PART III: PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE EFA GOALS IN THE SOUTH ASIA SUB-REGION
Data used in Part III are from the national EFA MDA reports of the countries as provided by the respective MOEs, unless otherwise indicated.

Part III consists of a summary of the national EFA MDA reports submitted by each of the seven countries in South Asia. For each country, a short introduction to the country is followed by a discussion of each of the six EFA goals. The presentation of each goal includes a brief background on issues relevant to the goal within the country, an overview of the progress made by the country towards achieving the goal, an analysis of disparities and a discussion of remaining challenges.

15. Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a small country in the northeastern part of South Asia. Although the area of the country is only 147,570 square kilometres it is home to a huge population of 138.6 million. The population density at 939 per square kilometre is the highest in the world. Although Bangladesh is a relatively new nation, Bengalis are an ancient people, and can trace their history back to 1600 BC. Historically, the land was ruled at times by dynasties from northern South Asia and at times by independent rulers. It was part of British India for over 200 years and, following Partition in 1947, part of Pakistan, until gaining its independence in 1971. The country is divided into six administrative divisions made up of 64 districts.

Bangladesh is a fairly homogeneous society. Over 98% of the people are Bangalees and speak Bangla as their mother tongue, but amongst the linguistic minorities there are about 47 different language groups. Nearly 90% of the people are Muslim. Hindus make up about 9% of the population, with the remaining 1% are mainly Buddhist and Christian.

Three of the world’s major rivers and 230 tributaries flow through Bangladesh to the Bay of Bengal, creating a very fertile delta capable of supporting the large population. Agriculture has been traditionally the main livelihood of the people. Rice is the most abundant crop and the staple food. In recent years there has been increasing urbanization such that 34% of the population now live in urban areas compared to 66% in rural areas.

With an annual GDP growth rate of 6.5%, Bangladesh is making progress economically. The per capita GDP in Bangladesh is US$456. It ranked 140th on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2005. Poverty is widespread but decreasing with a decline in the proportion of the population living below the lower poverty line from 33.7% in 2000 to 25.5% in 2005.

Bangladesh formulated an overarching national development strategy in 2005 called Unlocking the Potential. Popularly referred to as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), it weaves together various sectoral strategies into a coordinated whole so as to maximize overall social gains including accelerated poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs. Commensurate with the Dakar Framework for Action, the PRSP has sought to contextualize EFA goals for Bangladesh in the coming decade. It is clear that access to education has been the main pre-occupation of the past decade and a half, and this has borne fruit as exemplified by enrolment and gender parity statistics as well as the entry of Bangladesh into UNDP’s medium human development league of countries. Increasingly, however, research on outcome indicators is driving home the point that access achievements are not necessarily translating into commensurate quality achievements. A paradigm shift towards quality while retaining a focus on equity has thus become the basis of planning.

Recognizing the strategic challenges for the meaningful realization of the EFA goals, the Government of Bangladesh has adopted a programme approach for the development of pre-primary and primary education and initiated the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) for 2003-2009 as a successor to the projects under PEDP-I (1998-2003). The Government has also developed, through a participatory process, an NFE Policy Framework. Bangladesh has one of the largest NGO networks in the world. National and international NGOs are active in providing education for children, adolescents and adults.
The Government carried out an extensive participatory and professional process to review the achievements of the first National Plan of Action (NPA-I) (1992-2000), which was developed and implemented following the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. Bangladesh reviewed the achievements of the NPA-I with regard to the EFA goals and formulated the current NPA-II (2001-2015). The EFA goals in the NPA include the final targets for 2015 as well as intermediate targets for 2005 and 2010.

15.1 Goal One: Early Childhood Care and Education in Bangladesh

15.1.1 Background and Development of ECCE in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has as its goal the expansion and improvement of comprehensive ECCE, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. A major objective of the NPA-II is to institute a well-organized and coordinated programme of ECCE for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, using both formal and non-formal channels, with emphasis on family and community-based programmes. The NPA-II promotes an integrated approach to ECCE combining all aspects of child care and development including health, nutrition and sanitation as well as pre-primary education. It is recognized that a number of government ministries and departments must be involved, particularly those responsible for education, social welfare, women and children’s affairs, health, nutrition, water and sanitation.

The Government has adopted a partnership approach in the area of ECCE. In addition to pre-primary classes already in operation in formal schools, NGOs, CBOs and other groups and individuals are encouraged to establish and operate pre-school classes in schools as well as ECCE centres through community-based programmes. The NPA-II envisages three types of ECCE programmes, namely school-based pre-primary education classes, community-based ECCE centres located within primary school catchment areas and home-based ECCE programmes.

MOPME has approved an Operational Policy Framework for Pre-Primary Education. The framework was developed with the assistance of organizations working in the field of ECCE and through a participatory process. Under the framework, national standards are being set for monitoring developmental readiness in early childhood and learning programmes with age-based criteria.

15.1.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bangladesh

Under the NPA-II, children of the age group 3–5 years are covered under the ECCE plans. The population of this age group was estimated as 10.38 million in 2001 and is expected to increase to 11.68 million by 2015. The targets set in the NPA are to enrol one million children in pre-primary classes in formal schools and 1.04 million in NFE by 2005, one million in formal and 1.87 million in NFE by 2010 and 1.3 million in formal and 1.2 million in NFE by 2015. Based on the population projections, this represents an enrolment target of only 22% of the age-group.

MOPME has authorized two NGOs, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), a large national NGO, and Save the Children USA, to organize pre-primary classes in government and government-registered primary schools. By the end of 2006, BRAC had organized 20,000 pre-primary classes covering over 600,000 children in the premises or vicinity of government schools, while Save the Children had organized about 2,000 classes, including home and community-based centres in school catchment areas covering about 60,000 children. The pre-primary centres have strong links with the primary schools with the aim of all the children being admitted to Grade 1 of the formal schools upon completion of their ECCE classes. A number of other NGOs also run pre-primary classes, although not on as large a scale or with the formal endorsement of the Ministry.
In 2005, an enrolment of 1.1 million in ECCE programmes was reported for the formal sector with a slightly higher enrolment for girls than boys. This equals a GER of 11.4% and means that the target for the formal system was met. The GPI was 1.03. The total enrolment number in the non-formal system was not reported separately for the 3-5 age-group, but if this enrolment were added to the total, the GER would increase considerably. It was reported that the total coverage of children aged 0-5 under ECCE initiatives of NGOs was approximately 1.5 million. It is estimated that the enrolment in private centres as a proportion of total enrolment is 18%. In 2005, the percentage of new entrants to primary Grade 1 who had attended some form of organized ECCE programme was 37.6% overall, 38.8% for girls and 36.3% for boys. This is an indication that actual enrolment in ECCE is higher than the reported statistics. The GPI for this indicator was 1.07.

15.1.3 Analysis of Disparities in ECCE in Bangladesh and Remaining Challenges

While universal coverage is not planned for ECCE, Bangladesh has recognized the need to target activities to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. Most of the NGO interventions are designed to reach children from families who are disadvantaged and marginalized. The Ministry of Chittagong CHT is implementing a project under which pre-school classes are run in “para” (neighbourhood) centres. Most of the children are from linguistic minorities and do not speak Bangla prior to going to school. In the centres, both Bangla and mother tongue are used in teaching. A number of NGOs have similar programmes in the CHT and northern parts of Bangladesh to help children from linguistic minority groups to transit into primary schools. For nearly all the available information, the GPI of ECCE programmes exceeds 1.0. This indicates that girls are given a high priority.

15.2 Goal Two: Universal Primary/Basic Education in Bangladesh

15.2.1 Background and Expansion of Universal Basic Education in Bangladesh

The Government of Bangladesh is giving the highest priority to the goal of ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to a complete free and compulsory education of good quality. The Bangladesh Constitution (1972) recognizes the fundamental right of education and requires the state “to adopt effective measures for... establishing a universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children.” The Primary Education (Compulsory) Act (1990) made primary education compulsory. It was piloted in 68 sub-districts in 1992 and extended to the whole country from 1993.

The basic goal of the NPA-II (2001-2015) is to establish a knowledge-based and technologically-oriented competent society, ensuring that every school-age child has access to primary level institutions that provide all necessary facilities and that each child continues in school and receives quality education. The Government has committed itself to take the appropriate measures and make the necessary investments for the purpose of enhancing learning and gaining appropriate employable and life skills through formal, non-formal and informal education mechanisms; providing education to all primary school-age children, boys and girls, including ethnic minorities, disadvantaged and children with disabilities; ensuring that all primary level institutions, formal and non-formal, offer standardized and quality basic education; ensuring gender equality in basic and primary education; and reducing poverty substantially in line with the PRSP and MDG targets through and as a result of quality basic education and selective skills development training.

15.2.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bangladesh

By the end of the 1990s, Bangladesh already had some of the highest primary enrolment rates in South Asia. Particularly remarkable was the achievement of gender parity for a number of indicators. The challenge this decade is to further increase enrolments and retention, particularly amongst the most disadvantaged communities, to improve the quality of education and to move forward from numerically-based gender parity to full gender equality in all levels and types of schools.
The DPE undertook a comprehensive baseline survey for the sub-sectoral programme PEDP-II in 2005 which provides sex-disaggregated national data with breakdowns for each of the 64 districts. This data when compared to the information given in the EFA 2000 Assessment Report provides a picture of the progress made for a number of the key indicators of primary education during the first five years of the current decade.

The GIR in Grade 1 in 2005 was 111% for girls and 105.9% for boys with a GPI of 1.05. The NIR reflects a more accurate measurement of access and school entrance at the appropriate age. In 2000, the national NIR in Grade 1 was reported to be 64.6% with a GPI of 0.90. By 2005, the NIR had increased to 96.1% for girls and 93.3% for boys with a GPI of 1.03. This represents a significant increase in the number of girls and boys entering primary school at the appropriate age, and full gender parity has been achieved.

While the GER in primary education was 97.2% in 2001, it came down to 93.7% in 2005 (girls 96.2% and boys 91.2%) with a GPI of 1.05, as illustrated in Table 5. The proportion of girls enrolled was 50%. The reduction of GER from the earlier rates could mean that more children are enrolling at the appropriate age so that there are fewer over-age children enrolling. The NER more accurately shows the proportion of children of the appropriate age in primary school. The NER increased from 85.1% in 2002 to 87.2% (girls 90.1% and boys 84.6%) in 2005. The GPI was 1.06. Table 5 also shows the disparity in the NER, GER and GPIs within Bangladesh, showing a huge gap between the highest and lowest rates by district.

### Table 5: NER and GER for Primary Education, 2005, by Sex, Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location Level</th>
<th>Net Enrolment Rate (%)</th>
<th>Gross Enrolment Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest district</td>
<td>99.98</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest district</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Secondary education is divided into three phases. Grades 6-8 are classed as junior secondary, Grades 9-10 form secondary proper and Grades 11-12 (age 16-17 years) make higher secondary, which is the beginning part of college education that leads to tertiary education. The GER for junior secondary (Grades 6-8) in 2005 was 59% (66% for girls and 54% for boys) with a GPI of 1.08, while the NER was 54% (60% for girls and 49% for boys) with a GPI of 1.07. This compares favourably with 2001 enrolments in junior secondary (GER 57% and NER 50%). In 2005, the GER for secondary (Grades 9-10) was 42% (46% for girls and 39% for boys) with a GPI of 1.03, while the NER was 38% (42% for girls and 35% for boys) with a GPI of 1.03. The proportion of girls enrolled was 51%. Comparing the 2005 data with enrolments in secondary education in 2001 (GER 44% and NER 32%), it appears that more students of the appropriate age group are now being enrolled.

The GER for higher secondary (Grades 11-12) in 2005 was 15% (10% for girls and 18% for boys) with a GPI of 0.56, while the NER was 12% (10% for girls and 14% for boys) with a GPI of 0.71. When compared with 2001 enrolments in higher secondary (GER 7% and NER 4%), a significant increase of students at this level can be noted. However, it is a matter of major concern that the number of students, particularly girls, decreases drastically following the first public examination (i.e. the Secondary School Certificate at the end of Grade 10).
The data indicates that a considerable number of children repeat grades. The percentage of children repeating each grade is 12.3% for Grade 1, 11% for Grade 2, 13.7% for Grade 3, 11.4% in Grade 4 and 5.7% in Grade 5. This represents very high wastage in terms of time for both teachers and students as well as in financial terms. It is likely that the high repetition rates contribute to the low retention rates in primary education. In every grade, the percentage of boy repeaters is slightly higher than the percentage of girls repeating the grade. On average, the number of years input per graduate of the five-year primary cycle is 8.2 years (7.9 years for girls and 8.6 years for boys). The additional three years of input needed to produce a graduate is a result of the high repetition rates and the low survival rates.

The PEDP II 2005 survey found that overall survival rate was 53.9% (girls 56.1% and boys 51.7%). This is a lower survival rate than was reported in previous years. The decrease probably represents an improvement in the data collection system rather than an actual decline in the percentage of children completing Grade 5. The collection of more reliable data is to be commended and should lead to more effective monitoring of this and other indicators in the future. The GPI at 1.08 remained positive in favour of girls.

The available data indicates that the transition rate from primary to secondary had increased from 88.4% in 2002 to 92.4% in 2003 and then declined to 83.3% in 2004. This apparent decline may also be due to more accurate data collection. The reported transition rate of girls was higher each year than that of boys. In 2004, it was 86.6% for girls and 80% for boys with a GPI of 1.08.

Following the World Conference on EFA in Jomtien in 1990, Bangladesh decided to increase the number of teachers in primary schools as part of the drive to increase enrolment. One part of this strategy was to increase the number of female teachers to 60%. To attract more women, their qualification was relaxed to SSC or high school graduation at the end of Grade 10. For male teachers, the qualification remained unchanged at HSC. As the classrooms had to be provided with teachers quickly because of rapidly increasing enrolment, teacher training was changed from one-year pre-service to ten-month in-service training. Primary teachers start classroom teaching immediately upon recruitment. Usually they receive the Certificate-in-Education training within the first few years of their teaching career. The proportion of Certificate-in-Education trained teachers in government and government-registered primary schools is 71.9% (67.2% of women and 74.8% of men teachers).

In 2005, the average PTR was 54:1 with a PTR of 58:1 in government primary schools and 46:1 in government-registered and community schools. The national PTR average was 61:1 in 2002, indicating a reduction in the PTR in just three years. However, the national rate masks even higher ratios in some schools. According to the reports by district, the highest PTR was 85:1 with a PTR of 87:1 in Government schools. According to plans under PEDP II, the national PTR should be reduced to 46:1 by 2009.

In 2005-06, the proportion spent on primary education from the revenue budget was 34% and the proportion spent on secondary education was 23%. The proportion spent from the development budget was 61.5% for primary education and 27.1% for secondary education.

15.2.3 Analysis of Disparities in Universal Basic Education in Bangladesh and Remaining Challenges

One of the great achievements of the primary and secondary education systems in Bangladesh is the attainment of gender parity in enrolments for primary and secondary levels (excluding higher secondary). All the pupil-related indicators for both primary and secondary based on the latest data show GPIs exceeding 1.00 in favour of girls. This is the case not only at the national level but generally true across the districts. However, the comparatively low GPI (0.56) for GER in higher secondary indicates that there are still constraints within the system that may inhibit girls from progressing to higher levels of education.
There are significant differences by district for some of the indicators. For instance, compared to the national NER of 87.2%, in Gazipur the NER is only 65.4% for boys and 71.6% for girls. The national survival rate is low at 53.9%, but in Sherpur it is even lower at only 27.1% (27.8% for girls and 27.1% for boys). Data is not available on sub-groups of the population by ethnicity or socio-economic status.

As an incentive for the enrolment and participation of children from poor families, the Food for Education programme was started in 1993 and covered up to 40% of all school children. It was replaced with cash stipends in 2001. Rural girls in secondary schools have been receiving cash assistance in the form of stipends since 1993. The girls' secondary education stipends projects are credited with being one of the major contributing factors for achieving gender parity in primary and secondary enrolments.

15.3 Goal Three: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning in Bangladesh

15.3.1 Background and Development of Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in Bangladesh

The NPA-II includes the goal of ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. In Bangladesh, life skills and lifelong learning is defined as the development of individual capacities to cope with one's needs at social, mental and physical levels and to achieve established and recognized rights. It also encompasses the enhancement of an individual's negotiation capacity through training in problem-solving and in development of expertise and capabilities to tackle various circumstances and handle core responsibilities. Learners may be adults or out-of-school youth. What characterizes the structured learning activities involved is a large diversity of provision and providers, including the public, private and civil society sectors as sole providers or in partnership.

The NPA-II has not set any targets in quantitative or in qualitative terms for the goal. In the National Education Policy, the target population for admission in life skills and lifelong learning programmes is 8+ years for NGOs and 12-13 years for government organizations. According to the PRSP, one of the challenges for Bangladesh is to increase the proportion of TVET participation from 3% to 20% of enrolled secondary students by 2020.

15.3.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bangladesh

Among the youth (15-24 years) in Bangladesh, the literacy rate is reported to be 72.7%, 75.03% for males and 70.36% for females, with a GPI of 0.94. Comparing adult literacy rates to the youth literacy rate, it is clear that the proportion of literate young people is higher than for the older age groups. Also, although there is still a gender gap, it is considerably less than for the general adult literacy rate.

In 2005, approximately 2,728 TVET institutions were in operation in Bangladesh with a total enrolment of 241,336. Of this number, 48,267 students were enrolled in 180 public institutions and 193,069 students were enrolled in 2,548 private institutions. The proportion enrolled in private institutions was 80%. Only 26% of the students were female and the GPI was 0.35. The majority of TVET institutions suffer from poorly equipped workshops and laboratories, lack of teaching and training materials, inadequate classrooms and libraries and a lack of qualified teachers. The absence of linkages between training institutes and employers is a major impediment. With such a small enrolment, the GER for TVET is negligible. Currently, vocational training in Bangladesh does not meet the skills needed in the labour market both in terms of quantity and quality.

A Baseline HIV/AIDS Survey among youths was undertaken in Bangladesh in 2005. It was found that 85% of females and 93% of males were aware of HIV/AIDS, with awareness being higher among urban youth. Knowledge of ways to prevent HIV/AIDS was 22% for females and 23% for males among those with secondary or higher education.
15.3.3 Analysis of Disparities in Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in Bangladesh and Remaining Challenges

This is an area that faces many challenges and has not yet been given a high priority in EFA implementation. Although there have been some efforts to incorporate life skills into the formal and non-formal curriculum in Bangladesh, they are in an early stage of development and have not been reported in the EFA MDA analysis. The enrolment in formal TVET programmes is very low, and it is one of the few spheres of EFA in which there are still significant gender gaps. There are other initiatives operating in the country under the general label of livelihoods training. While the number is small, such interventions are more likely to reach the most vulnerable groups than the formal TVET institutions.

15.4 Goal Four: Literacy in Bangladesh

15.4.1 Background and Development of Literacy Acquisition in Bangladesh

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (Article 17) recognizes literacy as a fundamental right of all citizens and enjoins on the state to take measures to remove illiteracy speedily. The Government approved a national Non-Formal Education Policy Framework in 2006 which provides the overarching principles for conducting NFE programmes including adult literacy initiatives. Also established was the BNFE, which is the Government agency for the overall coordination of literacy and NFE activities in Bangladesh.

According to the NFE Policy Framework, “Literacy is the ability to read, understand, interpret, communicate and compute in verbal and written forms in varying contexts. It involves a continuum of learning that enables individuals to develop their potentials and knowledge-base and to participate fully in community affairs and wider social and developmental contexts.”

The NPA-II seeks to provide opportunities and facilities to meet the learning, life and livelihood skills needs of adolescents, young adults, adults and neo-literate adults to survive and thrive in a competitive world. The plan aims to contextualize EFA and MDG targets under the PRSP in a harmonized approach with realistic targets and shared responsibilities. The BNFE has the responsibility to establish appropriate standards and to promote NGO/CBO capacities to achieve quality in programme formulation, implementation and monitoring. NGOs and CBOs are to play the primary role in implementing programmes based on a public-private partnership approach for planning, implementation and monitoring of activities. BNFE is to ensure effective coordination of activities within the Government (relevant ministries) and between Government and other partners. Appropriate linkages with other relevant programmes (skills training, microfinance, employment generation) and organizations are to be established to assist NFE participants to put their new-found learning, job skills and knowledge to work towards poverty reduction and income generation. The BNFE will develop and maintain a regularly updated database and GIS mapping on the participant population, needs, location of services, agencies and linkages with marketing and input providing facilities.

Under the NPA-II there are to be separate initiatives targeted at selected age specific groups. The groups are the post-primary age group (ages 11-14); out-of-school adolescent and youth (ages 12-19); young adults (ages 15-24) targeting 50% of the illiterate group; and adults (ages 25-45) targeting 25% of the illiterate group. Post literacy and continuing education initiatives are also part of the plan.

15.4.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bangladesh

The BBS considers a person literate if he or she can “read and write a letter in any language.” On the basis of this criterion, the adult literacy rate in Bangladesh according to the 2001 Census was 47.5% and the current adult literacy rate is estimated to be 54.8% with a female literacy rate of 48.9%, a
male rate of 60.3% and a GPI of 0.81. The adult literacy rate in urban areas is 82.2% with rates of 77.4% for females and 86.3% for males. The corresponding rates in rural areas are 52.4% overall, 46.5% for females and 57.9% for males. Of the administrative divisions, Barisal has the highest adult literacy rate of 71.3% and Rajshahi has the lowest rate with 49.4%. For urban areas, the Dhaka division has the highest adult literacy rate (84.8%) while the Sylhet division has the lowest (71.5%). For rural areas, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions have the lowest rates (30.5%). At 72.7%, the youth literacy is 17.9 percentage points higher than the adult literacy rate. More progress towards gender parity has also been achieved with the youth literacy rate with GPI at 0.94 compared to 0.81 for the adult literacy rate.

According to the available information, there are 1,048 NGOs with NFE programmes in the country. A recent study found that NGOs run 6,574 centres, attended by 145,470 learners with females making up 82% of the learners. NGOs are also the implementers of a number of government-sponsored initiatives. This includes BNFE’s Post Literacy and Continuing Education project which covers a large number of learners in rural areas. There are 20 NGO implementing partners of BNFE’s project for working children which is targeting 200,000 working children aged 10-14 in the six divisional headquarter cities.

There is only a small amount from the revenue budget allocated for literacy and NFE, mainly for BNFE staffing. MOPME’s expenditure on literacy and NFE in 2005-06 was calculated as 3.53% of the overall development budget. A number of other ministries, including the Ministries of Education, Religious Affairs and Social Welfare implement projects related to NFE and literacy.

15.4.3 Analysis of Disparities in Literacy in Bangladesh and Remaining Challenges

Due to long-term discrimination against girls and women in past decades, the GPI for adult literacy shows a bias against women while enrolment in primary and secondary schools show more girls are now enrolled than boys. However, there are indications that progress is being made in addressing gender disparities in adult literacy. A high proportion of literacy and non-formal education programmes are targeting women. Also, the number of literate girls joining the adult population each year is increasing. These are promising signs for the future, but attaining gender parity in adult literacy is a long-term goal that will require sustained efforts at all levels for many years. Achieving gender equality is an even greater challenge.

Bangladesh is committed to extending the coverage of literacy and NFE programmes to educationally, socially and economically disadvantaged groups who missed schooling or dropped out of school. Specifically, the clientele groups to be covered by literacy and NFE programmes include primary school drop-outs, never enrolled adolescents and young adults, children living in remote locations, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and populations suffering social exclusion as well as all illiterate adults.

15.5 Goal Five: Gender Parity and Equality in Education in Bangladesh

15.5.1 Background and Development of Gender Parity and Equality in Bangladesh

As part of the NPA-II, the Government of Bangladesh has adopted the goal of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015 with a focus on ensuring females’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. Gender is a cross-cutting theme in the NPA-II with targets implicit within each of the other five goals. There are gender parity index targets for most indicators. Monitoring of progress makes full use of sex disaggregated data.

The Constitution of Bangladesh (1972) guarantees equal opportunities for all women and men in the country, and a number of policies have been adopted to facilitate the realization of this
guarantee. In the context of the CEDAW, the Government has put into place mechanisms to promote the participation of women and girls in society.

In the education sector, a number of pro-girl policies and strategies have been adopted to enhance the enrolment and participation of females in the system. In primary education, 60% of new teacher recruitments is reserved for women candidates. There have been massive social mobilization campaigns to motivate parents to send their daughters as well as their sons to school. Separate toilets for girls are being constructed in primary schools. Under PEDP-II, a gender action plan has been adopted to address issues of not only quantitative parity but also equity in all areas of school life.

In secondary education, the most notable intervention has been the various secondary school stipend projects for girls which have been in operation since the early 1990s covering most girls in rural secondary schools. There have been initiatives specifically to promote women teachers in secondary schools, and in 1999 a 30% quota was introduced for women teachers in secondary schools, madrasahs and colleges.

15.5.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bangladesh

This is an area in which Bangladesh has made the most notable progress in all of South Asia. It is truly a matter of pride for the nation that Bangladesh is one of the few countries in South Asia which has been on target of achieving gender parity in enrolments in both primary and secondary education in 2005. Bangladesh has achieved gender parity for the majority of the EFA indicators for which the GPI is monitored. The following are the indicators for which gender parity has been achieved: GER in ECCE (1.03), NIR in Grade 1 (1.03), GER in secondary education (1.03) and NER in secondary education (1.03). The proportion of girls’ enrolment in primary (50%) and secondary levels (51%) is also positive. These are all remarkable achievements.

There are a few indicators for which gender parity has not yet been reached. Some indicators have exceeded the higher end of the 0.97 to 1.03 gender parity range, indicating a bias against boys such as the GPIs for: GIR in Grade 1 (1.05), GER in primary education (1.05), NER in primary education (1.06), Survival Rate to Grade 5 (1.08), and Transition Rate from Primary to Secondary Education (1.08). Only two of the reported EFA indicators have GPIs of less than 1.0, namely adult literacy (0.81) and youth literacy (0.94). Also, the GPI for higher secondary education GER (Grades 11-12) at 0.56 is considerably lower than that of secondary education (Grades 9-10) at 1.03. The proportion of female enrolment (26%) in TVET was also very low. The proportion of female teachers was low for each of the teacher-related indicators at 36% in primary, 10% in secondary and 18% in TVET in 2005.

15.5.3. Analysis of Gender Disparities in Bangladesh and Remaining Challenges

The biggest gender gap is in adult literacy rates. This is a reflection of the limited access to education of girls in past generations. The higher GPI in youth literacy, although not yet indicating full parity, is an indication that the gap in adult literacy rates will gradually lessen. However, in addition to the natural increase in the number of literate adult females as a result of the school system, targeted initiatives are also required to address the needs of existing illiterate women to fulfil their right to education. Efforts for universal education and the promotion of adult literacy, particularly for women, should be seen as complementary.

The low GPIs for higher secondary education and the low proportion of girls enrolled in TVET are major causes of concern. An analysis of the SSC examination, the terminal exam at the end of Grade 10, reveals that despite continuing in school until Grade 10, considerably fewer girls than boys sit and pass the SSC exam. As a result, girls do not make the transition to higher secondary or to tertiary education. This greatly limits their future employment opportunities and disadvantages them in a number of ways both socially and economically.
Besides the quantitative indicators related to gender parity, emphasis must be given to the achievement of gender equality in the education system and in society as a whole. This is a much bigger challenge as gender stereotypes and perceptions are abundant. For instance, a recent review of the curriculum and textbooks of both primary and secondary education showed a general gender imbalance in favour of males and revealed a number of gender stereotypes. Having achieved gender parity for most indicators, the education system in Bangladesh must with equal commitment promote full gender equality.

15.6 Goal Six: Quality of Education in Bangladesh

15.6.1 Developments in the Provisions of Quality Education in Bangladesh

Along with gender, the major cross-cutting goal is improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. The NPA-II envisages all primary level institutions, formal and non-formal, offering standardized and quality basic education, thus providing a strong foundation that prepares children to face challenges in higher education and broader life with confidence and success. It also promotes equivalence between formal and non-formal basic education and between different streams within each, at all levels.

The NCTB has established a competency-based primary education curriculum with 50 terminal competencies. There is no national examination at the end of the primary cycle, but a national assessment was piloted in 2006, and PEDP-II includes an assessment component in which there will be periodic assessments of the system based on selective sample testing of students.

A major focus of PEDP-II is quality improvement. Under the programme, PSQLS are being established to ensure that every child has access to the minimum inputs necessary for an acceptable quality of primary education. The programme also aims to reduce the number of double-shift schools through ambitious building and teacher recruitment initiatives. The plan is to increase the proportion of government primary schools running on a single shift from 12% to 31% by 2009. It is anticipated that this will result in substantially increased teacher-student contact hours and thereby improve the quality of learning in primary schools.

