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**THE POST-2015 MDG AND EFA AGENDA AND
THE NATIONAL DISCOURSE ABOUT GOALS
AND TARGETS**

A CASE STUDY OF BANGLADESH

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BRAC	Building Resources across Communities
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CUE	Centre for Universal Education (Brookings Institution)
DNFE	Directorate of Non-formal Education
DPs	Development Partners
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
ELCG	Education Local Consultative Group
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GO-NGO	Government and Non-government Organisations
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPS	Government Primary Schools
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
IDA	International Development Association
IGS	Institute of Governance Studies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INFEP	Integrated Non-formal Education Programme
JBIC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation
LDC	Least Development Country
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MTMF	Medium-term Macroeconomic Framework
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPA	National Plan of Action
NFPE	Non-formal Primary Education

NSDC	National Skill Development Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme
PFM	People's Forum for MDGs (Bangladesh)
PKSF	Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (Rural Employment Support Foundation)
PMED	Primary and Mass Education Division
PPP	Public–Private Partnership
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RNGPS	Registered Non-Government Primary Schools
ROSC	Reaching Out-of-School Children
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFYP	Sixth Five Year Plan
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SME	Small and Medium-size Enterprises
SWAP	Sector-wide Approach
TLM	Total Literacy Movement
TTC	Technical Training Centre
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCEP	Under-privileged Children's Education Programme
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VTE	Vocational and Technical Education
VTI	Vocational Training Institute
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

Foreword

This national case study is intended to be a contribution to a critical analysis of the on-going negotiations about the direction and orientation for the development agenda following the 2015 MDGs and EFA deadlines. The case study is designed to explore the national dimensions of the international negotiations.

Part I – Historical Perspective on Education Policies

What have been the relations and interactions between international and national education and development policies (1970-2012)?

1. General Background

The educational system in Bangladesh consists of some 150, 000 institutions, 36 million students and almost a million teachers. Primary and secondary level institutions naturally form the bulk of the system with about 18 million students in primary education including madrasas and non-formal programmes and 12 million students at the secondary level including madrasas (BANBEIS 2011).

Participation in education has expanded remarkably in the decade of the 1990s. At the primary level, close to universal initial enrolment has been achieved, although almost 40 per cent of those enrolled drop out before completing the primary stage. Gender equality in enrolment at the primary and secondary levels is another accomplishment of the last two decades. In spite of the expansion, overall enrolment ratios remain low at the secondary (about 45 per cent of the relevant age group) and tertiary level (about 5 per cent). Effective participation measured by completion of the stage and acceptable learning achievements is much lower than what the enrolment rates may suggest (Ahmed et al. 2007).

What is the prognosis for education in Bangladesh by 2015 and by 2021, when Bangladesh will celebrate its 50th anniversary as an independent nation?

MDGs in education were defined in terms of participation and completion of primary education by all children and elimination of gender discrimination in education. These are important but modest objectives, which cannot be the totality of educational progress that Bangladesh and other developing countries would pursue during the period 2000-15 and in the decade afterwards. Nor can these objectives capture the multiple ways education must contribute to fighting poverty and achieving other national development priorities. The MDGs in education and in other areas have to be regarded as proxies or minimal conditions for development in different spheres that nations must strive for.

By the modest and minimal standards of the education MDGs, how are we doing? The EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2005 predicted bluntly that at the current trend and rate of progress, the goals of primary education for all children and elimination of gender disparities in education (beyond parity only in initial access) would not be achieved in Bangladesh by 2015. The latest GMR data (UNESCO 2012) confirm the projection made earlier. It can hardly be a consolation that our South Asian neighbours, India, Nepal and Pakistan, were also projected to be in the same precarious position (UNESCO 2004).

An adult literacy goal (EFA goal 3) of reducing illiteracy by half, a reductionist and mechanistic target, without placing it in a perspective of lifelong learning or linking it with skills development (goal 4), became a matter of controversy, with strong objections raised by civil society and education NGOs. The unresolved debate resulted in the absence of any major adult literacy initiative in Bangladesh in the last decade (see below.)

In respect of EFA goals related to early childhood education, skills development and quality of education, the absence of quantified targets and clearly spelled out strategies prevent assessment of progress against stated benchmarks. The complexities regarding objectives, required provisions and multiplicity of providers and actors in these areas had caused originally the failure to formulate specific objectives and indicate strategies in the Dakar EFA framework for action. The same complexities have thwarted national plans and programmes leading to generally poor performance, as discussed below.

2. The Basic Education Deficits

A low rate in literacy (51 per cent in 2011 by official estimate) and gender gap of over 7 per cent in this respect, and the absence of a credible and effective strategy to address the situation, and the fact that almost half of the children are deprived from a full cycle of primary education, led to the negative projections about meeting the MDG time-table. In 2012, though some progress has been made in improving intake and reducing dropout, this projection remains largely valid (BBS 2013; UNESCO 2012). Added to this are the deficiencies in quality and poor learning outcomes at all levels of education (Ahmed et al. 2007).

The constitution of independent Bangladesh adopted in 1972 provided for free and compulsory education as one of the “fundamental principles of state policy.” Article 17 of the constitution states that measures should be taken to establish “a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and [for] extending free and compulsory education to all children to such [a] stage as may be determined by law.” These words have frequently been invoked as the justification for one state-provided common primary school for all children in the country, though diversity in provisions has historically developed.

The 1974 “nationalisation” of the then existing 36,000 primary schools in the country was in the spirit of a highly “statist” interpretation of the principles of the state policy in the constitution, though a more nuanced view would be pragmatic and more defensible from a pedagogic approach. The nationalisation decision removed the role of the district and local government bodies and the involvement of the community in school management. By implication, the law discouraged non-government providers, such as institutions run by NGOs, community organisations or private providers.

In reality, since 1974, the number of primary schools more than doubled to over 80,000 and the number of students doubled to 16 million, while government primary schools increased only marginally. The new schools were categorised as registered non-government schools and received government funds for teachers’ salary support. The two types of primary schools (government and registered non-government) served about 80 per cent of the primary students. To attract children to primary school, a modest monthly stipend is paid to almost 40 percent of the children categorised as poor and free primary textbooks are distributed to all students. These incentives have raised initial student enrolment, but have reduced funding for essential quality inputs, thus affecting adversely the proportions completing primary education and achieving acceptable learning outcome. A madrasa stream at the primary level, called the *Ibtidayee*, also received government funding support. Privately managed English medium schools and “second chance” non-formal primary education run by NGOs are the other important providers of primary education.

In January 2013, the government announced the nationalisation of the 26,000 registered non-government schools in existence, departing from the *de facto* moratorium since 1974 on new government primary school. It revives the issue of how the state role in fulfilling the right to education should be carried out (See below).

The thumbnail sketch above of the primary education and literacy situation shows that government policies and programmes, including the nationalisation moves and incentive spending for stipends and free textbooks, reflect good intentions, but are inadequate for achieving even the modest MDG objectives in education. The situation at the secondary and tertiary levels and in vocational and technical education, built on a weak foundation of primary education, could not be any better.

Since the birth of Bangladesh, several national education commissions and committees were appointed at various times to formulate education policies and priorities in line with national goals and aspirations.

Beginning from the Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission report of 1974, at least half a dozen such initiatives were taken. These reports agreed largely on the diagnosis of problems and challenges and the recommendations also had many common elements. The most important and ironic common feature of the reports is that few substantive recommendations of any of the reports have been implemented (Ahmed, Ali and Khan, 2005). Whether the new education policy adopted in 2010 will have a different outcome through a systematic and serious process of implementation and monitoring of this implementation is still to be seen.

Decades of neglect in addressing major reform needs in education have resulted in an accumulation of problems, which have become deep-rooted and intractable. As a nation that has to rely primarily on its human resources to fulfil its vision of progress and development, the deficiencies in education constitute a critical risk for all its development endeavours.

The historical sketch shows four trends or continuing concerns, which characterise the development of basic education. They remain as constraints to development of education as a key component and a contributor to overall national development objectives of fighting poverty and advancing wellbeing of people.

The continuing unresolved issues, as elaborated below, are: i) an ambivalence about how the state's role and responsibility for fulfilling the right to basic education of citizens should be exercised; ii) how to move the system of primary and secondary education, which constitute the foundation of the national education system, away from a pattern of low investment and low performance; iii) deficiencies in developing and implementing workable strategies for literacy, lifelong learning and building skills and capabilities of people related to work, citizenship and personal fulfilment; and iv) problems of establishing ownership, continuity and consensus-building in policy, strategy and priority.

3. Role of State, Civil Society and Other Actors

A unitary and administrative view of state responsibility and obligation in respect of primary education undoubtedly provided the logic and motivation for the 1974 nationalisation law. As a result, arguably, the centuries old culture of community involvement in establishing and running primary schools was curbed by the law. Moreover, state management of schools nationwide led to a centralized bureaucratic system, which is difficult to make responsive to varied circumstances and needs in education delivery.

A statist mind set is reflected in various education policy statements including the latest one adopted in 2010. It says: "The process of nationalization of primary education should continue. The responsibility for primary education cannot be transferred to the private sector or NGOs." However, the policy ambiguously adds that a non-government organization or an individual can run primary school subject to approval of authorities and state regulations (Government of Bangladesh 2010).

The recent decision (January, 2013) to nationalize the non-government primary school signals a particular interpretation of state role – central government control of the system, rather than local government and community authority and accountability in education, which are also part of the governmental structure. It even ignores the constitutional provision regarding local government, which requires that public services should be planned and managed by elected representatives of the people at every level of administration (Article 59). This provision of the constitution envisaged governance of basic education more in line with what existed in the colonial period and continued until 1974 nationalisation. It was a system in which district education boards were responsible for planning and managing primary education.

The "nationalisation" approach taken reflects a bureaucratic view of school management and state role, in contrast to an educationally defensible view, by equating improvement of status and remuneration of teachers with their being designated as central government employees within the civil service structure. Should teachers' performance, incentives and social status be measured by the criteria for civil servants?

It also opens a Pandora's box – should the Ibtidayee madrasas, secondary schools at lower and higher levels, and all degree colleges, all of which receive substantial government subsidy covering their teachers' salary, also

be nationalized? The teachers unions are already out on the street with these demands. And what exactly does this achieve for quality of teaching and learning and students' learning outcomes?

What about "second chance" non-formal and alternative primary education, recognizing the reality that there will be need for such options for a long time, perhaps always? Bangladesh NGOs have pioneered a successful model of non-formal primary education (NFPE) serving on an average over a million children for the past two decades. This non-formal option has not been officially seen as a part of the national strategy for UPE and usually not included in official primary education statistics. However, a project called Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC), imitating many of the features of NFPE was initiated with donor assistance in 2006. And in PEDPIII, second chance primary education has been mentioned as one of the UPE strategies. In spite of negative evaluation of the ROSC project, mainly arising from education authorities' capacity limitations to manage, support professionally and monitor such an approach, a second phase of it has been started in 2012 and a relatively large second chance programme following the ROSC management model (run this time by the Bureau of Non-formal Education) has been proposed by the government. The logical conclusion of working out a genuine partnership with NGOs, which have been providing this service effectively, has not been reached. It appears that a restrictive interpretation of state responsibility as centralized government management of the activity may prevail, unless PEDP III external funders object.

