

Millennium Development Goals: Are We Really Achieving Universal Primary Education?

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Abstract

The paper discusses and evaluates the success rate of Pakistan in achieving Goal 2, Target 2A of Millennium Development Goal on primary education. The significant attention has been given to the education track record of Pakistan with special reference to the achievement of primary education in accordance with Millennium Development Goal. The results conclude that although the net primary enrolment rate has increased in Pakistan, but the ground reality is quite different than it is portrayed in the reports. The primary enrolment is pitifully short of universality because of adopting theoretical approach than practical. Many challenges are needed to be addressed. It is the responsibility of the government as well as of civil society to take strict practical measures to promote universal primary education, particularly in the rural areas.

Keywords: United Nations, Millennium Development Goals, Universal Primary Education, Education, Pakistan

Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were originated from the United Nations¹, Millennium Summit. It is considered as the most important pact ever made for international development² where the global leaders identified specific development priorities³ across a very broad range of global issues and also pledged to find out the solutions to many of the global challenges.

The era of 1990 is considered as a decade of faltering progress.⁴ Although the improvisation was taking place in many fields but it was felt that the world could not reach the previously agreed targets particularly in the third world countries due to its slow pace achievement. Rather escalating, the practical fulfillment towards achieving the targets was continuously declining.

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Following were the main areas⁵ where much visible progress was not observed.

Table. 1: List of Least Visible Focused Targets

1. Under-5 mortality rate
2. Maternal mortality rate
3. Child malnutrition
4. Water and sanitation
5. Income, poverty
6. Primary education

In order to accelerate progress within the span of fifteen years, certain goals, targets and indicators were set by 193 government leaders and 23 international organizations as a joint pledge, known as MGDs. The leaders pledged to strive, individually and collectively, towards the planned goals through international, regional and national action.

According to United Nations⁶ the MDGs focus on three major areas of Human development (humanity):

- Boosting human capital
- Improving infrastructure
- Increasing social, economic and political rights, with the majority of the focus going towards increasing basic standards of living

There are 18 targets, 48 indicators (as of 22 May 2002). For each goal, one or several targets, one or several measurable indicators for each target were set.⁷ The eight MDGs listed below were commonly accepted as a framework for measuring development progress:

- Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
- Achievement of universal primary education
- Promotion of gender equality and empower women
- Reduction of child mortality
- Improvement of maternal health
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Ensuring of environmental sustainability
- Development of a Global Partnership for Development⁸

Figure 1. Goals of Millennium Development



MDGs can also be used as indicators⁹ to assess the impacts of these inputs for achievements on the basis of global partnership.

The researcher used content analysis method to derive themes out of MDGs and conclude that all the Millennium Development Goals are interlinked with education. If we strive hard and promote education, primary education, other goals will eventually be achieved.

MDGs and Education

Education is the back-bone of every society, and children are considered as the human resource of the future. The value of education for children is priceless. Schooling, especially literacy, stimulates cognitive, emotional, and social development and empowers children. A well-educated child can avail better opportunities in every walk of life.¹⁰ According to Article 26 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹¹ everyone has the right to education. Goal 2 of MGDs focuses on achieving universal primary education, while Target 2A promises that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Goal 2 of MDG further focuses on the following:

- Enrollment in primary education
- Completion of primary education (grade 1-5)
- Literacy of 15-24 year olds, female and male

The world leaders believed that without access to education, it is impossible to produce quality human resources for the future. To promote education from the grass-root level, it was decided to give more priority to the Early Childhood Education (ECD) and that free,

compulsory and quality education would be ensured. Moreover, learning needs of young people and adults would be considered and the adult literacy rate was expected to be increased by 50% by 2015.

It is believed that during the past decade, much progress has taken place towards universal primary education, especially in the developing countries. Many middle-income countries in the world including Chile, China, Cuba, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, etc, have achieved universal primary completion when they were at the parallel stage of development as today's poorer countries. Their success lies in this fact that they built such education system, in which primary education was given priority. Today, many poorest countries have begun to register strong and sustained progress in completion of primary education. These include Ethiopia, Guinea, Mozambique, etc – all of which have increased the primary completion rate by valuing and prioritizing education.¹²

