



Ministry of Education
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Health and Quality Education: Offering a Secure Future
for All

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1. Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to briefly present Bangladesh achievements against Education for All (EFA) targets, discuss why some targets were not met, and address the planned measures to be taken to achieve Sustainable Development Goal-4 committed to by Bangladesh.

2. Education for All, the MDGs and Human Development in Bangladesh

The global populace stands at a historic crossroads in 2015. As the MDGs and EFA Goals are coming to their deadline, the world has the opportunity to build on their successes, momentum and lessons. Embracing new ambitions for the future, this year the global community has adopted a new set of development goals--the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Secretary General of the United Nations rightly said 'The global mobilization behind the Millennium Development Goals has produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history'. The MDGs have saved the lives of millions and improved conditions for many more. Since 1990 the number of people living in extreme poverty and under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half, the maternal mortality ratio has declined by 45 per cent worldwide.

As regards EFA Goals there has been remarkable progress across the globe. The number of out of school children and adolescents has declined by almost half since 2000. Great progress has been achieved in gender parity, particularly in primary education. Governments efforts to improve quality of education has also increased.

However, the progress is uneven and substantial inequalities exists between countries and within countries. Almost all of the 800 million people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger leave in developing countries. About 16,000 children die each day before celebrating their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes. The maternal mortality ratio in the developing regions is still 14 times higher than in the developed regions.

In spite of progress, EFA Goals remains unachieved. There are still 58 million children out of school worldwide and around 100 million children who do not complete primary education. Gender disparity persists in a third of the countries. Given the poor quality of learning 250 million children are not learning basic skills, even though half of them have spent at least four years in school !

Within countries big gaps still exist between the poorest and richest households. Millions of people are lagging behind because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity or geographic location. Inequality in education has increased, putting the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized in a challenging situation.

Between 2000 and 2015, Bangladesh implemented concrete measures to achieve EFA targets and education-related MGDs. EFA National Plan of Action I and II: NPA II (2003-2015) was prepared with the aim of achieving EFA goals. During this period Bangladesh also formulated the Non-formal Education Policy in 2006, National

Education Policy 2010 and National Skills Development Policy 2011. These policy regime provided for more focused and coordinated interventions for the development of the Education sector. The interventions included:

- All primary schools made government schools
- One year pre-primary established in all primary schools
- Expanded stipend program with awareness raising for girls education.
- Distribution of free textbooks for all students from pre-primary to secondary level (around 330 million textbooks)
- Programmes for out-of-reach children and working children
- Social mobilization and awareness program
- School-level Improvement Plans
- Introduction of school feeding programs
- Implementation SWAp for primary education development (PEDP II & III). SWAP in secondary in the offing.
- Results-based financing
- Teacher's training and professional education
- Use of ICT in education
- Emphasis on skills development program
- Government, NGO and private sector cooperation
- Decentralized education administration and measures for good governance
- Updated Curriculum and text books
- Infrastructure improvement and measures to enhance facilities

Because of the concerted efforts by the government, Civil Society and development partners during the EFA period, Bangladesh showed improvements in the EFA related targets:¹

- Pre-primary education mainstreamed (coverage: 78 % in 2014).
- Gender parity in gross and net enrolment rate in the primary and secondary level.
- Net Enrolment Rate reached 97.7% in primary and 62% in secondary education
- Enrolment in Technical and vocational education increased from around 6% in 2010 to around 15% in 2015².
- Adult (15-45) literacy rate increased from 47.9 % in 2001 to 59.8% in 2013.
- Enrolment of girls in technical education increased by 44% since 2010.
- Increase in Gender Parity Index (GPI) in all indicators measured.
- Pupil/teacher ratios declined.
- At the primary level around 83% and at the secondary level 73 % teachers are trained.

¹ Data from BANBEIS, Annual School Survey 2014, 2015 EFA Report Statistics

² The data is based on the recent provisional calculation by BANBEIS.

In spite of improvements Bangladesh falls short of full achievement of EFA Goals. The unfinished agenda include:

- ECD preceding pre-primary is available to a very small number of children.
- Dropout rate needs further improvements in both primary (21%) and secondary (42%)
- Gender gap in adult literacy and in vocational-technical education still persists.
- Pupil/teacher ratios declined but still high: 40:1 at primary and 37:1 at secondary level. Geographical discrepancies exist between rural and urban and from district to district and school to school.
- As about 80% of the schools run double shifts effective contact hour is limited.
- Learning assessments indicate major challenges in ensuring desired learning outcomes

3. What was learned and challenges ahead.

Bangladesh is yet to go a long way in the education. However our experience of the EFA offers numerous lessons, building on which we should design our interventions for the future. Now there could be no denying of the fact that sustained commitment of the government can make a difference. It is also obvious that the development inputs generally have a positive impact on sector performance.