The state role is equated with only central government control for systems of education and other services for a population of 160 million, the seventh most populous country in the world. A unitary system of governance and public administration has kept the spheres of activities limited for local government bodies which exist now, such as Union Councils with an elected body for a collection of villages, and the Upazila (subdistrict) Council, about 500 in total, with an elected body consisting of a number of Unions. The local government law also provides for elected District Council, 64 in all for the country, but the government has stalled on establishing the elected district councils, because members of parliament and central bureaucracy look upon this as undermining their authority and influence. In fact, as mentioned above, the present organizational arrangements in education and other public services appear to be in violation of the national constitution.

In the same vein, there are needs and opportunities for public-private partnership, especially in TVET, informal skills development and apprenticeship programmes, which so far have not been pursued with vigour. The National Skills Development Policy adopted in 2011 considers this to be important. Moving in this direction will require a change in the long-established mind set and practices in government operations, which have been averse to genuine partnership and flexibility, and creativity that it requires.

4. A Low-cost and Low-yield System of Education

Bangladesh has one of the lowest cost education systems, even compared to other least developed countries. This is reflected in the fairly extensive coverage of basic education including primary education and literacy programmes achieved with the lowest ratio of GNP (around two per cent in recent years) devoted to education in the South Asia region and one of the lowest among all developing countries. Per student primary education public expenditure is under \$100. The low per capita and total cost is no reason for satisfaction, because, educational quality - measured in terms of learning outcome, the pedagogic process and essential inputs - is clearly the victim of this situation.

Household Expenditure Survey and Education Watch data indicate that per capita household expenditures amount to about the same as per student government recurring expenditure in primary education. (*Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Household Expenditure Survey, 1996; CAMPE, Education Watch, 2000*). The amount of household expenditures in different sub-sectors of education raises policy implications regarding mobilization and effective use of resources. One issue is potential of combining public and other resources to promote equity in education; and promoting public-private partnerships on policy and programme development and in improving quality in educational services.

Quality improvement, desperately needed at all levels of education, will require additional resources. It is in this context that civil society bodies and professional circles raised the demand to increase the share of GDP for

education allocated in the government budget to 6 per cent in the next five to seven years, with commensurate increase in the education share of the government budget. Education finance arrangements reinforce the pattern of inequity in the education system. In primary education, it may be argued that the expenditures are widely distributed, but effective spending, counting who actually complete the primary stage, is far from equitable. Incentive payments in the form of stipends both at the primary and secondary levels add up to one-third of total development expenditure in the education sector. The question that arises is whether the benefits in participation, equity and quality improvement would not be better achieved by spending directly on improving inputs and performance in school, rather than making a cash transfer to families (Knowles, 2001).

5. Workable Strategies for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Recognising that “education is obviously a continuing process, spanning the years from earliest infancy through adulthood and necessarily involving a great variety of methods and sources,” Coombs and Ahmed, in their book published in 1974, distinguished between the three modes (of formal, non-formal and informal education) as “analytically useful, and generally in accord with current realities” (Coombs and Ahmed 1974).

Having made the analytical distinction, the authors noted that formal and non-formal education often bore similarities in pedagogical forms and methods, but generally differed in their sponsorship and institutional arrangements, educational objectives and the groups they served. Coombs and Ahmed went on to argue that “the need now is to visualise the various educational activities as potential components of a coherent and flexible overall learning system that must be steadily strengthened, diversified and linked more closely to the needs and processes of national development.” They underscored the emerging consensus that nations should strive to build “lifelong learning systems,” offering every individual diverse learning options throughout her or his lifetime (ibid p 9).

A broadly conceived non-formal education programme serving diverse learning needs of the population, known as the Integrated Non-Formal Education Programme (INFEP), was planned in 1992. INFEP envisaged a spectrum of activities ranging from early childhood education, non-formal primary education for dropouts and those who had crossed the entry age for primary school, and adult literacy and continuing education.

In the end, activities only in the area of adult literacy were initiated under INFEP in collaboration with NGOs. Resource limitations and lack of appreciation of and commitment to lifelong learning among decision-makers prompted this choice, adopting a conventional “alphabetisation” focused approach to literacy. In 1995, INFEP was replaced by a more regular management structure for NFE with the establishment of the Directorate of Non-formal Education (DNFE) under the division, now a separate Ministry, of Primary and Mass Education — MOPME. The activities of the directorate remained confined to launching and managing a literacy campaign, called the Total Literacy Movement (TLM). The adoption of a restrictive view of NFE, limited to basic literacy was also accompanied by the government’s decision to exclude NGOs from direct involvement in TLM. The TLM target was to reach the population in the age-range of 11 to 45 years and raise the adult literacy rate from 35 per cent in the mid-’90s to 62 per cent by 2000 through six-month long conventional literacy courses. According to official statistics, the target for literacy rate was exceeded by offering a literacy course to 17 million youth and adults.

However, widespread scepticism was expressed about the government’s claim. Independent surveys, such as the Education Watch Report of 2002, showed that the adult literacy rate in the country had improved somewhat in the previous decade to reach 41 per cent in the age group of 11 years and above. The study also found that TLM had made almost no contribution to this improvement. The increase in literacy rate was achieved mainly through the expansion of primary education (CAMPE, 2003). Poor outcome from DNFE efforts perhaps led to the government’s decision to close down the directorate itself in July 2003, although the reason for the decision was never publicly explained.

A degree of diversity in non-formal education in the country was and is being maintained through the NGOs’ initiatives and efforts. Non-formal primary education on a substantial scale has been carried out by NGOs. The largest of these programmes is offered by BRAC serving at a time about 1.5 million children and adolescents

between the ages of 8 and 14 years. BRAC, in fact, developed and pioneered the non-formal delivery of primary education, which would be usually seen as an essential component of formal education, and has been internationally acclaimed and imitated widely. Non-formal or alternative primary education delivery methods gained acceptance and legitimacy because of NGO performance in this area. However, as noted above, the attempt to take over and implement the approach under direct government control is likely to compromise the outcomes of the approach.

Other non-formal educational activities of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (successor to DNFE established in 2005) and by NGOs include basic general education combined with skill training for adolescents and youths who had dropped out from school or had never been enrolled in one. There are programmes in early childhood development and pre-school education with community participation and contribution, and dependent on external assistance. All of these have been on a relatively small scale, serving only a tiny proportion of the potential clientele. The NGOs' activities have not benefited from an explicit policy of support or financial encouragement from the government.

Since the debatable performance of TLM, the literacy effort has fallen into hard times, even though almost half of the adults remain illiterate. Substantially larger proportions are illiterate among women and the rural population. There has been no serious effort to analyse the lessons from past. What has been learned in Bangladesh and elsewhere suggests that a workable strategy should include community learning centres as the base, motivated and trained instructors, relevant learning content, participants who are sufficiently motivated rather than enlisted merely because of a national campaign to meet central numerical targets. Above all, dedicated NGOs and community organisations must be actively involved in running the community learning centres.

A nationwide network of community learning centres under local government auspices with active involvement of NGOs and community organizations could be the vehicle for life-long learning, complementing formal education. Promoting functional skills and meeting genuine learning needs on a sustainable basis could be the aim, and programmes designed and objectives defined accordingly. Instead of adopting such an approach, successive education authorities, backed by populist political opinion, put forward the unrealistic and not particularly meaningful goal of "eradicating" illiteracy within a short time through a campaign approach. In the end, the government's Finance Ministry and external donors remained unconvinced about funding such an effort.

6. Skills Development Challenges

Very limited opportunities for organized technical and vocational education and training (TVET) for the size of the population are the defining characteristic of this sub-sector. TVET enrolment is estimated to be fewer than 2 per cent of post-primary formal education enrolment. There is a wide array of informal skill development through on-the-job experience and traditional apprenticeship that has no link with the formal training system. Some informants were of the view that the national economy would come to a grinding halt without the informal and traditional skill development network (Ahmed, Ali and Khan 2005).

Formal TVET serves mainly young males who have completed at least the eighth grade. This rules out those who do not survive in the education system up to grade 9, mostly the poor. Secondly, failure to diversify its clientele and to make the programmes more flexible, adaptable and responsive to market needs and geared to the informal economy means that VTE is failing to help the poor improve their employment and income (CAMPE 2013).

A recently introduced vocational-technical stream, after grade 8, runs counter to general international experience that shows that "vocalationalizing" formal secondary schools raises the cost of the school without corresponding benefit in skill development or better employment prospects for students. International experience also suggests that the most useful vocational /occupational preparation in the secondary school is building a sound foundation of communication skills, mathematics and basic science, which make young people trainable for the employment market (JBIC 2002, 63-64). One of the National Education Commissions (GOB

2004) recommended that secondary education up to class 10 should be one unified stream with adequate focus on communication skills, science and mathematics for all students. As in the case of many policy recommendations, this has not been followed through seriously. Therefore, at present streaming students into different largely irreversible tracks of science, humanities, and vocational-technical begins after grade 8.

The most appropriate way to look at the quality of TVET is to judge it from the point of view of external effectiveness. This sub-sector, more than any other, should prove its worth by enabling students to cash in on the benefits of education and training through employment and income. Public sector vocational and technical education is regarded as disconnected from the formal and informal job market. The centralized management of the institutions throughout the country is based on standard curricula, courses, and organizational arrangements that limit interaction with local entrepreneurs and employers. Placement rates for VTI and TTC graduates were 40 to 65 per cent, and “unemployment is also common among graduates of polytechnics” (World Bank 2000.Vol. III, 9).

Non-governmental organizations such as UCEP (Under-privileged Children’s Education Program) appear to be confronting the quality and effectiveness problems better than the public sector programmes. UCEP has a high course completion and job placement rate. Cost per trainee completing the course in UCEP is 25 to 40 per cent lower than in public institutions (JBIC 2002, 65-66). This pragmatic model has useful lessons for viable skills development programmes.

In summary, a focus on results reflecting defined learning outcomes need to guide the efforts to improve quality. Key quality inputs such as teachers, learning materials, and essential facilities need to be looked at from this outcome perspective. Assessment of learning of students and performance of schools need to reflect the outcome orientation. The inputs and processes need to be managed and capacities need to be built in respect of teachers, curricular contents and learning materials in the sub-sectors of the system from the same perspective of results and outcomes. How will the workable strategies linking literacy, lifelong learning and skills development be developed and put into effect? How can the fragmented approach and the absence of a holistic view be overcome? If government budget allocations are an indicator of government priority, education and learning opportunities outside conventional formal education are almost wholly dependent on external assistance and carried out as projects without any claim on regular public revenue. This tendency appears to persist in recent or anticipated externally assisted projects in TVET. The first requirement, therefore, is to recognise at the policy-making level that this is a problem area that has to be given a high level of attention. This recognition has to be followed by appropriate policy development efforts, consensus building and continuity in pursuit of policy objectives, discussed below (CAMPE 2013).

7. Policy Ownership, Continuity and Consensus Building: National and International Dimensions

The continuing concerns and problem areas in educational development and difficulties of finding effective resolutions point to dilemmas in policy development, policy ownership, building consensus on key objectives and strategies and their effective implementation.

