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Universal Primary Education Pilot Project approved

The Government has approved the extended Universal Primary Education Pilot Project, 1976-82, at a total cost of Tk. 11.88 lakh, reports BSS.

The project aims at providing universal primary education to all the school-going children of the Meher (north) Union of Comilla. Dr. Ellen Sattar of the Bangladesh Association of Community Education (BACE) is the honorary Director of the project.

The earlier phase of the Universal Primary Education Pilot Project was started in Meher Panchagram, Comilla from March, 1976. Meher Panchagram is a Swanirvar village, had a population of 3,205 of whom 710 were primary school-age children. Meher Panchagram Shamabay, completed four feeder schools in February, 1976. Eight women teachers and four women assistants were recruited from the locality and trained at Aliganj PTT. The project supplied furniture, equipment and books for the children aged between 5 and 11 of Panchagram were attending the school system (Neora Primary School and four feeder schools at Sha-

hapur, Ghugushal, Barulia and Sonapur).

The community took the motivational and supervisory responsibilities and also helped the poorer families. The school system was viewed as a part of the overall development of the community. These achievements illustrate that when facilities are provided parents both rich and poor willingly send their children to school.

With a view to minimising expenses and examining the feasibility of replication elsewhere in the country the two-year-old Meher Panchagram Universal Primary Education Project has been extended to cover the entire Meher (north) Union with a population of 14,340 with primary school age children of 3,194 or 22 per cent of the population. The project has eight primary and 20 feeder schools, with support from village swanirvar committees, the school system has been functioning for the last one year.

The salient features of the extended project are: (A) The feeder schools will be run by

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part-time female teachers with 6th grade pass, 8th grade pass and matriculates respectively as female teachers are preferred. (B) Utilisation of existing housing facilities like maktab, mosque, outer house etc., (C) Free supply of books, slates and pencils and satchels for students particularly whose parents cannot afford. (D) Nutrition support and medical aid for students and supplies of locally made equipment and recreational facilities.

The project will be managed by a project committee consisting of local project officer, Government officials, Union Parishad Chairman and members and Swanirvar Committee Chairman.

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