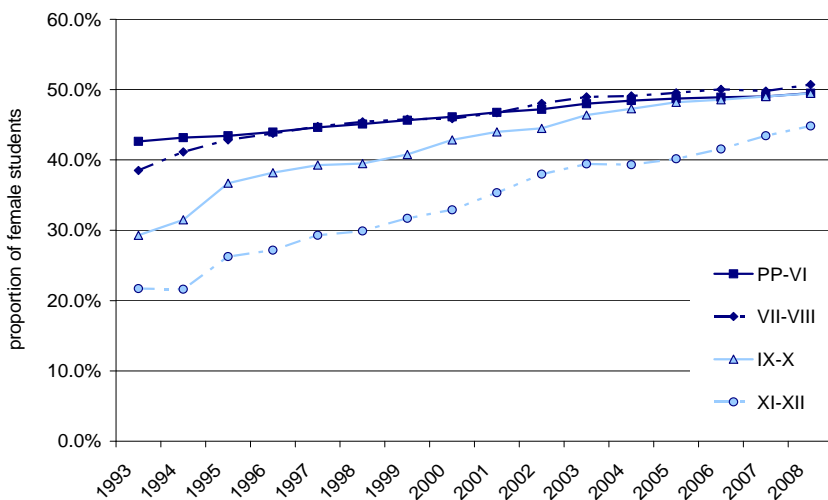


Figure: Proportion of female students, disaggregated by level of school, 1993-2008 (Source: Ministry of Education)

QUICK FACTS

Location:	Bhutan, all teacher training institutions as well as schools and education administrations throughout the country
Project aims:	Enhance access and quality of basic education in Bhutan
Project duration:	1989-2008
Cost:	33.9 Mio CHF (Construction: 16.1 Mio; HRD: 17.8 Mio)
Main partners:	Royal Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Education, Colleges of Education in Paro and Samtse

THE PERSPECTIVES

The long-term assistance to Basic Education in Bhutan has come to an end in 2008. SDC and Helvetas have therefore entrusted the University of Teacher Education Central Switzerland to conduct an impact assessment which served as basis for the document at hand (http://www.helvetas.ch/wEnglish/competencies/documented_experiences/doc_education.asp?navid=17).

A long way of basic education expansion and improvement is still up. The projects have, however, assisted the Bhutanese education sector in such a way that achievements should be sustained beyond the projects' duration. Bhutan today maintains a critical mass of well trained and qualified people working in basic education. In addition, the enhanced facilities and structures ensure that the professional capacities of teachers should be continuously improved and that the still existing teacher shortage can be addressed. Most of the newly developed policies, curricula and methodological approaches are successfully applied in practice and are being further improved and/or distributed. Last but not least, the Royal Government of