The history of educational policy statements not acted upon and almost a counter-productive nature of the initiatives in aggravating political divisiveness have given rise to scepticism about formal policy exercises. A civil society policy brief before the 2001 national election recommended “a pragmatic approach to solving problems based on experience and relevant international lessons, without the fanfare of a new policy, with ample dialogue and participation.” (Centre for Policy Dialogue, “Policy Brief on Education,” CPD Task Force Report, August 2001)

The difficulties in consensus building are rooted in the socio-economic divisions, power structure and political dynamics, which have resulted in the co-existence of three parallel streams of the vernacular general education, the religion-based madrasas, and the English medium schools. The three streams are patronised respectively by the lower-middle and middle class families, children of the poor families (with provision for

food and accommodation in the Quomi or indigenous madrasas), and the more affluent families in urban areas. (IGS 2012).

Political divisiveness has been compounded by the bureaucracy and the teachers' unions that have emerged as powerful interest groups as public employees since nationalisation of primary schools. They have resisted reforms that could lead to greater accountability, enforcement of performance criteria and community oversight (IGS 2012, 53).

It has been argued that the stalemate in policy consensus and the vacuum in this respect have opened the door for others, such as the external development partners, to influence and intervene in policy domains, disproportionately beyond what may be expected from the size of their financial contribution. (IGS, *ibid*)

The contribution from external development partners (DPs), roughly one-third of the government's annual development budget in recent years in primary and secondary education, has given the DPs considerable leverage on policies and strategies in educational development. Apart from adding to the resource pot, this partnership has helped to bring an international perspective and lessons from diverse experiences into the education development process of Bangladesh. DPs have helped to re-direct attention to international consensus in education development priorities such as the EFA framework, the MDGs and the focus on combating poverty represented by the PRSP exercises. (Ahmed, Ali, and Khan 2005, 28)

Efforts to bring about reforms in the government policies and practices have been complemented to a limited extent by donor collaboration with NGOs and research/academic institutions outside the public sector (such as support to CAMPE, BRAC, Ahsania Mission, CPD, IED of BRAC University etc.). A clearly articulated strategy on the part of donors that recognizes the potential of non-government entities in professional capacity development in the national system and strengthening and expanding public private cooperation in this respect is still missing.

Funding of projects outside the public sector, especially to NGOs, with relatively small grants, has been found to be difficult and costly. Ideas for a common sectorial or multi-sectorial funding channel or facility have been talked about, but a consensus is yet to emerge (Ahmed, Ali and Khan 2005, 28-29).

The articulation of global development cooperation thrust focusing on basic learning needs through the EFA movement launched in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand led to a shift in development cooperation towards support for universal primary education. This was reinforced in the Dakar World Forum on Education in 2000 and inclusion in MDG in the same year of the primary education and gender targets.

The international goals and strategies influenced national policies and priorities as well as priorities in the portfolio of external assistance of major multilateral and bilateral aid agencies. It can be argued that the global formulation of goals and targets brought about a degree of common understanding about the educational goals and strategies between DPs and the national government. (See Table 1)

Table 1. Influence of Global Priorities and National Policy in Education in Bangladesh

Global Goals	National Policy Measures in Bangladesh	Major Development Cooperation Initiatives
<p>World Conference on EFA, Jomtien, 1990</p> <p><u>EFA Goals:</u></p> <p>Goal 1: Universal access to learning</p> <p>Goal 2: A focus on equity</p> <p>Goal3: Emphasis on learning outcomes</p> <p>Goal 4: Broadening the means and concepts of basic education</p> <p>Goal 5: Enhancing the environment for learning</p> <p>Goal 6: Strengthening partnerships by 2000</p>	<p>1. Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990: Compulsory primary education programme introduced in 68 upazilas in 1992 and extended to all over the country by 1993</p> <p>2. A separate Primary and Mass Education was created in 1992 under the Prime Minister's Office.</p> <p>3. EFA National Plan of Action I (NPA I) 1991-2000 was prepared "to enhance both the qualitative and quantitative dimensions and also to take up other feasible support programmes to attain the EFA 2000 targets." The actions in NPA 1 were under two programme categories – primary education and mass education.</p>	<p>1991-96: General Education Project to support primary education expansion, infrastructure and quality – different components supported by IDA, ADB, Norway, SIDA, UNICEF, UNFPA, Germany and CIDA.</p> <p>1993-2000: Food for Education Project supported by WFP (replaced later by cash stipends).</p> <p>1997-2002: First primary Education Development programme supported by ADB, IDA, Islamic development Bank, Germany, Sweden, UK, UNFPA and UNICEF –distinct projects funded through separate agreements.</p>
<p>World Education Forum Dakar, 2000</p> <p><u>Dakar Framework for Action</u></p> <p>Goal 1: Expand early childhood care and education</p> <p>Goal 2: Provide free and compulsory primary education for all.</p> <p>Goal 3: Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults.</p> <p>Goal 4: Increase adult literacy by 50 per cent.</p> <p>Goal 5: Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015</p> <p>Goal 6: Improve the quality of education</p>	<p>1. NPA II 2003-15: All primary school-age children (6-10 years), boys and girls, including ethnic minorities, disadvantaged and disabled, should be enrolled and successfully complete the primary cycle and achieve quality education with gender equality.</p> <p>2. PMED was upgraded to an independent Ministry in 2003.</p> <p>3. Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2005</p> <p>(An 8 point strategy – item 3 was Quality Education at primary, secondary and vocational stages with an emphasis on girls)</p> <p><u>Follow-up actions</u></p> <p>National Education Policy 2010</p> <p>Sixth Five Year National Development Plan (2011-15)</p>	<p>2004-2011: Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) – a SWAP covering government supported primary education (excluding madrasas, NGOs etc.) – the first attempt to apply a sector approach with a common basket of donor funding from 11 donors – ADB, IDA, UK, EU, Netherlands, Norway, SIDA, JICA, CIDA, AusAid, and UNICEF</p> <p>2011-2016: Third Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP III) – 10 funders are as for PEDP II except Norway.</p> <p>Projects on Secondary Education with main support from ADB and IDA.</p> <p>Projects on Vocational and Technical Education supported by EU, ADB, WB and ILO</p> <p>[MDG and EFA served as overall framework for considering and guiding national education priorities and programmes and a basis for justifying</p>
<p><u>The Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015 Related to</u></p>		

Global Goals	National Policy Measures in Bangladesh	Major Development Cooperation Initiatives
<u>Education (UN 2000)</u> Goal 1: Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger Goal 2: Achieving universal primary education Goal 3: Promoting gender equality and empowering women Goal 8: Creating a global partnership for development	National Skills Development Policy 2011	external assistance, rather than directly leading to specific education projects.]

Source: Adapted from IGS, 2012, Table 8, p.58.

A National EFA Plan of Action (NPA), following the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All was prepared in 1995, outlining plans for EFA up to year 2000. It turned out to be an expression of ambitions, based partially on government targets, rather than a plan that was followed through for implementation. (Government of Bangladesh, PMED 1995) A similar document (NPA2) was prepared and was finalised in 2003, following the Dakar World Education Forum 2000, for the period up to 2015 (Ahmed, Ali, Khan 2005, 10). NPA 2 was also an expression of desirable goals and aspirations, similar to NPA 1, rather than an operational plan that was seriously and systematically used to design programme activities and allocate budgetary resources either from domestic or external sources. These documents appear to have been for international consumption prepared in response to international demand for such documents.

Programmatic priorities and planning were determined by elaborate negotiations between DPs and the government regarding scope, size and objectives and targets of cooperation and external and domestic contribution. A process of project or programme (the terminology used in what has come to be known as the sector-wide approach) is followed with extensive involvement of the donors with technical assistance support and teams of officials from donor agencies and consultants involved in the process. Personnel from both national and external agencies seem to be comfortable with this arrangement and find it an efficient way of getting the job done and earn brownie points for completing project negotiations, committing loan or grant funds, and achieving disbursement of funds.

Meanwhile, critical policy concerns, complex issues, and long-standing structural and operational problems that require in depth analysis, high level policy and political dialogue, stakeholders dialogue, making hard choices and indeed taking calculated risks are ignored. These are the kind of unresolved problems noted above which remain neglected despite rhetoric to the contrary in international discourse and in the project documents prepared by consultants, who themselves are not responsible or accountable for implementing the projects. In fact, there is a logic and pragmatism on the part of both national and international officials in taking the path of least resistance, not probing into problems too deeply or promote longer term change, the outcome of which cannot be shown within a relatively short time horizon of typically short tenures of national civil servants and international agency personnel in one job. A parallel to this is found in the short-term focus and aversion to go deeper into roots of problems among policy decision-makers in the government, whose line of vision is generally confined to the next general election. Thus the interests and inclinations of politicians and national and international bureaucracy coalesce, and civil society and academic critiques of the surface skimming of problems tend to fall into deaf ears.

The shortfall in quantity and quality in achieving EFA and education MDG is the situation we face despite the cooperation activities supported by external donors through different phases since the 1990s. There is no scope within the limits of this report to probe deeper into various direct and underlying causes.

However, it may be appropriate to comment on two related aspects of educational development in the period since 2000 to understand better where we are today and what the prospects are for the post-2015 era. The first one is the modality of cooperation described as the programme approach or the sector-wide approach, which has been justified and advocated as a means of addressing better the policy and strategy issues raised earlier. The second issue is the political economy of education and development decision-making that links or fails to link effectively the development and education priorities.

8. SWAPs and Multiple Provisions in Primary Education

The government's ambivalence about the state role and multiple provision for primary education constrained the design of PEDP II, limiting it to government primary schools (GPS) and registered non-government primary schools (RNGPS), although it was called a sector-wide approach for national primary education development. The same questions around the diversity of provision and government/donor roles in this regard have surfaced again in relation to PEDP III, the successor programme of PEDP II.

Civil society position

A CAMPE position paper prepared as a contribution to the formulation of the PEDP III programme made suggestions for the next phase of development in primary education. CAMPE agreed that the spirit and principles of SWAP should guide the planning of the next phase of UPE development. It however argued, in order to make a complex multi-faceted programme with multiple providers work, the case for the development of a matrix comprising workable options in policy priorities, major programme components, implementation mechanisms and responsibilities and financing mechanisms, rather than trying to fit these elements into a pre-conceived template under the label of SWAP. Flexibility in management and financing arrangements was also necessary to be allowed with diversity in provisions, it was advocated. Such a matrix was proposed to be the starting point for a dialogue (Sabur and Ahmed 2011, 182-185).

The basic premise underlying the CAMPE position was a vision for Bangladesh as a middle-income country, democratic, progressive, and pluralistic, with a stake for all citizens in it. This vision required universal access to a unified and equitable primary school system of high quality, substantially expanded opportunities for secondary and tertiary education, and numerous opportunities for acquisition of skills for a globally competitive labour market.

The goals for primary education in the context of human resource and national development priorities had to be consistent with creation of a knowledge-based economy and combating poverty based on equity, transparency and accountability in provision of education and other human resource services. The values of community cohesion, democratic practices and norms, human rights, and gender equity had to be reflected in the provisions and plans for primary and complementary basic education that would expand the opportunity for lifelong learning. Conditions had to be created for the government, NGOs, broader civil society, the community and other stakeholders to share the responsibility for achieving these goals (CAMPE 2008, 13).

SWAP experience and lessons not learned

In practice, the SWAP template emphasised, at the urging of major lenders and donors, the financing modality of pooled funding, ruled out "projects" within a common programme framework, and regarded government agencies as the exclusive recipient of external support, excluding NGOs and other non-government bodies. Also in reality, SWAP, under PEDP II and PEDP III, has been a *sub-sector* approach. A total sector approach in education has not been developed or applied anywhere, because of the wide diversity and multiplicity of

components and objectives and complexity of organisational structures that comprise a national educational system.