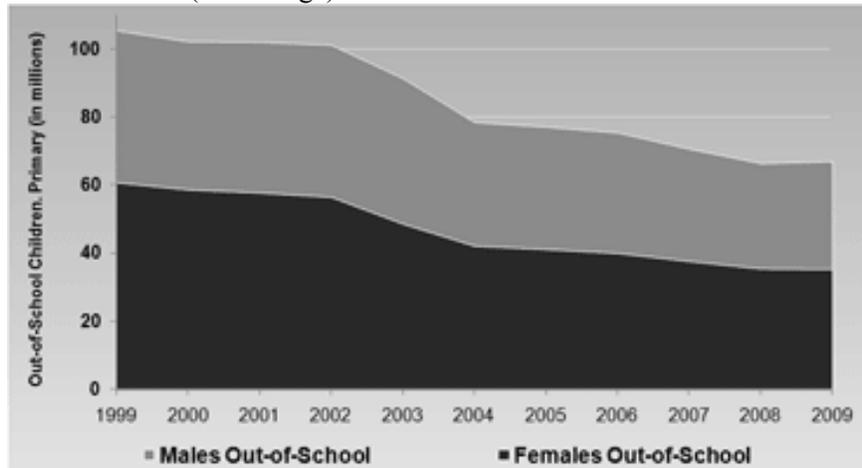
According to UNICEF,¹³ the literacy rate of the world (as of 2008) is given below

Table. 2: Statistics of Literacy Rate, 2008

77%	Youth Literacy rate (males 15-24 years old)
53%	Youth Literacy rate (females 15-24 years old)
77%	Net primary school enrolment ratio (male)
59%	Net primary school enrolment ratio (female)
70%	Survival rate to Grade 5
62%	Primary school net attendance ration (male)
51%	Primary school net attendance ration (female)

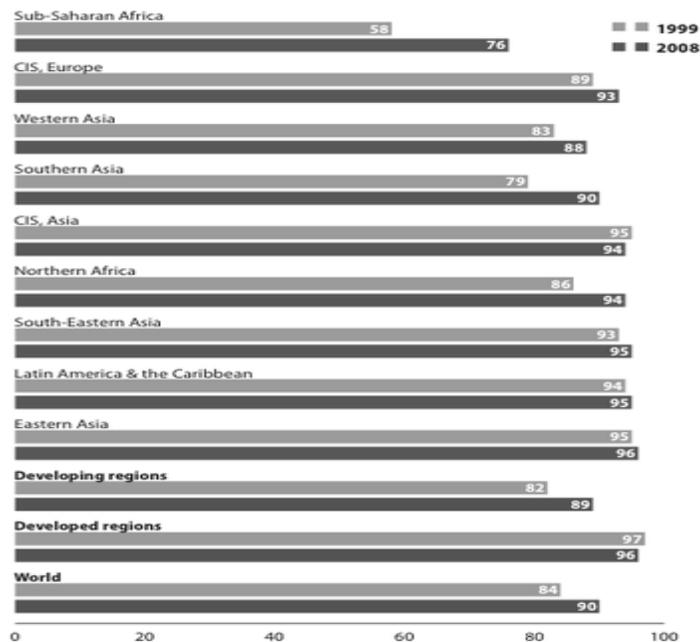
According to preliminary estimates carried out by the UNESCO,¹⁴ the number of primary school age children out of school fell by almost 37 million from 1999 to 2008, but there were still 69 million children out of school in 2008 which shows faulty education policies of certain countries, which make it impossible to reach MDG of universal primary education by 2015. The net enrolment ratio in primary education during 1999/2000 and 2006/2007 has improved as the drop outs rate has declined, particularly among males.

Figure. 2: Adjusted net enrolment ratio in primary education, 1999/2000 and 2006/2007 (Percentage)



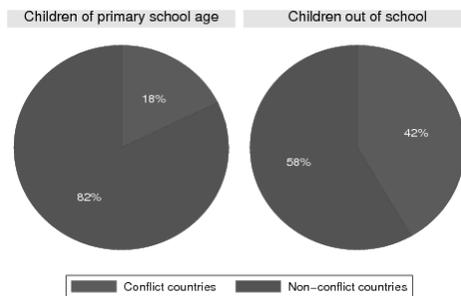
According to the recent research conducted by UNESCO¹⁵ the number of primary school age children out of school fell by 37 million from 1999 to 2008. The Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Northern Africa have achieved satisfactory enrolment ratio during 1998- 2008.

