Summary of overall Progress in Meeting the EFA goals

The Royal Government of Bhutan has always committed itself to the objective of providing free education to all its children between the age of 6 and 16 years. Since the start of modern development, the education sector has been given high priority within the government’s development policy and its share in the allocation of the total budget has never been below 10 percent (see chart below). From 440 students in 11 primary schools in 1959, the education system in Bhutan has as of 2010 grown to include over 170,000 school students in over 600 schools and extended classrooms. Additionally over 31,500 other learners are enrolled in 947 colleges (10), vocational institutions (8), non-formal centres (714), monasteries (207), etc. The achievements and challenges are highlighted below:

![Plan Allocation on Education Sector (1961-2013)](image)

**Figure 1 Plan Allocation on Education Sector (1961-2013)**

**Early Childhood Care and Development**

**Major Successes and achievements:** Since 2006, 19 new privately managed Day Care Centres institutions have been established, taking the total number to 25. Most of these day Centres are located in the urban areas. Additionally the Royal Government has initiated a pilot project to establish 40 community based ECCD centres with ten centres established in 2009 and 2010. These will cater to the rural areas of the country.
The ECCD unit of the Department of School Education has been upgraded to a division in recognition of the importance of ECCD. This division is in the process of finalizing early learning development standards (ELDS) with the assistance of UNICEF. This is scheduled to be completed by 2011.

**Major Challenges**

- Lack of a strong M&E system to assess the provision of ECCE
- Mountainous terrain and small and scattered settlements making provision of ECCE difficult
- Lack of capacity

**The way forward**

- Build advocacy for ECCE
- Establish community based ECCE centres in all districts

**Universal Primary Education**

**Major Successes and achievements:** The Royal Government has committed to achieve 100% NER by 2013, and Bhutan achieved a net primary enrolment (NER) ratio of 93.7% in 2010 up from 79.4% in 2006. This increase can be attributed to the increased pace of primary school construction.

Since 2008, the Royal Government has adopted the strategy of establishing extended classrooms (ECRs), attached to bigger primary schools. These ECRs cater to smaller communities in remote and inaccessible hamlets. Over the last four years, 50 new primary schools and 63 extended classrooms have been established.

The Ministry has introduced primary boarding to support students from communities that are far from schools. Currently there are over 5000 primary boarding students across the country. Students in informal boarding are also being supported the school feeding programme.

**Major Challenges**

- Mountainous terrain and small and scattered settlements making provision of primary schools in remote communities difficult
- Motivation and morale of teachers in small isolated community schools

**The way forward**

- Establishing ECRs in all small and remote communities
- Implementation of demand side interventions to reduce the cost of education (provision of free uniforms, etc.)

**Life skills and Life Long Learning**

**Major Successes and achievements:** To make education relevant to the real work situation, numerous activities are being organized for school students. Schools are offering various opportunities for students to familiarize themselves with different trades and agriculture practices at the higher secondary school level, and should
they opt for full time careers along these lines, there are tertiary educational institutes offering advanced courses.

In order to institute a system of continuous learning and to provide school leavers with an opportunity to upgrade their academic qualifications, a continuing education (CE) programme was initiated in a private high school in 2006 in Thimphu to offer adults who had to leave school before finishing their secondary education the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications. The continuing education programme, which allows adults to continue their education from where they left off, offers two 2-year courses for completion of the Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE)-classes IX and X, and Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate Examination (BHSEC)-for classes XI and XII. Since most participants are working adults, the classes are conducted in the evenings and on the weekends.

The CE programme was expanded initially to most private higher secondary schools, which were located largely in urban areas. In 2009 and 2010 the CE programme was introduced to nine public higher secondary schools, which mostly cater to rural areas. The CE programme is offered in twelve of the twenty Dzongkhag (districts). Over 1500 learners are currently enrolled in this programme. We are now seeing the encouraging trend of graduates of the CE programme availing of government scholarships and attending regular university courses.

**Major Challenges**

- Absence of an equivalency programme for out of school youths and adults
- Limited courses
- Limited to urban and semi-urban areas

**The way forward**

- Expansion of the CE programme to all districts
- Creation of an equivalency framework
- Vertical expansion of the programme to tertiary education level.