15.6.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bangladesh

Although a number of initiatives are being undertaken through PEDP-II to improve the quality of education, there has not been sufficient time to see the outcomes. Some of the monitoring mechanisms have been refined with better school-level information being collected and analyzed. The Survival Rate to Grade 5 reported for 2005 of 53.9% (56.1% for girls and 51.7% for boys) is expected to increase as the quality improvement initiatives are implemented across the country.

To attract more women primary teachers after committing to the EFA initiative in 1990, the Government relaxed the entry qualification for female candidates from HSC to SSC. Nearly all teachers in government schools have at least this level of education. The majority of primary teachers have at least HSC and a number have Bachelors and/or Masters degrees as well.

Overall, according to a DPE report in 2007, 71.9% of primary teachers (67.2% of females and 74.8% of males) in government and government-registered schools have completed the ten-month Certificate-in-Education course. In government and government supported secondary schools, 53.5% (57.4% of females and 52.6% of males) have completed the Bachelor of Education according to a BANBEIS report in 2006. For ECCE and non-formal education programmes, which are for the most part run by NGOs, the qualifications for teachers vary but generally they do not exceed the SSC level. Formal training in education is not required, but usually in-service training is included as part of the conditions of service.
The PTR in government primary schools was 58:1 in 2005 compared to 46:1 in government-registered and community schools. Most of the schools are running on a double-shift, so the actual number of students in a class at a given time is less than these averages. But the intention is to reduce the number of double-shift schools in a bid to increase teacher-student contact hours. As this happens, it becomes even more important to decrease the PTR. The PTRs vary across the districts with one district (Rangamati) having an average of only 33:1 while another (Noakhali) an average of 75:1, reflecting the huge variation within the country. The ratio also varies for individual schools and grades. It is not uncommon to find classes with up to 100 Grade 1 students with only one teacher. This obviously has huge implications for the quality of education, and the Government is seeking to address the situation through PEDP-II initiatives. In secondary schools, the national average of the PTR was 31:1 in 2005, although this again masks the disparities within the country.

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of the total government expenditure was 14% from 2005-06. It is 15% of the revenue budget and 13% of the development budget. The public expenditure on education as a percentage of the GNP is 2.3%, compared to the UNESCO recommended 6% of GNP. Public expenditure on education in primary schools is Taka 1,783 (approximately US$27) per student.

The PEDP-II 2005 baseline survey found that 90% of schools had a portable water supply mostly from tube wells. However, about 44% of the tube wells were not working at the time of the survey. Arsenic contamination presents a difficulty for some of the schools. With regards to sanitation it was found that about 9% of all government and government-registered primary schools had no toilets and 20% had only one toilet in the school for all children and teachers. Separate toilets for girls were available in 37% of the government schools and 35% of the government-registered schools.

15.6.3 Analysis of Disparities in Quality in Bangladesh and Remaining Challenges

Two of the areas that require addressing most urgently are the low teacher-student contact hours and the high PTRs. While PEDP-II has initiated the construction of new classrooms and the recruitment of new teachers to address both of these issues, it will take some time for the effects of these measures to be seen. Also, under the current projections, two-thirds of students will still be attending double-shift schools even at the end of PEDP-II in 2009 and the average PTR will be 46:1, which is an improvement over the current situation but far from ideal. These are matters which the Government is considering with the intention to further reduce the number of double-shift schools and the PTR, as well as to increase the number of teacher-student contact hours.

From the high repetition and low completion rates of primary schooling, it can be deduced that the quality of primary schooling is not satisfactory. When sufficient learning is not taking place in the classroom, there is a tendency for parents who can afford it to rely on private tuition to assist their children to learn the necessary content and skills to progress through the system. This automatically disadvantages children from poor and vulnerable groups whose families cannot afford private tuition.

The Government has recognized quality improvement as the most important and urgent need in primary education and in other types and levels of education. For this reason, it has been given high priority in the NPA-II. It is imperative that the interventions for quality improvement reach all the schools and children in Bangladesh. In addition to initiatives to improve quality in general, targeted interventions will also be needed to reach the most vulnerable to ensure that they remain in school and achieve the basic competencies required to progress to the next level of the system and for application in their lives.
15.7 Overall Conclusions and Policy Recommendations in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has made considerable progress toward achieving some of the EFA goals. The achievement of gender parity in enrolment in both primary and secondary is particularly noteworthy. However, there is no room for complacency. In order to achieve the goals as set out in the NPA II, concerted action is needed in every area.

In ECCE, there has been considerable work done by NGOs in cooperation with the Government. Various Ministries have also been involved in ECCE activities. However, overall coverage is still limited. By building on the partnership model and effective initiatives which have already been implemented on a small scale, there is scope to increase activities for near universal coverage in the next few years. For this to happen, policy decisions will be required in order to set a national framework and standards, and ensure increased funding and stronger coordination.

Bangladesh is approaching the achievement of universal primary education enrolment at entry for both girls and boys. However, due to high drop-out rates, universal completion is still an elusive goal. In order to achieve universal completion by 2015, drastic measures and renewed efforts will be required. Besides reaching and retaining the groups which are the most difficult to enrol, the quality of the system must be remarkably improved in order to retain students and to ensure their achievement of basic education competencies.

Life skills, lifelong learning, and youth and adult literacy have not been given high priority during the first decade of this century. Funding by the Government has been minimal, and most of the work has been carried out by NGOs. In the NPA II, as well as in the recently approved NFE policy framework, there is a commitment to extend the coverage of literacy and NFE programmes, particularly to the poor and vulnerable and to girls and women. These are areas that will require significant increases in funding and stronger coordination of activities in order to create a national impact.

Bangladesh has made notable progress in the area of gender equality. The achievement of gender parity in enrolment in both primary and secondary education has been remarkable. Greater emphasis is now required on the achievement of full gender equality within the education system and in society as a whole.

Despite its considerable achievements in the areas of enrolment and gender parity, Bangladesh is still lagging behind in the area of quality. Poor quality results in wastage throughout the system. This has been identified by the Government as a major challenge, and there is a strong commitment to promote, through policies and practice, improvement in the quality of all educational interventions.
16. Bhutan

The tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan is situated between the two giant nations of China and India. Most of the country is mountainous and the land elevation ranges from 160 metres above sea level in the south to more than 7,550 metres in the north. The population of the country was 634,982 in 2005 according to the first nationwide population and housing census. The population can generally be divided into two major ethnic groups, the Drukps and the Lhotsamps. Smaller ethnic groups with distinctive languages also live in remote pockets of Bhutan. Buddhism and Hinduism are the two major religions.

Bhutan has been an independent nation throughout its history. A great religious teacher from Tibet, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal unified the country and established a theocracy in 1652, which continued until 1907 when Sir Ugyen Wangchuck was elected by popular consensus as the first king of Bhutan. Since the monarchy was established, the country has been ruled by four successive hereditary kings with the fifth successor enthroned in late 2008.

Bhutan's development policy is uniquely guided by the Gross National Happiness (GNH) concept, which espouses that human beings have spiritual and emotional needs which are as important as material ones, but which have been largely overlooked by the traditional development approach. The concept of GNH now formally constitutes the key objective of national development and serves as the foundation for Bhutan's normative approach.

Ranked 135th on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2006, Bhutan has moved from the category of 'low' to 'medium' human development. The proportion of people living in poverty in Bhutan has been reduced to 31.7% of the population according to the Bhutan Human National Development Report 2005. There is a varied economy with substantial contributions to the GDP from mining, manufacturing and electricity along with the traditional sectors of agriculture, livestock and forestry.

Education is viewed as the basis for all development and as such has always been given a very high priority in planning. Around 13% of the Royal Government of Bhutan's resources are allocated annually for education. The MOE publishes the "Education and Policy Guidelines and Instructions" annually, which outlines the priorities of the education sector and informs of any policy changes. The Education Sector Strategy is closely aligned to the Ninth FYP, which is the overall guide for all development activities in the country. EFA goals and targets are included as part of the overall planning process of the Government and are reflected in the FYPs.

16.1 Goal One: Early Childhood Care and Education in Bhutan

16.1.1 Background and Development of ECCE in Bhutan

Under the broader rubric of early childhood care and development (ECCD), the national definition of ECCE programmes covers nurseries and day-care centres. These should help optimize the growth and development of children aged 3–5 years through informal and formal settings, and equip children with skills important for adjusting to their immediate environment. As ECCD is a relatively new concept in Bhutan, an awareness campaign programme on child care will be further strengthened by targeting families using different media. The subject of ECCD is to be developed and included in the NFE programme for dissemination throughout the country. Private individuals and entrepreneurs will be encouraged to set up child care centres and nurseries in areas where a demand for such programmes exists.

While ECCD is a fairly new concept, the first year of primary schooling in Bhutan is called the pre-primary section. Hence, children going to school start their formal education in the pre-primary class at the age of 6. It is recognized that what needs to be developed further is the broader concept of ECCE that addresses the health needs of children under 3 years old and the cognitive and nutritional requirements of the 3-5 year olds.
16.1.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bhutan

An ECCD section has been established under the Department of School Education. A draft ECCD policy and guidelines were formulated in 2003 and have been incorporated into the Guidelines for Establishment of Private Schools in Bhutan. Nine licenses have been issued to establish private day-care centres since 2005 and six are currently functioning. The combined enrolment is 211 (107 girls and 104 boys). There are 18 teachers, all female.

16.1.3 Analysis of Disparities in ECCE in Bhutan and Remaining Challenges

Reaching the poorest and most deprived children is the major challenge for the ECCD programme. ECCD currently is a small, urban initiative and a focused strategy has yet to be developed to reach the neediest and the poorest. Initiatives need to be developed to extend ECCD activities to rural areas and to the poorest and most disadvantaged. ECCD needs to be part of a holistic and integrated approach to reaching groups marginalized as a result of geographical location and socio-economic factors. At the same time, there is a need to review the curriculum to assess its effectiveness in generating community demand for ECCD.

16.2 Goal Two: Universal Primary/Basic Education in Bhutan

16.2.1 Background and Expansion of Universal Basic Education in Bhutan

Bhutan’s goal is for the NER for primary education to reach 100% by 2015. Ensuring access has received top priority, with the goal to ensure each child has access to a primary school within one hour’s walking distance from his or her home. This is to be made possible through expanding the existing community primary schools and establishing new primary schools where necessary. The concept will be further strengthened by developing some primary schools as resource centres, which may incorporate a computer centre, literacy centre, community library and a place for other community functions. While schools will be built and maintained with the help of communities using locally available materials, construction materials not available locally will be provided. Boarding will continue as a strategy to extend educational opportunities to isolated and nomadic communities. Extensive dependence on boarding, which is expensive and difficult to manage, will be reduced by establishing additional smaller schools in remote communities. Education at the basic level (11 years of schooling, pre-primary to Grade 10) will continue to be free.

16.2.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bhutan

There has been a steady expansion of community schools. The number of community primary schools increased by 62% from 151 in 2000 to 245 in 2006. The number of students enrolled in community schools has increased from 17,335 in 2000 to 29,132 in 2006. This represents about 28% of the primary student body and about 20% of the student population up to higher secondary level.

Hostels and the provision of food have been introduced to serve as a pull factor to bring children into the school system. Due to the mountainous terrain and the dispersed settlements, providing a school within three kilometres’ radius is not always possible. Therefore, the provision of hostel facilities and food has been instrumental in increasing student enrolment and retention in remote areas. The food has been beneficial, particularly for children from poor families. In 2006, there were 40 lower secondary, 18 middle secondary and 16 higher secondary schools with boarding facilities receiving some food support under the World Food Programme (WFP). A total of 41,438 students (23,578 boarders and 17,860 day students) were receiving food assistance in 2006. The proportion

---

54 Currently the government is considering a shift from this policy. Instead of continuing to construct community primary schools in the remote areas, a consolidation policy is being considered. Since the new policies are still being discussed, this report reflects the 2006 policies.
of girls receiving food assistance increased from 41% of the total in 2000 to 45% in 2006 (43.2% of the boarders and 48.2% of day students).

In Bhutan, the primary education cycle covers seven years of schooling from pre-primary to Grade 6. The total primary school enrolment in 2006 was 102,225 students, which is about 20% more than in 2000. Between 2000 and 2006, the enrolment increased an average of about 3.3% annually. The girls’ annual growth was 4.1% compared to the boys’ increase of 2.4%. This has helped to reduce the gender gap.

The GIR in primary school increased from 105% (104% for girls and 105% for boys) in 2004 to 112% (111% for girls and 114% for boys) in 2006. In 2006 the GPI was 0.97.

The GER for primary education, including the private schools, increased from 72% in 2000 to 102.1% in 2006 (100% for girls and 104% for boys) with a GPI of 0.97. The NER for primary education in 2006 was 79.4% (79% for girls and 80% for boys) with a GPI of 0.99. The NER is not available for earlier years. Available data for 2007 indicates that around 16.3% of primary school-age children are out of the formal school system. This indicates that the NER has further increased. Children enrolled in monastic education and those studying outside the country are not included in the official data. For basic education (pre-primary through to Grade 10), the GER is 84.8% and the NER is 75% in 2006. Data for other EFA indicators have not been reported.

16.2.3 Analysis of Disparities in Universal Basic Education in Bhutan and Remaining Challenges

Looking at the sub-national breakdown, gaps remain in terms of gross and net enrolment in primary education with the primary NER ranging from a high of 94% (Bumthang) to a low of 65% (Samtse). The table below shows the primary NER and GER and the GPIs for the 20 Dzongkhags in Bhutan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dzongkhag</th>
<th>NER</th>
<th>GER</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumthang</td>
<td>94.00%</td>
<td>93.00%</td>
<td>95.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chukha</td>
<td>71.00%</td>
<td>71.00%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagana</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>76.00%</td>
<td>74.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gasa</td>
<td>68.00%</td>
<td>69.00%</td>
<td>66.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haa</td>
<td>84.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>88.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhuentse</td>
<td>81.00%</td>
<td>83.00%</td>
<td>79.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongar</td>
<td>78.00%</td>
<td>78.00%</td>
<td>77.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paro</td>
<td>86.00%</td>
<td>85.00%</td>
<td>88.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemagatshel</td>
<td>89.00%</td>
<td>89.00%</td>
<td>89.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punakha</td>
<td>88.00%</td>
<td>83.00%</td>
<td>94.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samdrupjongkhar</td>
<td>78.00%</td>
<td>81.00%</td>
<td>76.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samtse</td>
<td>65.00%</td>
<td>67.00%</td>
<td>63.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarang</td>
<td>72.00%</td>
<td>72.00%</td>
<td>71.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td>87.00%</td>
<td>86.00%</td>
<td>88.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trashigang</td>
<td>82.00%</td>
<td>87.00%</td>
<td>78.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TrashiYangtse</td>
<td>87.00%</td>
<td>89.00%</td>
<td>84.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trongsa</td>
<td>92.00%</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
<td>94.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsirang</td>
<td>68.00%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
<td>67.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangdue</td>
<td>83.00%</td>
<td>81.00%</td>
<td>85.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhempang</td>
<td>89.00%</td>
<td>88.00%</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
<td>79.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>79.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: GPI has been recalculated.
Based on indicators for which data are available, Bhutan has achieved gender parity for primary GIR (0.97) and primary NER (0.99), and is approaching parity for primary GER (0.96). Enrolments in primary schools have increased for both girls and boys, but there has been a faster growth for girls (4.1% annually for girls compared to 2.4% for boys). These are all positive signs and are to be commended. However, it is not possible from the data presented to assess whether or not it is applicable for qualitative measures such as repetition and retention. Also, the growth in girls’ enrolments must be sustained into secondary schooling and higher levels. Verifiable progress in these areas is very important for achieving gender parity and for moving beyond mere numbers to gender equality in all aspects of schooling and society.

GERs, NERs and GPIs show regional variations in access for girls and boys across the country. The Government is aware of the geographical differences and is making particular efforts to extend education to the most disadvantaged areas.

A major challenge for Bhutan is to collect and analyze data for all the key indicators. The availability of data to show trends over time is particularly important. The disaggregation of data by location, ethnicity, and sex is also essential, particularly for informing strategies and initiatives to reach out to out-of-school children.

16.3 Goal Three: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning in Bhutan

16.3.1 Background and Development of Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in Bhutan

Related to this goal, Bhutan is aiming to continuously improve the quality and relevance of education to ensure the holistic development of each child, encompassing innate abilities, moral and social values, social cohesion and the world of work, including agriculture and other vocations. It is envisaged that technical, vocational and academic education and training will develop into a multifaceted system of opportunities. Programmes are to range from job-oriented short training courses and apprenticeship training programmes to specialized training at degree and postgraduate levels. The system is to be highly flexible and designed to respond to evolving public and private sector demands. Sufficient flexibility must also be provided within the system for students to move between academic and vocational studies easily. Pursuing a vocation should not preclude a person from pursuing further academic studies.

The NFE programme which promotes literacy and numeracy skills development, particularly for rural women and girls, has included some skills development information in reading materials for both the basic literacy and post-literacy courses. However, while touching on some vocational objectives, these do not include practical components. It is expected that in coming years, increasing numbers of graduates from the NFE programme will pursue further training in lower level vocational skills.

The curriculum and the textbooks of most subjects have value education embedded in them, but for that to be translated into reality a curriculum framework and teacher guide need to be developed. The Comprehensive School Health Programme is a collaborative partnership programme between the Ministries of Education and Health. In addition to providing health services to schools, it provides health education in schools, promotes self-esteem and respect among students and staff, and works in partnership with homes and wider communities. It also offers counselling services on careers, life skills, first aid, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, substance abuse and other youth issues.
16.3.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bhutan

There are seven vocational workshops in boarding schools, five vocational training institutes spread across the country and two handicraft training institutes. Apart from students in the degree and diploma colleges, there are now 1,166 students enrolled in different vocational and traditional craft training centres, which has more than doubled from 529 students in 2000. Of these students, 418 (36%) are female and 748 (64%) are male. The GPI is 0.56.

Another avenue for advancing one’s academic qualifications is through the Continuing Education Programme established two years ago. The number of students doubled in the second year. Faced with the shortage of space in government schools, this is a joint partnership between the Government and private schools. While the evaluation is undertaken by the Government’s examination board, the space and teachers are provided by the private schools. In 2007, there were 361 students of whom 187 (51%) were female and 176 (49%) were male, giving a GPI of 1.06.

16.3.3 Analysis of Disparities in Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in Bhutan and Remaining Challenges

At only 36%, the proportion of female students in TVET indicates that more initiatives need to be taken to involve girls and women in this type of education. The higher percentage of females (51%) in the continuing education programme is an encouraging development. Further analysis is needed to assess whether the most disadvantaged students are accessing TVET and other programmes of this nature.

A continuous review of labour market requirements and mid- and long-term economic development projections are crucial in order to design and plan appropriate vocational education training. Ensuring systematic improvement of the standards and quality of training is another critical dimension. It is recognized that the quality of training can be improved mainly by involving all stakeholders, especially the private sector, in the identification, design and delivery of training. A national qualification framework needs to be developed that defines the different levels of education and defines different learning routes between school, vocational and tertiary education.

16.4 Goal Four: Adult Literacy and Continuing Education in Bhutan

16.4.1 Background and Development of Literacy Acquisition in Bhutan

The national goal is to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2015 and to make all the adult population above 15 years of age functionally literate and numerate in the national language Dzongkha. A literate person is defined as one who can independently read and write for communication and solve new problems using literacy skills. The vision for Bhutan is to create a system of learning opportunities for all people at every stage of life. Opportunities are to be available for those outside the formal system of education to learn new skills and knowledge through a system of continuous education. Learning opportunities are to be community-based and are to improve people's lives to the greatest extent possible. In light of the important development outcomes and effects on the overall well being of the family, particular emphasis is placed on the learning needs of women.

The focus during the Ninth FYP is to expand the NFE programme using the existing teachers and space in primary schools, to recruit promising Class XII (Grade 12) graduates to teach in the NFE centres and to foster greater collaboration with other ministries to support post-literacy programmes. The aim is to increase the number of participants in the NFE programme from 1,000 to 4,800 every year. Learning opportunities are to be community-based and are to improve

55 Minimum qualification for all new NFE Instructors was raised to Class XII from Class X in June 2007.
people’s lives to the greatest extent possible. In light of the important development outcomes and effects on the overall well-being of the family, particular emphasis is placed on the learning needs of women.

16.4.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bhutan

Bhutan’s literacy information was updated in 2005 when a comprehensive population and household census was taken. According to the Census, the adult literacy rate (15 years and above) was 53% (39% for females and 65% for males) with a GPI of 0.60. The urban adult literacy rate was 72% compared to 44% in the rural areas.

The Census showed a youth literacy rate (ages 15-24) of 74.4% (68% for females and 84% for males) with a GPI of 0.85. In urban areas the youth literacy rate was 84% compared to 68% in rural areas. For both adult literacy and youth literacy there were considerable differences across the country with the remote areas having the lowest rates. A gender gap also exists with male literacy rates for both youth and adults higher than female rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group %</th>
<th>Literacy Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24 years</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years and above</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While formal education has made significant inroads in the younger generation and helped increase the literacy level, for those who dropped out of school and for others who had no opportunity to attend school, NFE is considered the only hope for acquiring basic literacy skills. The target people are mainly in the 15-40 age bracket. Although the NFE centres are also located in the urban areas, those in the rural areas have been the main beneficiaries of this programme.

In 2000, there were 146 NFE centres with 5,372 learners. By 2007, the number of centres had grown to 777 and the number of learners had nearly tripled to 14,694. The majority of learners were females (10,002) while there were only 4,692 males. A total of 11,178 learners were enrolled in the basic literacy course while the remaining 3,516 were enrolled in the post-literacy course.

It is reported that the NFE programme has made a significant impact on the rural population, particularly on women. Some learners have become parliamentarians in the National Assembly and, in addition to playing the role of change agents, their contribution towards the creation of social capital has been substantial. They are known to be able to discuss development issues and the needs of their villages.

The adult literacy programme requires substantial dedicated resources. Given that the current total expenditure on adult literacy is less than 0.5% of the total expenditure of the education sector, resource mobilization is crucial for achieving the EFA goal.
16.4.3 Analysis of Disparities in Literacy in Bhutan and Remaining Challenges

Marked differences in adult and youth literacy rates exist across gender, districts, and rural-urban areas. Although female literacy rates have improved, at 39% the female adult literacy rate is much lower than the 65% rate of their male counterparts. The GPI of 0.60 is extremely low. The low level of female literacy assumes particular importance since it is widely regarded in Bhutan as perhaps the most significant factor in development. With adult literacy levels at only 44% in rural areas compared to 72% in urban areas, the rural-urban differences are also striking.

Despite the higher male literacy rates, an area of concern for the NFE programmes is the low participation of men, who accounted for only 29% of the learners in 2006. Migration and frequent travel for work are perhaps the major reasons for low male participation. This, however, is a problem that requires deeper analysis at the community level if appropriate strategies are to be developed to effectively involve men in NFE programmes. However, the programmes seem to be an effective mode to reach to the large number of women who constitute the largest portion of the illiterate population in the country.

16.5 Goal Five: Gender Parity and Equality in Education in Bhutan

16.5.1 Background and Development of Gender Parity and Equality in Bhutan

The national goal is to increase the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education and to bring a special thrust on enhancing female literacy and opportunities for life skills, vocational education and employment for women, especially young women. The strategy is to increase the enrolment of females in higher secondary and tertiary education through easier access to schools and better hostel facilities, and to expand NFE and skills training in rural areas.

While it is considered that there is no overt discrimination against women in Bhutanese society, if the statistics on women’s participation in economic and political life are examined, it would appear that there is a gender gap, if not an explicit bias. Gender has been mainstreamed as a cross-cutting issue in Bhutan’s development plans.

16.5.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bhutan

In 2000, girls constituted 46.1% of primary enrolment. By 2006 this had increased to 48.9%. In absolute numbers, there was an increase from 39,251 to 50,017 girls during this period. This steady increase in the enrolment of girls at the primary level is also reflected at the secondary level. With a GPI of 0.98, gender parity is considered achieved at the primary level. With girls making up 50% of the enrolment in Classes VII and VIII, it appears that gender parity has been achieved for this level, while for Classes IX and X girls make up 48.4% of the enrolment. Although there has been a moderate increase of girls over the years in Classes XI and XII, they accounted for only 35.6% of the students in government schools in 2006. Interestingly, girls’ enrolment in private schools at the same level was at par with the boys (50%).

Girls’ enrolment decreases at the tertiary level. In 2005, only 35% of the enrolment in the Royal University of Bhutan was female, and of those studying on government scholarships outside the country, females accounted for only 25%. In 2006, of the total number of students enrolled in six institutes offering vocational education, only 33% were women.

The proportion of women teachers in the overall staffing of educational institutions varies greatly according to school type and level. Data from the national EFA MDA report show that as of 2006, 46% of teachers in government primary schools were women, 68% in private primary schools, and only 22% in community primary schools. Most community schools are located in remote areas, sometimes involving up to two days of walking and therefore teachers, women in particular, are reluctant to take up such postings.
However, the percentage is an improvement from 2000, when females accounted for only 12% of the teachers in community schools. In general, the proportion of women teachers decreases as the levels of education increase. The proportion is 48% in lower secondary, 41% in middle secondary, 30% in higher secondary, 20% in private higher secondary, and 17% in the Royal University of Bhutan. In TVET, the proportion of female teachers is only 12% and in NFE it is 48%.

16.5.3 Analysis of Gender Disparities in Bhutan and Remaining Challenges

While large gender differentials are not immediately apparent in Bhutan, some gender disparities are clearly evident in participation in higher secondary, university and vocational education. The proportion of female teachers is also low in higher levels of education and in TVET. The decline in girls’ participation as they go up the educational ladder may be indicative of cultural and social constraints that inhibit full participation of girls and women. While gender discrimination is not easily detectable in Bhutan, deep seated social barriers to women’s mobility and participation in the public domain need to be analyzed to inform the development of appropriate strategies.

16.6 Goal Six: Quality of Education in Bhutan

16.6.1 Developments in the Provision of Quality Education in Bhutan

Bhutan’s goals related to quality education are to reduce the annual dropout rate at the primary level from 10% to 5%, to reduce the repetition rate from 21% to 10%, to universalize coverage of the new curriculum and new activity-based teaching methods, and the full adaptation of the secondary school curricula to the Bhutanese context by 2007. Strategies that have been adopted include: ensuring that adequate facilities are available to schools; continuing to provide textbooks, stationery and hostel facilities for needy students; expanding boarding facilities and creating new hostels; encouraging private schools with secondment of teachers from government schools; developing a quality curriculum which is relevant and in accordance with the needs of the country; encouraging wholesome education and the development of productive citizens; enhancing the quality of teachers through pre-service and in-service training and upgrading of qualifications; introducing incentives to attract teachers to remote areas; and strengthening administrative support through improved monitoring and networking among educators.

16.6.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Bhutan

One of the key elements for ensuring quality education is the availability of qualified and trained teachers. In 2000, there were 3,045 teachers, including those in private schools and government institutes. This number doubled to 6,094 in 2006. Comparing the data of 2000 and 2006, there is a significant difference in the number and qualifications of teachers. There was a phenomenal increase in the number of teachers holding Bachelors degrees, from 452 in 2000 to 1,789 in 2006. The current high percentage of trained teachers (92%) is remarkable considering the overall increase in the number of teachers.

Non-national teachers have played a critical role in supplementing the teacher shortage in the country. In 2000, there were 576 non-national teachers constituting 19% of the total teaching force of 3,026. In 2006, there were 614 non-national teachers but the percentage had come down to 12% of the total of 4,975 teachers. Despite the increase in student enrolment, the increase in number of trained Bhutanese teachers has led to the overall reduction in the percentage of non-national teachers. The number of national teachers rose by 78% from 2,450 in 2000 to 4,361 in 2006. Most of the non-national teachers are teaching in middle and higher secondary schools.
To enhance the skills and competency of teachers, the Government provides in-service training programmes for teachers. Overall, 94% of all teachers have received in-service training. Efforts have been successful to ensure trained teachers are teaching in all locations, especially in difficult geographical areas. In addition, from 2002 to 2006, a total of 404 teachers were sent outside Bhutan on short courses and long-term fellowships. Teachers are also given the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications to higher secondary and degree level. The upgrading started in 1998 with 31 candidates and by 2007 about 1,167 teachers had enhanced their qualifications to Class X or Class XII level. For the degree level, a distance Bachelors in Education and a distance Masters in Education are offered. These are very popular since current civil service rules require a degree for career advancement.

The ideal standard for PTR has been set by the Government as 32:1. While the national average of 30:1 for all types of schools appears to be within the permissible limit, there are some disparities in the distribution of teachers. It is generally the lower level schools, such as the community and primary schools that have a high PTR, both in urban and very remote areas. In 2006, the national average for primary schools was 33:1. During the 2000-2006 period, there were significant improvements in the PTRs with decreases from 47:1 in 2000 to 28:1 in 2006 in community schools and from 44:1 to 33:1 in primary schools in the same period, in general.

For pupil-class ratios in urban areas, community and primary schools have the highest number of students in a section, with an average of 46 and 40 students, respectively. The lower secondary classes are also crowded in the urban areas, with an average of 41 students in a section. At the other end of the scale, the community schools in remote and difficult to reach areas have a very small number of students, ranging between 20 and 12, and it is in these situations where multi-grade teachers have been posted.

