

CHAPTER 5

Attaining
Universal Primary Education

PROGRESS IN ATTAINING THE MDG ON PRIMARY EDUCATION

The specific target under this goal is to ensure a full cycle of primary schooling by 2015.

GOAL 2: Achieve universal primary education

TARGET 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete primary schooling.

Indicator 6: Net enrolment ratio in primary education.

Indicator 7: Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5.

Indicator 8: Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds.

Nepal's progress in achieving this target, as measured by the indicators, is shown in Table 5.1.

There are multiple sources of data on education, and the reported figures on educational indicators vary, at times quite significantly, across

these sources. This is starkly exemplified in the reported enrolment rates in primary school. The Department of Education (DoE), which reports annual statistics on education, shows a primary enrolment rate of 83 percent (DoE 2003). In contrast, the NLSS for the same year (2003) shows only 72 percent of the (primary) school-age children enrolled in schools. Some of the difficulties in reconciling these figures with their implications for estimating the resource needs are discussed in Annex 8. The exercise reports both sets of data and mentions the sources used while reporting the resource needs.

On the whole, indicators on educational achievement in Nepal show a steady but rather slow progress in the last one and half decade. At the present rate of progress, Nepal is going to be way behind in reaching the target of providing

TABLE 5.1: Progress in attaining the MDG on primary education

Indicators	Status				Target		Situation in 2015 at the present rate of progress ⁹	Remark
	1990	1995	2000	Latest year	PRSP 2007 ⁸	MDG 2015		
Net enrolment in primary education (%)	64 ^a	69 ^a	81 ^a (2001)	83 ^a (2003)	90	100	100	On-track on the basis of DoE data
	NA	57	66 ^b	72 ^c (2003)	90	100	94	Slightly off-track on the basis of survey figures
Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5	38 ^f (1994)	40 ^f	63 ^g	76 ^{a1} (2004)	75	100	89	More or less on-track
Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds	50 ^d (1991)	56 ^e	70.1 ^h	73.0 ^c	79	100	100	On-track
Adult literacy	33 (1991)	40 ^f	48 ^e (2001)	48 ^c (2003)	63	75 ^f	63	Very much off-track

Source: ^a MoES 1990-99; DoE 2000-2004.
^b CBS/UNICEF 2001.
^c CBS 2004.
^d Population Monograph 1995.
^e CBS 1996.

^f HMG/N-NPC, National Report on Follow-up to the World Summit for Children (WSC) 2000.
^g MoES, School Statistics (1994-2003) (g.1: 2004 data).
^h CBS 2001.

⁸ Targets are from the EFA Action Plan of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).

⁹ Linear projections based on the first available figure around 1990 and the latest available figure on the indicators.

primary education to all children. Many children of primary school going age from the disadvantaged minorities and *dalits* are barred from getting an education. This is mostly due to social, economic and educational constraints rather than lack of physical access to school.¹⁰

The challenges for Nepal are two-fold: not only are about a fourth of the children of primary school-going age out of school, but also one-half of those who enrol never complete the primary level¹¹. There are several reasons for such a low completion rate. If social and economic constraints are important reasons, the educational environment in the schools is also a factor. The physical facilities of the schools are poor, teachers are untrained, or, even if trained, rote learning is still the prescribed mode, and the curriculum is irrelevant for many.

In view of this situation, nationwide programmes to improve the learning atmosphere, especially in basic and primary education, have been launched. The government has already implemented two phases of the Basic and Primary Education Programme (1993-2003). It has now launched the Education for All (2004-2009) programme.

Despite the efforts over the last 10 years, the progress in achieving universal primary education has been slow mainly due to poor implementation capacity and the centralized management of the educational system. The problem has been compounded by the intensifying conflict in the country, especially after 2001. The present EFA programme tries to address these issues through capacity-building efforts and handing over the school management to the communities.

The strategy of handing over the school management to the communities is appropriate in

the context of the ongoing conflict, as the government is unable to reach out to the rural communities. This, however, calls for capacity building of the local communities on a massive scale and, at the same time, furthering a responsive and capable education system.

