Mapping the Performance of India in Millennium Development Goals: A Case for Education

Dr.Kinjal V. Ahir

Assistant Professor, Tolani Institute of Management Studies

ABSTRACT Achieving Universal Primary Education' was considered as one of the eight core solutions to eradicate poverty in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). An equal emphasis had been laid on maintaining equity in access to education. Thus goal 2 and 3 of MDGs and thereby 5 indicators were related to education. While India was closer to achieving the target of universal primary education, many efforts were further required to ensure 100% completion rates at primary levels, 100% literacy rates with both males and females alike, and gender parity in enrolments at all levels of education. The efforts put to achieve the MDGs related to education increased focused policy initiatives towards the set goals. Such sustained efforts would be inevitable in the coming years to ensure the participation by the growing population in the eligible age cohort to ensure the Millennium Development in India.

INTRODUCTION

Education is seen as an important instrument for the social and economic upliftment of the impoverished people largely suffering from poverty anywhere in the world. 'Achieving Universal Primary Education' was thus considered as one of the core eight solutions to eradicate poverty in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). An equal emphasis had been laid on an equitable access to primary education, i.e. gender equality in the access of primary education.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were 8 time-bound goals to be monitored through 48 indicators. This research paper is an attempt to study the performance of India specifically in context of the MDGs related to education. Thus the structure of the paper includes a discussion on the role of education in MDGs, segregating the goals and indicators related to education. Then the performance of India is mapped in context of education related indicators in the MDGs followed by concluding remarks.

EDUCATION IN MDGS: AN OVERVIEW

Out of the 8 goals of MDGs goal 2 and goal 3 were linked with access to education. The Goal 2 of the MDGs was to 'Achieve universal primary education'. Thus in India the target related to goal 2 was defined as to 'Ensure that, by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education'. In this context the three measurable indicators used were:

2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education

2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary schooling

2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 years-olds, women and men

The Goal 3 of the MDGs was to promote gender equality and empower women. Thus in India the Goal 3 was set as to 'Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015'. In this context the measurable indicators used were stated as:

3.1 Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

3.2 Ratio of literate women to men in the age group of 15-24 years (MOSPI, 2013).

The following discussion focuses specifically on the statistical mapping of the performance of India with respect to the indicators mentioned in goal 2 and 3 only.

## PERFORMANCE OF INDIA SPECIFIC TO EDUCATION IN MDGS

The framework for MDGs in India was as per the UN Development Group framework of 2003. India adopted 12 targets relevant to India with corresponding 35 identified indicators under 8 goals.

Indicator 2.1: NER in primary education

In India the official school age for pre-primary schooling is 3 to 5 years and that for primary is 6 to 10 years. About 72 million students pursued primary education and about 122 million students pursued secondary education. In 2011 the school life expectancy for the age group 1 to 8 years was observed to be 11.7. The total number of new entrants in the last grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical entrance age to the first grade of primary education was 113.3%. The transition rate from primary to secondary education was 92% in 2010 (UIS, 2015).

The GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) measures the population irrespective of age pursuing a particular level of education as a percentage of the total population belonging to the eligible age cohort for that level. Instead, the NER (Net Enrolment Ratio) calculates only the population of the eligible age cohort pursuing a particular level of education, as a percentage of the total population belonging to the eligible age cohort, for that level. Figure 1 shows the GER and NER for 2007 to 2011 for primary education in India. It can be clearly observed that the GER was above 100 and NER was approaching the levels of universal primary education achievement. Since NER is the indicator chosen to measure the achievement of the goal, it can be observed that NER was closer to 100, though with a stagnancy.

Figure 1: Gross and Net Enrolment Ratio for 2007 to 2011 for primary education
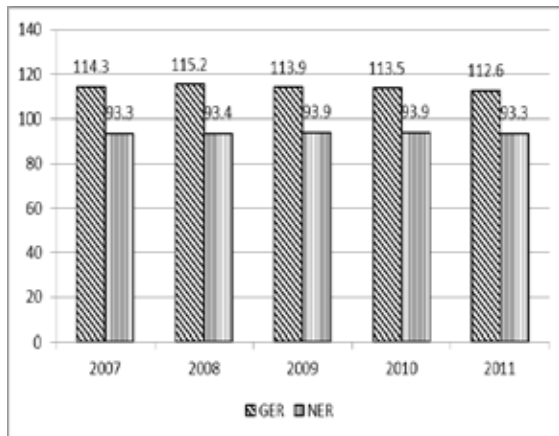
Source: UIS, 2015

The GER in 2013-14 at primary levels was 101.36% and NER was 88.08% and GER for upper-primary levels was 89.33% and NER was 70.02% respectively. But the GER for SC population at primary level was 113.03% and at upper primary level was 98.27%. The GER for ST population at primary level was 113.18% and at upper primary level was 91.33%. Gross completion rate at primary level is defined as 'primary completion rate is the total number of students regardless of age in the last grade of primary school (Grade V), minus the number of repeaters in that grade, divided by the number of children of the official graduation age (age '10+')'. The Gross Completion Rate at primary level was 101.3% in 2013-14 (NUEPA, 2013, pp 38, 39).