Figure. 3: Net Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education



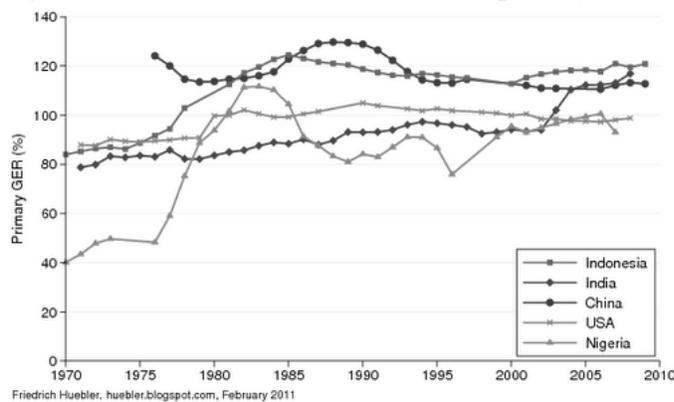
The global glance at the children overall and gross enrolled in primary school and out of school¹⁶ in conflict and non- conflict countries are given below

Figure. 4: Population of primary school age and children out of school in countries, 2008



UIS Data Centre¹⁷ revealed the gross enrolment ratio of five countries over the period of 40 years

Figure. 5: Gross enrolment ratio (GER) in primary education, 1970-2009



If we look into the dropout rate on the basis of gender, female were least opportunistic to avail education. The report of UNESCO¹⁸ shows the comparison of drop outs of primary school children on the basis of gender. According to the report, during 1999, around 106 million children were out of primary school. Almost 61 million (58%) were girls compared to 45 million (42%) boys. Comparatively, in 2009, around 35 million girls were still out of school compared to 31 million boys.

The last five years have still witnessed a marked slowdown in the rate of progress towards universal primary education. Lewis¹⁹ identifies that the main problems, due to which many systems in the

world are not achieving their goals is the weaknesses in their current systems, which needs to be addressed. It is assumed that if the current trend continues, there will be more children out of school by 2015.

Achieving Universal Primary Education by Pakistan

Pakistan is also signatory to MDGs beside many other treaties and documents. For the attainment of 8 Millennium Goals, the UN Millennium Declaration has fixed 18 targets and 48 indicators out of which, Pakistan has adopted 16 targets and 37 indicators. The list of major goals, targets and indicators of Pakistan are given below

Figure. 6: Millennium Development Goals of Pakistan²⁰

	MDGs	Targets	Indicators
1	Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger	2	3
2	Achieve Universal Primary Education	1	3
3	Promote Gender Equality & Women Empowerment	1	4
4	Reducing Child Mortality	1	6
5	Improving Maternal Health	1	5
6	Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases	2	5
7	Ensuring Environmental Sustainability	3	8
8	Develop a Global Partnership for Development*	5	7
		16	37

Education (Goal 2)

Target 3

Primary Education

Target 4

Eliminate Gender Disparity

Health (Goal 4, 5 and 6)

Target 5

Under-five Mortality, Health and Care

Target 6

Maternal Mortality

Target 7

HIV/ AIDS

Target 8

Malaria, TB and other Major Diseases

Water Sanitation(Goal 7)

Target 9

Environmental Resources

Target 10

Improved Water & Adequate Sanitation

Target 11

Katchi abadis (Slums)

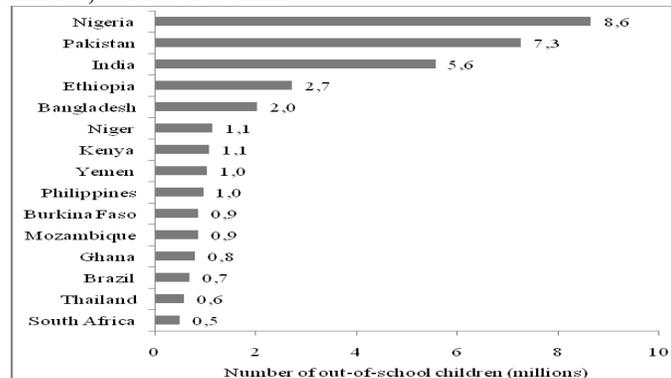
Pakistan has made satisfactory progress in achieving few of the MDGs, but for most of the indicators, performance is not quite adequate. One of the reasons could be low level of public sector allocations for the social sectors such as for Health, Education and Water & Sanitation.²¹

One of the important areas, where Pakistan lacks, is education. According to Article 37 (b) and (c) of the Constitution of Pakistan,²² the state shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period; make technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merit... According to Article, 22 (3) (b) of the Constitution of Pakistan, no discrimination in admission to educational institutions receiving public funds on grounds of race, religion, caste or place of birth. According to Constitution of Pakistan Article 25 a, the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined in the constitution.

In the year 2000, Pakistan ratified Education for all charter of objectives at the Dakar (Senegal) World Education Forum.²³ Pakistan has also pledged to meet the Millennium Development Goal for education, promising that, by 2015, education goals will be achieved. According to MDG, Children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education.