The Government has always made an effort to ensure that the curriculum is relevant to work and in line with the national needs and aspirations of the people. Revisions pertaining to three subjects – Dzongkha, English and Mathematics – have been initiated. A curriculum framework for English, from Pre-Primary (PP) to Class XII, has been developed. The curriculum guide for teachers and textbooks for Classes V to XII have also been completed. The new curriculum for Classes V-XII is being implemented, and the text books and curriculum guides for teachers of classes PP to IV are being revised.

The student enrolment for PP to Class X between 2000 and 2006 increased by 28%, whilst the repetition rate halved from 12.7% to 6.3%. In 2005, the drop-out rate for PP was nil and the year-wise primary level drop-out rate did not exceeded 4.5%, thus achieving the national goal of a reduction in the drop-out rate to 5%. The highest concentration of dropouts was in Classes X (7.4%) and VII (7.3%). The goal of reducing the repetition rate from 21% to 10% has been achieved with the highest rate recorded of 9.1% for Class IV in 2005.

16.6.3 Analysis of Disparities in Quality in Bhutan and Remaining Challenges

Bhutan has made remarkable efforts to improve the quality of education across the range of levels and schools, and it has been successful in bringing about many changes in the way schools function. It is recognized that sustaining the gains made and reducing drop-outs, especially among girls, will required strategies that go beyond teacher training and improved curriculum. Sustained community-level advocacy will be required to ensure that girls’education becomes a community norm and that all girls get the opportunities of benefiting from the national commitment of ensuring that every Bhutanese child successfully completes 11 years of basic schooling. Since some assessment responsibilities, especially at the primary and upper primary levels, have been delegated to the schools themselves, some benchmark indicators as well as the possibility of periodic assessment through an external mechanism may be considered. Maintaining quality standards in remotely located schools is of particular importance, as the poor and marginalized are in most cases studying in these schools. Sustaining quality in these schools will ensure that the equity and quality goals of EFA are met.
16.7 Overall Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Overall, Bhutan has documented substantial progress in all the EFA goals. The national MDA report made recommendations for the successful implementation of each of the six goals. Only the concluding observations are included in this section.

Bhutan is currently spending 7% of its GDP on education. With further expansion in the Tenth Plan (2008-2013), substantial resources will be required to improve the current infrastructure and construct new school buildings.

Bhutan has a highly subsidized system of education with tuition fees, textbooks, and in some places meals, given free. However, at the same time there are costs for parents that have been increasing and have prevented poorer families from sending their children to school. This is clearly reflected in the enrolment figures, which show 78% enrolment from the families in the top 20% of the income bracket but only 59% from those in the bottom 20% of the income bracket. The provision of incentives such as free stationery and board to rural students may need to be complemented with a scholarship scheme which may serve as an additional pull factor.

17. India

India is a vast country with a population of more than one billion, extending over an area of more than three million square kilometres. It is multilingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious. India is home to 16% of the world’s population, and over 400 languages are spoken, of which 22 are recognized as constitutional languages. India has followers of all the major religions of the world. Hinduism is followed by more than 80% of the population. Around 13% of the population are Muslim, making it the country with the second largest Muslim community in the world. Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and others make up the remainder of the population.

India is divided into 35 states and Union Territories (UTs). It has a federal form of government with responsibilities divided between the central government and the states. Education is the responsibility of both.

At the time of Independence in 1947, India was an economically impoverished country. Over the decades, the predominantly agricultural economy expanded and there is now a thriving mixed economy. While the majority of people still live in rural areas, there are massive cities supporting very large populations. For the last decade the economy has been growing steadily at a rate of about 8% to 9% per year. The country ranked 128th on the HDI in 2005.

The commitment to Education for All is a goal enshrined in the Indian Constitution which has been pursued through successive education policies and development plans at national and state levels. The Government of India is implementing a number of programmes for universalizing elementary education, achieving total literacy and providing quality education for all. As envisaged in the National Policy on Education 1986, the programmes are being implemented through ‘meaningful partnership between the centre and the states’. The National Development Council, with representation of Chief Ministers of all states, imparts a national character to the entire process of planning and programme formulation. The Union Government bears the responsibility for maintaining the national integrative character of education and improving quality and standards. This is being sought through the flagship programme SSA, a nationwide programme of universal elementary education implemented in a mission mode, along with programmes under the ICDS and the activities of the NLM.
17.1 Goal One: Early Childhood Care and Education in India

17.1.1 Background and Development of ECCE in India

There are several provisions in the Constitution of India, either as a fundamental right or as a directive principle of state policy, that have been used to promote ECCE services in the country. Initially, the Indian Constitution committed to the provision of 'free and compulsory education for children up to fourteen years of age.' In the absence of a lower age limit, early childhood education services were considered as part of the constitutional commitment. However, the subsequent 86th Amendment to the Constitution in 2001 divided the span of 0-14 years into two clear categories to cover their needs under separate articles in the Constitution. Article 21A has been introduced which makes elementary education for 6-14 year old children a fundamental right. ECCE has been included as a constitutional provision but not as a legal right of every child in Article 45 which reads: “The State shall endeavour to provide ECCE for all children until they complete the age of six years.”

Child development and education are considered concurrent subjects, which imply a shared federal and state responsibility for ECCE service delivery. The provision of ECCE services is governed by a plethora of policies and related action plans beginning with the National Policy on Education 1986 which viewed ECCE as “an integral input in the human resource strategy, a feeder and support programme for primary education and a support service for working women.”

17.1.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in India

ECCE provision in India is available through three distinct channels: public, private and non-governmental. Government-sponsored programmes are largely directed towards the disadvantaged communities, particularly those residing in rural areas. There are over 130 programmes under the auspices of various departments and ministries which target the development of children aged 0-6 years.

As a sequel to the adoption of the National Policy for Children, the Government initiated the ICDS which has emerged as a major national strategy for promoting holistic early childhood development in the country. The basic premise of the programme, which is a centrally sponsored and state administered nationwide initiative, is that early childhood education and care are inseparable issues and must be considered as one. The programme has been designed in an integrated way, adopting a holistic approach through one community-based service provider for all children from pre-natal to 6 years and pregnant and nursing mothers.

In view of the need for an effective and expanded scheme for childcare facilities, the Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme has been launched for the children of working mothers. Crèches are allocated to the States/UTs on the basis of the proportion of child population. Uncovered districts and tribal areas are given the highest priority to ensure a balanced regional coverage. The services include both the care aspect and pre-school education.

Under the SSA, provision has been made not only for greater convergence of pre-school education initiatives, especially of ICDS, with that of primary schooling but also for the setting up of pre-school centres in uncovered areas. As a result of actualizing these provisions many States/UTs have not only come up with the pre-primary centres (either separately or as a wing attached with the primary schools) but also have designed various state specific interventions to fit their local situation.

The ECCE services being provided by voluntary organizations and NGOs play a vital role in providing education for all ages in socially and economically deprived areas. These organizations primarily work with communities in difficult circumstances such as tribal people, migrant labourers and rural children in specific contexts. They run crèches and ECCE centres by mobilizing local resources. Some NGOs also run mobile crèches, which move along with the construction labour from one site to another. Although the effectiveness of these programmes has not been systematically evaluated, children who attend them are more likely to move on to primary schools and parents have generally reported positive outcomes.
Throughout India there are fee charging/profit-making initiatives in ECCE. While the public sponsored ICDS and NGO programmes cater to children from disadvantaged communities, private initiatives are targeted towards children of socioeconomically better-off families. These impart pre-school education through nurseries, kindergartens and pre-primary classes in private schools. Though exact figures are not available, it is estimated that about 10 million children receive ECCE from privately owned programmes. In the absence of a regulatory system or even registration at the ECCE stage, the education offered by these programmes is of variable quality.

Under public initiatives, the enrolment, which was 15% of the 3-6 year old children in 1989-90, stood at about 21% in the first half of the 2000-2010 decade (Lok Sabha, Starred Questions, 2004). According to the 2001 Census, the country has approximately 60 million children in the 3-6 years age-group. It is estimated that about 34 million children are covered by pre-school initiatives under ICDS and private initiatives. This leaves about 26 million 3-6 year old children not enrolled in pre-school activities. The gap between the number of pre-school children and available pre-school services seems to be very large.

17.1.3 Analysis of Disparities in ECCE in India and Remaining Challenges

The children not covered and unreached by ECCE programmes are found in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, many of them are located in isolated and remote hamlets, dalit and fishing hamlets, and in temporary settlements of seasonal migrant workers. In urban areas, many of the children live on pavements and in unauthorized settlements and slums. Children living in difficult circumstances, such as children of long-term patients, children with special needs, children of sex workers and women prisoners, riot and disaster-affected children, and refugees and displaced children may also be identified as children not covered and unreached by ECCE programmes.

In order to extend the benefits of ECCE to reach the large number of children presently not covered, the sub-group report on ECCE for the 11th Five-Year Plan (FYP) has recommended to identify and implement contextually suited, locally relevant innovative strategies and approaches. The sub-group also recommended increasing resources to fill this huge gap.

There are around 106 million women in the work force, of which 40%-45% are in the reproductive age group. Day care support services are an essential requirement for the children of working women. The sub-group on ECCE for the 11th FYP recommended that the existing crèche facilities need to be expanded exponentially with shared responsibility by the Government and the employers.

17.2 Goal Two: Universal Basic Education in India

17.2.1 Background and Expansion of Universal Basic Education in India

While the universalization of elementary education has been a national goal since 1950, the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002 made education a fundamental right for children in the age group of 6-14 years by providing that “the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.” The overall goal is to provide free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality to all children. It is significant to note that the National Policy on Education defines universal elementary education in a broad framework changing the emphasis from enrolment to participation, retention and achievement.
Although considerable progress has been made towards achieving the target of EFA, it is recognized that more rigorous and sustained efforts are required to universalize elementary education. A major bottleneck has been the persistence of regional and sectional disparities. The policy goal therefore is to intensify efforts to reach primary education to the deprived sections of the population. The goals of EFA with respect to universal access are twofold: the universal enrolment of all children including girls, disabled children and children belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in primary classes and the provision of upper primary education for them; and the provision of NFE or alternative education for school dropouts, working children and girls who cannot attend formal schools.

The last decade has witnessed a number of new initiatives to improve access to and participation of children in elementary education as well as for improving the quality of education in primary schools. SSA, the Government’s primary education flagship programme, is being implemented by the Government in partnership with the state governments with a long-term perspective on cost sharing and a district level decentralized management framework involving local bodies. It is envisaged that the abhiyan (campaign) will achieve four goals, namely: providing access to all children in the age group 6-14 years through formal primary schools or through other equivalent alternative delivery means; completion of five years of primary education by all children; completion of eight years of elementary education by all children; and provision of elementary education of satisfactory quality for all by 2010.

The programme provides opportunities for NGOs and the private sector to contribute towards the achievement of the goals. The programme aims to lead towards a community-owned initiative for universalizing elementary education. Efforts under the SSA are to be underscored by effective decentralization, sustainable financing, cost effective strategies for universalization, an interesting curriculum, community-owned planning and implementation and a focus on girls, marginalized caste groups and ethnic minorities.

17.2.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in India

The total number of schools at the primary level increased from 641,695 to 710,471 from 1999-2000 to 2003-04. Similarly, for upper primary, the number increased from 198,004 to 262,649 during the same period. The average annual rate of growth since 1997-98 was 2.7% at primary and 6.9% at upper primary level. The faster growth of upper primary schools is due to increased completion rates at lower primary as well as the conscious policy of the Government to achieve the target of one upper primary school/section for every two primary schools, as envisaged in the Programme of Action (1992).

Government and local bodies put together continued to own more than 90% of primary schools. The contribution of private agencies has been small though increasing over the years and was highest in the school year 2004-05 (9.79%). The percentage of primary aided schools has been slowly decreasing over the years while the percentage of unaided schools has been increasing. In 2004-05 at upper primary level, government schools accounted for 33.1% of all schools, while local body schools accounted for 7.9%, private aided schools, 29.4%, and private unaided schools 29.6%.

From 1999-2000 to 2004-05, enrolment in elementary education increased substantially, especially in the upper primary stage. Whereas the annual increase in enrolment in primary was 3.2%, for upper primary it was 3.9%. Both in primary as well as upper primary, proportionately the increase in girls’ enrolment was higher than that of boys. In primary classes, whereas the annual growth rate for boys was 1.7%, for girls it was 5.2%. Similarly for upper primary, the increase in boys’ enrolment was at the rate of 2.2% per year while for girls it was 6.5%. At primary level, GER improved from 95.7% in 2000-01 to 98.2% in 2003-04. For upper primary, during the same period, GER increased from 58.6% to 62.4%.
The drop-out rate decreased from 40.7% in 2000-01 to 29.00% in 2004-05 in primary classes. During the same period, the drop-out rate decreased from 53.7% to 50.8% in upper primary, and 68.6% to 61.9% in secondary. The decrease in drop-out rates at all levels implies an improvement in retention rates.

17.2.3 Analysis of Disparities in Universal Basic Education in India and Remaining Challenges

The GPI and the percentage of girls’ enrolment in primary and upper primary, computed for the period 2000-01 to 2003-04, reveal that there was consistent improvement in the average for both indicators. The GPI increased from 0.80 in 2000-01 to 0.93 in 2003-04.

There was no significant change in the share of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes’ enrolment in the total enrolment at elementary level from 2000-01 to 2003-04. However, the participation of girls increased in both the social groups and the drop-out rate decreased during the period for both scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The scheduled caste drop-out rate at primary level decreased from 45.2% to 34.2% while for scheduled tribes the decline was from 52.3% to 42.3%. However, the drop-out rate for both groups remained significantly higher than the national average.

About 1.62 million children with disabilities were enrolled in elementary classes across the country in 2005-06, of which 1.24 million were in primary and 380,000 in upper primary classes. Children with disabilities made up 0.99% of the primary enrolment and 0.87% of the total enrolment in upper primary. The GPI for children with disabilities was as low as 0.71 in primary and 0.67 in upper primary.

It was reported that the number of out-of-school children came down dramatically to 9.5 million by November 2005 from 24.9 million in March 2003. There are two specific schemes, the EGS and AIE, which support diversified strategies for out-of-school children.

Under the EGS, educational facilities are set up in habitations that do not have a primary school within a distance of one kilometre. Any habitation having 25 out-of-school children in the 6-14 age group (15 in the case of hilly or desert areas and tribal hamlets) is eligible to have an EGS centre. The EGS is a temporary facility until a primary school replaces it within two years. The formal curriculum is taught in EGS centres and all enrolled children are provided free textbooks and a mid-day meal.

Under the AIE, flexible strategies are being implemented for the education of children who cannot be directly enrolled in a school or EGS centre. The strategies include residential and non-residential bridge courses, back to school camps, seasonal hostels, drop-in centres and other alternative schools. AIE has been effective in providing education to the older age group (11-14 years), never enrolled or drop-out children, children who migrate seasonally with their families, street children and other deprived urban children, working children and other vulnerable children in difficult circumstances. In 2005-06, over three million children benefited from the AIE facilities of SSA. For 2006-07, the total number of children targeted for coverage under AIE reached 5.6 million.

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme was originally launched as a centrally sponsored programme in 1995 to support the universalization of primary education and to improve the nutritional status of children at the primary stage. In light of directives of the Supreme Court and policy pronouncements contained in the National Common Minimum Programme of the Government, the programme was revised in 2004 to ensure provision of a cooked mid-day meal for children studying at primary level in government, local body and government-aided schools as well as for children studying in EGS and AIE centres. To achieve this, an important component of assistance to states towards cooking costs was introduced. The scheme reached out to 120 million children enrolled in nearly a million schools/EGS centres. Evaluation studies conducted by independent agencies in 2005 reported that the programme is functioning and has helped in the daily attendance and enrolment of children, particularly girls. Improvement in retention, learning ability and achievement were also reported.
17.3 Goal Three: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning in India

17.3.1 Background and Development of Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in India

According to the National Census conducted in 2001, there were 225 million adolescents, comprising nearly one-fifth (22%) of the total population of India. Of the total adolescent population, almost 47% are female and 53% are male. Nearly one out of three adolescents aged 15-19 years is working, 21% as main workers and 12% as marginal workers. Economic compulsion forces the youth to participate in the work force resulting in high drop-out rates from education. Early marriage is common. The mean age at marriage for males is 22.6 years but for females it is only 18 years. Female mortality rates are higher compared to males of the 15-24 years age group. The pervasiveness of discrimination, lower nutritional status, early marriage and complications during pregnancy and childbirth among adolescents contribute to female mortality.

There are a number of policies formulated by the central government which have a bearing on adolescents' education. However, none of the policies refer to holistic development of adolescents and the role of education in this context. In the National Policy on Education (1986/92), the statements on upper primary and secondary education have obvious reference to adolescents. More specific reference is made in the context of NFE, population education and education for women's equality. The National Youth Policy (2001) recommends the introduction of sports and physical education as compulsory subjects in the school curriculum. The National Sports Policy (2003) covers the age range of 13-35. It refers to gender, justice and the empowerment of youth (including adolescents) through education. It also focuses on education's role in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. The National Charter for Children (2003) calls for the provision of education and skills for children and adolescents with special attention to the education of girls to improve their health and nutrition status. The National Population Policy (2000) refers to the special learning needs of adolescents and to population education.

17.3.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in India

The literacy levels of youth are fairly high especially in urban areas. About 90% of the 15-19 age group in urban areas are literate. In rural areas, the literacy rate of this group is 75%. Overall, adolescents from rural areas and girls are disadvantaged in education. The male-female differences increase with each level of education.

The Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) is an autonomous organization under the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports. It is the largest grassroots level organization in the Asia-Pacific region, catering to the development needs of more than 8 million non-student rural youth in the age group of 15-35 years, enrolled through about 253,000 village-based youth clubs across 500 districts of the country. The fields in which NYKS carries out its operations for the development of rural youth mainly relate to education, training, employment promotion, income generation, self-employment, enterprise creation and financial assistance. NYKS also undertakes various awareness programmes for the overall development of the rural community.

A number of activities were undertaken in 2006-07. A total of 3,060 skill upgradation programmes were organized with the participation of 79,922 youth (19,951 male; 59,971 female), 182 trainings in self-employment projects were organized involving 5,893 youth (3,469 male; 2,424 female) and 208 self-help groups development training programmes were organized with the participation of 10,275 youth (4,576 male; 5,699 female).
The NIOS provides opportunities for continuing education to interested learners through its 2,200 accredited academic and vocational institutions across the country. Initiated as a project in 1979 by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), open schooling has now taken shape as an independent system of education in India. The NIOS, with approximately 1.4 million learners on roll, has emerged as the largest open schooling organization in the world. The NIOS offers courses of studies through an open and distance learning mode. Courses of study include: an open basic education programme for children (up to 14 years), adolescents and adults at levels that are equivalent to Classes 3, 5 and 8 of the formal school system; a secondary education course; a senior secondary education course; vocational educational courses; and life enrichment programmes.

A section of adolescents and youth have become involved in drugs and alcohol. It is reported that 24% of the drug users are in the age group of 12-18 years. Incidences of alcoholism, drug addiction and crime amongst adolescents have seen a sharp rise in the last few years. Of those involved, boys outnumber girls and most of them are illiterate or have studied up to primary stage (41% primary, 20% illiterate), and a large number are school drop-outs. According to the National Aids Control Organization (NACO), 31.8% of AIDS cases in India between 1986 to 2006 were found to be in the 15-29 age group.

A number of projects focusing on HIV/AIDS and drug prevention are being undertaken. NACO has a number of nationwide targets, including: to achieve an awareness level of not less than 90% among youth; to train at least 600 NGOs in the country on conducting target intervention programmes among high risk groups; and to cover all the country targeting students in Class 9 and Classes 11 through school education programmes.

17.3.3 Analysis of Disparities in Life Skills in India and Remaining Challenges

Two organizations, NYKS and NIOS, with country-wide networks, have been primarily catering to the educational needs of adolescents and youth, particularly those outside the formal system of education. While NYKS has its focus on occupational skill development as part of rural development, NIOS is offering both general and vocational courses to the target group mainly in urban and semi-urban centres.

At this point, it is not known what proportion of the youth who have benefited from these and other programmes. This is an area that requires both assessment of efforts to date and the formulation of comprehensive strategies to meet the needs of adolescents and youth.

17.4 Goal Four: Literacy in India

17.4.1 Background and Development of Literacy Acquisition in India

The goal of the NLM is to attain full literacy (that is, a sustainable threshold level of 80% by 2012). NLM envisages that a focus on imparting of functional literacy to nonliterates in the age group 15-35 would help achieve this goal. NLM seeks to bring nonliterates to a level of self-reliance in the three R’s, reading, writing and arithmetic. It also provides for skills development to improve their economic status and well-being. It promotes values of national integration, conservation of the environment, women’s equality and observance of small family norms. And finally, it facilitates their participation in the development process. Functional literacy, encompassing all of the above, is the overall goal of NLM. A special programme has been launched targeting districts with low female literacy rates. It is also proposed to provide access to life skills programmes for neo-literates.

Eradication of illiteracy has been one of the major national concerns since Independence. The beginning of India’s widely acknowledged literacy movement, which encompassed adult literacy and continuing education in the 1990s can be traced to the National Policy on Education adopted
in 1986 and its Programme of Action (POA) revised in 1992, which accorded qualified priority for literacy. The NPE urged that “the whole nation must pledge itself to eradication of illiteracy, particularly in the 15-35 age group.” The POA proposed for the eradication of illiteracy to be treated with a sense of urgency and made a “mission”. The NLM was set up in 1988 to impart functional literacy to 80 million adult illiterates by 1995, which was subsequently revised to cover 100 million. After trying out different models, the NLM adopted a modified mass campaign approach known as the TLC as the dominant strategy for adult literacy.

The 2001 Census revealed that there were 304 million illiterates in the country, of which 44 million were in the 7-14 age group and the remaining in the 15+ age group. The target for literacy has been re-set to 85% under the 11th FYP. This would require a 15 percentage point increase, which, if achieved, would represent the highest increase in any decade. To achieve this target, focused attention will be given to the target age group of 15-35. The target for the basic literacy programme for the 15-35 age group is 50 million. Besides basic literacy, 120 million neo-literates are targeted for participation in LEAP. The overall target population for adult education in the Eleventh FYP is 170 million.

17.4.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in India

The efforts made by the TLC and post-literacy programmes to eradicate illiteracy yielded commendable results, as reflected in the 2001 Census, with an increase in literacy by 12.6 percentage points from 52.2% in 1991 to 64.8% in 2001, with male literacy at 75.3% and female literacy at 53.7% in 2001. The increase in the literacy rate was the highest for any decade. The urban-rural literacy differential, while remaining significant, decreased during the period. All states registered an increase in literacy rates and male literacy rates are above 60% in all States and UTs except Bihar (59.7%). The literacy rates for women rose at a much higher rate than male literacy rates. The increase in literacy rates for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes was even greater. The social impact of literacy efforts translated into better health awareness, greater empowerment and greater participation in panchayat elections.

The Tenth FYP recognized that without giving a specific thrust to improve female literacy rates, particularly in States with very low rates in general and large disparities between male and female rates, it would be impossible to bring about a dramatic improvement in the female literacy rate in the country and eliminate the gender disparity. For this reason, a number of innovative programmes were undertaken to provide literacy for women in disadvantaged areas.

A special project was launched to raise the female literacy rate of eight districts of Uttar Pradesh by covering 2.5 million illiterate women in the 15-35 age group. A female literacy programme in Bihar was implemented in 13 districts with low female literacy rates to cover 2.4 million women learners in the 15-35 age group. Nine districts in Orissa were covered under the Special Project for Accelerated Female Literacy which targeted 1.04 million non-literate women in the 15-35 age group. A special female literacy programme was implemented in five districts with low female literacy rates of Jharkhand. Around 500,000 women illiterates in the 15-35 age group were covered under the programme.

17.4.3 Analysis of Disparities in Literacy in India and Remaining Challenges

The national literacy rate for males in 2001 was more than 20 percentage points higher than the female rate. Urban rates for both male and female are considerably higher than national female literacy rates. Less than half of rural females are literate. The extent of the disparities can be illustrated by comparing the urban male rate of 79.9% with the rural female rate of 46.1%, a difference of 33.8 percentage points. A comparison of the female literacy rates of some of the most deprived areas with the urban male rates would reveal an even more stark disparity. Although the gap between the educationally advanced and disadvantaged states has been narrowing over the years, inter-
state and intra-state disparities still continue. Gender and geographical disparities in literacy persist and bridging these disparities is envisaged to be the prime focus of NLM in the Eleventh FYP. In addition to focusing on female literacy, the NLM will also concentrate on a number of special focus areas and groups.

The literacy map of the country shows a wide variation. The west coast, southern peninsula and north-eastern states like Mizoram are areas of high literacy. The main problem of illiteracy is in low literacy districts of the northern belt of the country, especially in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh which have almost 50% of India's non-literate. Various approaches have to be adopted depending on the socio-economic context. Literacy programmes have to be integrated with other development programmes being implemented in that area. In the case of migrant communities, a separate strategy of keeping the volunteer with the community may be adopted.

The literacy rate among tribal groups is 47.1%, which is the lowest compared to any other section of the population. During the implementation of the TLCs in some of the districts, concerted efforts were made to improve literacy among tribals. Around 13% of learners in TLCs have been from scheduled tribe communities.

India's Muslim population is the second largest in the world, next only to Indonesia. The literacy rate for Muslims is lower than the national average in almost all big states where the Muslim population is large, including Bihar (42%), Jammu and Kashmir (47.3%), Uttar Pradesh (47.8%), Assam (48.4%), Haryana (40%), Uttaranchal (51.1%), Jharkhand (55.6%), Rajasthan (56.6%) and West Bengal (57.5%).

Female literacy rates among Muslims are lower than the female literacy rates of all other religious communities in 21 States/UTs of India. Female literacy rates of Muslims are particularly low in the states of Haryana (21.5%), Bihar (31.5%), Nagaland (33.3%), Jammu and Kashmir (34.9%), Meghalaya (35.2%), Assam (40.2%), Uttaranchal (40.3%), Manipur (41.6%), Jharkhand (42.7%) and Punjab (43.4%). It was proposed to give these states special focus in the Eleventh FYP.

Although the TLCs took the form of a mass movement and were extended throughout the country, in many cases, the campaigns languished due to a number of reasons including natural calamities, lack of political will and frequent transfers of the District Collectors. Despite the completion of the campaign, large numbers of illiterates remained unreached. The Projects for Residual Illicitary (PRIs) was launched in these areas after the conclusion of TLCs to cover the remaining illiterates. PRIs have so far been taken up in 29 districts of Rajasthan, eight districts of Andhra Pradesh, four districts of Bihar, three districts of Jharkhand, nine districts of Madhya Pradesh, 14 districts of Karnataka, 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh and four districts of West Bengal.

17.5 Goal Five: Gender Equality in Education in India

17.5.1 Background and Development of Gender Parity and Equality in India

The persistent low educational participation of girls had, until recently, adversely impacted on women's empowerment in India. Such educational disadvantage of a defined segment of population has not only denied them individual growth and development, it has slowed down the pace of national development and resulted in skewed attainment of development indicators.

This is despite early recognition of the value and need for female education. In fact, much before international commitment to girls' education was expressed as a follow-up of the EFA goals, the policy environment in India had recognized the necessity of educating girls if universal elementary education were to be achieved. This was evident from the pro-girls/women constitutional stance that empowered the State to make special provisions for women and children notwithstanding the fundamental obligation of non-discrimination on the basis of sex. This provision has enabled
the State to draw up special policies and programmes to benefit girls and women to overcome their backwardness and address gender differences.

The National Policy on Education 1986 articulated the intent to “lay special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far.” It was a turning point in Indian education as it brought the issue of women’s equality to centre stage in all discourses on education and development. The policy asserted: “Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women... This will be an act of faith and social engineering... The removal of women’s illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to, and retention in elementary education will receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services setting time targets and effective monitoring...” It was acknowledged that achieving universal elementary education would be impossible without concerted efforts to reach the girl child. Since the mid-1980s, all basic education programmes have been designed to incorporate these policy perspectives and recommendations.

The national commitment to girls’ education gained momentum through several initiatives in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The first generation basic education programmes all emphasized the focus on girls’ education. This intent was taken to scale through the DPEP which made the female literacy rate a selection criterion for project districts and set goals of reducing gender disparities in enrolment, retention and learning. The clearly stated emphasis on girls’ education has drawn the attention of planners, implementers and programme managers alike. Continuing in the same vein, the SSA reiterates the need to focus on girls’ education to equalize educational opportunities and eliminate gender disparities.