PEDP II experience shows that the inherent dilemmas of development cooperation persisted under SWAp arrangements. The capacity constraints of governments in setting directions and priorities and managing resources for results and the external agencies' limitations in compensating for these constraints or helping overcome these have combined to pose high obstacles. This is so despite the SWAp rhetoric of national capacity building, and harmonisation and alignment among external agencies themselves and with the national priorities.

Progress has stalled in respect of issues critical to the PEDP mission of quality with equity and inclusion, which required policy decisions and commitment of the government, beyond the Directorate and the Ministry. Examples of these critical areas are: a) significant enhancement of public resources for primary education commensurate with equity-with-quality objectives, b) human resource policy and management regarding teachers and administrative personnel in primary education, including the formation of a professional sub-cadre within the civil service structure, for primary education management, and c) genuine decentralisation with increased authority and accountability for planning and management at local and school level. The SWAp modality as it was applied in PEDP II, and being applied in PEDP III, could not effectively address these issues, and in turn, these impinged negatively on how the modality worked.

Arguably, when many substantive policy issues have to be resolved and basic institutional and organisational reforms are needed to be undertaken based on agreed understanding of and commitment to these reforms, a SWAp that concentrated more on modalities and coordination of managing external financial assistance, than on substantive changes in the system, is not necessarily the most effective approach.

PEDP III has not taken on board these lessons and has been designed without basic change or adjustment on the SWAp template applied in PEDP II. If anything, PEDP III has made the financial support modality more complex by introducing what is called disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs) for release of donor funds (GOB, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, PEDPIII, 2011). Implementation of PEDP III is likely to be stymied seriously unless some flexibility can be incorporated in the disbursement mechanisms without sacrificing basic objectives of the programme in the course of upcoming mid-term assessment and dialogue in late 2013.

The policy dilemmas and accumulated problems of the education system as well as public concern about human resource development have generated a demand at political and policy-making level for rethinking national education policies and strategies. National parliamentary elections are occasions when political manifestos containing position on national issues are announced. To what extent these political pronouncements are seriously and consistently followed up by the political parties is another question. The experience is not particularly salutary in the case of Bangladesh as the discussion above indicates. The parliamentary election in December 2008 after an interregnum of two years of military-backed caretaker government provided the occasion for stating political positions and goals on educational development as discussed below.

9. The Political Economy of Development and Education Decision-making

One way of looking at the interaction and links between priorities in policy objectives for development in general and the education sector is to examine the overall development plans and strategies and how these incorporate or relate to education objectives and strategies. Bangladesh, since 1973, when the First Five Year National Development Plan was launched, went through five successive five year plans up to 2002. These national development plans followed the pattern in many developing countries with a relatively strong public sector role in economic management. The plans presented the macro-economic frame of resources, overall development goals and priorities as well as major sectorial goals and strategies with a medium-term five-year time-line. They provided a basis and served as the guide for formulation and implementation of the capital investment and other "development" components, separately from recurrent government operations, of the annual national budget. However, since 2003, at the behest of World Bank and IMF, along with many client

countries of the International Financial Institutions, Bangladesh shifted to Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) as the instrument for planning and managing national development programmes.

In the late 1990s, the mandates of the World Bank and IMF and how these worked to promote development and fight poverty in poor countries came under widespread criticism. The Asian financial crisis in 1997 brought economies of Southeast Asia including showcase ones of Indonesia and Thailand to near-collapse. The negative view of the structural adjustment programmes as the recipe for economic prosperity intensified, because it wreaked havoc for the poor, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. The new president of World Bank, James Wolfensohn, put forward the idea of the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) in 1999 to underscore an explicit focus on poverty reduction in development assistance. Poverty reduction strategies were, at the same time, a concern for the World Bank team that was preparing the World Development Report 2000/01, *Attacking Poverty*. (Christiansen and Hovland 2003)

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) initiative was viewed as bringing together the interconnected concerns about effective development cooperation. PRSP was linked with debt relief for Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), and the condition for countries' access to concessional loan from the International Development Association (IDA) and to Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) of IMF. Signing up for PRSP, therefore, was required for poor countries, if they wished to receive assistance from any of these sources as well as many bilateral agencies, which followed the lead of the Washington-based International Financial Institutions.

The PRSP regime

Bangladesh prepared an interim PRSP (I-PRSP) document titled *Bangladesh: A National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development* (GOB 2003) signalling the government's acceptance of the PRSP regime urged upon it by World Bank and IMF.

Development planning and management in Bangladesh in the decade since 2000 has been mostly under the PRSP regime since the decision to adopt this approach in 2002 by the right-of-centre government led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) then in power. It was argued that the five-year planning process with national input-output accounting, and public sector dominance of the development agenda and its implementation smacked of socialistic and centralised control of the economy. In its place, a strategic direction-setting with a broad objective of poverty reduction and a three-year rolling plan adjusted each year was less rigid and ideologically closer to the "free market" approach favoured by IFIs. As noted earlier, one important motivation of IFIs was to deflect the barrage of adverse views faced by them from developing countries in the late 1990s about their strategies and performance in improving the plight of the world's poor.

What difference did PRSP bring about in the substance and form of development planning; were there any significant change in the way development goals and strategies in general formulated and education and human development components defined and implemented; and did the re-adoption of five-year planning portend any important change in the prevailing pattern?

It has been argued in PRSP approach that a conceptualisation of development planning with poverty reduction as the focus would have a prominent equity thrust and human capacity and skills building would be a central element in it. Combating discrimination and disparities in different forms arising from geographical, ethnic, cultural, language and gender factors or personal attributes such as disabilities or special needs would be a high priority on the poverty reduction agenda. Governance and management would be characterised by stakeholder participation, transparency, strong accountability and responsive decision-making at the point of or close to where the beneficiaries are located. These characteristics and priorities would be reflected in resource allocations, and their use and management.

What has been the reality? A quick review of the process of preparing PRSPs would be relevant. The goals, strategies, expressed priorities and articulation of links and interaction among components, underlying

premises and assumptions as well as implementation and monitoring mechanisms would help provide an understanding, if not definitive answers, of what may have transpired..

The preparation of PRSPs – Mechanisms, processes and participants

The task forces or committees given the responsibility by GOB for overseeing the PRSP process have been essentially inter-ministerial committees of officials, which did not include representatives from the civil society, the private sector and development NGOs. Individual consultants were employed for preparing inputs and thematic papers for different sectorial areas, rather than having institutional involvement of research and academic institutions. The consultant inputs were not made public and it was difficult to ascertain how and to what extent these inputs were reflected in the final documents (CPD 2003).

A civil society consultation process for preparation of PRSPs was required in the guidelines given by World Bank and IMF. The consultation process was taken up with a degree of enthusiasm by holding of meetings in different parts of the country. For the first PRSP, even a development NGO, BRAC, was given the task of organising consultations in divisional and some district cities outside the capital.

For example, during the month of January 2002, the PRSP team held a total of 22 consultation meetings in collaboration with BRAC. Out of these 22 meetings two were held at the national level and one was held separately with the donors. Of the two national level meetings, one was held with the government officials and another with NGOs and civil society. The meetings were quite open-ended with no written inputs. The PRSP team members took note of the discussions held and BRAC prepared a summary report.

No systematic consultation was held with members of the parliament or political parties, except that documents were distributed individually to some political leaders and MPs. An exception was the revised PRSP II. This was presented to the newly elected Parliament in 2009 for a brief half-day discussion and comment. A formal approval or endorsement of Parliament was not considered necessary.

The consultation meetings were mostly informal in the sense that no formal minutes of these meetings were prepared and sent to the participants of these meetings. The PRSP team assured that the views and recommendations from the consultation would be reflected in revised documents. However, since nothing was made public, it is difficult to assess to what extent these were reflected in the revised drafts, how conflicting suggestions were resolved or whose recommendations got priority. A CDP analysis of summary of civil society observations and recommendations and their reflection on the IPRSP document showed that out of 22 recommendations recorded, 2 were fully reflected in the document, 10 were partially reflected, and 10 were not reflected or not addressed. (CPD 2003, see Annex 1)

The perception of a large section of people is that the PRSP is the traditional IMF and World Bank recipe for reforms that must be accepted in order to access their resources. "The PRSP is seen as the sugar coating for the reforms process and may face the same fate as the earlier generation of unowned reforms"(CPD 2003, 53-54).

The main contents and components of PRSPs

IPRSP. The Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003), prepared in some haste to meet IFIs conditions for access to poverty reduction facilities, recognised many roots and multidimensional characteristics of poverty. It proposed five broad policy and institutional components to constitute the antipoverty strategy to be followed. The proposed five strategic directions were:

- (i) Promoting pro-poor economic growth for increasing income and employment of the poor;
- (ii) Fostering human development of the poor for raising their capability through education, health, nutrition and social interventions;

- (iii) Supporting women's advancement and closing gender gaps in development;
- (iv) Improving social protection measures for the poor, especially women, against anticipated and unanticipated income/consumption shocks through targeted and other efforts; and
- (v) Promoting participatory governance for enhancing voice of the poor and improving non-material dimensions of well-being including security, power and social inclusion by improving the performance of anti-poverty institutions and removing institutional hurdles to social mobility.

The Paper also mentioned that policies and actions would be designed to reach out to the poorest and the remote rural areas, which were vulnerable to adverse ecological process (including *chars* and river erosion affected areas) and those with high concentrations of socially disadvantaged and marginal ethnic groups.

A Medium Term Macroeconomic Framework (MTMF) was prepared for facilitating the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy. The framework showed the link between national accounts, balance of payments and monetary and fiscal accounts. It also provided a budgetary expenditure framework indicating the public resource envelope and expenditure pattern required to achieve the desired growth and poverty reduction targets.

PRSPI. It emphasized that poverty alleviation was a multifaceted struggle. Hence, it called for a multi-front war; the major elements of it were described under four major strategic blocks and four supporting strategies under which various measures and actions could be grouped. The substantive areas or strategic blocks of action were:

- Macroeconomic policy and action to ensure rapid growth with particular focus on stable macroeconomic balances, improved regulatory environment, higher private investment and increased inflow of FDIs, effective trade and competition policies, and, pro-poor and gender sensitive budgetary process;
- Critical sectorial priorities to maximize pro-poor benefits from the growth process with special emphasis on the rural, agricultural, informal and SME sectors, improved connectivity through rural electrification, roads, and telecommunications;
- Expanding and improving safety net measures to protect the poor, especially women, against anticipated and unanticipated income/consumption shocks through targeted and other efforts; and
- Human development, giving priority to the poor for raising their capability through education, health, sanitation and safe water, nutrition and social interventions;

The four areas of supportive strategies were:

- Participation and empowerment of the poor, especially women, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as disabled, ethnic minorities, ecologically vulnerable;
- Promoting good governance through improving implementation capacity, promoting local governance, tackling corruption, enhancing access to justice for the poor, and improving sectorial governance;
- Improving service-delivery in the areas of basic needs; and
- Caring for environment and its sustainability (GOB 2005, XXI).

It asserted that unlocking the agency and potential of people required “an optimal mix of public action, private initiatives and community mobilization.” The “policy triangle” as expressed in the description of strategies above, consisted of pro-poor economic growth, human development and good governance (ibid.)

Among the key issues identified for fleshing out the strategies, two were about giving prominence to the link between employment and the “meso-economy” and higher priority to quality education.

