

RURAL EDUCATION PROJECT ROMANIA

November 2003 – December 2009

In May 2003, the Ministry of Education and Research has launched the Rural Education Project in Romania, which is addressing significant equity issues in the education sector by helping rural students to benefit from improved access to quality education.

This objective will be achieved through professional development of teachers and principals of rural schools; improving teaching conditions in rural schools both with respect to adequate minimum facilities and providing basic teaching-learning materials; promoting school-based innovation programs and community participation; and improving the policy-making capacity of local and central education authorities/agencies.

"This project is a natural extension of our previous projects in Romania. Adequate educational systems should provide good education in an efficient as well as equitable way. This project is about equity. It means that we are supporting the Government to provide well trained teachers and teaching materials to students in rural areas, and therefore increase the students' chances to continue their education at colleges or universities," says Ana Maria Sandi, team leader for the project.

The project is supporting broader community involvement in education management, working not only with education authorities, but also with local councils, parents, and community representatives. It aims to support decentralization by increasing the capacity of schools and local authorities to develop their own school improvement plans and to improve school management. Thus, the project is encouraging democratic school governance and is strengthening school-community linkages.

The project is focusing on rural student achievement as the main measure of its success. Outcomes of this project will be measured in terms of rural students achievement reflected in assessments and examinations, reduction of the gap between the scores of the students from urban and rural areas, increased school completion rate, and increased transition rates to upper secondary and tertiary education.

The three components of the project are:

Component 1: Improve Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools.

This component aims to develop professional competences of rural teachers and improve basic education conditions in schools. Since education inputs have a significant effect on students' achievements, this component will focus on teachers, textbooks and teaching/learning materials and school utilities.

Under this component, the following elements will be implemented:

1.1 school-based professional development for teachers through various training schemes including mobile units and distance learning;

At the present day, 250 mentors have been selected.

1.2 career development opportunities for teachers;

Five universities have provided training programs for teachers from rural areas.

1.3 basic education condition in schools;

1500 schools will be modernised in this project component

1.4 textbooks and teaching-learning materials.

The beneficiaries will be 8000 primary schools (I-IV classes) and 4000 gymnasium schools (V-VI classes) from 33 counties in Romania. These schools will receive didactic materials and books for the teaching-learning process.

Component 2: Improve School-Community Partnerships. This component aims to empower rural schools and communities in order to develop a broad collaborative environment supportive of education. The component aims both to improve the governance of schools and increase the contribution of schools to communities by encouraging and enabling schools and local authorities to work together to identify priorities, to diagnose problems and to formulate and implement solutions. Local Education Councils (LEC) will be set up at the level of each commune, involving the mayor and representatives of: the administrative councils of all the schools from the commune cluster; the local council; and local firms and other local organizations. This component includes an outreach and behavior change, communication and sensitization activities through which schools and communities will be assisted by facilitators in discussing education needs and in preparing their own school improvement plans, as well as school improvement projects. The LECs will be involved in managing planned activities including mobilizing community resources.

2500 grants will be awarded for rural teams (teachers, parents, students, local communities). At the present day, 691 schools have received grants in this component.

Component 3: Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation and Policy Making Capacity. The overall objective of this component is to ensure the sustainability of the project by strengthening capacity in leadership and decentralized educational management at the local level and increasing the institutional and analytical capacity at national and local levels for policy analysis, formulation and planning. These objectives will be achieved through establishing the National Education Indicators Set; improving the National Education Data Base; and preparing a National Assessment of Basic Education.