Reaching the unreached is a big challenge. Never enrolled Children are mostly from extremely poor and geographically or socially marginalized families. Opportunity costs for attending schools is a significant factor for not attending or dropping out from school. Bringing them to schools are not only difficult but also expensive.

Gender issue in secondary level shows a queer pattern. In primary girls surpass boys in participation, completion and internal efficiency. Overall participation of boys in secondary is around 10% less than that of girls. However, the completion rate, as well as the coefficient of internal efficiency is lower for girls in secondary. In secondary dropout rate is 49.71 % for girls and 35.71% for boys. The trend is again reversed at the higher secondary level, where girls are doing better than boys both in completion and in internal efficiency. The reason for low participation of boys compared to girls at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels and higher rate of drop out of girls at secondary should be looked into and addressed.

Skills development of young people is recently getting more attention than before. Development partners has shifted their focus from basic education to skills development. Participation in technical education and skills development program is rising. However, the growth of employment cannot keep pace with the growth of the labour force. Changing the perception of technical education for the better, extending technical education and skill training facilities and strengthening the existing institutes are essential pre-conditions for taking the advantage of the prevailing demographic dividend. Drawing a market responsive curriculum for technical education and making skills programs responsive to local and overseas market needs are also crucial.

Results of the assessments indicate the need for urgent and drastic improvement in quality of learning outcomes. Learning outcome and quality education have bearing on repetition, survival and completion rates.

4. Sustainable Development Goals and Education

The recently approved Sustainable Development Goals place education at the core of this latest global initiative to promote development. Education is not only one of the seventeen goals, but education is also central to the achievement of most of the remaining 16 goals.

SDG aims at making the education systems not only more accessible but also more relevant. The goals are no longer to get every child in school, and to achieve gender parity in educational attainment; the goals are to educate all students so they can develop the skills, the knowledge and the dispositions to advance the actions necessary to have sustainable development and to empower them to do so.

SDG-4 states: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” There are 10 targets for this goal, some of which relate to the unfinished EFA agenda. Seven targets are outcome-based and three relates to means of implementation. The issue of gender parity, equity and quality cut across the targets. The targets looks like a tall order indeed.

5. Financing SDG Education Agenda

Lack of adequate finance was among the most significant obstacles to achieving the Education for All goals. The SDGs set out a far broader agenda for education than the MDGs or EFA. The aspirations encompassed in the SDG 4 cannot be realized without a significant and well-targeted increase in financing. While the SDGs have no financial targets for education spending, the Incheon Declaration of the World Education Forum 'urge adherence to the international and regional benchmarks of allocating efficiently at least 4 - 6% of Gross Domestic Product and/or at least 15 - 20% of total public expenditure to education'.³

UNESCO estimated that an annual total cost of achieving universal pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education in low-and lower-middle income countries is projected to increase from US\$100 billion in 2012 to US\$239 billion, on average, between 2015 and 2030. The total cost will more than triple in low income countries. To improve education quality as envisaged in the post-2015 agenda, spending per student will need to increase substantially. For example, low income countries will need to increase the amount they spend per primary school student from US\$70 to US\$197 by 2030.

³ Incheon Declaration 2015

Government spending on education by low income countries, excluding post-secondary education, will need to increase by 50% as a share of GDP between 2012 and 2030. The total annual financing gap between available domestic resources and the amount necessary to reach the new education targets is projected to average \$US39 billion between 2015 and 2030. The gap is particularly large in low income countries, where it constitutes 42% of annual total costs.

Aid will thus remain a crucial source of education finance over the next 15 years if the targets are to be met. Across low and lower middle income countries, donor aid for pre-primary, primary and secondary education will need to increase by at least six times.⁴

In the Seventh Five Year Plan Government of Bangladesh has allocated Taka 1129.3 billion for the Education and Technology sector of which Taka 867.2 billion is for education.

The financing requirement for achieving SDG 4 by 2030 in Bangladesh is yet to be estimated. But it already evident that the financing in education should be increased by a huge margin to achieve the ambitious targets of SDG 4. Despite substantial estimated increase in funding from domestic sources a wide financing gap will remain. Donors should be committed to bridge that gap.