About bridging employment and meso-economy, it was noted that nearly a million young people were joining the labour force every year and with an employment-GDP elasticity of only 0.34 (i.e., economic growth of 1 per cent would increase employment by 0.34 per cent), employment demanded the highest strategic attention. This challenge called for attention to: i) increasing wage employment, ii) increasing real wages, iii) increasing self-employment opportunities, iv) increasing labour productivity, and v) improving terms of trade for the products of labour particularly in agriculture and the informal sector. Policy cue had to be taken from a “coming of-age” of the meso-economy: formal and informal activities in service, trade, construction and small industries proliferating in the rural market centres arising from agricultural growth and remittance income, among other factors. It was said that this meso-economy dynamics so far had been bereft of policy attention in respect of the multi-faceted employment challenge (GOB 2005, xxviii).

On quality education, it was mentioned that achievements in access were not necessarily translating into quality achievements. A paradigm shift towards attention to quality, but retaining the focus on equity was considered an urgent necessity. It was seen to be necessary to move away in the development of the quality agenda at primary, secondary and vocational levels from top-down approaches to “an analytically sound reading of the ground realities of school, community and administrative environments in which they are situated.” (ibid., xxix)

It is interesting that the observations on the priority to employment and quality education, pertinent by themselves, did not include any mention of the importance of links and mutual interaction between the two.

PRSP II, titled *Steps towards Change: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II (NASPR-Revised)* for the period 2009-11, follows closely the structure and content of PRSP I. The strategy framework for the second PRSP consists of five strategic blocks and five supporting strategies. They are the same ones in the first PRSP plus an additional item in both categories. A strategic block was added on “essential infrastructure for pro-poor growth.” Similarly, an additional item under supporting strategies was “enhancing productivity and efficiency through science and technology.”

The revised NSAPR emphasized policy continuity and consideration to sustained efforts towards achieving MDGs and the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Development Goals (SDGs). Unlike PRSP I, the second version was placed in the National Parliament on 15 September, 2009 for comments and brief discussion (GOB 2009).

An item under critical areas of pro-poor growth was “promoting decent employment.” A comprehensive employment guideline would include as core components:

- (i) creating employment opportunities in rural economy,
- (ii) expanding employment opportunities for wage labour in industries,
- (iii) providing credit and training for self-employment,
- (iv) promoting subcontracting arrangements between large enterprises and SMEs, and
- (v) providing special training arrangements for facilitating export of labour. The labour policy would be reviewed with a view to re-defining minimum wage, removal of discrepancy between male and female

wages for same work and productivity, and better protection of the rights of workers and trade unions. (GOB 2009, xvi)

A new element foreseen in PRSP II was a job creation programme for those who were by-passed by the normal growth process. A programme entitled Employment Generation for the Hard Core Poor would be introduced to create 4.9 million man-months of employment in FY2010. This employment would be created through public works programmes, micro-credit and employment-based social safety nets (ibid.).

Under the strategic block, Human Resources Development, an action area was building the “knowledge base” with emphasis on education, training and research. It was stated that the country’s education system comprising primary, secondary, tertiary, and non-formal education would be developed to build a “knowledge-based society.” “Utmost priority” would be given to quality of education to increase employability of the graduates. Attention would be given to increase people’s access to information, research capacity and awareness among people, particularly at the grassroots level. A commitment of the government to achieve “100 per cent literacy by 2014” was included in line with the election pledge of the ruling party, despite misgivings of the academic community and civil society about what this pledge really meant (GOB 2009, xxi).

It is worth mentioning that in the second PRSP, the employment promotion strategy noted the need for training for self-employment and overseas employment. Improving quality of education to enhance employability of education outputs was also noted, but what this recognition implied in respect of changes in skills and jobs agenda and reform in education and training and how these would be implemented remained uncertain. The multi-faceted links between education and training, on one hand, and skills development and job creation on the other, were not explicitly indicated.

Observations on the PRSP regime and its approach to education and skills development

There has been a spotlight on poverty reduction in development plans and strategies in the last decade. What can be said about how this explicit focus has affected progress and outcomes in respect of human capability enhancement, skills and capacity building, education and lifelong learning opportunities and sustained well-being of the disadvantaged and discriminated groups in society?

Critiques from think tanks, researchers and civil society provide clues about significance of change in development priorities and strategies anticipated in PRSPs and how the rhetoric matched action. The origin of PRSPs under the auspices of IFIs and making these a condition of access to poverty reduction financing facilities, raised questions about the national ownership of these initiatives, despite elaborate efforts to make their preparation participatory and inclusive of stakeholders, as noted earlier.

Ownership. Ownership of policy obviously is a complex issue. There are many stakeholders with varying degree of involvement and actual capacity and interest to be involved in the policy process and its implementation. For instance, there may be ownership by officials in the government ministries; ownership by those responsible for implementation at the local level; national ownership as endorsed by the elected government and the Parliament; ownership by the stakeholders such as civil society and the business bodies; and ownership or at least a degree of understanding of the strategy among the general population. The rhetoric of participation voiced by IFIs, government policy makers and civil society has prompted a formality of a consultation process, more at the stage of preparing the documents and less in implementation and monitoring. What difference this has made in the substance of the strategies and plans, especially in their implementation and monitoring progress remains questionable (Mahmud 2006, 17).

Another major concern is who mediates and reconciles among conflicting interests of stakeholders. In a democratic system, it is the political process and mechanisms at different levels, depending on the degree of devolution of authority and responsibility, and ultimately at the national level through roles played by elected public representatives at the national parliament. In the absence of effective decentralisation and local government structures and if the people’s representatives fail to play their role because of prevailing practice and procedures, political culture and lack of capacity, the onus for presenting the national position falls by

default on the central bureaucracy. This is what has happened and continues in Bangladesh. The political class, irrespective of which coalition is in power, and the bureaucracy, seem to be comfortable with this situation, because they share common interests. The civil society's dissenting and divergent views are not strong enough by themselves to make a difference, until it can present a more unified front and garner support from allies among the political and bureaucratic stakeholders.

Growth and Equity Dilemma. Despite a respectable annual growth performance of around 5 per cent during the 1990s, a pro-poor growth strategy to eradicate poverty was not adopted. By choice or by default, the economy followed the classic Harrod-Domar model of growth based on the premise that unequal distribution of income would promote economic growth and greater employment because, richer people would save more and larger domestic savings would mean more investment resources; which in turn would create employment and income and would accelerate increase of gross domestic product. Inequality did increase during this period in Bangladesh while the economy was growing faster with trade liberalisation. Gini coefficient increased from .348 to .417 during this period indicating an increase in income inequality (Ehsan and Ahmed 2005).

PRSP with an explicit poverty reduction goal recognised the dilemma of the previous decade and placed employment creation high on the agenda for poverty reduction. Yet the "Harrod-Domar model and the *trickle-down theory* remained the mainstay of Bangladesh's PRSP strategies" (Ehsan and Ahmed 2005, 19).

Issues like equality, labour-intensive infrastructure development, labour market analysis, rights at work, safety net programme for workers, directly related to employment generation and thus to reduction of inequality, received inadequate attention in PRSPs (CPD 2005, 59-60)

With scarce capital and abundance of labour in Bangladesh, strategies that increased labour productivity and returns clearly were the best option for promoting pro-poor growth. The observations of President Julius Nyerere four decades ago appear to be particularly apropos. Nyerere argued, if poor countries had little capital and an abundance of labour, it made sense to use what capital there was to make the most abundant resource, labour, more productive; rather than use labour, often wastefully and with poor remuneration, to make the least available resource, capital, more productive (Nyerere 1973).

Employment and capacity building. As noted earlier, employment generation had to be the central concern in policy framework for fighting poverty. For 1% growth, employment generation was estimated to be only 0.34%, while a million new job seekers entered the job market each year. Priority to increase in wage based employment, real wages, self-employment, producing appropriate skills for the market and higher price for labour intensive commodities to achieve pro-poor employment generation was mentioned in PRSPs. The policy matrix that attempted to link objectives and actions did not specify sufficiently workable initiatives and projects for local level formal and informal economy to create the employment opportunities in service, trade, as well as diversified agriculture. How to facilitate the coming together of new technology, capital and marketing opportunity for this purpose remained uncertain (Rahman et al. 2005)

A government Task Force on "Poverty Eradication and Employment Generation" noted that I-PRSP and the Task Force shared similar intents for achieving a faster pace of poverty reduction and realization of human rights. The Task Force agreed that three issues identified in IPRSP as central to achieving PRSP goal:

- (1) *Consolidating the Success*, which required identification of new hitherto untapped sources of economic growth, poverty reduction, and social development arguing that business as usual will not do;
- (2) *Avoiding the Pitfalls*, which is a list of wider environmental factors, such as law and order, economic mis-governance, policy inconsistency, etc., within which anti-poverty actions function and which in the final analysis determine their success; and
- (3) *Facing New Challenges*, which outlines the importance of managing the new risks and uncertainties associated with changing the global economic environment.

The *Medium Term Policy Matrix* is purported to be concrete expression of the actual intentions of the PRSP. The text of the document, such as the issues mentioned above, was not necessarily carried forward into the policy matrix, “and in cases where they are, the activities mentioned remain vague, broad, and undefined. There is thus very little indication of addressing issues of structural change in the actual policy matrix even though its need may be recognised in part of the [PRSP] text.” It was said that “an open-ended and a structural” policy matrix could let various Ministries feel free to continue to operate with business as usual, failing to deliver on increasing the pace of poverty reduction (CPD 2003)

Major implementation constraints. While the content and strategies in projects and programmes can be further improved and refined, little is gained if these are not implemented fully and within the planned timetable. Lack of implementation, piecemeal and partial implementation and delays in development projects are serious problems that jeopardise and undermine achievement of goals and lead to major waste of resources. The rate of project implementation typically is between 50 and 60 per cent utilization of annual development budget in recent years according to Implementation Monitoring Division of the government. Up to 15% of projects suffered from zero implementation; it is difficult to visualise why these projects received approval and budget allocations. Many projects became stuck after partial implementation either for budgetary or design weaknesses. Better accountability in project implementation called for promoting a culture of transparency and open sharing of information (Rahman et al. 2005, 15-16).

All of the PRSPs undertook an exercise to construct a policy matrix that would link major objectives, what needs to be done within the time period of the strategy, indicative resource requirements and responsible agencies. Indicators of progress were attempted to be identified and monitoring processes and mechanisms were suggested.

In practice, the logic of a rational and coordinated development planning and implementation implied in the medium term macro-economic framework and implementation and monitoring mechanisms were not systematically and persistently applied. The emphasis was on external resource mobilisation rather than putting into operation a genuine national development planning and management process. This emphasis is betrayed by the fact that the responsibility for the interim PRSP was given to the Economic Relations Division (ERD), which has as its remit donor relations. Only later for PRSP I and II, the Planning Commission became involved in the process. As noted, drafts, background documents, thematic papers, consultation records and recommendations were not made public. (CPD 2003, 41-44)

The observations made about I-PRSP also applied largely to its successors, PRSP I and II:

The failure to breathe life and operationalize the idea of a wider and multi-actor oriented institutional space for attacking poverty was not the only weakness in the document that claimed to be a *national* strategy. More importantly, the document in the final analysis did not change or challenge the ‘business as usual’ approach for the government. We do not get any clear sense of what the promises were, who was responsible for what, how the various line ministries would be coordinated to deliver on the promises, what the role of the local government would be, and how being out of step would be monitored and sanctioned (CPD 2003)

PRSPs, Education and Skills Development. In enhancing skills and capacities of people to improve productivity, increase better-earning employment, what measures should be considered as priorities in education and skills development? The importance of this area has been noted in all of the PRSPs. But there were gaps in the measures envisaged and a greater lag in actual implementation of the proposed measures. One of the research groups echoed similar views of others about skills and capacity building programmes. Concerns that required greater attention and coherent action than specified in PRSPs were:

- Madarsa, English and Bangla medium education split society three-ways. Absence of policy measures to overcome this division trapped young people from poor families in low quality education.
- A major problem in primary education at local level is lack of accountability and responsibility in a highly centralised governance and management structure.