In addition to local capacity building, substantial upscaling of efforts are necessary, such as incentives for children (e.g. scholarships, meals), better physical facilities and an improved teaching learning environment in the schools to address the needs of local schools in many areas. All these activities call for significant increases in public investment in education.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

The public expenditure pattern in the last one and a half decade shows Nepal giving increasing priority to the education sector, especially to basic and primary education. Nepal's public expenditure on education increased from around 9 percent of the total budget in 1990 to about 16 percent in the recent years (Table 5.2). Similarly, educational expenditure as a percentage of Nepal's GDP is now about 3 percent compared to 2 percent or below in the early 1990s.

External aid constitutes a significant proportion of the total public expenditure on education. External sources account for about 15 percent of the total public expenditure on education. Most of the external aid shown in Table 5.2 was for the EFA programme.

Although public investment in education has been increasing, it is still low compared to what is needed for quality education to reach all children. Nepal's public expenditure in primary education is about NRs. 550 (about US\$ 7.40 at the current exchange rate) per child. This is very low even when compared with its South Asian neighbours.

¹⁰ In 2003 about 90 percent of Nepalese children were found to be within 30 minutes' walking distance of a primary school. This suggests the relatively high density of primary schools in a country with a difficult terrain.

¹¹ DoE (2003) shows a 49.8 percent primary school completion rate.

TABLE 5.2: Public expenditure in education

Year	Population	GDP at current price (in million NRs.)	Total national budget (in million NRs.)	Educational expenditure (in million NRs.)	External aid for education (in million NRs.)	Educational expenditure as % of total budget	Educational external expenditure as % of GDP	External aid as % of educational expenditure	Per capita expenditure on education (NRs.)
1990	18,080,114	99,702	19,670	1,800	185	9.1	1.8	10.3	100
1991	18,491,097	116,127	23,553	2,082	122	8.8	1.8	5.9	113
1992	18,911,422	144,933	26,418	2,868	205	10.9	2.0	7.2	152
1993	19,341,301	165,350	30,898	4,150	712	13.4	2.5	17.2	215
1994	19,780,952	191,596	33,597	4,564	617	13.6	2.4	13.5	231
1995	20,230,596	209,976	38,795	5,066	1,319	13.1	2.4	26.0	250
1996	20,690,462	239,388	46,544	6,150	1,318	13.2	2.6	21.4	297
1997	21,160,781	269,570	50,724	7,203	1,786	14.2	2.7	24.8	340
1998	21,641,790	289,798	56,118	7,804	1,401	13.9	2.7	17.9	361
1999	22,133,734	330,018	59,579	7,682	942	12.9	2.3	12.3	347
2000	22,636,860	366,251	66,273	9,329	1,960	14.1	2.5	21.0	412
2001	23,151,423	393,566	79,835	11,045	1,424	13.8	2.8	12.9	477
2002	23,677,682	405,632	80,072	13,050	1,880	16.3	3.2	14.4	551
2003	24,215,904	435,531	84,005	13,242	2,029	15.8	3.0	15.3	547

Source: MoF 2004.

THE EDUCATION MODEL

In a bid to assess the resource needs for attaining Goal 2, Education Model 06-24-04e.xls, an Excel file developed by the MP, was used. The intervention packages included in the model are provided in Annex 4, Table A4.2 and Annex 5, Matrix A5.2.

Data used in the model were derived mostly from the publications of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES). The cost data were mostly obtained from officials of the Department of Education. Issues and further details on data are provided in Annex 8.

GENDER AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE EDUCATION MODEL

In addition to the poor educational standards in the country, there is wide disparity between the

men and women in their educational status. The girl child does not have equal access to educational opportunities for various reasons. The intervention packages of the model specifically try to address these constraints and make available enough resources to carry out the said activities. Some of the specific aspects of the model, which try to address the existing gender gap, are:

- Separate toilets for girls in the schools;
- Incentive schemes such as scholarships for increasing girl enrolment;
- Revision of the curriculum and textbooks to make them gender sensitive;
- Incorporating gender issues in teacher training and orientation programmes;
- Parental education for sending the girl child to school;
- Incentives for schools to increase girl enrolment; and
- Increasing female teachers in the schools.