17.5.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in India

The share of girls in total enrolment at the primary level increased from 49.8 million (43.7%) in 2000-01 to 59.9 million (46.7%) in 2003-04. In 2000-01, 17.5 million girls (comprising 40.9%) were enrolled at the upper primary level. This number rose to 21.5 million (representing 44% of the total enrolment) in 2003-04. In absolute terms, there was an increase of 10.1 million girls at the primary stage while at the upper primary level, the increase was relatively modest. The GPI for most indicators for the elementary stage showed a steady improvement. From 0.80 in 2000-01, the GPI for primary enrolment rose to 0.93 in 2003-04, indicating a progressive reduction in gender disparity.

Although gender parity for gross or net enrolments at the primary level has not been achieved, the GPIs for primary education showed improvements in all areas. However, for other indicators, such as adult literacy and youth literacy, the GPIs showed improvement but remain significantly below the target range of 0.97 to 1.03.

17.5.3 Analysis of Gender Disparities and Remaining Challenges

The primary GER of both scheduled caste girls and their scheduled tribe counterparts crossed the 100% mark in 2004-05, signifying a high level of participation. However, the girls’ ratios were very low at the upper primary stage. The drop-out rate of both scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls showed a declining trend at the primary stage, but the rate remained disturbingly high at the upper primary level. Among girls at the primary stage in general, the drop-out rate declined steadily from 41.9% in 2000-01 to 21.54% in 2005-06. The analysis makes it clear that gender disparity still persists and a relatively high proportion of girls do not complete the eight-year cycle, reflecting the weakness of the system to retain them.

A number of national and state-level initiatives targeting girls and women have been the hallmark of educational interventions for improving the educational status of girls and women. The
programmes are important particularly the poorest and the most vulnerable girls and women in the country.

Under a centrally sponsored scheme, a programme of NFE was operated from 1979-80 to 2001 for out-of-school children in the 6-14 years age group. Recognizing that large numbers of girls and working children had been left out of the ambit of education, the NFE scheme provided the flexibility, relevance of curriculum and diversity of learning activities to reach them through a decentralized management system. The scheme was implemented in 25 States/UTs in educationally disadvantaged states as well as in states with urban slums, hilly areas, deserts and/or tribal areas, with a particular emphasis on working children. Of the 241,000 NFE centres, there were 118,000 NFE centres exclusively for girls.

Based on suggestions made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Planning Commission and others, the NFE scheme was revised and renamed the “Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education” programme. The scheme provides for extending access to small and un-served habitations, flexible strategies for out-of-school children, bridge courses, back-to-school camps and residential camps for out-of-school girls. A new feature is making community management of centres mandatory.

The National Programme for Education of Girls for Elementary Level (NPEGEL), launched in September 2003, is an integral but distinct component of the SSA. It provides additional provisions for enhancing the education of underprivileged and disadvantaged girls at the elementary level through community mobilization, the development of model schools in clusters, gender sensitization of teachers, the development of gender sensitive learning materials, early child care and education facilities and the provision of need-based incentives.

The KGBV, launched in July 2004, is designed to encourage greater participation of girls in education at the upper primary level. The scheme has sanctioned 2,180 residential upper primary level schools for girls belonging predominantly to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other disadvantaged castes and minority communities with high gender gaps and low female literacy. Three-quarters of the seats are reserved for girls from marginalized or minority communities and the remaining are available to girls below the poverty line. A total of 270 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) have been set up in blocks with a predominantly Muslim population and 583 in scheduled tribes’ blocks. Up to December 2006, approximately 63,921 girls had been enrolled in 1,039 KGBV schools, of which 27.3% are from scheduled castes and 30.8% are from scheduled tribes. The scheme is part of the SSA with effect from 1 April 2007.

17.6 Goal Six: Quality of Education in India

17.6.1 Background and Development in the Provision of Quality Education in India

Several policy and programme initiatives have been taken up in recent years with a focus on the issue of quality improvement in school education. Apart from substantially enhancing allocations for the physical and academic infrastructure necessary for effective schooling, a systematic exercise has been carried out to determine basic norms for provision of physical, human and academic facilities in each school. These norms act as the guiding principles for creating additional schooling facilities for primary education.

Alongside the provision of improved facilities, policy makers have also focused their attention on the learning levels attained by children who attend schools. A national committee of experts set up by the Government in the early 1990s evolved a framework of “Minimum Levels of Learning” to be attained by every student in primary education.

The critical role of teachers in ensuring quality education has also come into sharper focus. The massive expansion of the system has influenced the quality of teachers and the support system available for guiding them in their work. One of the major policy interventions in the last decade
was to make institutional arrangements at district and sub-district levels for the in-service education of primary teachers. The emphasis is on decentralizing the training arrangements and providing guidance and support to teachers on a continuous basis.

The elementary school system in India has grown in size to an enrolment of around 200 million. The sheer magnitude poses a major challenge not only for efficient management but also for mobilizing resources needed to maintain even a reasonable level of quality. Persisting with efforts to move ahead on all fronts is seen as the most important factor. Keeping this in view, a number of programmes and schemes have been initiated by the central as well as state governments. The quality improvement component has been given high priority in all the EFA projects and is the main thrust of the SSA.

To improve the quality of education, the Government has pursued a five-fold strategy consisting of: improving the provision of infrastructure and human resources; providing improved curriculum and teaching learning materials; improving the quality of the teaching-learning process; giving attention to teacher capability building; and increasing the focus on specification and measurement of learner achievement levels.

17.6.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in India

From the 1999-00 to 2005-06 period, the number of primary schools increased from 641,695 to 772,568 and upper primary schools increased from 198,004 to 288,493. The number of teachers also increased. The Government policy is to provide at least two teachers for every primary school initially and ultimately to provide one teacher for every class or sector in primary schools. In upper primary schools, the teachers are provided on the basis of subject teaching and teaching workload. A substantial increase in the number of teachers has been registered since 1999-2000. At the primary stage, there were 1.92 million teachers in 1999-00, which increased to 2.18 million in 2005-06. At the upper primary level, the number increased from 1.3 million to 1.67 million over the same period.

Despite the increase in the number of teachers, the PTR at the primary level increased from 43:1 in 1999-00 to 46:1 in 2005-06. At the upper primary level, there was a slight decrease during the same period from 38:1 to 35:1. The average pupil-class ratio at the primary level improved from 48 per class in 2002-03 to 41 per class in 2005-06, and at the upper primary level it decreased during the same period from 36 to 33 per class.

Almost all the teachers at the upper primary stage have the required qualification. At the primary level, 4% of male teachers and 4.75% of female teachers lack the minimum qualification (secondary passed). A sizeable proportion of primary school teachers in Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Assam and Tripura are not academically qualified. The proportion of teachers having pre-service training increased from 66% in 2003-04 to 73% in 2005-06 at primary level. The proportion of trained upper primary teachers during the same period increased from 69% to 76%.

A new National Curriculum Framework (2005) has been developed through an extensive consultation process. The new framework exposes teachers to important issues such as the aims of education, how children construct knowledge, how children’s learning can be best facilitated through suitable activities and the role of teachers in school and society. Subject-specific learning improvement programmes based on innovative pedagogical practices, many under the leadership of teachers, are in place across the country. For their part, schools are becoming more child-friendly and teachers are increasingly aware of the efficacy of child-centred, activity-based pedagogy.

The SSA has made a provision for 20 days of annual training for each teacher and all states have utilized this provision. Overall, across the states 2,347,017 teachers out of a total of 3,053,285 (77%) have received training. This large coverage is certainly an achievement. The training modules are in all cases developed at the state level. The training content reflects a wide range but is largely
focused on subject-specific training and pedagogical aspects. A few innovative themes include life skills development, road safety and reading promotion activities.

17.6.3 Analysis of Disparities in Quality in India and Remaining Challenges

Despite all the efforts, there are still inter-state and intra-state disparities in terms of quality inputs and outputs across the system. Compared to the national average of 40:1, in India 9 out of 35 States and UTs have PTRs above 40:1 in primary schools. The highest PTRs in primary schools are observed in Bihar (62:1), Uttar Pradesh (60:1), Jharkhand (48:1) and West Bengal (48:1). The high PTRs are also indirectly reflected when the pupil-class ratio is analyzed. Compared to the national average of 41, the primary pupil-class ratio is extremely high in Bihar (91) and Jharkhand (69).

As a part of the design of the SSA, achievement surveys are conducted for Classes 3, 5 and 7/8 at three yearly intervals to yield the baseline, mid-term and terminal profiles. To date, the final results of the Class 5 baseline survey (of 2002) and the provisional findings for Class 3 and Class 7/8 from surveys of 2004 are available. The sample survey on learning achievement at the end of Class 5 reveals that the mean achievement of students in language, mathematics and environmental studies (EVS) at the national level is 58.6%, 46.5% and 50.3%, respectively. The Class 3 survey has found the mean learning achievement in mathematics and language to be 58.3% and 63.1%, respectively. Mean achievement levels for Class 7 in mathematics, language, science and social science are 30%, 53%, 36% and 33%, respectively. Class 8 students have scored on average 38% in mathematics, 52% in language, 41% in science, and 45% in social science.

The surveys reveal wide variations across and within states in terms of achievement. For Class 5, which marks the end of the primary cycle, of the 30 participating States and UTs, the mean achievement averages were below the national average in 17 States in mathematics, in 15 States in language and in 17 States in environmental science. For Class 8, which marks the end of the elementary cycle, of the 17 participating States, achievement averages were below the national average in 10 States in mathematics, in 11 States in language, in 10 States in science and in 11 States in social science.

In 2005, a set of 14 monitoring formats and three analytical sheets were finalized for use nationally. Teams were trained in the field of monitoring quality dimensions, issues in quality and the kind of information to be collected and the analysis required. Follow-up workshops at state and district level were also organized.

A total of 18 states have sent the information on the state level formats for 2006 for one quarter each. Implementation of this monitoring exercise has helped the states to identify the issues which they need to focus on in order to improve quality in elementary education. A number of states could relate poor learner achievement in select subjects with problems in classroom transactions. This is helping the states to plan in a focused manner and to improve their training programmes. This exercise has empowered the states to focus on quality dimensions as per their specific needs and requirements.

17.7 Overall Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Raising public expenditure on education to a level of 6% of GDP has been a national commitment of India for nearly 40 years. At present, public spending on education is about 3.7% of GDP. The resource generating capacity of the Government has received a boost as a result of high growth rates in the Tenth FYP, and the resulting exuberance should offer the right opportunity to meet this long pending commitment of increasing expenditure on education.

The objectives of the National Education Policy have been addressed during the 10th FYP mainly through the SSA, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, teacher education schemes, and programmes under the NLM. As a result, most of the indicators have shown a positive trend. There has been a reduction
in the number of out-of-school children, a decrease in gender and social disparities and a decline in drop-out rates. The number of teachers and the number of schools have increased substantially.

The urgent challenges are bringing the 6%-7% children of the ‘hard-to-reach’ category into the fold of education, addressing issues pertaining to improving quality, bridging social gaps and reducing inter-state, inter-district and inter-block disparities. To make the goal of universalization of elementary education meaningful, inclusive education, which is suitable for all children, including those with special needs, is a significant component under SSA. These are the challenges which need to be addressed in the Eleventh FYP. Special emphasis needs to be put towards the education of girls to achieve gender parity and equality, with a focus on inclusion and quality.

18. Maldives

The Republic of Maldives is a small island nation. Of its 1,190 islands, 196 islands are populated, 88 are resort islands and 34 have been developed as industrial islands. The sea forms over 99% of the Maldives and only 0.33% is land. The islands of the Maldives are small, and can be traversed by foot in 10 minutes. Currently, 72 islands hold a population of less than 500, 39% of the islands have a population of 500 to 1,000 and only 2% have a population over 5,000. The highly scattered nature of the population poses many challenges for the provision of basic services with a particular impact on the quality of education provision.

According to the March 2006 Census, the population of the Maldives is about 300,000. Nearly one third of the population live in the capital Malé. Currently, just over one third of the population is of school age. By 2015, it is projected that this will go down to a quarter. The Maldives has been an independent state for most of its history. The Portuguese occupied the Maldives for 15 years in the sixteenth century. The Maldives became a British protectorate in 1887 and remained so until independence on 26 July 1965. The Maldives was converted to Islam in 1153 A.D. Dhivehi, the language of the Maldives, is of Indic origin, and the people are of different ethnicities. The script for Dhivehi is known as Thaana, which is written from right to left like the Arabic letters. English is treated as a second language and as the medium of instruction in the schools.

During the past two decades, development of the tourism and fisheries sectors, favourable external conditions, large inflows of external aid, and generally prudent economic management contributed to a steady rise in GDP of 7% per annum. Two decades of strong growth has led to some of the best economic, social and health indicators in South Asia. The average per capita income is $2,600.

Ranked 100th on the HDI in 2005, the Maldives will graduate from the LDC status to the middle-income group in 2008. The Maldives has the second highest rank (behind Sri Lanka) in South Asia on the Gender-related Development Index (GDI).

18.1 Goal One: Early Childhood Care and Education in the Maldives

18.1.1 Background and Development of ECCE in the Maldives

Pre-primary education is an integral part of the Government’s overall education policy and strategy. The EFA goal of expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and development (ECCD) was included in the Fifth and Sixth National Development Plans, the Education Sector Master Plan (1995 – 2005), and has a clear focus in the Seventh National Development Plan which includes a specific goal to maintain the net enrolment in ECCD at over 85%.

Maldivians attach great importance to starting the education of their children at an early age. Even prior to the introduction of modern pre-schools, the traditional edhuruge (a home-based education system provided by respected community members) discharged the function of developing basic
literacy, numeracy, religious knowledge and awareness in children. Today, modern pre-schools co-exist with the edhuruge in most island communities, and together they provide the first organized learning opportunities for over 89% of pre-school aged children.

The ECCD Programme began as a UNICEF-funded project in 1989 at the Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC). At its conception, the main focus was to train atoll-based ECCE teachers and produce appropriate materials. It is now under the Early Childhood Care and Development Unit (ECDU). The responsibilities of the ECDU are to strengthen pre-school education in the Maldives, to advocate and promote ECCD best practices and key messages, to develop appropriate learning materials, to build the capacity of pre-school teachers and managers and to promote community based ECCD activities.

The overall strategy is to strengthen and expand ECCD, enhance enrolment and encourage and sustain community initiatives and participation. The MOE provides assistance for community initiatives and also promotes alternative non-formal ECCD programmes. Raising public awareness of how to nurture and care for the physical, developmental and learning needs of infants and toddlers is integral to the efforts to expand ECCD programmes. In 2001-03, a national campaign on ECCD was launched to raise parental awareness and understanding of ECCD needs and ways of stimulating the healthy development of infants and toddlers. Seed funding for community organizations and private parties to initiate ECCD programmes is part of the plan to identify and target assistance to communities that are least served by ECCD programmes. Curricular guidelines and resources have been developed and provided free to pre-schools and childcare centres.

18.1.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in the Maldives

There has been a steady increase in enrolment in pre-primary education. In 1997, only 45% of the atoll population had access to a nursery school, but by 2005 the proportion had increased to 79%. In 2006, there were 176 pre-schools. Special emphasis has been given to start pre-schools on islands where there are none. Through community initiatives nine pre-schools were established in 2005-06. The EFA goal of expansion of ECCD has been almost fully realized as all but 12 of the inhabited islands have a modern pre-school.

Community and privately run pre-schools cater to the majority of children enrolled at the pre-primary level. In 2005, there were 13,505 children (6,611 girls and 6,894 boys) enrolled at the pre-primary level. Of these, 23% of the pre-schoolers were enrolled in Malé. The role of the community and the private sector is critical in ensuring provision of quality ECCD. The PTR was a healthy 26:1.

As of March 2006, only 282 of the 614 pre-primary school teachers (46%) were trained. Of the 332 untrained teachers, 249 (75%) were located in the atolls and 83 in Malé. Media for and about children under 5 is a major focus in the Maldives. Materials have been developed exclusively for advocacy and awareness raising. Materials include books, leaflets and posters for children and caregivers.

18.1.3 Analysis of Disparities in ECCE in the Maldives and Remaining Challenges

Taking the learning and experience from model-ECCD centres to scale is a major challenge in terms of the physical and human resources required. Many of the pre-schools on the islands run by communities do not have the required facilities and trained staff to cater to the needs of pre-school aged children. Teacher training will have to be a priority area if the quality issues in ECCD are to be addressed, especially on the isolated atolls. Some basic protocols for running a pre-primary centre, whether it be the traditional edhuruges run by the local communities or privately managed schools, need to be developed to ensure some degree of uniform quality across the board. This would be one way of ensuring that disadvantaged children also get the benefit of quality pre-primary education.
The strategic focus on strengthening pre-primary education needs to be matched with assessing the impact of the intensive advocacy done at the community level on community attitudes and practice. It is recognized that pre-primary education is but one part of wider ECCD programmes and that there is still the need for change at the parental, family and community levels. Such assessments are necessary to inform future community level work.

18.2 Goal Two: Universal Primary/Basic Education in the Maldives

18.2.1 Background and Expansion of Universal Basic Education in the Maldives

With the goal of ensuring that all children, irrespective of gender, ability and location, have access to basic education, the Maldives by 1998, had already achieved universal primary enrolment. The Maldives has moved ahead of other countries in the region by extending the concept of basic education beyond the elementary level to 10 years of schooling, thereby making a national commitment to ensuring that every child would have this opportunity. This has created challenges of teacher availability and competence, of provision of quality education and above all of learning achievements, all of which are the key challenges being addressed in the Maldives currently.

18.2.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in the Maldives

In the past two decades, there has been considerable progress in creating access to educational opportunities at all levels. Since 2000, all children in the Maldives have had access to the first seven years of formal schooling, a major achievement for a country whose students are scattered over 196 inhabited islands. By 2004, there were 225 schools with primary classes, 117 schools with lower secondary classes, and 15 schools with higher secondary classes. As part of strengthening and improving educational quality, 135 community schools were converted into government schools in 2005. By 2007, secondary schools were available in atoll capitals and on the islands with larger populations. Only 29 islands do not have access to secondary schooling.

As illustrated in Table 8, the primary GER rose from 116.2% in 2000 to 123% in 2005. In 2005, the GER was 119.8% for girls and 126% for boys with a GPI of 0.95. Table 9 shows that primary NER increased from 98% in 2000 to 100% in 2005, and the GPI increased from 0.98 to 1.0.

Table 8: Gross Enrolment Ratio, by Level (%), 1997–2005, Maldives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>127.5</td>
<td>125.5</td>
<td>129.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Net Enrolment Rate by Level (%), 1997-2005, Maldives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: "..." indicates no data available.

The GER for lower secondary increased from 79.4% in 2000 to 118% in 2005, and the NER increased from 36.6% to 64.6% during the same period. In 2005, the GPI was 1.14 for GER and 1.20 for NER. However, despite increases at the lower secondary level in the last five years, the GER and NER are drastically lower for higher secondary. The GER for higher secondary increased from 4.5% in 2000 to 11.5% in 2005, and during the same period the NER rose from only 1.3% to 7.2%. In 2005, the GPI in higher secondary for GER was 0.93 and 1.16 for NER.

There was an overall improvement of 27 percentage points in the transition rates from primary to secondary between 1999-2000 and 2004-05 with a 31-point improvement in girls’ transition rates compared to a 23-point increase for boys. The transition rate for girls in 2005 was 86% compared to 80% for boys with a GPI of 1.08. The lower transition rates for boys is part of a general trend of boys dropping out in search of livelihoods at a much earlier age or as a result of apathy stemming from poor performance as well as an uncertainty as to the relevance of formal education. This is a trend that needs to be further analyzed and the root causes addressed.

18.2.3 Analysis of Disparities in Universal Basic Education in the Maldives and Remaining Challenges

The Maldives is committed to inclusive education to encompass all children, and as part of this commitment the inclusion of children with special needs has been brought to the fore through the formulation of a national policy on disability, currently at draft stage. A road map has been formulated to achieve the national policy to increase and expand opportunities for special education. There is a system established to coordinate among the authorities to monitor the implementation of activities outlined in the road map for children with disabilities. At each step of implementation, the quality of service is to be measured through feedback from those involved and adjustments made accordingly. From 2001 to 2005, of the 310 children with disabilities who were enrolled for special classes, only six children were enrolled in the atolls. Quite clearly, children in the atolls have almost no access to any kind of special classes and this is an area that needs attention in the future.

Overall, the major challenge in the Maldives’ basic education sector is ensuring access and enhancing transition to the higher secondary level. The concern is how to create such access on islands that are sparsely populated making the establishment of higher secondary schools unfeasible. Several alternatives are under consideration such as the provision of residential schooling facilities in the atoll capitals and the provision of incentives to encourage parents to send their children to such residential facilities. This is a slow process as parents and communities have to be convinced that indeed this is a viable and desirable alternative.
18.3 Goal Three: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning in the Maldives

18.3.1 Background and Development of Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in the Maldives

There is a strong commitment to the goal of ensuring that young people's learning needs are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. Increasing access to 10 years of formal schooling is seen as a strategic step in meeting the learning needs of young people. It is recognized that 10 years of schooling is necessary to develop the technological literacy and know-how and personal attributes to thrive in an age of knowledge and technology.

A major goal is to provide the necessary infrastructure to raise the NER in secondary schooling (Grades 8-10) from 36% to 80% by 2010. A critical strategy to achieve the goal is to provide a ‘diversified’ secondary curriculum that is student-centred, culturally relevant and that provides diverse learning opportunities. Such a curriculum should include vocational and technical training and employment-based training. An integral and important element is providing meaningful life skills education. There is also a plan to encourage the private sector to offer college level (diploma and certificate level) training programmes to meet the learning needs of young people.

18.3.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in the Maldives

There is a strong possibility that the Maldives will meet its target of 80% NER in secondary education by 2010 as enrolment in lower secondary has been steadily rising from about one-third of the age group in 2000 to nearly two-thirds in 2005 (64.6%). There has also been a significant improvement in NERs for girls. Compared to the NER in lower secondary of 70.7% for girls in 2005, the NER for boys at 58.8% is considerably lower. The proposed enriching of the curriculum through vocational skills may help to increase NERs in general and for boys in particular. While at the higher secondary level, NERs are significantly lower, it is recognized that better NERs and completion rates at the lower secondary level should have a positive impact on higher secondary level participation and completion rates.

Life skills have been introduced in schools and for young people working in different sectors. The Integrated Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Life Skills Project, which has been implemented in the Maldives for the past three years, targets adolescents in Malé and some other areas. The life skills programme aims to empower young people to make informed and healthy decisions, in the face of often confusing and conflicting information and lifestyles, and to encourage the development of the necessary skills and attitudes to cope with various aspects of one's life in the family, the school and the community in general.

Workshops for training peer educators have been held to motivate young people to undertake educational activities with their peers. Since 2003, orientation sessions were held for 566 teachers, 150 school heads and 80 senior officials of the MOE, and life skills training was imparted to 1,270 primary students, 624 secondary students, and 656 students from atoll schools. A total of 120 programmes with 15-minute segments on life skills have been telecast by Television Maldives.

The CCE offers courses including an advanced certificate in ECCD, foundation and certificate courses in the English language, distance education in the English language, certificate courses in secretarial and textbook production skills, and condensed technical and vocational courses in electrical wiring, computer hardware and dressmaking and design. Starting in 2000, the CCE started an initiative called Second Chance with the objective to conduct and coordinate classes in Malé and in the atolls, to provide counselling for students, to develop teaching-learning materials and to provide career development opportunities for students. Around 1,500 students have benefited from the various courses offered.
18.3.3 Analysis of Disparities in Life Skills in the Maldives and Remaining Challenges

With the school timetable already overloaded with academic subjects and two external examinations, the commitment to life skills education is still quite minimal at the school managerial level as well as at the policy level. As life skills sessions are held outside the normal timetable hours of the students, the facilitators find it difficult to complete the intended number of hours of life skills education. Incorporating life skills as an integral part of teacher training (both pre-service and in-service training) remains a challenge. This is a critical element as the teacher plays a key role in not only being an academic but also a social mentor for students.

18.4 Goal Four: Literacy in the Maldives

18.4.1 Background and Development of Literacy Acquisition in the Maldives

In 1990, the Maldives already had an adult literacy rate of 96% and a youth (age 15-24) literacy rate of 98.2% with GPIs of 1.0 for both. These favourable rates were maintained in 2000, with adult and youth literacy rates of 96.3% and 98.2%, respectively. The overall literacy rate (2006) for the country is 93.8%. Accordingly, the Maldives does not have a specific target for adult literacy but rather has adopted the goal of ensuring equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Literacy in the Maldives is defined in terms of the national language Dhivehi using the Thaana script. Considering the small size of the population and the fact that scarcely anyone outside the Maldives speaks Dhivehi, it is remarkable that the language has flourished. The uniqueness of the national language means that Maldivians also need to learn foreign languages in order to communicate with the outside world, to obtain higher education and to support the tourism industry. Generally the most useful language is English.

Progress in English language knowledge, especially among young adults, has moved at a rapid pace. In 1997, English was spoken only by around half of the young adults of the islands’ population (outside Malé), but by 2004, it was spoken by more than three-quarters of them. The increase has been slower among older people, with rates going up from 10% to 20%. Progress has also been made in Malé. In 1997, almost all young adults spoke English but only 55% of older adults did, but by 2004 the proportion had risen to around 70% of the older adults.

18.4.2 Analysis of Disparities in Literacy in the Maldives and Remaining Challenges

Even though high literacy rates for both men and women have been achieved, the country faces the problem of a possible relapse of neo-literates into illiteracy. Currently there are no mechanisms in place to assess the status of literacy skills or information and knowledge levels. This would need to be done to inform any post-literacy and continuing education programmes. A tracking and database system needs to be developed to monitor out-of-school youth, the status of neo-literates’ skills and the extent to which vocational skills have been useful in ensuring livelihood.

18.5 Goal Five: Gender Equality in Education in the Maldives

18.5.1 Background and Development of Gender Parity and Equality in the Maldives

In the Maldives, gender disparities are not as evident as in most other parts of South Asia. Existing laws and policies do not discriminate against women in the areas of access to health services, education and employment, but socio-cultural factors do restrict girls’ and women’s enjoyment of these rights. While there is no doubt that gross gender disparities are not characteristic of the Maldives, issues of women’s empowerment and the qualitative realization of gender equality remain as much a concern for the Maldives as for other countries in the region.
Successive development plans have reaffirmed gender mainstreaming as a priority and have incorporated gender as a cross-cutting issue. Since the Sixth National Development Plan, a separate section on gender as a cross-cutting policy issue has been incorporated. The National Policy on Gender came into effect in April 2006. The Seventh National Development Plan 2006-2010 has incorporated all aspects of the policy including targets to eliminate gender disparity in tertiary education and to increase female participation in the labour force from 52% to 60%.

18.5.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in the Maldives

The Maldives has already achieved gender parity for most indicators for which information is available, although the GPI values are showing a trend of possible growing disadvantage against boys. GPIs of 1.0 or above were recorded for NERs of primary, lower secondary and higher secondary education, for adult and youth literacy rates and for transition rates from primary to secondary. An enabling environment is in place through the national commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming supported by strong policy commitments and institutional mechanisms to achieve the national goals.

In 2005, the proportion of female teachers at the pre-primary level was 95%, while at the primary level it was 66%. However, the proportion of female teachers at the lower secondary level was only 36% and at higher secondary it was 27%. This is indicative of the smaller number of women gaining the qualifications required to join the teaching profession at the higher levels.

18.5.3 Analysis of Gender Disparities in the Maldives and Remaining Challenges

Despite the great progress made in terms of gender parity, there are indications that work is still needed to attain full gender equality. While the GPI for higher secondary NER is 1.16, the GPI for the GER is 0.93, indicating that in terms of overall numbers, girls are under-represented at the higher secondary level but more higher secondary-school aged girls than boys are enrolled at the higher secondary level. It is also reported that the number of girls going abroad for tertiary education is lower than the number of boys. Cultural expectations regarding young women living away from home impact upon the numbers of female students studying abroad and hence female attainment of tertiary qualifications. From 2001 to 2005, 39% of undergraduate scholarships abroad, 38% of post-graduate scholarships and 22% of doctorate scholarships went to girls.

18.6 Goal Six: Quality of Education in the Maldives

18.6.1 Developments in the Provision of Quality Education in the Maldives

A major cross-cutting goal is ensuring that all children, irrespective of sex, ability and location, have access to good quality basic education. As a follow-up to the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, April 2000), the Maldives prepared a detailed plan of action that detailed the priority areas that need to be addressed if the goal of ensuring quality basic education is to be realized. Key strategies include: developing an effective mechanism to monitor student achievement across the country; conducting a five-year national programme to train teachers; developing a decentralized school supervision mechanism; strengthening in-house supervision of schools; increasing the production of relevant curriculum materials; providing adequate educational facilities in each school; completing a needs assessment of special needs students and providing in-service training for teachers to mainstream the students where possible; giving greater emphasis to schools in the least served areas of the country to ensure that students in all locations are served equally; developing a national educational management information system; and conducting a national campaign to raise awareness of student’s nutritional needs, particularly on the importance of providing a good breakfast for children.
18.6.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in the Maldives

An issue of particular relevance to the Maldives is the dependence on expatriate teachers. The World Bank Third Education and Training Project, which ended in 2007, focussed on training local teachers and improving teacher competencies. There was a 6% increase in the number of national teachers from 3,326 in 1999 to 3,538 in 2005. However, the proportion of national teachers in Malé remained about the same during the project period (58%). The actual number of national secondary school teachers increased significantly from 200 local teachers in 1998 to 607 teachers in 2005, but so did the number of expatriate teachers, which increased from 500 in 1998 to 1,611 in 2005. Hence, the proportion of national teachers dropped from 69% in 1999 to 63% in 2005.