- Local government structure remained detached from planning and helping quality assurance of schools.
- Teacher training, including Primary Training Institutes at district levels, suffered serious quality deficiency.
- Privately established schools in urban and rural areas were not subjected to any government control and coordination to safeguard interest of students and promote equitable education.
- Secondary Education (grades 6 to 12), mostly run by local school management committees with government financial support cost families substantial amounts and bore little relevance to practical skills, was of low quality and employment opportunity.
- In TVET, programmes in formal institutions began after grade 8, thus keeping poor children out, and there was little coordination between the curriculum and the job market. Increasing enrolment, from under 3% of age group to 20% would be of little help unless training content, school organisation and management changed in major ways.
- Secondary graduates did not achieve proficiency in English and computer skills – critical for employability (Rahman et al. 2005).

10. Recent Education and Training Policy Emphases - Vision 2021, Education Policy 2010, 6th Five Year Development Plan (2011-2015), Skills Development Policy (2011)

Vision 2021 was presented as an election pledge by the leading party, Awami League, in the coalition of political parties that won the parliamentary election at the end of 2008. The political commitment of the government regarding education and enhancement of skills and capabilities of people are expressed in Vision 2021, and subsequently, in the National Education Policy adopted in 2010 and the Sixth Five Year Development Plan. A National Skills Development Policy also has been adopted in 2011.

Vision 2021

It proclaimed a vision of where Bangladesh wants to be at year 50 of its nationhood. It is yet to be fully elaborated, but the headline items related to education and human resource development include:

- Achievement of universal primary education, extending this stage to grade 8; elimination of illiteracy; creating a new generation skilled in and equipped with technical and scientific knowledge; better remunerations for teachers; and overall improvement of quality and equity in education. It also promised the formulation of an education policy fit for the contemporary age.
- There are other Vision 2021 goals pertinent for educational development – building the Digital Bangladesh through extensive use and capacity development in digital technology; creating gainful employment opportunities for at least 90 million skilled workers; and ensuring equal status for women in all spheres of society and the state.
- A key item relevant for educational development is the goal in governance and public administration, particularly, the idea that local government bodies would be at the centre of planning and management of development activities. With this end, local government authorities at the district and upazila (sub-district) levels would be empowered to become self-reliant and autonomous. This goal also happens to reflect a constitutional requirement under Articles 59 and 60 of the constitution that elected representatives at each level of administration take responsibility for public services and development activities.

The 2010 Education Policy

The National Education Policy, approved by the National Parliament in 2010, provides a framework for fulfilling the role of the educational system in the nation's human resource development. The key relevant features include:

Universal education up to grade 8. One-year of pre-primary education and primary education (of five years at present), extended to grade 8 should become universal within the next decade. The historically evolved reality of the diversity of provisions in primary and secondary education – government, government-assisted, NGO and private sector schools, and the madrasa – is recognized. It is agreed that this diversity may continue, but all institutions will have to follow a common core curriculum and adopt minimum common standards regarding learning provisions.

Multiple delivery modes with common core curriculum and standards. The common core curriculum for all types of secondary level institutions (including madrasa) will include Bangla, English, mathematics, science, Bangladesh studies, and IT, and will be complemented by additional subjects pertinent for each major stream – general, vocational, and madrasa. In addition to the vocational stream in schools, there would be various forms of skill training activities according to graded national skill standards designed to meet skill needs in domestic and overseas employment markets. Instruction in science and IT would be given special attention.

Literacy and non-formal education. A literacy programme to eliminate adult illiteracy by 2014 is proposed. Non-formal education is seen as a means of providing a second chance to those who drop out of formal schools, complementing the “literacy campaign.”

Quality improvement in tertiary education. Tertiary education institutions, both public and private, would be encouraged to take responsibility to establish and maintain quality standards within agreed framework. A four-year degree programme should be acceptable higher education qualification for most professional level occupations except for those aiming for teaching, research and other jobs that call for specialized expertise. A three credit English course should be compulsory for all degree students. Various quality-enhancing investments in facilities and teacher upgrading are proposed. Pedagogic technology such as Internet and education television channels should be supported. Specialized professional education in medicine, agriculture, engineering, law and business should be made more practical and their quality enhanced with closer involvement of the professional bodies.

Student assessment to discourage rote learning. Assessment of learners’ achievement should be based on public examinations and continuous evaluation by teachers, which should aim at assessing cognitive, affective and reasoning domains.

Teachers’ status, incentives and training. Teachers’ recruitment, training, professional support and remuneration should be key elements of the strategy for improving quality in education. A Teacher Recruitment and Development Commission should be established to recruit teachers and support their professional development.

Governance and management measures. A consolidated education law should be enacted providing a legal framework for educational governance and management in line with the purposes of the new policy.

It can be seen that the policy recommendations are in the form of normative goals or preferences expressed in general terms. Implementation of the policy will require establishment of mechanisms and processes, preparation of phased operational plans, and reconciliation of differing views and making choices among options on certain issues.

The Sixth Five-Year Plan

The Sixth Five Year National Development Plan (2011-15) is expected to be an important mechanism for implementing the plan and programme of the government with provision for adequate resources, appropriate coordination and necessary monitoring and adjustments of plans as needed (GOB Planning Commission 2011)

The implementation of Vision 2021 is expected to happen through two medium term plans, the first being the sixth plan. How effectively the challenges identified regarding education and skills development will be met

through the Sixth Plan mechanism? It is said in the plan document that “in a market economy like Bangladesh where the bulk of the economy is privately owned and managed, the role of planning is essentially indicative in nature.... focus of the plans [being] on strategies, policies and institutions to help guide the private sector in helping Bangladesh achieve the goals set in Vision 2021” (GOB Planning Commission 2011, 8).

It is recognised that without proper government regulations and public spending in core areas, the social and economic results can be “devastating and unsustainable.” A “proper” balance between incentives to private sector and instituting regulatory policies for safeguarding public interest is seen as “a major guiding principle of the policy and institutional framework of the Sixth and the Seventh plans.” But the “indicative” character of the plan - rather than being an operational document that is the basis for guiding and monitoring annual budgets, fiscal decisions and economic policies of the government - casts doubt about the plan’s efficacy in guiding actions to achieve the Vision 2021 Goals (GOB Planning Commission 2011, 8).

The normative goals and preferences stated in the policy beg two education related questions:

- a. How can the broad statements of purpose and some hints of strategy given in the education policy be analysed, elaborated, possible points of controversy resolved and priorities in phasing and sequential steps transformed into an operational plan and programme?
- b. What should be the organizational and institutional mechanism for implementing the operational plan and programme with provision for adequate resources, appropriate coordination and necessary monitoring and adjustments of plans as needed? This is where past education commission reports and their policy recommendations faltered.

The decision of the government to abandon the *ad hoc* approach of PRSP – an “externally imposed” document - and to go back to the five-year development planning mode provide an institutional mechanism for resource provisions, coordination, monitoring and placing all reform and development efforts in education within an agreed policy framework – always a challenge in a complex and multi-faceted endeavour which is the national education system.

A plan document is only as good as it becomes a guide for effective action, rather than another document. How the revived medium-term development-planning process (after almost a decade of no-plan interregnum) will be reflected in annual budgets, medium term budgetary frameworks, and annual development plans need to be indicated. How will the plan guide externally assisted development projects (such as PEDP III) also needs to be specified. How recurrent budgets of line Ministries reflect the plan priorities, strategies and targets also need to be considered.

The decision of the government to re-institute the five-year development planning mode provides an institutional mechanism for resource provisions, coordination, monitoring and placing all reform and development efforts in education within an agreed policy framework – always a challenge in a complex and multi-faceted endeavour which is the national education system. But will the plan live up to this expectation?

A tell-tale statement (SFYP Summary p.8) is: “The Government recognizes that in a market economy like Bangladesh where the bulk of the economy is privately owned and managed, the role of planning is essentially indicative in nature.” This may be true for the total economy, but public sector investment and planning is essential in essential public services and particularly critical in education and health sectors.

In an appropriately ambitious medium-term plan, there should be a mixture of incremental changes and some bold innovations. The document as it stands is dominated by incrementalism with few bold initiatives. Key priorities in the Education Policy and Vision 2021 call for “out-of-the-box” experimental and developmental approach, rather than only incremental reforms. The experiments must be initiated during the sixth plan so that these can lay the ground for a qualitative transformation in the education system by 2021 (Ahmed 2009).

The National Skills Development Policy (2011)

The National Skill Development Council (NSDC) as the apex body for policy formulation on skill development with representation from the government, employers, workers and civil society has been established. A national skill development policy was drafted in 2009 under the auspices of the Council. The Policy (NSDP) received government approval in 2011. This policy attempts to address the issues related to technical and vocational education and training in the country and proposes to strengthen the Bangladesh Technical Education Board as a quality assurance mechanism. The new Skill Development Council will also consider strategic approaches in the medium term coinciding with the sixth plan.

The policy aims to address critical issues including provision of demand-driven, flexible and responsive training provision; nationally recognized qualifications; competency based training; quality assurance; accurate skills and labour market data; and competent TVET instructors and managers. Other elements in the policy are strengthened apprenticeships; recognition of prior learning; improved access for under-privileged groups; private training provision; industry training; TVET financing; and skills development for overseas employment. A key feature of the policy is the engagement of industry through the establishment of Industry Skills Councils.

In the issues identified and actions proposed, the policy has underscored a number of major concerns:

- Rethinking the role of the public sector and to modernize VTE to meet market demands and extend greater benefits to the poor;
- Improving the links between training and job market;
- Improving the positive effect on poverty reduction by targeting new clientele; and
- Improving efficiency and quality of programmes.

These general objectives appear to take cognizance of the problems and deficiencies in TVET programmes and skills development in general. These have to be elaborated into operational plans and activities with implementation mechanisms specified and resources ensured. These items are mentioned in the strategies indicated in the Sixth Plan and the chapter on vocational and technical education in the Education Policy, but how these are to be put into operation through appropriate steps remains open and insufficiently defined (CAMPE 2013).

Part II – The Post-2015 Debates¹

This section looks at relations and interactions between national perspectives on the post-2015 EFA and MDG agenda, and the international preparation for the post-2015 agenda.

11. The Backdrop for the Post-2015 Debates

As described above, Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in expanding educational opportunities, scoring major success in bringing in children into the education system and overcoming gender disparity in doing so. However, there will be significant short fall in achieving EFA and education MDG, because of continuing problems of dropout and non-completion and stagnation in literacy, adult education and TVET. Beyond the EFA and MDG shortfall, the success in expansion itself has brought to the surface major concerns about learning outcomes, equity, and relevance of the learning content from the point of view of skills and capacity building of the products of the education system.