**Literacy**

**Major Successes and achievements**: With the population and housing census (PHCB) of 2005, the first census conducted in Bhutan, adult (15 years and above) literacy rate was found to be 53 percent in 2005, with females accounting for 39 percent and males 65. Due to the improved data it will be easier to measure future progress under the literacy programme, known as the Non-Formal Education programme. However, there is no doubt on the impact this programme has made on women, particularly rural women, in enabling them to read and participate in activities which were hitherto restricted to the literates. Currently, there are over 12,000 (2010) learners enrolled in the Non-Formal Education Programme.

**Major Challenges**

- Absence of reliable data on national and sub-national literacy rates
- NFE courses limited to Dzongkha the national language
The way forward

- Liaise with the National Statistical Bureau to improve literacy data collected through the national census and other surveys such as the Bhutan Mixed Indicator Survey, Poverty Analysis Report, etc.
- Expansion of the NFE basic and post literacy courses
- Introduction of English in post literacy courses

Gender

Major Successes and achievements: Bhutan has made significant progress in promoting female participation in education, achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education. The gender parity index (GPI) in primary education is 1.03 and 1.02 at the secondary education level. A challenge is to increase girls’ participation at the higher secondary level (class XI and XII) where they account for 46 percent of the enrollment, and tertiary level where girls account for only 38% percent. However these are comparable to 2006 where girls accounted for 43 percent of the enrollment at the higher secondary level and 33 percent at the tertiary level. Concerted efforts are required to ensure that gender parity is reached for higher and tertiary education, although it is expected that the current primary cohort will level off when it reaches the higher and tertiary level.

Major Challenges

- Transition of girls from secondary to higher secondary level is low compared to boys.
- Gender responsive teaching not institutionalized.

Quality Education

Major Successes and achievements: The Royal Government of Bhutan has been attempting to enhance the quality of education through the revision of the curriculum, providing pre- and in-service training for teachers and improving the educational infrastructure. The teacher-training programme offered by the Royal University of Bhutan has been extended to a four-year first degree from a three course in 2008. Teaching allowances has been introduced for the teaching profession in order to attract the best candidates. Provision for upgrading teachers’ qualifications has been made available via a distance education programme. Despite the satisfactory teacher student ratio on a national level, a further challenge remains in getting adequate teachers to the remote and difficult areas. The construction of new staff quarters in rural areas and improvement in the class room facilities, such as good libraries, computers and computer assisted teaching aids are needed to attract teachers and maintain the standard of education. Recognizing teachers as the most important tool in enhancing the quality of education, the Royal Government has approved the Ministry’s white paper on ‘A policy-led approach to improving Teacher Quality in Bhutan’. This paper covered five
specific HR policy areas in regard to teachers:

- Special Career Track for teachers, which provides a clear view to teachers on career pathways, specialization choices and entry and exit requirements of the profession, thus, making the teaching profession attractive.
- Teacher Recruitment policy - to ensure that the Ministry can attract, select and recruit the highest quality talent into the profession
- Teacher Professional Development policy to develop and nurture the teaching cadre as a set of high performing professionals by offering them opportunities for learning and growth to ensure that each individual is able to deliver their best to the profession
- Teacher Performance Management policy to ensure objectivity and consistency in performance evaluation across individuals and roles and to develop a performance based culture in the education system that inspires quality performance in both individual and group performance and provides appropriate rewards and recognition for the same
- Teacher Deployment policy to ensure each school is appropriately staffed with the right number of teachers by subject and to endeavour to meet individual teacher preferences regarding choice of location and school

The Ministry has initiated Educating for Gross National Happiness in schools. This included an international conference and three national conferences where all principals, senior teachers, district education officers, etc. participated. This has re-invigorated the education system.

**Major Challenges**

- Lack of resources, with the withdrawal of development partners from Bhutan due to its changed classification as a middle-income country.
- Capacity of the Ministry to implement the new Teacher HR Policies

**The way forward**

- Introduce standardized competency based module tests for grades V, VII & IX (year 6, 8 and 10)
- Introduce standardized competency based year end exams for grades III, VI & X (year 4, 7 and 11)
- Restructure the Ministry of Education so that is able to effectively deliver its mandate
- Implement the 5 teacher HR policies approved by the Royal Government
- Review and revise the curriculum for Science, Social Studies and introduce Fine Arts.
- Expansion of the Educating for GNH Movement to cover all teachers