But the state of education is in a vulnerable state in Pakistan. More than half of the world's out of school children live in just 15 countries and Pakistan is one of them. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report²⁴ provided figure shows the real state of children enrolment in the schools. Pakistan stood second (7.3 millions) with the highest drop outs rates.

Figure. 7: Number of children of primary school age who were out of school in 2008, selected countries



Some Facts and Figures

- 2011 was Pakistan's Year of Education but Pakistan failed to promote much literacy as expected
- One in tenth of the world's primary education age children who are not in school, live in Pakistan second in the global ranking of out-of-school children
- The United Nations recently reminded governments, all of today's primary school age children would need to have started school by 2009, if they are to complete their studies by 2015. Unfortunately, by 2009, Pakistan was unable to enroll all the students at primary level
- 30% of Pakistani live in extreme poverty- having received less than two years of education
- Twenty six number of countries that send more children to primary school, but are poorer than Pakistan
- India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are all on the track to meet their education Millennium Development Goal, however, Pakistan is still routing
- The number of young children out of school has decreased in India ten times the rate seen in Pakistan
- Pakistan is committed to spend at least 4% of the GDP on education but budget has have fallen in recent years.²⁵ [and is found nearly 2% of the GDP]

Discussion

Pakistan's net enrolment rate for 2000-05 was reported to be 56%, while India stood at 78% and Bangladesh at 86%. The Survey on education by the Federal Bureau of Statistics²⁶ reported that 21,333,000 boys were enrolled in elementary school compared to 9,082,000 girls. Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey²⁷ was carried out in 2004-2005 at the district level showed vast disparity in the enrollment rate at schools in various parts of the country. Save the Children²⁸ stated that out of 40 million children in the 5-14 age group in Pakistan, about 22 million are estimated to be out of school.

According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan,²⁹ Pakistan was placed at 144th in the world literacy ranking. The education sector was plagued by corruption, misuse of funds and resources and inconsistencies in the implementation of education reforms. According to the report of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan,³⁰ Pakistan is at 120th spot in the EFA Development Index ranking with the lowest allocations to education sector.

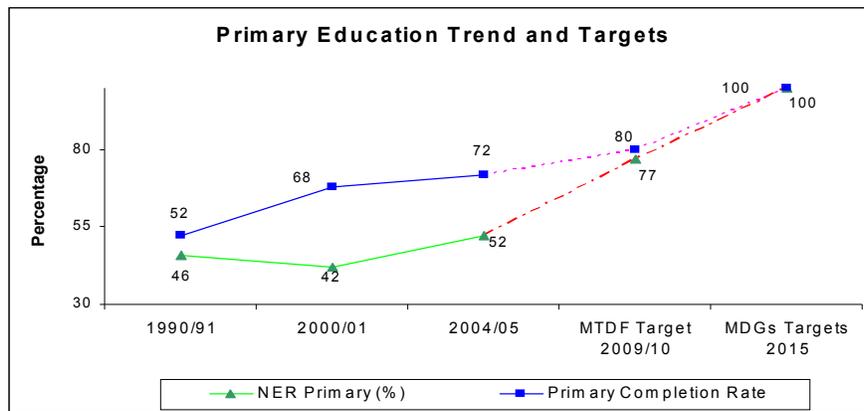
According to the Economic Survey 2008-2009,³¹ the Net Enrolment Rate (Primary) in Pakistan was only 57%. The Population

Census Report 2006-2007³² mentioned that the number of illiterates is increasing in Pakistan, which itself testifies that the practical approach towards education in Pakistan is still a day dream. The statistics released by the Govt. of Pakistan indicates that about 43% people in Pakistan are illiterate, and only 57% children of age 5-9 are enrolled in primary schools.

According to the Constitution of Pakistan,³³ literate is any person who can read newspaper and write a simple letter in any language. This theoretical definition has no practical significance and does not direct us towards promoting literacy in Pakistan.

PIDE³⁴ designed the road map to the primary education trend since 1990 till 2015.

Figure. 8: Primary Education Trend and Targets



The above graph provides an imaginary map as the achievement of MDG for education by 2015 is impossible for Pakistan to achieve as the rate of development and growth in the field of education is quite slow. Pakistan Millennium Development Goal Report³⁵ shows a glance at the net primary enrolment ratio and literacy rate in Pakistan during the last few years.