Considerable resources have been applied to the training of teachers. A total of 2,063 national teachers (1,462 females, 601 males) were trained under the project, which included obtaining a teacher qualification rather than just graduating in a subject area. In addition, about 1,335 primary and 1,885 secondary teachers were provided with in-service training. The number of untrained teachers is still high at 1,475 (967 female, 508 male).

By 2005, the proportion of teachers trained at each level of the system was 41% of pre-primary, 64% of primary, 85% of lower secondary and 88% of higher secondary teachers. It is interesting to note that the likelihood of having a trained teacher increases as students progress to higher levels in the system. Compared to 12% of higher secondary teachers, over one-third of primary teachers are untrained.

At the primary level, based on results from the national assessment of 2003, learning achievement levels are mixed. In mathematics, for Grades 4 and 7, results were acceptable, but the results were lower than expected in English. This was the first assessment using competencies, and teachers and students alike were still adjusting to this new policy. No comparable information from an earlier date is available to analyze trends.

Much progress has been made to increase the number of secondary school students taking and passing the national certificate examinations at Grades 10 and 12. The total number of students passing the O-level (Grade 10) and A-level (Grade 12) examinations substantially increased from 1999 to 2005.

To improve the quality of education, 20 Teacher Resource Centres (TRCs) have been established in 20 atolls. The objective is to decentralize professional development, materials production and curriculum development through empowerment, ownership and participation by all. As the TRCs will be locally staffed and will provide necessary in-service training and additional contents upgrading for locally recruited teachers within the atolls, the establishment of child friendly learning environments in island schools should be both feasible and sustainable. It is envisaged that community participation in establishing both the TRCs and child friendly learning environments will ensure a degree of ownership and thus support sustainability.

18.6.3 Analysis of Disparities in Quality in the Maldives and Remaining Challenges

The gap in the quality of education between the capital Malé and the rest of the country is considerable, and inter- and intra-atoll quality gaps have also emerged. Major efforts have been put towards increasing educational opportunities outside Malé at all levels, particularly for secondary students. As a result of facilities expansion in the atolls, more opportunities have become available to sit the O-level and A-level examinations in locations other than Malé. In 1999, O-level examinations were available in Malé (1,197 students) and across 17 atolls (821 students), and A-level examinations were only available in Malé (198 students). By 2005, O-level examinations were available in Malé (2,715 students) and across 21 atolls (4,951 students), and A-level examinations were available in Malé (709) as well as three of the atolls (122 students). While all these gains are impressive, the percentage of students passing the O-level examinations dropped from 25% in 1999 to 20.8% in
2005, while the A-level results dropped from 44.4% to 39.4% over the same period. The exception was the A-level results of girls, which showed an increase of 23 percentage points over the period from 1999 to 2005.

With the low O-level and A-level pass rates, most students are left without a relevant preparatory educational qualification under the current system. This creates a particular disadvantage for poorer students. To rectify this situation, the Maldives is considering offering a national certification examination for those students who do not qualify in the Cambridge O-level and A-level exams.

It is encouraging to see that there is a commitment to improving quality in education. Even with the increase in the student population, the standards have not dropped but rather are improving. The number of top achievers is on the rise. The picture is promising and with the dedication and hard work of all concerned, the quality of Maldivian education should improve considerably in the next five years.

**18.7 Overall Conclusions and Policy Recommendations in the Maldives**

It is recognized that a major challenge is ensuring teacher competency and building capacity in a sustained manner. Planning and universal training coverage of teachers at all levels will be key to ensuring quality education. Supervision and monitoring have been identified as another dimension for ensuring quality. The setting up of the Educational Supervision and Quality Improvement (ESQI) Section as a separate unit is a positive development for strengthening school supervision and learning assessment processes. Coordination between the ESQI section and EDC will need to be strengthened to ensure that the feedback from supervision and assessment feed into teacher training and capacity building.

Given the automatic promotion system, ensuring and assessing learning achievement is a challenge. The O-level and A-level exam results indicate that performance and achievement levels are less than satisfactory. Having a strong continuous assessment system in place is imperative. This implies that teacher competencies in the area of continuous assessment should receive top priority.

Scaling up quality interventions for ECCD will require a systematic training programme that should include developing an understanding and perspective on ECCD coupled with pedagogic inputs for pre-primary education. This should be a priority area as there are a large number of untrained ECCD teachers. ECCD interventions in the atolls need to be strengthened if the larger goals of equity and reaching disadvantaged children are to be fully realized.

Special education practices and strategies for inclusion are in an infancy stage. There is a need to set up a framework to monitor special education initiatives both in Malé as well as in the atolls. A resource support mechanism is necessary to sustain and nurture this initiative in order for it to be embedded within the education system.

Given the demographic profile of the Maldives, the strengthening of life skills initiatives, especially for young adults, needs to be given top priority. An effective life skills programme is needed as the curriculum does not currently include these skills and the teaching methods do not promote their acquisition. Life skills packages should be adjusted for the island environment. More teachers should be trained in life skills to facilitate a positive environment for the students and to produce a positive impact.

With the expansion of the secondary school sector, there is an urgent need to revisit the secondary school curriculum as well as teacher training in order to meet the changing requirements of the Maldives and to include a strong and viable vocational education component for children who may not pursue higher education. Similarly, training of secondary school teachers needs to be recast taking into account the poor performance of students at O-level and A-level exams.
Since the Maldives is working to achieve self-sufficiency in the availability of local teachers, it may be necessary to revisit and recast the pre-service teacher training curriculum to focus specifically on quality issues such as continuous assessment. National supervision and assessment mechanisms, processes and systems also need to be strengthened. The use of new technologies such as ICT needs to be explored in order to meet the needs of dispersed schools, students and teachers.

19. Nepal

Nepal is a mosaic of geographical and social diversity. Geographically it consists of three layers, the mountains, the hills and the terai (plains). The population according to the 2001 Census was about 23 million, with a projection of about 27 million for 2007. Nepal is inhabited by people of diverse social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The 2001 Census identified 101 social groups and recorded 92 languages. The castes and ethnic groups whose mother tongue is different from the national language constitute about 51% of the population.

Around 80% of the people in Nepal are engaged in subsistence agriculture. The per capita income is about $370, and 31% of the people live below the poverty line. Nepal was ranked 142nd on the HDI in 2005. The percentage of spending on education as a percentage of GDP is 3.4%.

Following the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, April 2000), a National Plan of Action (NPA) for EFA was prepared in 2001 and endorsed by the Government of Nepal in 2002. The NPA covers the whole EFA period (2001-15) and is based on Government policies as well as the prevailing situation and needs in Nepal. The EFA Core Document (2004-09) is the basis of the Government’s sector wide programme in education, which is implemented by the Government with its own funds as well as funding from a number of donors.

19.1 Goal One: Early Childhood Care and Education in Nepal

19.1.1 Background and Development of ECCE in Nepal

The EFA goal for Early Childhood Development (ECD) is based on the Dakar Framework for Action. The EFA NPA and the EFA Core Document 2004-2009 programmes in Nepal have made commitments to expand and improve ECD provision throughout the country. Various forms of early care and education programmes that include school-based, community-based and privately run pre-primary and kindergarten schools have been brought under the one title of ECD. The country has set a target to provide ECD services to 80% of children aged 3–5 by 2015. Similarly, it has targeted to have 80% of new entrants to Grade 1 to have had attended some form of organized ECD programme by 2015.

Based on the ECD Strategic Plan (2004), an Early Childhood Development Programme Implementation Guideline was prepared by the Department of Education, MOES in 2005. The Tenth FYP (2002–2007) highlighted ECD as the main initiative to prepare children for enrolment in primary schools and for their holistic development. Expansion of community-based ECD and orientation of primary school teachers, head teachers and parents are the main objectives for ECD.

Two different modalities of support have been adopted for urban and rural areas: a demand driven approach with partial government support for urban and accessible areas, and special support for the establishment and operation of ECD centres in areas of deprived and disadvantaged communities. Approximately 25% of ECD centres will be established in disadvantaged and high poverty pockets of the country and the Government provides the major portion of the cost for these centres. Special attention is to be given to children from high risk groups such as street children, orphans, children with disabilities, child labourers and children from dalit, disadvantaged and Kamaiya families.
19.1.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Nepal

The enrolment of children in ECD/Pre-Primary Centres (PPCs) has increased rapidly over the years. GER increased from 11.7% in 2000 to 41.4% in 2006 (40.9% for girls and 41.9% for boys). The percentage of new entrants to Grade 1 who had attended some form of organized ECD programme increased from 9.6% in 2002 to 18.3% in 2006. Gender parity in GER has been attained (GPI 0.98), and there is no marked difference in terms of overall enrolment of dalit and janajati and other castes.

There are nine districts where the percentage of children in Grade 1 with ECD/PPC experience is more than 35.5%, whereas there are 44 districts, mostly mountain, hill and some terai districts, where less than 16% of the children in Grade 1 have ECD/PPC experience. Moreover, there are 48 districts where the percentage of children with ECD/PPC experience is below the national average (18.3%). Of these, 12 districts have less than 5% of children in Grade 1 with ECD/PPC experience.

19.1.3 Analysis of Disparities in ECCE in Nepal and Remaining Challenges

Despite the growth of ECD/PPCs in recent years, many challenges remain before the target of 51% enrolment can be achieved by 2009. There are regional differences in the growth of GER. The hill, mountain and terai zones have achieved GERs of 38.1%, 36.8% and 36.3%, respectively. The highest GER is in the Kathmandu Valley with 128%. Being economically and socially advantaged, the Kathmandu Valley has the highest concentration of pre-primary education providers in the country. The overwhelming majority of institutional schools with pre-primary classes are concentrated in the urban areas.

The quality of ECD provision, which is generally poor in most of the school-based and community-based centres, is a concern. The issues and challenges of ECD mainly relate to parental awareness and involvement, qualifications and training of ECD facilitators and capacity of the system. There is still a need for the development of norms and standards regarding qualifications of ECD facilitators and for the development of criteria for implementing ECD programmes at the district level.

19.2 Goal Two: Universal Primary/Basic Education in Nepal

19.2.1 Background and Development of Universal Basic Education in Nepal

The goal for UBE is to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minority groups, have access to a complete free and compulsory education of good quality. The term ‘all children’, currently signifies children within 5 to 9 years of age living in the country, irrespective of their sex, caste, ethnicity or any other circumstance (children within 5-13 years from 2009). The NPA 2001-2015 targets achieving NERs of 88%, 90%, 95% and 100% by the end of 2005, 2007, 2012 and finally 2015, respectively. The Tenth National Development Plan (2002-2007) adopted the target of securing 90% NER at primary level by mid 2007.

The Education Act (2001) provides for all children to have free access to quality basic education and acknowledges the national obligation to fulfill this goal. Following the restoration of popular democracy in 2006, Nepal promulgated a new Interim Constitution in the same year. The Interim Constitution has enshrined the right of people to basic and primary education. It also states that school education up to secondary level will be free. It envisages primary education in mother tongue for different linguistic groups. It highlights the importance of access to education for females, orphans, children with disabilities, ethnic or religious minorities and other disadvantaged groups. The system and procedures for the implementation of the constitutional decrees as well as the legal provision and actual programme for compulsory education still need to be developed.
Nepal employs a number of strategies for enduring universal basic and primary education. The first important strategy is to bring schools closer to the habitat – ensuring that a school is within easy walking distance for a child, not more than 30 minutes. The second strategy is to remove economic barriers – schools are made free of fees. No regular fees are to be charged for registration, tuition or school operation, and textbooks are provided free of cost. The third strategy is to provide incentives to needy students, in the form of school uniforms and scholarships. The fourth strategy is to ensure that basic needs are met in the schools, that is drinking water, toilets, safe environments and, in some disadvantaged places, mid-day meals. The fifth strategy is to ensure an inclusive environment, socially, culturally, linguistically, and physically.

To make primary education free and compulsory, the Government has taken a phased approach. The first phase is for expanding access and providing free schooling. The second phase is for making education rights-based, and the third phase is for developing systems and mechanisms to ensure appropriate support for the disadvantaged sections of the population, gradually making education compulsory. Complete free basic and primary education is expected to be achieved by 2015.

For the past several decades, there has been a significant expansion in the numbers of schools, teachers and students. However, there are still a large number of school age children who have not been able to attend school. Children who belong to disadvantaged and deprived communities, girls and special needs children, constitute the major proportion of the excluded population.

The Government has taken a number of important measures to expand access to basic education. The interventions include special consideration for girls and children of disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities to complete the primary school cycle; scholarship programmes for dalit children and for girls; school improvement and expansion programmes in areas of low enrolment, high repetition and high drop-out rates; programmes to improve existing school physical facilities; and school feeding programmes in areas where the nutritional status of children is low. Alternative schooling initiatives for children in difficult circumstances include school outreach programmes for children in remote and difficult areas, flexible schooling for working and disadvantaged children, and out-of-school programmes for un-enrolled children and school dropouts.

19.2.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Nepal

Table 10: Gross and Net Primary Enrolment Ratio (%), by Sex, 2001-2006, Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GER Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>NER Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>124.7</td>
<td>114.7</td>
<td>134.1</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>118.4</td>
<td>109.4</td>
<td>127.1</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>88.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>126.7</td>
<td>117.1</td>
<td>136.0</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>130.7</td>
<td>124.2</td>
<td>137.0</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>145.4</td>
<td>141.8</td>
<td>148.8</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>138.8</td>
<td>138.4</td>
<td>139.2</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 2006, the NER for the primary level was 87.4% and GER was 138.8%, as illustrated in Table 10. The increase in NER has been gradual, about 1 percentage point per year. The NERs for girls and boys are 85.5% and 89.3%, respectively. The high GER shows that there are many over-age and under-age children in primary schools. Regional variations in primary school enrolments exist, with 21 districts with GERs less than the national average of 138.8% and with 13 districts, mainly
in the western mountains and central terai, with GERs of less than 100%. Although the NER and GER for dalit and janajati are not available, studies show that their enrolment levels are less than the national average, with dropout and repetition rates higher compared to other groups. The completion rates for dalits and janajatis are also low. Disparities in gender, caste, and ethnicity increase with increased levels of education and poverty.

Between 1995-96 and 2003-04, access improved almost universally across all types of education facilities. During this period, the proportion of households having access to primary schools within a 30-minute walking distance from home increased from 88.4% to 91.4%. In urban areas, almost all households (98.8%) are within easy reach of primary schooling facilities whereas among rural areas this is the case for only 89.9% of households. Terai households in rural areas have somewhat better access compared to their hill and mountain counterparts. Access to lower secondary and secondary education also increased as indicated by improved transition rates of primary to lower secondary and lower secondary to secondary schools.

In general, school statistics show that retention of children until the last grade of each level of schooling is a major challenge. Measurement in terms of promotion, repetition, dropout, survival, completion and transition rates to upper grades and levels indicate slow progress in improving internal efficiency. Overall, the internal efficiency of the education system is very poor. Factors contributing to this include low literacy levels of parents in rural areas, low levels of government investment in pre-primary and ECD programmes, lack of focus on in-service teacher training, lack of teaching materials for teachers to help poor performing students and lack of programmes to raise awareness among School Management Committees (SMC), Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members and parents about appropriate interventions.

19.2.3 Analysis of Disparities in Universal Basic Education in Nepal and Remaining Challenges

There are nine categories of children in Nepal who have been identified as deprived of educational opportunity – girls, children in remote rural areas, dalits, disadvantaged ethnic groups, children of IDPs, children with disabilities, working children, street children and the extremely poor. At all levels of schooling, the number and percentage of boys is higher than girls. Participation rates for both boys and girls in urban areas are higher than for rural areas, as is the case for the richer quintiles compared to poorer quintiles. Dalits and disadvantaged groups have lower participation rates in all levels of schooling. Children in two or more of these nine categories are not likely to attend school or, if they do, it is very unlikely that they will complete the cycle.

The NER trend in primary education from 2001 to 2006 indicates that the specific age-group population in school has been increasing continuously. In 2001, 81.1% of the total primary age group was enrolled in schools across the country and by 2006 this had increased to 87.4%. Girls’ primary NER increased more rapidly from 75.1% to 85.5%, compared to the boys’ NER which increased from 86.9% to 89.3%, in the same period. Comparing the NER for boys and girls, there is still gender disparity. However, the NER for girls shows an upward trend. The annual average increase from 2001 to 2006 was 2.2 percentage points for girls, 0.5 points for boys and 1.3 points for both sexes.

The Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS II, 2003-04) found that the children most deprived of education are from families within the poorest quintile (45% against the richest 5%) and children living in rural areas (24% against 8% in urban areas). Children in the terai (26%) and mountain (23%) zones are the most disadvantaged. At all levels of schooling, participation rates for boys are higher than those of girls.

The survival rate of children has been used as a proxy indicator of quality. From 2000 to 2005, the overall Survival Rate to Grade 5 increased from 66% to 78%. For girls, the increase was from 68% to 75%. The survival rate of boys during this period increased more and overtook the survival rate of
girls with an increase from 65% in 2000 to 79% in 2005. Despite these gains in improving survival rates, there is still much to do to improve the quality of education.

Despite the magnitude of the current EFA efforts, the trend analysis shows that achieving 100% NER by 2015 will not be possible without more concerted effort. The Government recognizes that special efforts are therefore needed. Rights-based education is one such step which has been taken seriously by the Government. However, there is still the need to develop systems and mechanisms to ensure this policy is implemented. Ensuring fully operational and effective schools in all regions, districts and settlements is still a challenging task. Many schools do not have an adequate number of teachers with the appropriate level of training, many schools lack classrooms and ensuring basic facilities is still a challenge. Effective implementation of policy provisions, such as primary education in mother tongue, is still far from being realized. Similarly, education for children with disabilities is still not available for the majority of such children. Norms and standards for minimum quality of primary schools are yet to be developed.

19.3 Goal Three: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning in Nepal

19.3.1 Background and Development of Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in Nepal

In response to EFA Goal 3 to “ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes,” Nepal’s NPA includes the development of life skills education in a broader context. National development plans (that is, the Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Plans) have put emphasis on skills-based training and learning of life skills. There are however no specific quantifiable targets for life skills and lifelong learning. The main policies related to life skills education are the provisions to make education more relevant to life. Building on the EFA objectives, the Tenth Plan provides for the expansion of literacy programmes to improve the livelihoods of deprived groups, especially girls, dalits and disadvantaged children. The Tenth Plan’s objectives also include the development and expansion of secondary education, production of a mid-level technical workforce through the expansion of vocational and technical education and the production of a high-level skilled workforce through the development of higher education.

The policy framework for life skills education is to develop learning environments sensitive to the needs of girls, disadvantaged and displaced children. The policy focus is on developing necessary skills to earn a livelihood and to help reduce poverty, to develop skills for safe health, sanitation and prevention of health hazards including HIV/AIDS and epidemics, to develop personal skills for better interaction with the environment, to use different means of communication for information and expanding opportunities including learning opportunities, to promote local entrepreneurship, especially through the promotion of indigenous skills and knowledge, and to promote democratic ways and values, team work, conflict resolution, harmony, and partnerships.

The strategies of the Government for the provision of appropriate learning and life skills education include: curricular reform to incorporate important aspects of life skills such as health, sanitation, general knowledge, communication, and skills at primary and secondary levels; mobilizing and enhancing technical education and vocational training for youths; general training and orientation for youths and adults on contextual issues and topics such as HIV/AIDS, micro-credit and savings, health issues and family planning; and making adult literacy programmes functional and relevant in the context of life skills. There are a number of programmes targeting the achievement of this goal.

19.3.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Nepal

The Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) is responsible for managing 15 public technical schools, two Vocational Training Centres for Community Development and one
Training Institute for Technical Instruction. There are also over 160 private technical institutions, which operate in affiliation with the CTEVT. The total enrolment capacity of these institutions is about 12,000. Since it is often difficult for poor and disadvantaged sections of the population to meet the costs of the programmes run by private technical training institutes, CTEVT recognizes the urgent need to develop cost-effective skills development schemes for the wider population. To achieve this objective, CTEVT has begun developing a programme attached to general secondary schools. Using the existing physical and human resources, the programme is managed and operated by the SMCs of the schools and offers mainly technical education programmes, including civil engineering, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and agriculture. As suggested in the Tenth Plan, CTEVT aims to develop one programme in each of the 75 districts. It has so far established 15 and is planning to develop 15 per annum between 2007 and 2011.

The trade school concept is an initiative of the Government and the Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI). Under this scheme, trade schools are supported by both the business community and the Government. Five trade schools have been established as part of a five-year pilot project for unemployed youth, employees who are working in business and industries, and rural and disadvantaged groups.

In response to the commitment of the MOES to incorporate life skills, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) has recently revised the school curriculum. Knowledge, skills and attitude-related competencies were integrated into the primary school level curricula for health education. Grade-wise curricular objectives were revised to include knowledge, skills, and attitude level objectives. The contents related to life skills are incorporated throughout the curriculum providing scope for topics such as personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, nutrition, diseases, first aid and health services. The revised curriculum and textbooks are being piloted in 50 schools of 10 districts.

According to NLSS II 2003-04, 58% of the population aged 10 years and above have heard about HIV/AIDS. About 65% of males reported having heard of HIV/AIDS, compared to 51% of females. The percent of the people who have heard of HIV/AIDS is higher in urban (83%) compared to rural (53%) areas. While TV, radio, newspapers and pamphlets are the main sources of knowledge of HIV/AIDS in urban areas, radio, friends, relatives, and TV are the main sources in rural areas.

19.3.3 Analysis of Disparities in Life Skills in Nepal and Remaining Challenges

The current provision for life skills education is very small compared to the needs. Studies show that a large proportion of youths and adults (about 80%) are not covered by any institutional provision. There is an emerging trend of private sector involvement in the provision of skills development, particularly in profitable areas such as health, education, computers and small trades. However a systematic approach based on data and strategic information is still lacking.

It is difficult to estimate the progress towards the EFA goal of life skills education. The challenges include developing an information system that tracks needs as well as provision and trends, and also developing specific programmes to address policy focuses and strategies. Particularly, there is a need to develop life skills education programmes to meet the learning needs of children from ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups, children with disabilities, as well as children and youth affected by conflict situations. There is still a need to develop a consensus on the scope and coverage of life skills education and their prioritization. There should be coordination among the various stakeholders involved in the development and provision of life skills education. There is also scope for developing and adopting a national framework for life skills education.
19.4 Goal Four: Literacy in Nepal

19.4.1 Background and Development of Literacy Acquisition in Nepal

In Nepal, literacy is defined as the ability to read and write daily life-related short and simple sentences written in the person’s mother tongue or national language, as well as ‘numery’ or the ability to do simple arithmetic calculations. Literacy is seen as a key determinant for long-term human development and a significant factor for the social and economic improvement of individuals and a country. Although the word literacy has been officially replaced by "non-formal education,” literacy as the skill of reading and writing is still used to denote the literacy rate of the country.

Nepal was one of the signatories of the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (March, 1990) which set the target to reduce the adult illiteracy rate to half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on improving female literacy to significantly reduce the disparity between the male and female literacy rate. However, the Jomtien Declaration did not significantly influence Nepal to accelerate progress towards raising the literacy rate in the country within the given timeframe.

A decade later, at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, April 2000) the six EFA goals were reaffirmed, including the fourth objective to achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and to ensure equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. This declaration has positively influenced Nepal to promote literacy and NFE programmes as major vehicles for poverty reduction and social empowerment. Nepal has developed and is implementing a National Plan of Action to raise the adult literacy rate to 75% by the year 2015 (from 48% in 2001), to 95% for the 15-24 age group (from 70%) and to 90% for the age 6+ group (from 54%). To achieve the anticipated outcomes a variety of literacy, post literacy, and income-generating programmes are being designed and implemented.

In order to address the development needs in the field of literacy and NFE, the following pledges have been made in the Tenth Plan: formulating programmes on formal and non-formal technical and vocational education with an emphasis on using technology; implementing programmes on literacy, post literacy, income generation and other NFE programmes to assist particularly disadvantaged communities; making 1,866,000 adults, particularly women, dalits and disadvantaged janajatis (ethnic groups) literate, to achieve the literacy rate targets set in the plan; providing 933,000 new literates with post-literacy education and skills training; providing 200,000 boys and girls of school age with basic primary education and setting up of 205 CLCs to support a continuous learning process; increasing the literacy rate by expanding NFE programmes; implementing effective adult literacy and child education programmes in an integrated manner and in coordination with other development programmes, with the involvement of local bodies and governmental and NGOs; developing the national Non-formal Education Centre (NEC) as an institution for policy making, providing technical services and monitoring and evaluation; and clarifying the role of NGOs and local bodies in the implementation of illiteracy eradication programmes and entrusting them with the responsibility for implementing the programmes.

19.4.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Nepal

From the beginning of the Tenth Plan, NFE has been seen as a main vehicle to reduce poverty and to create social awareness. The Government has commissioned the Non-formal Education Council as well as the NEC to coordinate NFE initiatives and to provide policy direction and programme support. Although still in early stages of development, a number of initiatives have been undertaken in the past few years. From 2000 to 2007, around one million people (nearly 200,000 men and over 800,000 women) have been involved in the national literacy programme. A total of 150 CLCs were established from 2001 to 2006 at the village-level for institutionalized provision of literacy and post-literacy activities. Linkages between formal and NFE are being established. Ways
are being explored to provide open learning for expanding literacy provision as well as for making it applicable to the daily lives of the participants. Awareness programmes for motivating people to eradicate illiteracy have been undertaken. Attempts are being made to forge links with the numerous national and international NGOs with literacy programmes.

Increasing the literacy rate to meet the targets set for 2007, 2012 and 2015 poses a significant challenge for Nepal. It is recognized that the present programmes and strategies may not achieve the goals set in the EFA NPA. At the current pace, it is unlikely that the literacy targets will be met by 2015. More concerted initiatives will be required. There is a growing concern that a comprehensive literacy programme needs to be launched in the country. A perspective plan for NFE/literacy has been prepared with the aim to develop and implement a holistic programme for the advancement of NFE/literacy.

19.4.3 Analysis of Disparities in Literacy and Remaining Challenges

According to the 2001 Census, there is a gender gap of more than 20 percentage points in the overall literacy rate (age 6+), the youth literacy rate (age 15 to 24 years) and the adult literacy rate (age 15 and above). Gender disparity is strikingly apparent in the adult literacy rate where only 35% of females are literate compared to 63% of males (GPI 0.56).

There are also disparities among development regions and ecological zones. Literacy rates are lowest in the mountainous region. The central hills region, which includes the Kathmandu valley, has the highest literacy rates while the mid-western and far-eastern mountains have the lowest rates. In general, the hill areas tend to have literacy rates above the national average (except in the far and mid-west hills), the terai region is generally in the middle, and the mountains are mostly below the national average.

Wide discrepancies in literacy rates are also evident among different caste and ethnic groups. The lowest literacy rates are found among the dalits living in the terai. The big gap in literacy rates among different ethnic groups indicates clearly that the existing programmes have failed to adequately reach the deprived ethnic groups. Accessibility of these groups to literacy programmes either under the Government’s or NGOs’ sponsorship is inadequate. According to the Nepal National MDA Report, available statistics show that the literacy rate of economically and socially privileged groups ranges from 60% to 88%.

The magnitude of the illiterate population is huge with a total of 7,086,712 (male 2,535,195 and female 4,551,517) illiterates. This size is beyond the capacity of the current programmes to achieve the targets. Increasing public awareness and active participation of stakeholders, including potential participants, are considered crucial for the success of NFE programmes. The role of the media or mass communication is considered important for this. It is important to develop partnerships with the numerous national and international NGOs involved in NFE. The strategy has been to undertake such initiatives at the village level with the preparation of village education plans (VEPs). Recently a 10-year national literacy plan was developed and adopted by the Government. A comprehensive national literacy programme is being planned.

Major challenges remain. Resources from the regular budget as well as additional funds for specific initiatives remain too small compared to the needs. Literacy programmes, materials and content are still driven by providers’ perceptions and provision due to a lack of a localized system. The number of CLCs is too limited and their expansion remains a challenge. There is a need to translate the national commitment in terms of policy into concrete actions with adequate budget provision.
19.5 Goal Five: Gender Parity and Equality in Education in Nepal

19.5.1 Background and Development of Gender Parity and Equality in Nepal

In Nepal, the EFA plans for each goal were devised separately with little linkage with the overarching goals of equity and quality. Although equity-related issues are progressively covered in the Government’s sector programme (EFA 2004–09), the “mainstreaming” of equity and inclusion concepts is relatively limited. However, equitable quality education for all is a key principle as well as a major policy of the programme. In order to materialize this principle, several strategies and activities have been devised and are being implemented. Strategies have been undertaken to achieve equity in access through school construction and rehabilitation, alternative/flexible schools, free school education, free textbooks, school feeding, and scholarships. Strategies undertaken to achieve equity in quality include curriculum improvement, teacher training, professional support, improvement of the school environment and reforms in school examinations. Measures to increase the number of female teachers are strategic from both access and quality perspectives. Increasing institutional capacity and enhancing school autonomy are also the major strategies which may have a direct bearing on equity in education.