Indicator 2.2: Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary schooling

The indicator captured the successful completion of primary education from grade I to grade V. Retention rate at Primary level was calculated based on enrolment data of Grade I (2009-10) & Grade V (2013-14) including enrolment in unrecognized schools. Ratio of Grade I (2006-07) to Grade VIII (2013-14) at all-India level was 66.71 percent. According to the DISE survey for 2013-14 the retention rates at primary levels was 82.38% in 2013-14. The retention rates at primary levels (Grade I to V) for SC population were 80.68%, ST population was 67.68% and OBC population was 78.06% in 2013-14 (NUEPA, 2013). Thus for all the three ethnically disadvantaged groups the retention rates were lower than the country average. Certainly these rates should be closer to 100% for achieving universal primary education. Similarly, the ratio of Grade V to Grade I enrolment was 93% in 2013-14. The transition rate from primary to upper-primary level was 89.58% in 2012-13, which further needs to be increased. Average Annual Drop-out rate presents average annual grade-specific drop-out rates by considering grade-wise enrolment in 2012-13 and 2013-14 and grade-specific number of repeaters in 2013-14. The average annual drop-out rates for primary levels was 4.67% and for upper primary level it was 3.13% in 2012-13 (NUEPA, 2013). Effective policy efforts and participation by the citizens could result into the achievement of the second goal promptly.

Indicator 2.3 & 3.2: Literacy rate of 15-24 years-olds, women and men

For the period of 2008-12, the youth literacy rate for males was observed at 88.4% and that for females was observed at 74.4% (UNICEF, 2015). It had been observed for India that spending some years in schooling was not assuring literacy. It was reported that in India around 90% emerged illiterate even after completion of 4 years of schooling and around 30% illiterate on completion of 5 to 6 years of schooling. It was believed that at the existing rate of educational development it might further take another 56 years to achieve female youth literacy and so the target was expected to be achieved in 2070 to 2080 (Gohain, 2014).

Indicator 3.1: Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a measure of equality or disparity in enrolments. GPI is calculated by dividing the GER of females by GER of males. A GPI of 1 indicates complete parity and any fraction less than 1 indicates gender disparity in favor of males. In India the GPI based on GER at primary levels in 2012-13 was 1.03, for upper primary was 1.05, for secondary education was 0.99, for senior secondary was 0.98 and that for tertiary education was 0.89 (MHRD, 2014).

Certain attributes associated with education can help in understanding the challenges obstructing the achievement of MDGs related to education. The average student classroom ratio in 2013-14 in primary schools was 25. Approximately 54.5% of schools only had a headmaster / teacher in 'primary only' schools having enrolments 150 and above in 2013-14. The availability of the basic amenities was also a hindrance at many schools. About 94% of primary schools had drinking water facility in 2013-14. About 91.62% of schools had functional girls' toilets in 2013-14 but only 44.66% schools had hand wash facilities available near the urinal. 61.87% of schools had boundary walls in 2013-14. Only 58% schools had a playground in 2013-14. 62.7% schools had functional computers in the school and 76.13% schools had library facilities, which was praise-worthy. But only 51.74% of all the schools had electricity connection in 2013-14. Such facilities were further subject to electricity availability. Providing mid-day meals can act as a strong motivator to attract children for pursing education and can also act as a deterrent towards child labour. 88.6% schools provided Mid-day meals inclusive of government schools and those aided by management. 73.14% of the government schools provided textbooks (NUEPA, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

India, like most of the other participating countries undoubtedly benefitted by making MDGs an integral part of the planning and policy-making process. It assisted by increasing focused and target-oriented measurable efforts towards eradicating poverty with a holistic approach across varied goals. Efforts in education related time-bound achievements were appreciable considering the fact that a large part of the population in India belonged to the eligible age cohort of pursuing education. It was by no means a small task to accomplish the goals set in MDGs.

The policy efforts like Right to education, Sarva-ShikshaAbhiyaan, Mid-day meals, efforts by NGOs and private education providers had contributed in concerted efforts towards universal elementary education in India. It is equally important to sustain it, even after the MDGs deadline of 2015 gets over. In particular the successful completion of the primary levels of education should be ensured and

unless it was done qualitatively the literacy rates would continue to appear far from satisfactory. Thus in context of MDGs related to education India's performance is appreciable so far and it needs to be sustained rather with a greater pace using the launch received from the efforts put in MDGs, in the forthcoming years.

REFERENCE [1]Gohain, M. P. (2014). India will take around 56 years to achieve female youth literacy: Report. Times of India. March 10. Retrieved as on 28.1.14 from http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-will-take-around-56-years-to-achieve-female-youth-literacy-Report/articleshow/31758534. cms | [2] MHRD (2014). Educational Statistics at a Glance, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring and Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi. | [3] MOSPI (2013). Towards achieving Millennium Development Goals – India 2013.Social Statistics Division, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. Retrieved as on 26.1.15 from http://mospi.nic.in/mospi_new/upload/MDG_pamphlet29oct2013.pdf | [4] NUEPA (2013). Elementary Education in India - Progress towards Universal Elementary Education. District Information System for Education 2013-14, Flash Statistics, Provisional. National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.September. Retrieved as on 28.1.15 from http://www.dise.in/Downloads/Publications/Documents/Flash%20Statistics2013-14.pdf | [5] UIS (2015). Country profiles. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Montreal, Canada. Retrieved as on 15.1.15 from http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?regioncode=40535&code=IND | [6] UNICEF (2015). State of the World's Children 2015, Country Statistical table for India. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. Retrieved as on 24.1.15 from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india_statistics.html