There are organisational and governance issues reflected in different kinds of primary and secondary education provisions, which aggravate social division. A highly centralised governance and administrative structure fails to make the system responsive, accountable and capable of generating necessary involvement and contribution of communities and local government.

The system fails to build the foundation of skills and capabilities of young people for the world of work, citizenship and personal fulfilment. A particular weakness has been stagnation in literacy, TVET, adult education and lifelong learning. The problems have accumulated for a long time and have become more intractable.

An unresolved issue is how the state obligation to provide basic education and fulfil the right to education is perceived – there is a continuing ambivalence between a “statist” approach that minimises the role of communities, NGOs and the private sector and building effective partnerships capitalising on the human and social capital of NGOs, communities, private sector, and local government.

A low-cost and low-yield system has evolved which cannot address quality-with-equity issues without structural changes in governance, organisation, cost patterns at different levels and new partnerships. However, educational and broader development plans and strategies have remained confined within existing structures. Major external assistance projects in primary, secondary and technical-vocational education also have failed to look at the structural issues or gone along with the government inertia in this regard.

The political economy of decision-making in education and development spheres re-enforces the existing pattern of low-cost-low-yield education provisions, weak links with broader human capability enhancement and non-accountable organisational and governance pattern as the PRSP regime and even the content of the new Sixth Five-Year Plan suggest. The Education Policy 2010 and the statement of Vision 2021 provide some hints of departures from the present patterns with an emphasis on quality-with-equity. However, whether a determined and systematic effort can be carried out to fulfil the new vision and a real transformation will be

¹ This part is based on perusal of relevant documents and websites as mentioned in the text, the writer’s personal involvement in some of the discussions, dialogues and meetings and conversation with a number of key informants including:

-Dr. Q.K. Ahmad, Chair, PKSF, adviser to PFM, also adviser to government on environmental and MDG issues
-Dr. Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Executive Director, PKSF and co-coordinator of PFM consultations
-Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Executive Director, CAMPE and Convener, PFM
-Tahsinah Ahmed, Swiss Development Agency, Embassy of Switzerland, Dhaka
-Dr. Nabendra Dahal, Education Manager, UNICEF, Dhaka
-Dr. James Jennings, Education Adviser, AusAid, Dhaka
-Dr. M.K. Mujeri, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
-Dr. Rizwan Khair, Director, Institute of Government Studies, BRAC University
-Libuse Soukupova, European Union, Dhaka and chair, ELCG.
They all do not necessarily share the views expressed in the paper.

realised depend on what is done to bring about structural and systemic change in educational development, linking it with broader development objectives, and building partnerships.

This sketch of progress made and challenges and dilemmas encountered and the unfinished tasks related to EFA and MDG are the backdrop for post-2015 MDG and EFA discourse.

This part will focus on:

- Current indigenous and externally-driven debate in the country on post-2015 agenda, main actors and points of view
- Similarity and differences between national and global priority, targets and , strategies in reference to EFA and MDG, and
- Participation and involvement of national stakeholders in international post-2015 discourse.

It is now clear that Bangladesh will come close to achieving universal initial enrolment in primary education by 2015, but will fall short considerably of universal completion of primary education, thus failing to achieve the MDG and EFA primary education goal. Current trends also indicate that there will be a substantial deficiency in achievement of essential skills and competencies by primary education completers, and deficits in expanding adult literacy and lifelong learning opportunities. Both dropout from programmes and poor learning achievement are intimately linked with equity in participation. This will clearly be one of the unfinished tasks that will have to be addressed beyond 2015.

12. National Reactions to the International Discourse on post-2015 Development Agenda

An international discourse about expectations and goals beyond 2015 has begun to which Bangladesh is expected to contribute as it carries on its internal dialogue about the future.

In July 2012, the Secretary-General launched a High-level Panel of Eminent Persons to provide guidance and recommendations on the post-2015 development agenda. The report of the Panel was expected to be published in May 2013. Earlier, the Secretary-General established the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. Chaired by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UNDP, the team brings together more than 60 UN agencies and international organizations.

These two processes are expected to be complemented by national consultations in more than 60 countries. A set of eleven thematic consultations have been organized by UNDP, education being one of the eleven thematic consultation topics. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - or Rio+20 (2012) held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro produced a political outcome document that proposes practical measures for implementing sustainable development. The Rio participants also decided to initiate a process to formulate a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals are intended to take off from the current MDGs and converge with the post 2015 development agenda.

Projecting the Southern Voice. In this context, it is worth noting that the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a development think tank in Bangladesh, has been active in an initiative of think tanks and research institutions from the South to project their voice strongly in the on-going discussion. Called the Southern Voice (on post-MDGs), it is a network of 48 think tanks from South Asia, Africa, and Latin America that intends to contribute to the post-MDGs dialogue.

An expert group meeting hosted by CPD in Dhaka on 11-13 January 2013, looked at (i) Framework Issues, (ii) Reflections on the Unfinished Agenda, (iii) Issues for the Future, (iv) Partnership and Resource Mobilisation, and (v) Projecting the Southern Voice on to the on-going consultations.

The framework issues identified in the meeting were: retaining the focus on accelerated poverty eradication in the post-2015 agenda. Promoting a more just world order, addressing particular development challenges of low-income countries, integrating goals and targets with a resource framework, attention to political asymmetry in power relations., and use of real-time data and information for keeping track of progress.

It was underscored that major unfinished tasks remained in respect of all of the 2015 MDGs. It was stressed that nationally rooted think tanks can provide relevant research and evidence-based policy advice to their respective governments in designing and implementing a 2015 completion programme and looking ahead to future.

The group offered a “first approximation” of the agenda, listed below, for the future in a document titled “First Approximations on Post-MDG International Development Goals - A contribution by the Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals towards preparation of the report by the UN High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda”:

- Revising upward the poverty threshold,
- Reducing hunger and malnutrition,
- Improving the quality of education and setting targets for secondary education,
- Generating more gainful employment opportunities,
- Improving healthcare services, reducing further infant and maternal mortality, addressing HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases affecting large numbers of the poor,
- Reducing gender violence,
- Paying more attention to migration and migrants’ rights,
- Addressing development challenges emanating from climate change,
- Ensuring participation and representation of stakeholders as well as transparency and accountability (Southern Voice 2013, www.cpd.org.bd/PostMDG/SVoice_Post-MDG_First%20Approximations.pdf).

The report emphasized resource generation commensurate with the goals. Trade and market access, global financial architecture, policies regarding LDCs and managing climate change challenges and resources, must all be considered in relation to the development agenda, rather than through wholly separate mechanisms and interlocutors without any consideration of the linkages, which is the current pattern. It is emphasized that “the post-2015 international development agenda needs to create a basis for a development-oriented synergy between all of these processes that could be leveraged by developing countries.”

Domestic resource mobilisation in developing countries must be accompanied by compliance with the pledge of 0.7 per cent of the GNI contributed to ODA by members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee. Innovation in mobilising financial resources for the implementation of post-2015 development goals could include carbon taxes, taxes on financial transactions, the creation of vertical funds, global philanthropy, and Corporate Social Responsibility expenditures.

It was asserted that the Southern Voice think tanks could help governments to take up the challenge of implementing global goals by adapting these to national priorities.

13. UN-led discourse and interaction on Post-2015 MDGs in Bangladesh

The UN Resident Coordinator has the responsibility for interaction with governments, including sharing information, helping organise consultations and events, and following up on government obligations. The regional director in Asia-Pacific of the UN Millennium Campaign, Minar Pimple, based in Bangkok at Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), has been the focal point for contacts with civil society bodies in the region. It appears that the resident UN Team considers their primary task is to maintain the contact and facilitate interaction with government agencies, rather than with a broader spectrum of national actors, including NGOs, civil society forums, academics, and activists. The main interaction of UN with non-government actors has been through occasional visits of Mr Pimple when information sharing and discussion

have been organised with the involvement of the Peoples' Forum for MDG (PFM). (See Box 1 and further discussion about PFM below.)

Box 1. Briefing from Asia Pacific Regional Director of UN Millennium Campaign to People's Forum for MDG, Bangladesh

Emerging scenarios: There is an emerging consensus on formulating a new agenda which retains the simplicity and the affirmative action nature of the MDGs, supplemented with other goals and targets reflecting the changed global context

Post-2015 development agenda: Major themes often mentioned are - Human rights, Inequalities and Sustainability.

Specific themes, related to the three major themes, which have come to the fore are: i) Population dynamics, ii) Peace and security, iii) Stable and inclusive economic growth, iv) Productive employment and decent work, v) Food security, vi) Governance (including principles of inclusion & participation, promoting transparency & accountability), and vii) Building resilience of vulnerable population groups.

Emerging Post 2015 key messages:

- The core values contained in the Millennium Declaration remain valid: The Post 2015 framework is an opportunity to incorporate issues that were part of the Millennium Declaration but were not reflected in the MDGs – e.g. human rights, environmental sustainability, peace and security.
- The Post 2015 development agenda must be universally applicable but flexible to meet specific needs of countries and peoples.
- Global partnerships must be re-defined to make it truly “global” with a clear accountability framework for both developed and developing countries.

Call for a participatory, inclusive process:

- There is a general understanding that the Post-2015 must not repeat the shortcomings of the MDGs.
- UNSG as well as civil society coalitions call for a more participatory, inclusive process, which is responsive to the voices of people directly affected by poverty and injustice.
- However, preparatory processes and consultations for Rio +20 have so far failed to meaningfully integrate CSOs at the national level.
- UN-wide communications and outreach function is being established to gather inputs and feedback from civil society and facilitate dialogue on post-2015 framework, using a new web platform.

Source: Briefing to PFM by Minar Pimple: Asia- Pacific Regional Director, UN Millennium Campaign, Dhaka, 11 August 2012.

The inadequacy of contacts and lack of substantive engagement of civil society with the UN country team has been brought up with Mr Pimple during his last visit in August 2012. He recognised the problem and promised to consult with the country office, but so far a significant change has not been noticed.

An expectation from and obligation of the UN system is to encourage and facilitate civil society engagement along with government representatives in national consultation and articulation of national position. There has been selected non-government participation in events and consultations as individuals rather than in the form of systematic institutional involvement of non-government stakeholders. This is particularly noteworthy given the vibrant and strong NGO bodies and forums in Bangladesh in relation to major development sectors, human rights and rights of specific groups, and numerous advocacy and activists' bodies.

Cases in point about the absence of institutional and systematic engagement of civil society stakeholders are the national consultations organised by the government and UN in November, 2012; the parliamentary and civil society forum meeting in December (South, South-West, North & Central Asia Parliamentary and CSO forum on MDG Acceleration and Post-2015 Development Agenda, 10 December 2012) and a South Asia Government-UN consultation (ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Sub-regional workshop on MDGs and post-2015 development agenda for South Asia, 8-10 January 2013, Dhaka). In each of these events, UN and government representatives were the main presenters with cursory opportunity for letting civil society positions and critiques to be expressed, by a few individuals rather than through organisational representation. The parliamentary meeting is labelled as parliamentary and civil society forum but civil society was conspicuous by its absence.

It can be argued that civil society is diverse and there are many organisations and bodies with varying institutional and organisational forms. How they can be brought into the process and given an active role, especially in formal events, is a problem. This may be so, but this itself suggests the need for systematic and continuing engagement and support for a collaborative government-civil society process, rather than parallel lines of activities, which rarely or only incidentally intersect. This is perhaps less difficult in Bangladesh than in other countries because the civil society is relatively more organised through advocacy and activist forums. A significant illustration of this is the coming together of the civil society through the People's Forum for MDG (see below). It is more a problem of change in mind-set and customary ways of doing things on the part of both the UN and government bureaucracy than real difficulties.