19.5.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Nepal

The enrolment of girls at both the primary and secondary level improved between 2002 and 2006. During this period, female NER increased for primary from 76.8% to 85.5%, for lower secondary from 35.8% to 47.8%, and for secondary from 23.9% to 32.4%. Despite the progress made, disparities in terms of gender, caste and ethnicity persist.

For example, at the district level, most of the districts from the terai, mid-western and far-western regions are still facing problems, such as the low GPI in primary enrolment of 0.74 in 2006 in several districts of the terai region. Children with disabilities also have limited access to education. The GPI at the primary level for disabled children was only 0.82 in 2006.

Overall, the promotion, repetition and dropout trends of primary education have steadily shown improvement. Girls’ share of promotion has increased. Repetition and drop-out rates for both boys and girls have decreased in primary level. However, dalit children’s chances of survival decrease as the grade level increases. Interestingly, in all the grades, dalit girls are more likely to survive than dalit boys, but in most cases being female is an additional disadvantage in the groups already disadvantaged by other factors.

With an adult literacy rate of only 35% for females compared to 63% for males and a GPI of 0.56, significant gender disparities are a major concern for both overall and disaggregated breakdowns by geographical regions, caste and economic and social groupings. For example, the adult literacy rate of dalits in the country is only 27% with males at 38% against the females at only 16%. Moreover, there is disparity between the literacy rates of hill dalits with 54.9% compared to only 20.2% for the terai dalits in 2006. Wide gender disparities in literacy prevail among both hill and terai dalits, with GPILs of 0.72 and 0.44, respectively, as well as in the far-western and mid-western mountain and hill districts. Considerable gender disparities exist in some terai and hill districts adjoining the eastern and central regions. Western and central districts in general are characterized by a lower gender gap in literacy status.

There are huge gender disparities in the composition of the teaching profession. So-called high caste males dominate the teaching force at all levels. The number of female teachers in public primary schools increased from 23.4% in 2004 to 30.6% in 2006, but women still make up less than one-third of the primary teaching force. The number and percentage of female teachers in the upper grades is even lower.
19.5.3 Analysis of Gender Disparities in Nepal and Remaining Challenges

Gender-based discrimination continues to be perpetuated both within society and in educational systems. Social restrictions on girls’ and women’s mobility, early marriage, patriarchy and the dowry system all contribute to low participation of women and girls in education. Consequently, self-perceived roles combined with social norms and economic structures reduce girls’ chances of being schooled. For dalit girls and women, the situation is exacerbated by untouchability and poverty. Negative teacher attitudes towards girls, including their low expectations of girls, and inappropriate physical and non-physical environments of the schools also discourage girls from attending school.

Marked progress has been made towards achieving gender parity in primary education enrolments. However, there is still a significant imbalance in some districts and among some marginalized groups. There remains a huge gender gap throughout the country in all literacy statistics, especially in disadvantaged districts and among marginalized groups. Capacity development activities to mainstream gender and other forms of social equity are needed to address issues of social inequality and gender imbalance. Furthermore, to address issues of gender and social exclusion in education from a holistic perspective, inter-institutional arrangements and inter-ministerial collaboration are required.

19.6 Goal Six: Quality of Education in Nepal

19.6.1 Developments in the Provision of Quality Education in Nepal

Government policy for improving the quality of education focuses on ensuring gender parity, reaching and bringing disadvantaged children into the mainstream, advocating a rights-based approach to education, increasing public investment in education, updating the curriculum and teacher training, upgrading the physical environment of schools, promoting an inclusive approach in education and decentralizing management of education services. Specific interventions are being undertaken to implement each of these strategies.

The EFA Core Document (2004-09) has set principles and strategies to improve the quality of education. These include raising the competence and qualifications of teachers, improving the learning environment in classrooms, enhancing the quality of curricula and textbooks and ensuring their timely distribution, developing school-based autonomous supervision and monitoring and ensuring decentralized management of schools.

19.6.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Nepal

The EFA NPA has broadly categorized the indicators of quality primary education as enhanced efficiency in the management of education, an improved primary curriculum and assessment system, improved physical facilities and learning environments and increased education expenditure. Initiatives are being implemented to delegate important aspects of school management to local communities. Head-teacher training with certification is in place. Teacher management systems are being improved including the upgrading of teacher qualifications, providing 10 months initial training for teachers and instituting a mandatory teacher licensing system. Strategies are also being implemented to establish requirements for teacher accountability and supervisory services are being brought closer to schools to provide professional support to teachers and to monitor performance based on agreed standards for quality education. This includes the establishment of reporting requirements.

The primary curriculum was revised in 2004, and teachers’ guides and teacher support materials based on the national curriculum were developed. A national curriculum framework was developed by the Curriculum Development Centre and approved by the Council. However, shifting from the existing practices of textbook-based assessment to curriculum-based assessment is yet to
take place. Prime concerns have been the construction and rehabilitation of school facilities and ensuring minimum standards for appropriate learning environments. Over 5,000 new classrooms have been constructed and around 1,500 schools rehabilitated. However, visible improvements in the school environment are yet to be realized.

There are standards set by the Government relating to PTRs (40:1 for the mountain; 45:1 for the hills and 50:1 for the valley/terai) and student-space ratio of 0.75 square metre at primary level and one square metre at the secondary level. Similarly, minimum learning achievement measured by student annual examinations is another way to ensure minimum quality. These indicators, however, do not cover the quality aspects comprehensively, and there have been difficulties in maintaining the standards. The issue relates to individual school conditions. For example, in the rural mountain region the PTRs are as low as 7:1 whereas in the terai urban and semi-urban areas the PTRs are as high as 150 students per teacher in some schools.

Survival Rate to Grade 5 has increased remarkably at the primary level from 66% in 2000 to 78% in 2005. However, the cycle completion rate and the straight cohort analysis are available only at the research level and are not included in the regular reporting and analysis.

The available financial data indicate that demand for quality education has not been sufficiently met by a corresponding increase in educational expenditure. A considerable increase in budgetary provision for education is needed to comprehensively address the issue of quality education.

19.6.3 Analysis of Disparities in Quality in Nepal and Remaining Challenges

Since Dakar, there has been an increasing emphasis on improving the quality of education, and a number of strategies are being implemented for this purpose. However, the data collection, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems are insufficient to adequately identify where problems exist, to monitor progress and to document the effects of initiatives to improve quality across the country and in specific locations. It is clear that the ones who suffer the most from the poor quality of education are the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Girls from these groups are the most adversely affected. It is recognized that an even greater priority must be given to quality and that an increased budgetary provision will be necessary. Improved monitoring and reporting systems are needed to identify the extent of the disparities as well as to document the effects of initiatives to improve quality.

It is important to identify and take measures to address the issues related to school drop-outs, who mostly belong to the poorest quintile, mainly the disadvantaged ethnic minorities and the dalits. This is one of the main reasons for very poor participation of the poorest quintile in secondary, higher secondary and tertiary levels of education. According to the NLSS 2003-04 data, the NERs of the poorest quintiles are 51% for primary, 7% for lower secondary, 2% for secondary, 1% for higher secondary and 0% for tertiary.

Obviously, dropping out relates to poor learning achievement and in most of the cases failure in the annual grade promotion examinations. The problem is also related to the lack of sensitivity and capacity of teachers and schools to address the difficult circumstances of the disadvantaged children in terms of language, inclusion and relevance of education.

Other emerging disparities relate to the differences between private and public education. Private schools reportedly have better conditions and basic provisions which help to ensure regular attendance, and are better at maintaining contact between students and teachers. The difference relates to both better management and the mode of parental investment which is direct payment by the parents to the schools. There is also a gap in terms of per child expenditure. Private schools are, however, serving only those who can pay, mostly the children from relatively wealthy families. This has to be seen from the economic perspective of the poor and the non-poor groups. For example, for the poorest quintile, food costs make up 73% of their total expenditure compared to the richest quintile’s expenditure of 41% on food. The share spent on education of the poorest is 1.3% compared to 4.8% in the case of the richest quintile (NLSS 2003-04).
It is also noted that data relating to the school environment and basic provisions such as safe drinking water, toilets, playgrounds, libraries and books are collected in the school census, but yet to be included as part of regular monitoring and reporting. Similarly, the information regarding inclusiveness, relevance and child friendliness are yet to be considered. Overall, efforts have been made to improve the quality of education but they have mainly focused on the curriculum framework and policies. Ensuring policy implementation remains a challenge. There is also a need to establish national norms for schools and classrooms with a set of comprehensive standards. Setting national norms and ensuring that schools meet such norms are crucial to ensure basic quality in the rural schools, particularly in the areas where the communities belong to disadvantaged groups.

19.7 Goal Seven: Education of Indigenous People and Linguistic Minorities in Nepal

19.7.1 Background and Development of the Education of Indigenous People and Linguistic Minorities in Nepal

“Ensuring the rights of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through mother tongue” is the seventh EFA goal which is unique for Nepal. The Government added this goal in light of the country’s diverse ethnic and linguistic population and in accordance with the strong political commitment to mother tongue education.

Nepal is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country with 101 social groups speaking more than 92 languages as their mother tongue. In 2005, of the 4.5 million students at primary level, 1.6 million (35.6%) were from indigenous groups. It has also been found that most of the school dropouts belong to the non-Nepali speaking communities. Apart from them, a large number of children from these vulnerable groups have no access to school and are debarred from the right to achieving basic education.

Taking cognizance of this situation, Nepal has taken a policy decision to introduce mother tongue as the medium of instruction at the primary level of education. The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2006), which ensures equal status to all mother tongues spoken in Nepal including Nepali, makes a provision for imparting primary education through mother tongue. The Tenth Plan, which is the PRSP for Nepal, identifies human development and social inclusion as the main pillars of the poverty reduction policy. For education, the two major aims for the five-year period are improving access to and quality of primary education and providing education in the mother tongues of the various communities up to primary level.

To achieve the goal, a number of strategies have been adopted: the use of mother tongue as a subject of study and as the medium of instruction; bilingual education, teacher recruitment, training and deployment; and special programmes for endangered languages and cultures. Activities are being implemented in line with these strategies.

19.7.2 Progress Achieved in Selected Core MDA Indicators

A number of studies on bilingual education and mother tongue interventions at primary level have been completed. Mother tongue and bilingual schools have been identified in 25 districts. Textbooks to use for subject teaching have been developed in 14 languages with scripts. The feasibility of transitional bilingual education programmes is being studied. Thirty textbooks for Grade 1 have been translated into various languages and nine supplementary readers in mother tongue have been developed and distributed. A template has been developed which includes guidelines for preparing mother tongue textbooks. Adult literacy courses have also been developed in a number of languages, and there are pilot projects for both adults and children in which mother tongue is being used as the medium of instruction combined with bridging materials to ensure the acquisition of literacy in Nepali as well.
19.7.3 Analysis of Disparities in the Education of Indigenous People and Linguistic Minorities in Nepal and Remaining Challenges

Despite the political commitment, there is no comprehensive policy guidance to provide primary education to all children through their mother tongue. The policy documents are silent about teacher recruitment and teacher deployment to support primary education through mother tongue. There is no clear procedure for the production and distribution of reading materials for mother tongue education. The criteria to identify mother tongue and bilingual schools and the responsible agencies for implementation are not clear. Also, there is no data keeping system on teachers and students on the basis of their mother tongues, to guide the development of reading materials, teacher deployment and teacher training.

There is also no comprehensive programme for mother tongue education. Most of the activities indicated in the EFA NPA and in "The Bilingual Transitional Education Programme for All Non-Nepali Speaking Children" are yet to be carried out. Except for the 25 selected districts, other districts have yet to identify mother tongue and bilingual schools. The task of teacher training has not yet been initiated for mother tongue education. The translation of textbooks in various languages has been initiated but in many cases the translated textbooks do not reflect the social and cultural needs of the students. The budget allocated for the development of bilingual and mother tongue materials, as well as for other activities of the programme, is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the country.

In order to fulfil Nepal’s very laudable seventh EFA goal, an increased budget, further planning and a strong commitment of communities and the education establishment are required. Full implementation can only be accomplished over time, but the recognition of the right of children to receive education in their mother tongue is a vital first step.

19.8 Overall Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The Nepal National MDA Report identified major issues and proposed recommendations to ensure the fulfilment of each goal. General observations and recommendations were also included in the report and are summarized in this section.

Development of basic and primary education has been a major national endeavour, particularly since 1990. The development activities in the earlier period took place as part of the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP). From 1997, it became a core national programme and continued until 2004. These development activities took place with the inspiration and support of the world EFA campaign started in 1990 from Jomtien. One of the strengths of BPEP was that it was a core national reform programme implemented by the Government through the MOES. Many reform activities took place during this period including the creation of the Department of Education to undertake the national programmes. The educational endeavours are supported by donors and development partners with technical assistance and resources.

There has been significant achievement in terms of access to primary education. Government policies, including free primary education, schools in walking distance of home and incentives for children in disadvantaged places and from disadvantaged communities, are important programmes for ensuring better access. Flexible schooling, alternative schooling for children in rural areas and in difficult circumstances and hostels for female students are some of the supplementary measures taken to address needs of children who could not be accommodated by regular formal schooling.

Revision of the national curriculum and preparation of a national framework to ensure flexibility and relevance at the local level, expansion of teacher training, free textbooks at the primary level, classroom construction and piloting of continuous assessment are some of the important interventions undertaken for enhancing the quality of education. Decentralized management of
schools with the voluntary transfer of school management to local communities with resource autonomy has provided an important thrust towards better school management.

Recent policy thrusts are rights-based basic and primary education and upgrading basic education to Grade 8 from the current Grade 5. These are major steps calling for an overall reformulation of education structures and provisions.

There are conceptual commitments and statutory provisions in place for effective implementation of EFA activities. However, there are still many challenges for the operationalization of the provisions and for the effective undertaking of the tasks to achieve the goals. There are crucial policy gaps to fill and mechanisms must be developed to ensure the translation of policies and strategies into actions. Most importantly, the capacity of institutions and people must be developed to operate programmes according to the spirit, principles and concepts behind the policies and strategies.

In line with the aspirations of the people, the interim constitution of Nepal has decreed that basic and primary education will be rights-based and free up to secondary education. In line with the NPA, the Government is undertaking preparatory work to develop a policy and programme for upgrading primary education from Grade 5 to Grade 8. However, the tasks that lie ahead are rather challenging. There will be a need for a thorough assessment of current practices. Crucial for success will be the development of implementation systems and budgeted programmes. Also, there is a need for a national strategy for the eventual implementation of compulsory basic and primary education.

The Government must address the emerging needs and aspirations of the people through increased budgetary allocations. There is a need to increase the budget commitments from the current 3% of GNP to a higher level in line with world trends.

A comprehensive EMIS to support development of practical policies and plans that capture the contextual concerns is another important need. Such an EMIS system should include a database to disaggregate data by ethnicity, language, socio-economic status and other important indicators that have direct implications for the education of the children, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

Improving the quality and relevance of education is important to ensure that parents and children, particularly the disadvantaged, feel that the environment and the activities in schools are friendly and meaningful. Commitment and participation of local stakeholders including the school, community, parents and government personnel are important requirements. The preparation of District Education Plans and Village Education Plans are an important part of this approach. Such activities should be reinvigorated and established as part of the regular programme.

Since the progress towards EFA goals varies significantly by regions, districts, villages, social groups and economic quintiles, there is a need to form forums to take up the issues at the appropriate levels and with the concerned groups to ensure that their needs are addressed. EFA forums should be formed at least at the district and village levels. Such forums should review the EFA status in the district and village and accordingly, identify issues and suggest strategies and policies needed to address the issues. Such forums should also make political bodies aware of the issues and solicit their support to address them. Most importantly, there is a need to form a body at the local level to take the ownership of EFA, and for this, there is an urgent need to activate and reinvigorate the locally elected bodies.

20. Pakistan

Pakistan emerged as an independent state on 14 August 1947. It is a land of diverse cultures and terrain consisting of four provinces, namely Balochistan, North Western Frontier Province (NWFP), Punjab and Sindh, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Other administrative areas are the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Spread across nine major ecological zones, Pakistan has a diverse
array of landscapes. Its territory encompasses portions of the Himalaya, Hindu Kush, and Karakoram mountain ranges and is the home to some of the world's highest mountains. The terrain also includes vast fertile plains as well as deserts.

Pakistan has a population of approximately 159 million with one-third living in urban areas while the majority (63.7%) reside in rural areas, largely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Pakistan is an Islamic Republic and an overwhelming majority of the population (96.3%) is Muslim. Approximately 1.6% of the population is Hindu, 1.6% Christian, and 0.3% Bahais, Sikhs, Buddhists and followers of other religions. Pakistan has a multitude of languages which are as diversified as its people. Urdu is the national language and the medium of instruction in 65% of the nation's schools. Urdu and English are official languages of the Government. Pakistan is a land of historically vibrant and dynamic cultures. The magnificent Ghandara and Indus Valley civilizations flourished in what is now Pakistan.

Overall, Pakistan's macro and micro economic indicators have shown positive upward trends in the past few years after a decade of depression during the 1990s. It was ranked 136th on the HDI in 2005. The number of people living below the poverty line has steadily decreased in recent years, standing currently at 17%. The percentage of spending on education as a percentage of GDP is 2.2%. The Medium Term Development Framework (2005-10) has been aligned with the MDGs in keeping with the country's resolve to scale-up efforts to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

In 2004, the Government of Pakistan initiated a comprehensive Education Sector Reforms Programme (2004-07) in line with the National Education Policy 1998 – 2010 and with a particular focus on EFA. Pakistan's EFA NPA is based on the Dakar Framework with the aim of achieving the six international EFA goals. Compulsory and free education is mandated in the Constitution. As a federal system EFA plans are implemented by the provinces, and in accordance with the Local Government Plan 2000, there is further devolution to the district levels. Pakistan is a member of the UNESCO High Level Group on EFA, is one of the E-9 countries and is a potential EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) country.

20.1 Goal One: Early Childhood Care and Education in Pakistan

20.1.1 Background and Development of ECCE in Pakistan

Early Childhood Education (ECE) has been set as the third highest priority in the NPA. Both the Government and NGOs are committed to promoting ECE. According to the plan, net participation in ECE activities should reach 50% by 2015. Pre-primary (“katchi”) classes were at one time common in formal schools but from the 1980s, the practice was almost discontinued, whereas pre-primary education remained an important part of private education. Recognizing the role and significance of ECE, provision has been made in the National Education Policy (1998-2010) to reintroduce pre-primary officially as a formal class in primary schools, in effect making primary education six years.

20.1.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators in Pakistan

Pakistan has reported remarkable progress in participation in ECE activities. The level of achievement has already far exceeded the targets set for 2015. Compared to a GER in ECE of 36% in 2001-02, by 2005-06 it had reached 91%. During this period, the GER for girls increased from 33% to 85%, while the increase for boys was from 40% to 97%. Considerable increases with resultant higher GERs have been reported for all the provinces. Sindh currently has the lowest GERs with 55% for girls and 62% for boys. The FATA shows the greatest discrepancy between girls and boys with GERs of 78% and 154%, respectively. GER in ECE was slightly higher in rural areas (93%) than in urban areas (88%).
A somewhat less dramatic but significant increase was also reported in the percentage of new entrants in Grade 1 who have attended some form of organized ECE programme, rising from 64% in 2001-02 to 74% in 2005-06. During this period, the increase for girls was from 72% to 78%, while for boys it was from 58% to 72%. With only 28% of new entrants in Grade 1 having ECE experience, Sindh was the province with by far the lowest rates for this indicator. In urban areas, 63% of new entrants have ECE experience compared to 77% in rural areas.

Out of a total enrolment of 7.1 million in 2005-06, 2.7 million (1.2 million girls and 1.5 million boys) were studying in private sector schools. The private sector accounts for about 33% of the education system overall, whereas for ECE, its share is about 39%. The proportion of children enrolled in ECE activities in private schools is remarkably higher in urban areas. In urban areas, private schools account for 73% of the enrolment compared to only 22% in rural areas.

20.1.3 Analysis of Disparities in ECCE in Pakistan and Remaining Challenges

Tremendous growth in ECE activities has been reported. The move towards making it a part of the formal system may have produced this immediate impact. Effective social awareness campaigns are also mentioned. The differences in girls’ and boys’ participation rates are not great, but it should be noted that there has been a greater increase in boys’ participation than girls in the past five years, that in the FATA girls’ enrolment is much lower than boys and in the private sector there is a higher participation of boys than girls. There are considerable differences in the participation rates of the different provinces and administrative areas, but no further breakdown is available to identify sub-groups of the population which may not be participating in ECE activities.

Teacher training has been identified as an issue that needs to be addressed. There is no specific training required of teachers in the Government system. Consequently the percentage of teachers with the requisite training was not reported. The percentage of trained teachers in the private sector was reported to be 47% of which 10% were working in urban and 22% in rural areas.

Age-wise data is not available, making it impossible to report on net participation rates. The very high GERs reported (over 100% for some areas) may be related to many of the children being over- or under-age and may not accurately reflect the actual percentage of the population participating in ECE activities.

The extension of ECE activities into all public schools is a major priority. The training of teachers and the provision of adequate classrooms are urgent challenges. The Government will continue to encourage the involvement of the private sector and NGOs to ensure that ECE is available to all children.

20.2 Goal Two: Universal Primary/Basic Education in Pakistan

20.2.1 Background and Expansion of Universal Basic Education in Pakistan

As the highest priority in the NPA, the goal of universal basic education is that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls and children in difficult circumstances, will have access to compulsory primary education of good quality. Starting from a baseline of 66%, the target is 100% NER for boys by 2010 and for girls by 2015. An intermediate target of 79% NER (68% for girls and 90% for boys) was set for 2006.

The NPA includes a number of strategies for the realization of universal primary education. EFA plans have been prepared and launched at national, provincial and district levels, and EFA fora and EFA units established at each level to improve coordination and expedite implementation of the NPA. The Compulsory Primary Education Act has been enacted in three out of four provinces of the country as well as in Islamabad Capital Territory. Although enforcement of the act is still pending, significant efforts are being made to get all children into school. According to the NPA, primary education facilities will be provided to all children in the relevant age group and disparities in
the availability of school facilities for boys and girls in both rural and urban areas will be reduced. Almost 30,000 new primary schools are to be constructed and facilities in 100,000 existing schools are to be upgraded. Detailed school mapping is to be undertaken to identify unreached localities, and mosque schools will be opened in smaller settlements. The terms and conditions for recruitment of females are being relaxed to recruit more women teachers. A motivational campaign is to be launched to convince parents to send their children to schools. Under the Girls Primary Education Project, 1,700 community model schools have been established throughout the country with improved facilities. A number of projects are being implemented to improve both access, particularly for girls, and the quality of education.

20.2.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

The estimated population of the primary education age group (5-9 years) in 2005-06 was 19.3 million, 13% of the total population. Comparing statistics in 2001-02 with the data for 2005-06, Pakistan recorded a gradual improvement in numbers and percentages for nearly all indicators during the four-year period.

As illustrated in Table 11, increasing from 96% to 116%, the GIR for Grade 1 rose 20 percentage points during the four-year period from 2001-02 to 2005-06. There was a significant increase of 30 points in female GIR compared to 11 points for males with the resultant 111% GIR for girls and 121% for boys. The NIR increased by 16 points from 77% to 93%. The increase for girls was 23 points compared to 9 points for boys, but at 88% the NIR for girls was still considerably lower than the 97% for boys. As shown in Table 12, during this four-year period, the primary GER increased by 13 points from 71% to 84%. The increase was 17 points for girls compared to 9 points for boys, resulting in 76% GER for girls and 92% for boys. The NIR increased by 9 points from 57% to 66%. Whereas the increase for boys was only 6 points, for girls the increase was 12 points. Yet the NIR for boys at 72% is still considerably higher (13 points) higher than the 59% NIR for girls. This means that over 40% of Pakistan’s primary-aged girls are still out of school. In 2001-02, there was a significant difference in NERs of urban areas (65%) and rural areas (53%). However, in four years, the gap had been closed with an NER of 66% in both rural and urban areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GIR in Primary Education</th>
<th>NIR in Primary Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GER in Primary Education</th>
<th>NER in Primary Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the secondary level, the GER increased by 6.1 percentage points from 24.5% to 30.6% from 2000-01 to 2005-06. The percentage point increase for girls and boys was the same, leaving the same gap in enrolment with GER for girls at 26.6% compared to 34.4% for boys. The NER increased by only just over 4 points for girls and boys over this four-year period. In 2005-06, the overall NER in secondary education was only 23.9%, with boys at 26.8% and girls at 20.7%. This means that only a fifth of Pakistan’s girls of the age group and one fourth of the boys are in secondary school. Although not as great as in primary, a gender gap persists which has not been reduced over the four-year period. In secondary education the urban-rural gap persists and is widening. The NER in urban areas increased 8 points in four years from 30% to 38% while in rural areas the NER improved only 3 points from 14% to 17% during the same period.

The overall average repetition rate of primary school children to Grade 5 declined from 2.7% in 2001-02, to 2.1% in 2005-06. The repetition rate for girls declined from 2.4% to 1.9%. The repetition rate to Grade 5 on average in 2005-06 was recorded as 3% in urban areas compared to 1.9% in rural areas. It was reported that from 2001-02 to 2005-06 the survival rate in the public sector increased by nearly 15 percentage points from 57.3% to 72.1%. The survival rate for girls in 2006 at 72.8% was slightly higher than the 71.6% rate recorded for boys.

The share of public expenditure allocated to primary education was only 23.5% in 2001-02. By 2005-06 this had almost doubled to 43.6%.

**20.2.3 Analysis of Disparities in Universal Basic Education in Pakistan and Remaining Challenges**

Pakistan has made significant progress in primary education. The number of out-of-school primary aged children was reduced from 8.8 million to 6.8 million in four years. However, the intermediate primary NER targets for 2006 of 79% overall, 68% for girls and 90% for boys were missed by 13 percentage points, 9 points and 18 points, respectively. With NERs of 66% overall, 59% for girls and 72% for boys, the prospects of reaching the target of 100% primary enrolment for boys by 2010 and for girls by 2015 seem very unlikely unless new strategies are employed and progress is greatly accelerated.

The gap between girls and boys for most of the indicators has been reduced from the 2001-02 school year to 2005-06. However, huge gender gaps still exist. In 2006, the GPI was 0.82 for GER as well as for NER for the primary level. The GPI for secondary education was 0.77 for both GER and NER. With a GPI of 1.05, Survival Rate to Grade 5 was the only indicator with a difference in favour of girls. Four-tenths of primary age girls and four-fifths of secondary age girls are out of school. This all indicates that renewed efforts for promoting girls’ education at every level must be employed in order to close the gender gap and to ensure primary education for all children by 2015.

While generally the indicators are higher for urban areas than for rural areas, for most indicators the gap has been narrowing. The exception is enrolment in secondary education where the gap is widening with 38% NER in urban areas compared with only 17% in rural areas in 2005-06.

There are tremendous variations across the provinces and administrative areas. For instance, the NER for primary is 66% nationally, 84% in ICT and only 40% in Balochistan (32% for girls). The NER for secondary is 24% nationally, 64% in ICT and only 11% in Balochistan and FATA (8% and 3% for girls, respectively). Compared to the national Survival Rate to Grade 5 of 72%, it is 94% in AJK and 39% in FATA (25.5% for girls). Generally the areas with the lowest indicators also have some of the lowest GPIs in the nation.

There was no reporting of rates for indicators below the level of provincial/administrative areas. From the data, it is not possible to compare different linguistic, ethnic and/or socio-economic groups. In order to identify the children who are out of school and to target efforts to enrol and retain them, further analysis will be needed.
20.3 Goal Three: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning in Pakistan

20.3.1 Background and Development of Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in Pakistan

Included in the NPA is the goal of ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. The main focus of the EFA is to meet the learning needs of children, adolescents and adults. Learning needs have been classified into two categories, namely learning content which covers knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, and learning tools which covers literacy, numeracy, problem solving and oral expression. The skills are to be acquired through four pillars of learning, namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and with others, and learning to be. In an effort to provide great specificity on the skills covered within EFA, three typologies have been identified, namely basic skills (literacy and numeracy), psycho-social skills (reflective, personal and interpersonal skills including problem solving, communication, coordination and team work) and practical/functional skills (manual skills relating to specific vocations or for a specific behaviour such as health).