The environmental aspects included in the education model are:

- Revision of the curriculum and textbooks to include appropriate environmental topics and periodic revisions;
- Training of teachers and incorporating environment in the orientation programmes; and
- Constructing toilets in the schools to improve the school environment and to inculcate proper sanitary habits among the students.

RESOURCE NEEDS FOR ATTAINING THE MDG ON PRIMARY EDUCATION

Financial Resource Needs

The total cost of attaining the MDG on education for 2005-2015 amounts to NRs. 334.5 billion (US\$ 4,778.9 million) at 2004/05 constant prices. The average annual cost amounts to NRs. 30.4 billion (US\$ 434.4 million) at 2004/05 constant prices (Table 5.3). The estimated costs are significantly higher than what the government is spending at present. For instance, the total basic and primary education budget of the government in FY 2004/05 was NRs. 11.2 billion, but the estimated cost for FY 2005 was NRs. 13.7 billion, or more than 20 percent higher. This is to be expected as the estimates are based on best pedagogical practices and also the fact that the age groups used are different. For instance, Early Childhood Development (ECD) costs are based on the number of children of 3-5 years instead of 3-4 years as used by the MoES. Moreover, the cost estimates for FY 2005 are based on the latest coverage figures of FY 2003. Another important factor is that the cost estimate is for all children regardless of whether they attend public or private school.

It may also be noted that the increase in the cost between 2005 and 2015 is more rapid in the mountain and Terai regions whereas the increase is much slower in the hills. This is because most of the coverage indicators for education in the hills are better than in the mountain and Terai regions.

Since ECD coverage is very low at present, the investment on ECD intervention packages will increase most rapidly. The increase in investment estimates for primary and secondary education is not going to be that rapid because of higher current coverage rates and expected wastage reductions in these sub-sectors. Due to the increasing contribution of primary education in improving the adult literacy rate, the annual amount needed for adult literacy will actually decline over the years. The amount required for adult literacy in FY 2005 was NRs. 317 million, which is expected to decline to NRs. 214 million in 2015. In terms of capital and recurrent cost breakdown in FY 2005, the capital cost constituted 5.4 percent of the total cost in 2005, which will increase to 8 percent in FY 2015.

Human Resource and Infrastructure Needs

The number of additional facilitators/teachers needed between FY 2005 and FY 2015 at the various levels of education is as follows:

- Total additional ECD facilitators 89,799
- Total additional primary school teachers 55,301
- Total additional secondary school teachers 20,339

TABLE 5.3: Estimated resource needs for attaining the MDG on primary education (in million NRs.)

Intervention areas	2005		2010		2015	
	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%
Early childhood development	366	1.7	1409	4.7	4,033	9.8
Primary education	13,060	59.0	17,238	58.1	21,869	53.3
Secondary education	7,534	34.0	9580	32.3	13,344	32.5
Adult literacy	317	1.4	324	1.1	214	0.5
Education management and support cost	851	3.9	1,142	3.8	1,578	3.9
Total (in million NRs.)	22,128	100.0	29,697	100.0	41,038	100.0
Total (in million US\$)	316	-	424	-	586	-
Total cost (2005 to 2015) NRs. 334,524.2 million (US\$ 4778.9 million)						
Average annual cost (2005 to 2015) NRs. 30,411.3 million (US\$ 434.4 million)						

Note: US\$ 1 = NRs. 70 (February 2005).

Similarly, the number of ECD centres/classrooms that need to be constructed or rehabilitated between FY 2005 and FY 2015 are:

■ Total ECD centres	69,689
■ Total primary level classrooms (new construction)	14,534
■ Total primary level classrooms (rehabilitation)	38,559
■ Total secondary level classrooms (new construction)	28,859

CONCLUSION

The resource needs estimate shows that the present level of investment on education must increase substantially. The financing gap in the education sector at present is met through external assistance. The financing gap will increase over the years because Nepal will not be in a position to substantially increase its contribution in view of the low GDP per capita and relatively modest projected growth rate of GDP between FY 2005 and 2015 (for details, refer to Chapter 10). ■