6. Why are SWAps needed?

Experience and lessons from PEDP 2 and PEDP 3 indicate that positive gains can be made under SWAp modality. For attaining the targets of SDG 4, the SWAp approach should be continued and strengthened in primary education and the secondary and technical education should also follow suit. The SWAp modality for development, however, raises questions regarding purpose. Some of the reasons are that SWAps:

- Are holistic programs rather than disconnected projects;
- Strengthen communication and coordination across the sector;
- Strengthen coordination among development partners;
- Strengthen line agencies to implement and monitor development activities;
- Reduce administration burden on government;
- Reduce overlap and duplication of discreet development projects
- Build capacity for needs-based development targeting;

7. SWAp in Education Sector: PEDP to Secondary SWAp

The concept of SWAp was first introduced to the education sector of Bangladesh with the introduction of some sort of coordination among a few donor-funded primary education projects. However, the coordination was mostly limited among the development partners, who subsequently gave it the name PEDP 1. Government was yet to buy the concept of the

⁴ Education for All Global Monitoring Report Policy Paper 18 March 2015 Pricing the right to education: The cost of reaching new targets by 2030

programme approach in education and the considered these those projects as standalone projects. PEDP 2 was the first sub-sectoral SWAp in education and government agreed to the concept of program approach with a caution. PEDP 2 offered a lot of valuable lessons for both the government and the development partners. Building on the lessons of PEDP 2, PEDP 3 was designed. PEDP 3 stood apart from its predecessor programs for its results focus, emphasis on education quality, exemplary donor harmonization and partnership, development partners alignment with government system of fiduciary management and government ownership, among other features. This structure was a radical departure from the project approach.

Some of the issues regarding SWAp were:

- Thinking among government agencies was very much project based, and the value of a program approach was not well understood;
- Lack of effective coordination channels among stakeholder agencies and development partners (DPs) hampered implementation;
- Alignment of development partners' agendas under one framework;
- Using government fiduciary systems for development activities;
- Applying results-based financing to development
- Monitoring and data-driven planning systems took time to develop;

Encouraged by the experience of SWAp in primary education government and development partners have decided to move to a program approach in secondary education as well. ADB assisted Secondary Education Sector Investment Program (SESIP) is the first step towards that goal. MoE has also developed a medium-term framework for the secondary education sub-sector, focusing on quality improvements, policy measures and specific actions needed to reform the system. This framework could be the basis of a comprehensive SWAp in the secondary education in the future.

8. How will Bangladesh achieve the goals of SDG-4?

Bangladesh's 7th Five Year Plan focuses on poverty alleviation through inclusive human development including human capital, education, health, skills development, gender equality, service delivery, capacity, accountability and allocation.

In line with the National Education Policy 2010 and the 7th Five Year Plan for education development, Bangladesh will focus on:

- Sustaining the achievements in participation and gender parity.
- Ensuring effective learning outcomes at all levels by improving the teaching learning process in schools
- Reducing disparity and bringing out of school children, most of whom come from ultra poor families, to school.
- Ensuring decentralization and promoting good governance.
- Infrastructural, ICT and equipment support for education institutions;
- Introducing modern management options for education
- Development of relevant skills for employability
- Increasing number of teachers and enhancing their quality.

- Improvements in curriculum and textbooks
- Mobilizing resources for adult literacy program and developing effective mechanism for 'second chance education'.
- DP coordination through SWAp in secondary, madrasah, and technical education under a common program framework;
- Introduce needs-based pre-vocational and vocational programs in general education schools;
- Increase awareness and build capacity in government to undertake development responsibility;
- Improve transparency through effective and verifiable monitoring and reporting supported by a robust and effective EMIS
- Engage the private sector and NGOs for development through PPP modalities;

Analysis of the EFA results for education indicates that the following areas need strengthening for improving the development results:

Area of Strengthening	Reason Needed
Coordination among the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform approach to development under a common framework • Rationalized curriculum between primary, secondary, technical and madrasah • Unified approach to monitoring and reporting • Flexible pathways for students
SWAp in Secondary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce administrative burden • Reduce overlap and wastage of resources
Decentralized education management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More efficient
Monitoring, Evaluation and oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable accurate assessment of sector status • Enable accurate measurement of impact of development activities
EMIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable access to networked data • Efficient and timely data channels • Generation of annual analytical reports • Data linkage between Primary, Secondary, Technical & Madrasah
Teacher development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of graduates • Establish career path
School Quality Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a quality standard for all aspects for learning, access, and governance