20.3.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

The youth population (15-24 year age group) increased 4 million (13%) from 30 million in 2001-02, to 34 million in 2005-06. The urban youth population is 16.85 million and the rural population is 17.2 million (49% and 51% of the total, respectively). The number of literates of this age group increased from 19.15 million to 22.63 million over the same four-year period. The youth literacy rate increased from 62% to 66.6%. The rate for males increased 4 points from 73% to 77% compared to an increase of only 3 points for females from 52% to 55%. Provincial statistics indicate that the highest increase in the youth literacy rate (9 points) was in the NWFP and the lowest increase (3 points) was in Sindh. Overall, the highest youth literacy rate in 2005-06 was in Sindh (71%) and the lowest in Balochistan (48%). The female rates for every province were lower than the lowest provincial rates for males. By sex, the highest rate was 77% for males in Punjab and the lowest was 26% for females in Balochistan.

The enrolment of the secondary level age group (ages 10-16) was 6.39 million in 2001-02, of which only 75,000 (1.2%) were enrolled in TVET institutions. In 2005-06 the enrolment was 7.68 million and enrolment in TVET increased to 238,000 (3.1%). There was an increase in enrolment in TVET of around 163,000 from 2001-02 to 2005-06.

Concepts and content on health education and skills have been included in the curricula from primary (Grade 1) to secondary (Grade 10). Teachers’ manuals and materials on HIV/AIDS have been developed to create awareness about HIV/AIDS and other contagious and fatal diseases. Health and physical education are optional subjects at secondary level. Health and sanitation, mother care, child care and awareness about various diseases in terms of symptoms, prevention and treatment are included as core concepts in the curricula of functional literacy and post literacy.

The overall transition rate from primary (Grades 1-5) to lower secondary level (Grades 6-8) was 69.2% in 2001-02 (male 68.6% and female 70.2%). In 2005-06, the overall transition rate increased to 76.6% (male 74.5% and female 79.8%). The 9.6 percentage point increase for females was somewhat higher than the 5.9 points for males. The GPI for transition from primary to lower secondary increased from 1.02 to 1.07 in four years, indicating more women than men transition to lower secondary.

The overall transition rate from lower to upper secondary (Grades 9-10) improved 10 percentage points from 76.9% in 2001-02 to 86.9% in 2005-06. The increase in female transition rate of 16.3 points from 70.2% to 86.5% was considerably higher than the 4.9 percentage point increase in male transition rate from 82.3% to 87.2%. The GPI for transition from lower to upper secondary increased from 0.85 to 0.99 in four years.
20.3.3 Analysis of Disparities in Life Skills in Pakistan and Remaining Challenges

This is not an area of high priority in EFA plans or implementation. Life skills have been introduced into the curriculum in both formal and non-formal education, but there is no documentation of the extent of implementation or of the results.

Although the number of adolescents enrolled in TVET has increased, the percentage enrolled in TVET compared to the population is less than 1%. There was no reporting of TVET enrolment for older age groups. The GPI of enrolment in TVET at the secondary level more than doubled from 0.31 to 0.64, but even so the GPI remains very low, indicating a bias against women. Less than 90,000 girls are enrolled in TVET at the secondary level in all of Pakistan compared to nearly 150,000 boys.

Rates of transition from primary to secondary and from lower to upper secondary are improving, and the rates for girls have increased more than for boys. However, the percentage of the age group in secondary schools is still very low, and this is particularly true of girls.

20.4 Goal Four: Literacy in Pakistan

20.4.1 Background and Development of Literacy Acquisition in Pakistan

The NPA assigns a high priority to the goal of achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. The target set in the NPA is 86% literacy for the 10+ age group by 2015. With a baseline of only 43%, this target is very ambitious.

In Pakistan, the adult literacy rate has traditionally been recorded for the 10+ age group based on the population census conducted every 10 years. From census to census, the definition of literacy has changed, making it difficult to compare rates over time. In the 1998 Census, the definition of a literate person was “one who can read a newspaper and write a simple letter in any language”. The proposed definition for the 2008 Census was “one who can read and write a paragraph in any language with understanding and can make simple calculations”.

A Literacy Ordinance was approved by Parliament in 1987 which included provisions for making literacy a prerequisite for participation in economic and social activities. However, a date for enforcement of the act has not yet been set.

The current Education policy (1998-2010) envisages democratization of education through the expansion of elementary education including formal and non-formal methods and expanded adult education, literacy and functional literacy programmes, as a basic requirement for economic development, for modernization of social structures and for providing equality of opportunity for all citizens. It is recognized that Pakistan’s international commitment to double the rate of literacy by the year 2015 cannot be accomplished without achieving universal primary education. This will be achieved by complementing the formal primary school system with a strong non-formal basic education initiative. A massive non-formal basic education programme is included in the plan to provide access economically and expeditiously to all the 5.5 million primary school age children who are at present out of school. Adolescents and youth who have missed primary education are to be given a second chance through a crash condensed course to enable them to complete the primary education cycle within two to three years.

A number of measures are being undertaken by the Government to provide literacy for adults, especially for women. Under the President’s Education Sector Reforms Programme an amount of Rupees 100 Million has been allocated annually since 2001-02 for opening adult literacy centres in the provinces. The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) has been launched in collaboration with UNESCO. LIFE activities include training of literacy managers and teachers, curriculum development, development of literacy materials, establishment of CLCs and needs assessment for
literacy for the next 10 years. A number of other adult literacy projects are being implemented by the Government and by NGOs. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, a national curriculum for literacy has been developed and launched. The curriculum covers the areas of basic literacy (three levels), functional literacy and income-generating skills.

20.4.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

In 2001-2002, Pakistan's adult literacy rate was 43% (male 57% and female 29%). The urban literacy rate was 63% compared to 34% for rural areas. By 2005-06, the literacy rate of the 15+ age group had increased to 52%. The male literacy rate increased 8 percentage points from 57% to 65%, and the female literacy rate increased 9 points from 29% to 38%. The increase in the overall rate in four years totalled 9 points, or just over 2 points per annum. As has been noted under Goal Three, there has also been a modest increase in the youth literacy rate.

Amongst the provinces, the highest increase in adult literacy rates were in Punjab (from 44% to 54%) and Sindh (from 45% to 55%), which recorded a 10-point increase overall in four years, followed by the NWFP having a 9-point increase (from 45% to 54%). Balochistan had the lowest increase of only 5 points from 32% to 37% (only 1.25 points increase per year). Balochistan remains the province with the lowest adult literacy rates in Pakistan for both males and females.

The literacy and NFE sector were not given due attention in previous decades, and this is one of the reasons for the low literacy rates. In 2005-06, the total allocation for literacy and NFE was around Rupees 3,000 million out of a total education sector allocation of Rupees 170,708 million. About 2% of the education sector allocation is for literacy and NFE. It has been calculated that the minimum budget requirement for the literacy and NFE sector per year is around Rupees 5,051 million. To meet this gap in the budget, an additional Rupees 2,000 million is required annually.

20.4.3 Analysis of Disparities in Literacy in Pakistan and Remaining Challenges

The major focus of literacy programmes in Pakistan is on the female population. More that 80% of literacy centres are for women. A number of development programmes and projects have been launched since 2000 for the promotion of girls' primary education and female literacy. These programmes and projects are beginning to show positive results. The GPI for the national adult literacy rate has improved 0.07 from 0.51 in 2000-02 to 0.58 in 2005-06. The improvement in GPI was highest in rural areas (0.36 to 0.44) compared to urban, where there was a 0.04 decline, and amongst the provinces in Punjab and Sindh. However, with a GPI of only 0.58 in national adult literacy rates, there is still much to be done. Overall, only 38% of adult females in Pakistan are literate compared to 65% of adult males. In Balochistan, the province with the lowest adult literacy indicators in Pakistan, only 18% of adult females are literate compared to 54% of adult males, and the GPI at 0.33 is alarmingly low. There are also large variations in the literacy rates of the provinces. Within provinces there are also enormous differences in rates of the districts with several districts having female literacy rates as low as 3% to 6%.

Based on the analysis of the situation, it is clear that major initiatives will be needed to meet the EFA goals for adult literacy, particularly for women. Besides general programmes to provide literacy to the adult population, specific efforts must be targeted to meet the needs of women, provinces with low literacy rates and ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic groups with particularly low rates.

20.5 Gender Parity and Equality in Education in Pakistan

20.5.1 Background and Development of Gender Parity and Equality in Pakistan

A major goal of the NPA is to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and
equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. This is a cross-cutting issue which is integral to all the other goals and targets.

Pakistani women and girls constitute 48% of the population. The Government is committed to reducing and narrowing gender disparities and to empowering women significantly through education. According to Vision 2030, gender equality and gender justice entails equality of opportunity for all citizens, both women and men. Through recent government initiatives, there has been some progress in the empowerment of women through their representation on federal, provincial and local electoral bodies and in other spheres of life. The Women Protection Bill 2006 was an important step in the empowerment process. Pakistan’s Perspective Plan 2001-11 envisages raising female literacy from 29% to 69% by the end of the plan. Emphasis is on the economic, social and political empowerment of women. Gender gaps, particularly in social indicators, are to be removed and a better quality of life for women is to be ensured. To stimulate sustainable development, gender equality and women’s empowerment are to play a major role in the alleviation of poverty, hunger, and disease.

In the education sector, emphasis is placed on female secondary school education. Scholarships and subsidies for girls’ education are provided to low-income households to encourage continuation of education beyond the primary level, and particular emphasis is on the provision for girls residing in geographic regions with high poverty concentrations. Scholarships are given to girls to enhance their professional educational qualifications to become teachers. The content of education is being made more relevant to the practical needs of rural girls through the inclusion of subjects such as agriculture, health and hygiene in the curriculum. The portrayal of women in various developmental contexts is being introduced to minimize stereotypes in textbooks. The revamping of science education is a major initiative targeting rural areas and encouraging female students to follow the science stream with the aid of scholarships.

### 20.5.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

The GPI has been calculated for each indicator to assess where Pakistan stands in terms of gender parity in quantitative terms. The table below gives the GPI for each indicator in 2001-02 compared to 2005-06, along with a calculation of the gains during the four years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>GPI for 2001-02</th>
<th>GPI for 2005-06</th>
<th>Increase in GPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth literacy</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER in ECE</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIR in primary education</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIR in primary education</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER in primary education</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NER in primary education</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER in secondary education</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NER in secondary education</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival Rate to Grade 5</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Rate from primary to lower secondary</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the absolute number and the percentage of adult male and female literates aged 15 and above increased during the four-year period from 2001-02 to 2005-06. Although the GPI among adult literates improved, at 0.58 this is the indicator with the lowest GPI, signifying that for every 100 men who are literate there are only 58 literate women. Although there was an increase in the absolute number and percentage of youth male and female literates, there was no improvement in gender parity. While there is more disparity in rural areas compared to urban areas, in rural areas the GPI showed a gradual increase from 0.49 to 0.60. There are significant regional differences. The NWFP and Balochistan are far below the national average with GPs for youth literacy of only 0.39 and 0.42, respectively.

Starting with a fairly high base, the gender disparity in ECE enrolments narrowed over the four-year period from 2001-02 to 2005-06. There are now 88 girls for every 100 boys in ECE programmes. In urban areas, the GPI is in favour of girls while in rural areas the trend is also encouraging as GPI increased from 0.83 in 2001-02 to 0.88 in 2005-06. Punjab recorded a GPI of 0.98, while the FATA at 0.50 in 2005-06, had the lowest GPI in the country.

A sharp increase was recorded in the GPI for both GIR and NIR in Grade 1 with an increase of 0.17 for both, the highest increase for any indicator. Gender disparity each year has comparatively narrowed more in rural areas than urban areas. It is closer to parity (0.93) in rural areas than in urban (0.88). Although it registered a 0.18 improvement, at 0.51 the FATA is still the area with the lowest GPI.

There was also a notable improvement in gender parity in both GER and NER at the primary level. The GPs for both has gradually increased from 0.72 to 0.82 with improvements in both urban and rural areas. With a GPI of 0.96 in urban areas, gender parity is nearing achievement, while in rural areas with a GPI of 0.76 there is still a considerable gap. This is also true of some of the regions. Although the GPI for GER in the FATA increased from 0.27 in 2001-02 to 0.41 in 2005-06, there is still less than half the number of girls in school as boys.

The GPs for both GER and NER at the secondary level only marginally increased by 0.04 from 0.73 in 2001-02 to 0.77 in 2005-06. In urban areas, gender parity has been achieved with the GPI for both secondary GER and NER having increased from 0.91 to 0.97 during the same period. However, in rural areas the GPI increased only 0.01 to 0.58. Across the country, the GPI varied greatly. For secondary NERs, the highest rates were recorded for the FANA (0.90) and Punjab (0.89) in 2005-06, whereas the FATA had an alarmingly low GPI in secondary NER of only 0.16 in the same year.

The two indicators for which the GPI is in favour of girls are the Survival Rate to Grade 5 (1.02) and the transition rate from primary to lower secondary (1.07). This is the case for survival to Grade 5 in both urban and rural areas. The GPI for transition from primary to secondary in urban areas is in favour of girls while in rural areas the GPs are also encouraging and moving towards parity. The GPs for both survival and transition are fairly high throughout the country, although there are still some significant gender gaps in some areas. In the FATA, the GPs were 0.55 for survival and 0.81 for transition in 2005-06. In Balochistan, the GPI for transition was 0.84 in 2005-06.

Enrolments in primary schools have significantly increased. However, the proportion of girls of the total enrolment only marginally increased from 2001-02 to 2005-06 by 3 percentage points to 43%. Over the same period, there was a gradual increase in the proportion of girls’ primary enrolment in both urban and rural areas. The proportion increased from 46% to 48% in urban areas while in rural areas it improved from 37% to 41%. Although there had been an increase of about one million girls at secondary level since 2001-02, the proportion of girls’ enrolment in secondary increased only slightly by 1 percentage point to 42% during the four-year period. In urban areas, the proportion of girls in 2005-06 was 48% compared to 41% in rural areas. From 2001-02 to 2005-06, the proportion of female enrolment in TVET increased from 23% to 38%. The proportion of girls in TVET was higher in rural areas (43%) than in urban areas (36%). Some of the areas of the country have particularly low proportions of girls enrolled at the various levels of schooling. The lowest proportions of girls
in the country were in the FATA for primary (28%), the FANA for secondary (13%) and the NWFP for TVET (31%).

The number of women teachers in primary education has increased by 8 points since 2001-02. However, their proportion of the teaching force only increased from 44% to 45% from 2001-02 to 2005-06, and there is still a large difference in the proportion in urban (64%) and in rural areas (37%). The number of women teachers in secondary schools increased by 140,000 and their proportion increased from 52% to 58% over the same period. There was a positive trend in the increase of female secondary teachers in both urban and rural areas. The proportion of women teachers in urban secondary schools increased from 65% to 69% while in rural secondary schools it increased from 39% to 46%. The number of women teachers in TVET increased tremendously by 150% and their proportion also increased from 26% in 2001-02 to 32% in 2005-06. The proportion of women teachers in TVET is 32% in urban areas and 33% in rural areas.

20.5.3 Analysis of Gender Disparities in Pakistan and Remaining Challenges

Women and girls in Pakistan face many problems related to poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, discrimination and exclusion from decision-making processes. It is recognized that without developing gender-friendly environments and resolving these issues, women in Pakistan cannot become fully productive members of the society. To realize women's potential in society, initiatives are being taken to reduce gender disparities in all walks of life.

Education is seen as a major vehicle for eliminating gender inequalities within society, but addressing inequalities within the education system itself is also a tremendous challenge. The extent of the problem can be seen in the low adult literacy rate for women of 38% and a GPI for adult literacy of only 0.58. Parity for this indicator can only be achieved through sustained efforts to involve girls and women in education at all levels over a substantial period of time. However, there are encouraging signs. The GPIs for ECE and for gross and net intakes at Grade 1 of primary are comparatively high. This indicates that entry rates at the lowest levels are moving towards parity.

There have been significant gains towards gender parity in enrolments in both ECE and primary, but there needs to be renewed efforts to greatly increase the enrolment of girls in both primary and secondary. The GPIs that are in favour of girls are survival to Grade 5 and transition to secondary schools. This is an indication that, if girls are given the opportunity, they are as likely as boys, and possibly more likely, to continue their education.

Although in general there has been more progress in rural areas than urban during the last four years, the GPIs for most indicators are still higher for urban areas. There are significant regional differences with some of the areas of the country having very low GPIs for most indicators. These are areas where even more concerted efforts must be made to achieve gender parity and eventually equality. There has not been an analysis of gender disparities in sub-groups of the population based on language, ethnicity and/or socio-economic status, but it is likely that the gender gap is greatest amongst the most disadvantaged groups in society.

The main focus of the data is on quantitative measures of progress towards gender parity. There are many other issues related to gender equality which will also need to be addressed if education is to fulfil its role of bringing about a more equal society.

20.6 Goal Six: Quality of Education in Pakistan

20.6.1 Developments in the Provision of Quality Education in Pakistan

Another cross-cutting goal is to improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Quality improvement and school effectiveness are the key elements of the NPA.
The Government intends to ensure quality of education by implementing the Education Sector Reforms. The vision of the Education Sector Reforms is to provide quality education that enables all citizens to reach their maximum potential, to produce responsible enlightened citizens and to integrate Pakistan into the global framework of human-centred economic development. It is recognized that continuous efforts are required to address quality and efficiency of education in order to achieve the targets and objectives of EFA. The main quality interventions include reforms in curricula (focusing on basic learning needs of children, adolescents, youth and adults), textbook development, teachers’ training and a literacy curriculum. The quality improvement plans are intended to ensure the development of a more relevant learner-centred curriculum, which is supported by, and linked with, the development of higher quality textbooks, teacher training processes and assessment methods. An overriding issue in the education sector was the unavailability of high quality, reliable and standardized data. Through the National Education Census, vast quantities of information are now available covering all categories of educational institutions.

**20.6.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators**

According to the records, all primary school teachers in Pakistan fulfil the required minimum academic qualifications. A recent initiative is underway to upgrade the required qualifications of primary school teachers to graduate level. A number of teacher training and development projects are being implemented by the Government and NGOs.

The PTR in primary education increased from one teacher to 36 students in 2001-02 to 40 students per teacher in 2005-06 due to the impact of increased enrolments. The PTR for primary in rural areas increased by five to 39:1 during the same period, while in urban areas it increased only by two to 43:1. An increase in enrolment is a target of EFA, but the increased PTR highlights the need to induct new teachers at primary level.

Although there was an increase in enrolment in secondary education, the PTR remained constant at 15:1. There was a substantial increase in the number of secondary teachers. In 2005-06, the PTR in rural areas (18:1) was considerably higher than in urban areas (13:1), but throughout the country the PTRs for secondary are generally low. Only one area (FANA) at 25:1 has a PTR above 20:1.

The Government increased its expenditure on education from Rupees 78.9 billion in 2001-02 to Rupees 170.7 billion in 2005-06. The percentage of public expenditure on education of the total expenditure increased from 9.55% to 12.18%. However, a financial gap still exists. The public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP increased from 1.76% to 2.20%. In spite of constraints, it is the intention of the Government to increase it further to 4%. The public expenditure per pupil as a percent of GNP per capita for primary education doubled from 4.04% to 8.77%. The public expenditure as a percent of GNP per capita for secondary education increased from 6.36% to 9.68%. The intended result of these increases is the improvement of the quality of education.

Clean drinking water and adequate sanitation are a priority of the Government. A comprehensive national policy has been formulated to address missing facilities in schools. An integrated policy is being implemented with a focus on having clean drinking water for the entire population and maximization of sanitation coverage. The proportion of schools with drinking water increased from 57% in 2001-02 to 69% in 2005-06. The proportion of schools with adequate sanitation facilities increased from 44% to 63% during the same period. The proportion of urban schools with clean water facilities increased from 73% to 90% while in rural schools the increase was from 55% to 63%. The water and sanitation situation in schools varies across the country. In Balochistan, only 32% of schools have water sources and only 28% have adequate sanitation. The Government has launched a national programme to supply basic water and sanitation facilities to all schools of the country.
20.6.3 Analysis of Disparities in Quality of Education in Pakistan and Remaining Challenges

There has been an improvement in all of the quasi-indicators of quality, as illustrated over the four-year period from 2001-02 to 2005-06. This in itself does not guarantee a higher quality of education, but it is an important start.

The PTR in primary schools is not unduly high. While the national average is 40:1, only three areas have higher PTRs. They are Punjab with 44:1, the NWFP with 42:1 and AJK with 41:1. Further investment and teacher recruitment are needed in these areas to ensure that enrolments can increase without an adverse impact on quality. With a national average of only 15:1, the PTR for secondary is very favourable. The PTRs for secondary schools for all provinces and administrative areas are below 20:1, and in Sindh the PTR is only 11:1. There could be considerable growth in secondary enrolments throughout the country without any area exceeding a PTR of 30:1.

It is recognized that quality improvement will take concerted efforts over a substantial period of time. For this reason, quality improvement has been given a high priority. In addition to general strategies for improving the quality of education intended for the whole country, targeted initiatives will also be required to identify and meet the needs of areas, schools and sub-groups of the population which are not being reached adequately with other quality improvement interventions. There is also a pressing need to introduce a coherent policy on teacher education and development.

20.7 Overall Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The Pakistan National EFA MDA Report has reviewed and analyzed the progress towards EFA by comparing the baseline 2001-02 data with the most recent available data from 2005-06. There has been considerable progress for a number of indicators. The results of the efforts of Pakistan are encouraging and reflect its commitment to attain the targets of EFA. Pakistan has accelerated efforts to achieve universal primary education, gender goals, youth and adult literacy and quality education. The Government has increased its investment in education at every level. However, many challenges remain and efforts must be intensified if the EFA goals are to be met by 2015. The following major priorities have been identified.

The human factor in educational change needs greater policy attention. Leadership should be promoted in the system through carefully designed incentives. Determining merit through testing should be ensured. Teacher education programmes need to be revisited and a professional development centre should be established in each district. National standards of teacher education and a system to accredit teacher education programmes need to be established.

Sustainable improvement in school effectiveness and the quality of education is only possible when apex institutions with sufficient professionals and capacity provide support through research on educational issues of national, provincial and district significance. This is an area that requires strengthening.

Civil society and community participation are essential to achieve success in EFA. The Government fully recognizes the important role of communities in the promotion of education. It would be useful to review the organizational framework of community participation which needs to be more flexible and less prescriptive in nature.

Universal primary education by 2015 can only be assured by consolidating and accelerating efforts for increasing enrolments, improving NERs and GERs, reaching the unreached and disadvantaged groups, enhancing survival and transition rates and minimising drop-out and repetition rates. Efforts for universal primary education must be intensified.
Literacy and poverty eradication are high priority areas in Pakistan and hence they are an integral part of education policy and plans as well as other national strategies such as the PRSP. An integrated approach has been adopted to address all dimensions of the issues. An effective monitoring system has to be in place to ensure efficiency and achievements.

Although there are multiple challenges, Pakistan has made considerable progress in reducing gender disparities for a number of indicators. However, there is still a need to address gender issues in institutions, enrolments, teacher recruitment, GIRs, GERs, NERs and drop-out rates. A renewed commitment to gender goals is required. The information gathering and analysis system requires further strengthening. The formulation of policies should be informed by reliable data from the field. Spending on education in Pakistan has been substantially increased but it still remains low as a percentage of national income. The Government plans to increase spending on education to 4% of GDP. A recommitment to more spending on education as well as to spending more efficiently need to be assured. Governance needs to be improved at provincial, district and sub-district levels. The capacity of departments of education for planning and management require strengthening.

Pakistan introduced the Education Sector Reforms and is implementing the NPA for EFA. Despite economic and financial constraints, funds have been provided even beyond the allocations. However, more funding is needed from both internal and external sources. Achieving Education for All is a challenging goal for Pakistan. It will require the commitment and active engagement of all stakeholders to make it a reality.

21. Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an island nation separated from India by a narrow strait. The Bay of Bengal lies to its north and east and the Arabian Sea to its west. The population is around 20 million. About three quarters of the population is rural and 1.7 million people live in the Greater Colombo area. Ethnically, the majority of the population is Singhalese, about one-fifth of the population is Tamil and the remaining population mostly Moors with small numbers of other groups. The majority of the people are Buddhist, but there are also substantial numbers of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Sri Lanka gained independence after 150 years of British rule in 1948. The powers of government are substantially devolved to the elected Provincial Councils. The country is divided into nine provinces which are subdivided into 24 districts.

Sri Lanka's economy has enjoyed moderate success despite a brutal 25-year civil conflict which has inflicted massive economic and social costs, and the tsunami in 2004 which devastated two thirds of the coastal belt and caused heavy damage to human lives and property. Despite having one of South Asia's highest per capita GDP rates (US$ 856), at least a quarter of the population remains below the poverty line. Open economic policies have transformed the traditional agro-based economy to one dependant on services and manufacturing. In 1963, the agricultural sector contributed 44% to the GDP, but by 2004 it had come down to 18%, while services contributed 56% and the industrial sector 26%. During the last half of the century, GDP growth has been around 5.5% annually. The per capita income has risen from US$150 in 1960 to US$1,355 in 2006. Sri Lanka was ranked 99th in the HDI in 2005 and has graduated from a low income country to a middle income country.

Sri Lanka has had high participation rates in education for over 60 years, and during the past decade there has been a major emphasis on improving the effectiveness of the system. The General Education Reforms in 1997 introduced changes in the curriculum and advocated transformation of teaching-learning techniques in order to improve the quality of education and its relevance to individual and national needs. The EFA NPA has converted policy into action. Elements of the plan are integrated into the plans of the MOE and other agencies. The EFA Unit of the MOE is responsible for policy direction, co-ordination and monitoring of EFA programmes.
21.1 Goal One: Early Childhood Care and Education in Sri Lanka

21.1.1 Background and Development of ECCE in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is committed to expanding and improving comprehensive ECCE, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Early childhood is defined in the Sri Lankan context as the period of a child’s life from conception to age 5. Sri Lanka has used the term “early childhood care and development” (ECCD) instead of ECCE when designing and planning programmes that support children’s development, learning, health, nutrition and other attributes. The terminology used for ECCE programmes varies, but the educational services are similar in early childhood development centres, pre-schools and Montessori schools. Daycare centres and crèches differ from the other institutions in that children are taken care of for longer hours in the absence of their working parents.

Early childhood education is an important part of the General Educational Reforms of 1997. The Reforms detailed the actions to be taken for ECCD and pre-school education. The crucial activities include: strengthening the Children’s Secretariat and the Non-Formal Education Branch of the MOE; designing awareness programmes; developing training programmes on early childhood development for mothers and care givers; promoting setting up of more pre-schools to provide facilities for greater participation of children between 0-3 years in education; making legislative provisions for the regulations of pre-schools; designing basic curriculum guidelines for pre-schools; and setting up a Department of Early Childhood Education and a Child Study Centre in one of the universities. Activities have been undertaken in all these areas.

The National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development (2004) is being introduced in the provinces by the Children’s Secretariat, which functions under the Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Empowerment (MCDWE). The aims of the national policy are: to assure for every child the best start in life by ensuring access to adequate health and nutrition services along with the opportunities for responsive psychosocial stimulation; to promote the importance of an integrated approach that brings together health, nutrition, psychosocial stimulation, safe water, hygiene and sanitation services; to develop standards and guidelines that regulate the development and implementation of ECCD programmes; to clarify the role and responsibilities of central, divisional and local government authorities in the provision and support of ECCD services; to clarify the relationship between governmental, non-governmental agencies, the private sector, communities and families in the provision of ECCD services; to synchronize and coordinate the services provided by the different stakeholders in ECCD; to mobilize and allocate increasing financial resources for and investment in ECCD programmes; to promote the importance of the roles of parents, caregivers and the community in the development of children; and to enhance the capacity of parents, caregivers and communities to adequately support their children’s development.

21.1.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

There are home-based programmes, health programmes, crèches and pre-schools that serve the needs of children in the early childhood stage in Sri Lanka. All these programmes, except pre-schools, serve children from birth to a relatively young age. However, the unavailability of systematically updated comprehensive databases at a national level makes it difficult to provide a valid statistical picture of ECCD programmes, especially regarding 0-3 year old children.

There are 315 divisional secretariats in the nine provinces in Sri Lanka. However, information on enrolment in pre-schools was available for only 185 divisional secretariats. The available data indicates a GER in ECCD programmes of 80% in 2006. The Western Province reported the highest enrolment rate of 94%. The Sabaragamuwa Province reported the lowest at 57%. The significant roles played by the Government and NGOs as well as INGOs have contributed towards increasing the enrolment levels in pre-schools in Sri Lanka. Sex disaggregated information is not reported for the GER, but from the other data, such as new entrants to Grade 1 with ECCE experience, it would appear that the enrolment of girls and boys is approximately the same.
The percentage of new entrants to primary Grade 1 who have attended some form of organized ECCD programmes has increased steadily from 77% in 2000 to 90% in 2005. The percentage of girls rose from 79% to 90% while the percentage of boys grew from 76% to 89%. In 2005, the GPI was 1.01.

