

Pakistan has not reached any of 'Education for All' goals

Pakistan has not reached any of the Education for All goals set in 2000 with measurable targets, but made significant progress in closing the gender gap, particularly in the early years after 2000. When the goals were set, there were 68 girls enrolled for 100 boys in Pakistan. By 2007, there were 83 girls but this only increased to 87 by 2012.

The figures make part of the key findings of the 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 'Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges', produced by Unesco which has tracked progress on these goals for the past 15 years. The report was launched on Wednesday at ILO Auditorium in the presence of the Minister of State for Education, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Trainings, along with educational institute experts and representatives.

The report says that in Pakistan, spending on education fell from 2.6 per cent of GNP to 2 per cent. It says that Pakistan is far from reaching the goal of achieving universal primary education and achieving a 50 per cent reduction in levels of adult illiteracy whereas less than half of adolescents are enrolled in lower secondary education in the country.

The report says that just one third of countries have achieved all of the measurable Education for All (EFA) goals set in 2000. Only half of all countries have achieved the most watched goal of universal primary enrolment. An extra \$22 billion a year is needed on top of already ambitious government contributions in order to ensure we achieve the new education targets now being set for the year 2030.

Released one month before the World Education Forum in Incheon (Republic of Korea), the report reveals 47 per cent of countries were able to reach the goal 1 (Expand early childhood care and education) and another eight per cent were close, including Pakistan. Twenty per cent were very far from the goal. Yet, in 2012, nearly two-thirds more children were enrolled in early childhood education than in 1999.

In goal 2 (Achieve universal primary education) 52 per cent achieved the goal; 10 per cent are close and the remaining 38 per cent are far or very far from achieving it, including Pakistan. This leaves almost 100 million children not completing primary education in 2015.

Assessment of goal 3 shows that 46 per cent of countries reached universal lower secondary enrolment. Less than half of adolescents are enrolled in lower secondary education in Pakistan. Globally, numbers in lower secondary education increased by 27 per cent.

Only 25 per cent of countries reached the goal of 'Achieving a 50 per cent reduction in levels of adult illiteracy;', 32 per cent remain very far from it, including Pakistan. While globally the percentage of illiterate adults fell from 18 per cent in 2000 to 14 per cent in 2015.

In goal 5 (Achieve gender parity and equality), the report says that gender parity will be achieved at the primary level in 69 per cent of countries by 2015. Pakistan will be far. At secondary level, only 48 per cent of countries will reach the goal. Child marriage and early pregnancy continue to hinder girls'

progress in education as does the need for teacher training in gender sensitive approaches and curriculum reform.

In goal 6 (Improve the quality of education and ensure measurable learning outcomes for all), the numbers of pupils per teacher decreased to 121 of 146 countries between 1990 and 2012 at the primary level, but 4 million more teachers are still needed to get all children into school. Trained teachers remain in short supply in one third of countries; in several sub-Saharan African countries, less than 50 percent are trained. However, education quality has received increased attention since 2000.

The report says that since 2000, many governments significantly increased their spending on education: 38 countries increased their commitment to education by one percentage point or more of GNP. In Pakistan, spending on education fell from 2.6 per cent of GNP to 2 per cent.

To complete Education for All agenda, the GMR suggested the governments to make at least one year of pre-primary education compulsory and free for all. Policy makers should identify and prioritize skills to be acquired by the end of each stage of schooling. Literacy policies should link up with the needs of communities and teacher training should be improved to include gender-focused strategies.

For equity, governments, donors and civil society must develop programmes and target funding to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged so no child is left behind and future education targets for education must be specific, relevant and realistic. It also recommends that the international community, in partnership with countries, must find the means to bridge the US\$22 billion annual finance gap for quality pre-primary and basic education for all by 2030.

Speaking in her opening remarks at the launching ceremony, Director Programmes, Idara-e-taleem-o-Agahi Baela Raza Jamil said that in spite of many efforts by the Government and civil society to upgrade the education sector, the education indicators do not add up to a picture of a glass half full.

“To reverse this, it is imperative that partnerships between the government and non-state actors are matched by coherence, upgraded norms of quality learning facilities, post primary opportunities and above all progressively higher financing of education.”

Director UNESCO Vibeke Jensen concluded in her presentation of the GMR report by emphasizing the need to focus on what needs to be done urgently to make sure we reach the goals as fast as possible. She stressed that plans for achieving new goals will need to be set including ensuring of the implementation of government commitment to raise the share for education from 2 per cent to 4 per cent of GDP.

Minister of State for Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Baligh-ur-Rehman said the EFA GMR publication was immense important for policy makers, educationists and civil society that will help in identifying key lessons and recommendations for improving the education.

He said that it's unfortunate that millions of children are still out of school in Pakistan and that most of the EFA Targets were not achieved. However he reaffirmed the government commitment for improving the education and that steadily progress has going on in education indicators. Referring to the Government national plan of action that was roll out in 2013, he said it is a significant step towards improving the education with the help of all the Provinces and Federal Units.

He also mentioned that modalities for Malala Fund in collaboration with UNESCO have been devised in 2013-14 and 2014-2015 which will help improve the EFA target regarding the gender parity. He said that the Government National education assessment conducted by National educational system is also an important step in moving forward to address key education gaps.

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