Figure. 9: Achieving Universal Education through Primary Education

Indicators	Region	2001/02	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	MDG Target (2015)
Net primary enrolment ratio (percent)	Pakistan	42	52	53	56	55	57	100
	KP	41	47	49	49	49	52	80
Completion/survival rate Grade 1 to 5 (percent)	Pakistan	57.3	67.1	72.1	54.7	52.3	54.6	100
	KP	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	76	n/a	n/a
Literacy rate (percent)	Pakistan	45	53	54	55	56	57	88
	KP	38	45	46	47	49	50	75

In the above figure, there is a big leap in the net enrolment ratio from 2009 to 2015. According to PILDAT,³⁶ we can achieve 64% literacy (10+) by the end of 2015. The projected rate of literacy and net enrolment rate in Pakistan by 2015 is given below

Figure. 10: Projected Rate of Literacy

Indicators/Year	Rates as per PSLM Survey (Pakistan Economic Survey 2009-10)			Average Annual Growth Rate	Projected Rate by 2015
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09		
Literacy Rate (10+)	55	56	57	1.818%	64
Net Enrolment Rate (Primary)	56	55	57	0.892	60.12

The above data reveals that Pakistan may need another 15 years to achieve 86% literacy rate and 38 years to achieve universal primary education (UPE).

Success in the field of education is based on several things. Unless trained teachers, proper drinking water, washrooms and spacious rooms are provided, we cannot expect to achieve 100% literacy rate by 2015 as these factors are correlated to the achievement of primary enrolment in Pakistan.

The Academy of Educational Planning and Management³⁷ revealed that 52% of the students do not have an access to room schools; 67% of the public schools are without electricity; 39% public schools do not have drinking water facilities while 41% of the schools are without latrine.

For Pakistan and all the other countries, success of most of the goals of MDGs is based on Goal No. 2- Achieving Universal Primary Education. Education is the key to success and we can achieve all the

goals, if proper education is made accessible to every individual. If we provide quality education to our future generations, then many areas can be improvised eventually. Following are the examples of countries, where education improved the conditions of all the sectors:

- Education promotes gender equality (MDG Goal 3): It is because of providing equal opportunity of education to boys and girls, women in Mali with secondary or higher education have an average of 3 children while an uneducated women have an average of 7 children.
- Education reduces child mortality (MDG Goal 4): In Indonesia, mothers with no education avoid children to have vaccination due to many misconceptions. That's why child vaccination rates are 19% when mothers have no education which increases to 68% when mothers have at least secondary school education.
- Education helps improve maternal health (MDG Goal 5): In Burkina Faso, mothers with secondary education are twice as likely to give birth in health facilities as those with no education.
- Education helps combat preventable diseases (MDG Goal 6): In Malawi, 27% of women with no education know about HIV transmission risks. For women with secondary education, the figure rises to 59%.
- Education helps ensure environmental sustainability (MDG Goal 7): More than 2.6 billion people still lack access to proper sanitation and 1.1 billion people have no regular access to clean water. As a result, 1.8 million children die from diarrhea each year.³⁸

If Pakistan adapts the education model of other countries, regardless of competition or other elements, we could expect a major growth within the next 4 years.

According to the report published in Dawn Newspaper,³⁹ the economic cost of not educating Pakistan is the equivalent of one flood every year. The only difference is that this is a self-inflicted disaster. One in ten of the world's out-of-school children are a Pakistani. There are no chances that the government will reach the millennium development goals for education by 2015. On the other hand, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are all on their way to achieving the same goals. Article 25a sets up a possible scenario where a citizen can take the government to court for not providing them access, or even be the grounds for a *Suo Moto* action. There are 26 countries poorer than Pakistan but send more

of their children to school, demonstrating the issue is not about finances, but will and articulating demand effectively.

Conclusion

Enrolment is the very first step of the ladder but it should not be considered as the only source of achievement. Enrolling children in the school can change the statistic ratio and may also help us to raise the status on global platform, but it cannot change the challenges faced by our country. Only practical education is the tool which can lead our country towards success. Hiring of trained teachers, providing basic facilities to the students, good attendance rates, timely progression through grades, and mastery of basic cognitive skills are few of the elements, we need to consider. Although the net primary enrolment rate increased from 45% in 2002 to 54% in 2006, it is pitifully short of universality because we are going on theoretical approach rather than practical approach. The ground reality is quite different than what we look in the reports. Not all enrolled children attend school regularly and not all who attend regularly complete primary schooling. Moreover, not all who complete primary schooling acquire adequate learning to be literate and numerate.

While Pakistan has made substantial headway recently in achieving theoretical dimension of the 'Education for All' Millennium Development Goal (MDG2), it still has a long way to go. We must enhance the quality of schooling and ensure they are able to achieve their full potential.

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