Data for 2005 have been disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, medium of instruction and geographical location. The percentage of Tamil children (80%) with ECCD experience at entry in Grade 1 is less than the Muslim children (85%) and both are lower than the majority Sinhala children (93%). Only 56% of boys and 57% of girls on plantations have ECCD experience upon entry to Grade 1. The percentage of girls and boys is approximately the same for all three groups. When considering the medium of instruction, the percentage of children who have ECCD experience in Tamil medium (81%) is considerably lower than that of Sinhala medium (93%).

The majority of ECCD centres in Sri Lanka are operated by the private sector, including NGOs and religious groups. However, due to lack of data, it is not possible to give the exact percentages in terms of the number of centres or the number of children covered.

Training for ECCD in the Sri Lankan context is defined as “what has been obtained other than on the job.” Improving and expanding training opportunities for care providers has been spelt out in the National Policy on ECCD. The minimum educational and professional qualifications required for care providers are specified in the “Guidelines for Child Development Centres” produced by the Children’s Secretariat in 2006. A number of courses are available for training in ECCE but the duration and quality vary greatly. It is not possible with the available data to give the number of ECCD providers who have had appropriate training. A 2004 survey found that in some provinces it is as high as 79% while in others it is as low as 23%.

21.1.3 Analysis of Disparities in Sri Lanka and Remaining Challenges

The National ECCD Policy (2004) is a timely measure taken by the Government to ensure that Sri Lankan children in early childhood receive the nurture, care and education they need to develop to their full potential. The policy includes a strategy to train all ECCD personnel in identifying children at risk and children with special needs. There are variations in participation rates by region and community. These are areas that need to be studied further in order to enrol all children in quality ECCD programmes.

In Sri Lanka, the majority of children have experienced ECCD prior to admission to primary school although the quality of the programmes have not been evaluated. It is recognized that assessment is needed on how children experience child care including the responsiveness of the caregivers, individualization of care and the use of language in the classroom.

There are differences in participation rates according to ethnic and language groups and in various areas in the country. It was identified by the Children’s Secretariat that a number of children do not attend pre-school because there are no centres in their locality. For most of the available data, there is no appreciable difference in rates by sex.

Overall, there are very high participation rates in ECCD programmes in Sri Lanka. For the remaining children to be enrolled, more targeted initiatives may be required. For an improvement and standardization of quality, it is recognized that more training and support is required.

21.2 Goal Two: Universal Primary/Basic Education in Sri Lanka

21.2.1 Background and Expansion of Universal Basic Education in Sri Lanka

The goal of UBE is to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to a complete free and compulsory education of good quality. UBE is defined in Sri Lanka as education in Grades 1–9 for
children aged 6 to 14 years. Education is compulsory for all children of this age group, and inclusive education is the accepted policy.

Education for All has been a goal of Sri Lankan society for well over 60 years. The Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939 provided for enabling legislation to enforce compulsory attendance of children aged 5-14 years, but the Government did not take the necessary steps to introduce regulations to enforce this policy. The National Education Commission (NEC) was established in 1991 as the policy-making body for education in Sri Lanka. The Report of the National Education Commission (1992) drew attention to the need for legislation on compulsory education. After six decades, regulations to enforce compulsory education for the 5-14 age group were introduced with effect from 1 January 1998. These regulations require parents to ensure admission of their children to school and their continued attendance.

In 1945, the Free Education Act paved the way for children from poor families to gain free access to education. The Constitution of Sri Lanka (1978) provides for “the complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels.” According to law, the medium of instruction of students should be their mother tongue, and there is provision for instruction in Sinhala and Tamil.

The main focus of the NPA is to improve the quality of education. The objectives of the NPA which are focused on achieving UBE are the provision of UPE, the improvement of quality, access and equity in secondary education and the development of education in conflict affected areas. A number of programmes have been undertaken to ensure that all children can attend school. The state provides free textbooks to all students from Grade 1 to Grade 11. School uniform materials are provided for all students. Through the Grade 5 scholarship programme, a subsidy for secondary education is given to students of low income families who perform well on the exam. School nutrition programmes are mainly focused on students of Grades 1 and 2 in approximately 8,023 schools in difficult areas. Small rural schools have been established all over the island giving access to basic education to a substantial proportion of the population. There have also been efforts to improve schools and education in the conflict areas.

21.2.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

Although enrolment rates in Sri Lanka have been impressive for many years, the target of total participation in basic education has not yet been achieved, and in the last five years some of the achievements have been eroded. There has also been some difficulty with data collection. Data for seven districts are not available as the population census could not be held due to the conflict situation. Population estimates have been calculated for these districts based on the census data of 1981. Accordingly some of the key indicators have been estimated for the affected areas of the country.

The GIR for Grade 1 of the primary cycle was 102% for both males and females in 2001. By 2004, the national rate had dropped to 90% for girls and 91% for boys. It had increased again somewhat in 2005 with 93% for girls and 95% for boys, with a GPI of 0.97. The variation among districts in 2005 ranged from 81% to 102% for girls, and from 85% to 102% for boys.

The NIR for Grade 1 steadily decreased from 96% in 2001 to 88% in 2004 but picked up slightly to 91% in 2005. The national NIR in 2001 was 96% for girls and 95% for boys. In 2005, the NIR was 90% for girls and 91% for boys with a GPI of 0.99. The district rates ranged from 79% to 100% for girls and from 83% to 99% for boys.

In 2001, the national GERs in primary education was 108% overall, 108% for girls and 109% for boys with a GPI of 0.99. By 2005, the percentages had declined to 97%, 94% and 99%, respectively, with a GPI of 0.94. The district rates vary from 87% to 100% for girls and from 91% to 104% for boys. Although according to the GERs, more girls (106%) than boys (103%) participated in primary
education in the urban sector, the participation of girls (102%) was slightly lower than that of boys (103%) in the rural sector. In the plantation sector, the GER was lower for girls (97%) than for males (106%). Among the ethnic groups, the highest GER was for Muslim boys (109%) and the lowest for Tamil girls (100%).

The national NER in primary education also showed a downward trend from 92% in 2001 to 89% in 2005. In 2001, the NER for girls was 93% while the rate for boys was 91% with a GPI of 1.03. In 2005, the rates had dropped to 90% for boys and 88% for girls. The decline was greater for girls than for boys, and the GPI was reversed to 1.00. Among the districts, the rates in 2005 ranged from 78% to 96% for girls and from 82% to 96% for boys. It has to be noted that an unspecified number of children in the 5-14 age range attend international schools. Enrolment data for these schools are not available, but it is estimated that about 2% of the children in the relevant age range are enrolled in these schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NER</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>GPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 2001, the GER in secondary education for both girls and boys was 96% with a GPI of 1.0. By 2005, there had been a decline for both sexes to 95% and 92%, respectively, with a GPI of 1.03. Rates for the districts ranged from 87% to 98% for girls and from 86% to 103% for the boys.

There was minimal change in the national average NER in secondary from 89% in 2001 to 90% in 2005. Girls’ NER remained at 91% and the boys’ at 88% with a GPI of 1.04. The lowest rates in the districts were 84% for girls and 82% for boys. In Colombo, the rates were exceptionally high with 96% for girls and 101% for boys. This is the result of students migrating from other districts to enrol in Grade 6 in Colombo schools.

The transition rates from primary to lower secondary were 98% for girls and 96% for boys in 2001. The rates improved to 99% for girls and 98% for boys in 2005 with a GPI of 1.01. An examination of the rates across the different population groups reveals that the transition rate for both male and female children in plantation schools (95% and 96%, respectively) are lower than the rates for students in other schools (97% for boys and 99% for girls). Also, the rates in Tamil and Muslim schools are lower than those in Sinhala schools. The transition rates in 2005 for males and females in urban schools were 108% and 111%, respectively, whereas the transition rates for males and females in rural schools were 95% and 96%, respectively. The transition rates of over 100% in urban schools are due to the migration of students from rural schools to urban schools at Grade 6.

Transition rates from lower secondary to upper secondary are slightly lower than those from primary to lower secondary. However, a slight improvement in the rates can be observed from 2001 to 2005 where the increase was from 95% to 96% for girls and from 92% to 94% for boys.

Primary completion rates were calculated as a percentage of the relevant school-going age population rather than by using a cohort analysis. The completion rates hardly changed from 89% in 2001 to 90% in 2005. The completion rate for girls in 2005 was 91% compared to 88% for boys with a GPI of 1.03.
Repetition rates are relatively low in all the primary grades. In the Sinhala medium schools, the rates for both sexes for every grade are below 1%. In the Tamil medium schools, the repetition rates for girls range from a low of 0.89% for girls and 1.16% for boys in Grade 1 to a high of 2.03% for girls in Grade 4 and 2.57% for boys in Grade 5. Generally, the repetition rates for boys were higher than those of girls.

The overall PTR is around 22:1, which by regional standards is quite low, but this masks high variations among schools and areas. The education system managed by the MOE has a more than adequate stock of teachers. Yet severe teacher shortages exist in some areas, especially in remote rural schools. The shortages are particularly severe in Science, Mathematics and English subjects. At the same time there are large surpluses of teachers in some urban schools. There are excesses and deficits of teachers at the same time in almost all districts. This means that some schools enjoy the benefit of more than their share of teachers at the expense of less fortunate schools.

National expenditure on education declined from 3.5% in the 1990s to about 3% of the national income by 2005. The Government education expenditure in Sri Lanka currently amounts to about US$415 million annually which is about 7%-9% of Government spending. The escalation of defence expenditure in the context of the civil war has contributed to the decline of allocation for education. Defence expenditure in 2005 accounted for over 5% of the GDP. The other reasons for the relatively moderate public education investment include the broad range of public services such as free health care and wide ranging access to poverty alleviation programmes.

21.2.3 Analysis of Disparities in Universal Basic Education in Sri Lanka and Remaining Challenges

The intentions of the Government, which are in line with internationally accepted principles on the rights of the child, are reflected in the national policy and objectives on education. However, it is recognized that weaknesses, shortcomings, gaps and lapses are evident in translating these policies and objectives into actions and strategies. The Government has almost entirely taken over the burden of providing education for children. Free instruction, textbooks, uniforms, mid-day meals and subsidized transport are provided for school-going children. Despite all these steps, Sri Lanka has still not achieved UBE. There are serious disparities in the provision of resources to schools. There is no strict policy or procedure to ensure that every school receives an adequate quota of teachers. The provision of infrastructure facilities and furniture is not equitably executed. These shortcomings have seriously affected the quality of education and achievement levels of students in less fortunate schools. It will be necessary to positively discriminate towards small and deprived schools to bring them up to the national standards until these inequalities are eradicated. Also, the MOE should set up an efficient and practicable monitoring system to constantly monitor the progress of the system so that any shortcomings can be addressed promptly and effectively.

The NEC of Sri Lanka has identified the following as vulnerable groups of children: plantation children; children with disabilities; working children including those in domestic service; children of migrant women workers; street children; orphaned, abandoned and destitute children within and outside children’s homes; and children in remand homes, detention centres and certified schools. There are strategies and special programmes for reaching each of these vulnerable groups, but renewed efforts will be necessary if they are to be provided equal access to a quality education which will make a difference in their lives. The Sri Lanka National EFA MDA Report lists a number of recommendations for identifying and better serving children who are not participating in primary education as well as the children who enter but do not receive a good quality education due to social and economic barriers or because of inadequacies in the system.
21.3 Goal Three: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning in Sri Lanka

21.3.1 Background and Development of Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in Sri Lanka

The goal of life skills and lifelong learning envisages the development of three skills sets: basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, which enable a person to acquire the skill of learning to learn; psycho-social skills that help to develop one’s personality to successfully face problems and challenges confronted in day-to-day living; and practical and technical skills which equip a person to earn a living. The strategies adopted to ensure fulfilment of the goal are: the designing of a curriculum appropriate for imparting basic skills, psycho-social skills and technical and vocational skills in schools; delivery of the curriculum by competent teachers; and ensuring the required inputs in order to maintain the expected standard of quality.

The school curriculum is designed to achieve the national goals identified by the NEC in its 1992 report and subsequently modified by its 2003 report. Acquisition of skills takes place through the total school curricula comprising of academic subjects as well as co-curricular activities. A few subjects have also been introduced into the curriculum, especially to facilitate the teaching of life skills.

21.3.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

The subject of life competencies was introduced in 1999 into the junior secondary curriculum under the education reforms programme. The emphasis was on developing skills and attitudes relating to life situations in children by engaging them in specially designed participatory activities rather than by teaching them in the traditional manner. In 2004, the MOE integrated life competencies with civics education. The ongoing curriculum revision is giving more attention to improving life competencies education. Life skills have been integrated into the health and physical education curriculum, and initiatives are being taken to integrate psycho-social competencies into Grades 3 and 4 of the primary school curriculum.

A good all-round education is expected from schools. In Sri Lanka, it is recognized that a good general education includes an orientation to the world of work which fits the outputs from the school system to the work opportunities that are available. Practical and technical skills are compulsory subjects from Grades 6 to 9. At the secondary level, science, technology and a practical subject are compulsory for all students in schools. It is expected that students who complete these subjects will have a broad idea of the work opportunities available and the basic skills required to undergo further training in the field of their choice. The Government has recently introduced technology subjects at the senior secondary level as well.

The post-secondary courses of the technical education and vocational training (TEVT) system encompass various forms and levels of training, which generally start after completion of the senior secondary level of schooling (Grade 11, age 16 years) and go up to the diploma level. The first tier of training consists of certificate courses which are designed to produce semi-skilled to crafts-level workers. These courses range in duration from six months to four years. The next tier of courses consists of diploma programmes which vary in duration from three to four years. The objective is to prepare students to become versatile technicians capable of performing a broad spectrum of work between that of an engineer and a skilled worker. About 320 TEVT institutions throughout the country are operated by the major public TEVT providers. A number of ministries are involved in TEVT, either as part of their mandated functions or as part of serving their respective sectors. Other public TEVT providers and operators include 379 statutory bodies, 209 government institutions and 21 special institutions. The Government is seeking to reduce unemployment and respond to the changing labour market by combining short- and medium-term strategies. In the short term, the Government is exploring the possibility of expanding local and foreign skilled and semi-skilled employment, while over the medium term, according high
priority to manufacturing-based growth with increased foreign investment. This strategy requires highly trained labour, including technicians and technologists, who are currently in short supply. The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission is planning to develop a national TEVT policy framework. By incorporating a policy on quality assurance, it is planning to develop a strong TEVT sector responsive to the requirements of industry, learners and other stakeholders. The National Vocational Qualifications Framework of Sri Lanka (NVQSL) is to be the key element in unifying TEVT. National skills standards are to be prepared in consultation with industry. National quality standards for teaching and assessment using a competency based approach are to be the basis for national certification of learners and workers. The NVQSL is benchmarked with the systems of developed countries.

Sri Lanka is still a low prevalence country for HIV. But the national surveillance statistics shows a slow but progressive increase in reported cases. HIV/AIDS prevention education was initiated in the education system in 1994, but the knowledge of STDs and HIV/AIDS among Sri Lankan adolescents is poor. According to recent studies only 57% of adolescents are aware of the existence of STDs in general. The knowledge of transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS was relatively better compared to knowledge of other STDs. About 50% to 60% of adolescents demonstrated positive attitudes towards HIV/AIDS patients and attitudes improved with age. The knowledge of HIV/AIDS and symptoms and signs of STDs was marginally higher among out-of-school adolescents compared to those in schools, reflecting a knowledge transfer through community channels. However, overall knowledge could not be considered satisfactory as the overall percentage of those with correct knowledge rarely exceeded 50%.

21.3.3 Analysis of Disparities in Life Skills and Non-Formal Education in Sri Lanka and Remaining Challenges

Although life skills competencies and an introduction to technical and vocational skills have been a part of the curriculum for many years in Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka’s National EFA MDA Report did not find the country to be making sufficient progress towards the goal of promoting life skills and lifelong learning. It was found that a poor understanding of the subject matter and misinterpretation between technical skills, psycho-social skills and basic educational competencies are the main weaknesses in the school system. The time allocated for the subject is not adequate, and most teachers are still using traditional lecture methods for teaching purposes.

There is no strong psycho-social competencies development programme for out-of-school youth. The National Youth Services Council and the Plantation Human Development Trust have life skills development programmes, but the coverage is limited. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and a few NGOs are conducting life competency development programmes in the conflict affected areas but the coverage is not adequate to reach all affected children and young people.

Post-secondary higher technical education is relatively underdeveloped. Only a limited number of mandated public providers and a few enterprising private technical institutions with foreign affiliations are engaged in higher technical skills development. This is one of the major difficulties in responding to labour market demands.

The Government is the main financier and provider of TVET in Sri Lanka. As the TVET system has expanded, activities are being duplicated and the system is facing operational and financial constraints. These affect the efficiency, relevance, and quality of TVET. There is a growing number of private providers of TVET courses, but these mostly focus on information technology. They award an assortment of certificates and diplomas with no assurance of quality or national recognition. There appears to be tremendous variation in their training quality, from outstanding to very poor. This may compound the unemployment situation and discourage the youth from pursuing TVET programmes.
21.4 Goal Four: Adult Literacy and Continuing Education in Sri Lanka

21.4.1 Background and Development of Literacy Acquisition in Sri Lanka

The Constitution of Sri Lanka has among its goals, "the complete eradication of illiteracy and assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels" and "to promote with special care the interests of children and youth so as to ensure their full development, physical, mental, religious, social and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination". Literacy represents the core of the development spelled out in the above two articles. Literacy in Sri Lanka is defined as the ability to read and write in the first language.

In the Three Year Action Plan for Education for All (2002-2004), adult literacy was included in the fourth segment of NFE. Improving adult literacy programmes was one of the specific goals identified. However, a general expectation rather than a specific goal was implied in the plan. The Action Plan for 2004-2008, on the other hand, is more specific and detailed. The objective for the period from 2004-2008 is to ensure that out-of-school youth in the compulsory education age group acquire functional literacy. The objective, however, does not take cognizance of the needs of illiterate adults who are above 18 years. A draft Action Plan has been developed for the period from 2007-2010. It has identified four objectives related to literacy, namely the development of basic literacy among youth and adults, the development of functional literacy among youth and adults, the development of life/practical skills and the development of both the practical and technical skills required to succeed in life through the school system.

21.4.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

The NFE Branch of the MOE operates three types of NFE programmes. In 2005, the enrolment in the three programmes was 17,994 with 11,746 female participants (65%) and 6,248 male participants (35%). The enrolment by type of programme was 4,175 in basic literacy (23%), 3,796 in functional literacy (21%) and 10,023 in CLCs (56%). Geographically, in all three types of activities, the worst-served areas appeared to be the North-Central, North-Western and North-East provinces. This is a cause for concern as the literacy rates for North-Central and North-Western provinces were lower than the national literacy rate.

The non-identification of specific targets or performance indicators to be achieved in relation to literacy at the national level, by region or sex prevents an accurate assessment of progress achieved. In a country where census figures show high literacy rates it is important to differentiate levels of literacy, particularly to identify individuals who may have low and hardly usable levels of literacy. As there has been no attempt to assess literacy using reliable instruments and as there are no statistics on degrees of literacy, it is not possible to ascertain whether or not literacy levels are improving.

The latest available literacy statistics are from the 2001 National Census which did not cover seven districts in the conflict-affected Northern and Eastern provinces. Although at 91%, Sri Lanka has the highest adult literacy rate in the region, there has only been a modest increase since 1981 of 4 percentage points from 87%. The female rate, which increased from 83% to 90%, showed a greater improvement than the male rate, which increased from 91% to 93%, GPI rose from 0.91 to 0.96, but overall it is disappointing progress considering how advanced the country was two and a half decades ago. There is no data to show whether or not there has been any additional progress in the last five years.

Sri Lanka in 2001 had a high rate of literacy (95.6%) among its youth (ages 15-24), and the female rate (96.0%) for this age group was slightly higher than the male rate (95.1%) with a GPI of 1.01. Among the sectors, the estate sector had the lowest youth literacy rate (85.5%) and the rate for females (84%) was lower than the male rate (87%). Among the provinces, the highest rate of youth literacy as well as of female youth literacy was in the Western province. In six out of the seven
provinces for which data is available, the female rate was higher. The only province in which the female rate was lower is the Central province which has a substantial proportion of its population coming from the estate sector.

21.4.3 Analysis of Disparities in Literacy in Sri Lanka and Remaining Challenges

In all districts, the adult literacy rate was lower for females than for males but the disparity is low. As noted above, the reverse is largely true for youth literacy. The disparities are more pronounced at the district level with the highest percentage of 95.4% being for a district in the Western province while the rates for plantation districts were considerably lower (82.6% to 85.2%).

Comparing statistics on adult literacy rates with poverty levels, while there is no direct correlation between the two variables, it is clear that on the whole, poor districts tend to have lower rates of literacy in relation to the national literacy rate. The available data indicates a clear relationship between poverty and illiteracy with the districts that have high poverty indicators having a literacy rate below 90%.

The report notes that the ultimate goal of improving literacy is not only to ensure that all people become literate but also that they have opportunities to reach higher levels of proficiency to improve the quality of their lives. Thus the objective should be not only to estimate the percentage of population (adults and young adults) who gain literacy but also to classify the levels of literacy that they have mastered. In this way, programmes can be designed and supported to improve levels and uses of literacy.

It is recommended that the following groups are identified as priority target groups for literacy programmes: those who lack literacy in disadvantaged communities such as urban slums, estates, fishing, remote rural and conflict-affected communities; gypsies and prisoners; those who have lapsed into illiteracy as a result of not utilizing literacy and numeracy skills such as early drop-outs and child workers; children with special needs, child workers, children in detention camps and disabled adults who have never received the opportunity of enrolling in school; and children who are in school but whose learning achievement is low. By developing and implementing strategies to meet the educational needs of these groups, combined with the effects of UBE, there should be a steady increase in the youth and adult literacy rates.

21.5 Goal Five: Gender Parity and Equality in Education in Sri Lanka

21.5.1 Background and Development of Gender Parity and Equality in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka’s NPA, gender is considered a cross-cutting issue, an integral part of the first four goals. Sri Lanka has a long tradition of promoting the rights of girls and women. The 1978 Constitution not only guarantees equal rights without discrimination on the basis of sex but also provides for policies of affirmative action to remove gender discrimination. Policies increasing access to education have been universally implemented for over six decades and education has been a major agent in reducing gender and socio-economic disparities within the education system as well as in society at large. Free primary, secondary and tertiary education since 1945 has been a major factor that has contributed to the achievement of gender equality in terms of access to education at all levels.

21.5.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

Sri Lanka already had impressive indicators in terms of the GPI at the beginning of the century, and these have been maintained. With a few exceptions, gender parity has been achieved for many of the core indicators with 2005 GPIs within the 0.97 to 1.03 range.

Although very high for the region, adult literacy rates have only risen moderately from 87% in 1981 to 91% in 2001. Compared to a general increase of only 4 percentage points in 20 years, the female
adult literacy rate improved by 7 points from 83% to 90%, and the GPI improved from 0.91 to 0.96. Gender parity for youth literacy has been achieved with a GPI of 1.01 in 2005.

There is one area of concern with regard to maintaining gender parity. Both the GER and the NER for primary education decreased nationally from 2001 to 2005, as has already been noted. It is important to also note that the decrease was greater for girls than for boys. While the GER for boys during the period declined by 10 points from 109% to 99%, for girls the decrease was 14 points from 108% to 94%. Although not as dramatic, a similar pattern is seen in the NERs. While boys’ GER decreased by only 1 point from 91% to 90%, the decline for girls was 5 points from 93% to 88%. During the period, the GPI for GER decreased from 1.01 to 0.95 and for NER the decrease was from 1.02 to 0.98.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GER</th>
<th>NER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


21.5.3 Analysis of Gender Disparities in Sri Lanka and Remaining Challenges

For most of the indicators there are no major concerns about gender disparity issues among sub-groups of the population. However, in all districts, the adult literacy rate of women is lower than the men’s rate, although the disparities are relatively low. This is an area that needs concentrated action in order to identify women not accessing education and to provide them with opportunities to become literate. In the case of youth literacy, gender parity has been achieved.

21.6 Goal Six: Quality of Education in Sri Lanka

21.6.1 Developments in the Provision of Quality Education in Sri Lanka

As with gender, in Sri Lanka’s NPA, quality is considered a cross-cutting issue, an integral part of the first four goals. The main focus of the NPA is to improve the quality of education. This is consistent with educational policy and the thrust of the Government’s education initiatives in the last decade. The changes introduced as part of the General Education Reforms in 1997 had as their main purpose to improve the quality and relevance of education.

Quality is defined as the acquisition of information with the promotion of personality attributes such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, team work, responsibility and human values that are essential to ensure effective performance in the work place as well as a multifaceted quality life. This provides the broad framework for initiatives to improve the quality of education at all levels and in all spheres.

21.6.2 Progress Achieved in Selected EFA MDA Core Indicators

An analysis of most of the quality indicators is included in the discussion on EFA Goal 2, universal basic education. For most indicators, Sri Lanka has registered impressive results. Completion rates for primary education are 91% for girls and 88% for boys. Repetition rates in primary education are relatively low. At 22:1 the PTR for primary education is remarkably low. The percentage of primary
teachers having the required academic qualifications increased from 65% in 2000 to 85% in 2005, and 80% of secondary teachers are certified to teach according to national standards.

21.6.3 Analysis of Disparities in Quality of Education in Sri Lanka and Remaining Challenges

Sri Lanka recognizes that despite the overall positive indicators, the quest for quality has not yet been attained. A number of areas have been identified for further work in order to improve the quality of all educational provision and to target areas where quality is particularly problematic. It is recognized that there are still serious disparities in the provision of resources to schools, including the placement of teachers.

In ECCD, the majority of centres are operated by the private sector. This has meant that it has been difficult to maintain standards of quality. It is recognized that more training and support are required for an improvement of quality and in order to bring a degree of standardization to services.

The NEC of Sri Lanka has identified a number of vulnerable groups of children. Some special steps have been taken for these children. It is important that initiatives include not only provision for access to school but equitable access to a high quality education.

21.7 Overall Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Sri Lanka has a long tradition of educational provision for both girls and boys as a means of national development. As a result, along with the Maldives, the country has achieved the most impressive EFA indicators in the South Asia region. However, the Government has recognized that there is no room for complacency. For each of the goal, areas have been identified for further improvement in order to reach the EFA targets by 2015.

The National ECCD Policy (2004) is being implemented to ensure that Sri Lankan children receive the care and nurture they need to develop to their full potential. The vision, mission, aims, areas of action and objectives have been clearly stated in the policy statement. It has identified the framework and mechanisms to ensure quality assurance in ECCD and stipulates the responsibilities and functions of the Government, the private sector, NGOs and communities. However, it is recognized that the aims of the policy do not adequately reflect the multicultural nature of Sri Lankan society. The development of harmony among various ethnic groups living in Sri Lanka should be a major aim of ECCD. Since pre-schools are important agents in reaching parents, objectives with regard to social cohesion and social integration should be included in the policy. It is recommended that bilingual or multilingual staff who view diversity as an asset should be trained to work with children that attend ECCD centres from different linguistic backgrounds.

The achievement of universal basic education has been given top priority by the Government. The Government is fully funding all aspects of primary education. Funds have been allocated even in the midst of financial constraints. However, despite all the efforts, UBE has not yet been achieved. It is recognized that more intensive and more directly targeted efforts are required. Effective measures are needed to get all out-of-school children into education and to ensure uniformity of quality standards for schools throughout the country. Also, the Ministry needs to set up an efficient monitoring system to constantly assess, review and analyze the progress of the system so that shortcomings can be addressed promptly and effectively.

Sri Lanka has made noteworthy progress in the area of literacy and basic skills due to its social development policies of providing free education to all children. The importance of psycho-social skills however has only recently been recognized. The teaching of life skills has been adopted as a new subject in the curriculum. Aspects of life skills are also included in other subjects such as civics, health and physical education. There is also an emphasis on peace and conflict resolution
implemented through the academic curriculum as well as through co-curricular activities. However, much still needs to be done in this area to ensure the development of life skills in children and adolescents. Technical and vocational programmes also need to be made more practical and aligned with market needs in order to contribute to economic and social growth.

Sri Lanka has one of the highest literacy rates in the region. However, there have only been moderate increases in the last two decades and universal literacy as a goal has been given little emphasis. New measures are needed to finally achieve the objective of universal literacy. The ultimate goal of improving literacy is not only to ensure that all people become literate but also that they have opportunities to reach higher levels of proficiency in literacy to improve the quality of their lives.

A review of the policies, legislation, plans and actions that have targeted the achievement and maintenance of high levels of literacy in Sri Lanka clearly indicate that progress made in literacy and formal education in the space of six decades, especially in relation to the other countries in South Asia, are impressive. However, the EFA agenda is still far from fully achieved. Policymakers as well as practitioners in education should identify universal literacy of both children and adults as a realistic goal on which it is not possible to make any compromises.