Rhetoric is plentiful. For instance, Neal Walker, UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh, speaking to the regional Parliamentary meeting on 10 December 2012 said:

Now that we're working on the next development paradigm, what could we do better? Firstly, the process of formulating the next developmental framework needs to be more consultative. Country consultations need to stimulate an inclusive debate on a post-2015 development agenda by providing an analytical base, inputs and ideas that: (a) build a shared global vision; (b) amplify the voices of the poor and other marginalized; (c) Influence the inter-governmental processes. For Bangladesh, we need to ensure a participatory consultative process and make the final product concise, understandable, strategic and meaningful in a national context.

As noted, the practice and action in what could be done to support and promote inclusive and a broadly participatory discourse both by UN and the government agencies remained wanting in what was tried and achieved.

14. National Discourse: People's Forum for MDGs – Origin and its contribution

A history of parallel processes of the government and civil society in relation to MDG and EFA that mostly did not intersect characterized implementation of MDGs and EFA from their inception.

In 2005, the *Millennium Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report* was jointly prepared by the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations Country Team. The preface of the report claimed:

The most remarkable achievement is in the field of primary education with the country well on its way to meet the MDG 2 of universal primary education by 2015. The challenge here is ensuring adequate finances to keep up the momentum and ensuring quality education for all.

In the same year, the *Millennium Development Goals: a people's progress report* was published. It said:

According to the MDG progress report the current (2004) UPC [universal primary education completers] rate for eligible children (of age 6-10) is around 56%. Therefore, a "business as usual

approach” will not be able to take the country to achieve the goal of 100 per cent universal completion by 2015 (PFM, 2005, 14).

This appears to be a good example of the Rashomon effect. Invoking the famous Kurosawa film of the same title, it explains the subjectivity of perception by which observers of an event produce substantially different but seemingly plausible accounts of it.

The civil society groups were not satisfied with the lack of their involvement in preparing the national MDG progress report and with the content on which there were different perspectives of the government and the civil society stakeholders.

As the PFM report put it:

The GoB/UNDP report is not comprehensive from the viewpoint of assessment of progress and does not contextualize MDGs for the country. The goals, targets, and indicators of MDG need to be identified and reviewed against the backdrop of current Bangladesh. Consequently, the report did not fulfil the expectations of the people of Bangladesh including the wider civil society, CSO, NGO and Human Rights organizations. Even the preparation of the report lacked a sufficiently participatory process. Furthermore, the report does not address the underlying causes of poverty and deprivation focusing on the rights of the socially excluded and marginalized groups (PFM 2005, 1).

With the backdrop of unsatisfactory GO-NGO interaction on implementing MDG and reviewing its progress, a national workshop was held with civil society initiative on 24 November 2004 where representatives from CSOs, sectorial networks, development partners and media attended. The People's Forum on MDGs (PFM) comprising sectorial networks, CSOs and concerned individuals was launched. A Steering Group was formed to carry ahead the movement. Soon after the government-UN report on MDG progress was released in February 2005, a planning workshop was organised by PFM on 17th March 2005 in Dhaka where planning for the preparation of the “people’s report” was undertaken. The report was published in September 2005. Hard work and zeal of PFM members, prompted in part by dissatisfaction with the process and content of the “official” report, made it possible to complete the PFM report in a short time.

In the context of the post-2015 discussion, PFM became pro-active and initiated a civil society dialogue keeping in view the Rio + 20 and Cop – focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). (This is a reference to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, June 20-22, 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to review progress and set future agenda and , before that, preparation for Rio+20 that occurred at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 10) in October 2011 in Changwon, Republic of Korea.)

Taking the cue from UN, nine teams were formed to prepare thematic papers inviting PFM members to volunteer to lead the preparation of the papers. The themes and the related organizations/resource persons are listed below (Table 2).

Table 2 . Themes and Focal Points for preparation of Post-MDG Thematic Papers

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Resource Person/ Organization</u>
• Gender and Inequality	Steps Towards Development
• Poverty and Inequality	Palli KarmaShayak Foundation (PKSF) and Sight Savers
• Food Security and Nutrition	Oxfam GB
• Governance	Democracy Watch, Action Aid Bangladesh and Wave Foundation
• Growth and Employment	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies(BIDS) Dr. M.K. Mujeri

- Education CAMPE, Samir Nath and Manzoor Ahmed
- Environmental Sustainability Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP)
- Conflict Resolution Prof. Dalem Chandra Bormon, formerly of Dhaka University
- Health and Population Dynamics Dr. Nurun Nabi, Dhaka University and Dr. Kaosar Afsana, BRAC.

First drafts of these papers had been presented and feedbacks provided in a series of PFM meetings between December, 2013 and May, 2013. Dr. Q. K. Ahmad, Chairperson, PKSf (a publicly funded foundation that provides capital funds to NGOs for micro-credit and employment generation), a highly regarded economist and active in the fields of environment and education, is associated with the preparation of the PFM papers and formulating a consolidated position in an appropriate form.

The thematic papers, each 10-15 pages in length, followed roughly a common structure containing main thematic concerns/issues in Bangladesh, a brief review of progress in the relevant area in relation to MDG goals and targets, problems and constraints encountered, and the way forward (initial ideas about what could be post-2015 agenda). A draft of a synthesis based on the thematic papers was discussed with PFM on 18 May and a revision based on feedback was presented to a wider audience on 8 July, 2013. The synthesis titled: "A New Global Partnership: For Sustainable Human Development through Eradicating Poverty and Transforming Economies, » planned to be finalised shortly, would be presented to the government and the United Nations.

While PFM continued its post-2015 deliberation, government preparation was underway for formulation of the government position and input to UN on post-MDG agenda and priorities with the government Planning Commission as the focal point. There was no formal consultation or interaction between the government preparation process and PFM, except limited individual and incidental contacts.

BRAC, known as the largest development NGO in the world (in terms of areas of its activities, number of people served directly in 11 countries, and staff and budget turnover) has embarked on an internal exercise on post-MDG development agenda. On the basis of extensive staff participation led by a dedicated team at the central level an initial concept paper has been prepared (Annex 2). This initiative is worth noting for its potential impact in Bangladesh and other Asian, Sub-Saharan and Central American countries where BRAC is active.

15. EFA and education MDGs in post-2015 era – International Discourse

EFA Dakar Framework for Action and six EFA goals were adopted early in 2000. Later in that year at the UN, the eight Millennium Development Goals included a specific goal on universal primary education and removal of gender disparity in education, among other fields. Obviously, education MDG is a minimal objective within a broader development vision and cannot be seen as a total agenda of educational development or education's contribution to national development. EFA, while broader than education MDG, also has been limited to basic and compulsory education.

The preparation of National Plan of Action (NPA) I and II following the first EFA conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and the second EFA conference in Dakar in 2000 was undertaken with government lead. There was sharing of drafts and consultation at various stages with NGOs and other non-government stakeholders. However, as pointed out above, NPAs, in spite of the label, were not operational documents that guided plans and budgets for education in the public sector, except perhaps indirectly by emphasizing certain broad priorities. The NPAs did not contribute to a change in the conceptualization of how the state role is exercised in fulfilling basic education rights of citizens or in the largely separate and parallel spheres of activities of the two parties in expanding education services.

Within a framework of regional cooperation, with UNESCO Asia Pacific Regional Office support, a South Asia Regional EFA Forum was established in 2002 with the Ministries of Education or Primary and Mass Education (in the case of Bangladesh) representing the countries. Two Ministerial level meetings of the South Asia EFA Forum were held in Islamabad (21-23 May, 2003) and Dhaka (13-14 December, 2009). Themes for the two

meetings were respectively, education finance and quality, and regional collaboration and sharing of experiences. Other than government officials, for each country two non-government participants from international organisations, NGOs and civil society could come as part of the country delegation at their own expense. In reality, few NGO or civil society participants joined and there was no systematic involvement of non-government actors in preparation for or follow-up of these events. In fact, it appears there was no substantive preparation and follow-up that would or could influence national education programmes significantly.

The E9 Initiative. The E9 is a forum of nine high-population developing countries in which 70 per cent of the world's illiterate adults and 40 per cent of children out-of-school live. These countries are: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan. Launched in 1993 in New Delhi, India, the E-9 Initiative has become a forum for these nine countries to discuss their experiences related to education, exchange best practices and monitor EFA-related progress. E-9 countries have made significant socioeconomic progress. Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and Mexico are the Members of G-20. Mexico is an OECD member, while China is now the second largest economy in the world. Brazil and India are also the top ten economies. Bangladesh and Indonesia has also been growing fast economically. In 1993, the E-9 countries accounted for only 16.5% of world's nominal GDP. Now, they represent almost 30% of world's nominal GDP.

The E9 countries met at Ministerial level biennially, hosted in rotation by different countries, and focused on different themes, as shown below (Table 3).

Table 3. E-9 events and themes

Event	Theme
Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting New Delhi, India, November 2012.	Inclusive, Relevant and Quality Education for All
Eighth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Abuja, Nigeria, June 2010	Literacy for development
Seventh E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Bali, Indonesia, March 2008	Improvement of teacher education and training as a focus of educational system reform
Sixth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Monterrey, Mexico, February 2006	Assessment of quality in education
Fifth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Cairo, Egypt, December 2003	Early childhood care and education
Fourth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Beijing, China, August 2001	The role and use of distance education and information technologies in basic education
Third E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Recife, Brazil, January 2000	E-9 countries 2000 EFA assessments: New avenues for action
Second E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Islamabad, Pakistan, September 1997	Social and political mobilization
First E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Bali, Indonesia, September 1995	From Delhi to Bali
New Delhi Summit on EFA New Delhi, India, December 1993	The Delhi Declaration and Framework for Action

Source: UNESCO, E9 Initiative. (http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/pdf/E9%20Background_June%202012.pdf)

Despite progress made, major problems remained to be tackled by the E9 countries. Along with the quantity, the issue of the quality of education remains to be addressed. The majority of children do not receive quality instruction and leave school without acquiring basic skills in these countries due to factors, not very different from those in other developing countries, such as, teacher development and performance, curriculum, learning environment, and inequality in opportunities. Participation and involvement in the E9 process and events, as in other EFA inter-country exchanges, have been essentially confined to the government personnel.

What difference have the EFA-related exchanges made in advancing the EFA cause? It is difficult to provide a definitive answer. It can be argued that these exchanges have made national policy and decision-makers more aware about the trends, experiences and lessons internationally, which could be relevant for and applied in the respective countries. A number of activities within the E9 cooperation framework have been launched or are in process, led by one of the countries, such as the Revitalizing Adult and Youth Literacy Programme by Nigeria, the International Seminar on Improving Female Literacy in Cooperation with Women NGOs by Indonesia, and an International Conference on Literacy for Inclusive and Sustainable Development by India. It can also be argued that these efforts would have a greater and more sustained impact with systematic involvement of stakeholders and actors beyond the government in each country.

What is envisaged for post-2015 EFA and how it incorporated into or linked to the post-MDG agenda remain an open question. It would depend on whether there would be an overarching Post-MDG framework that would give prominence to human capability enhancement. In such a scenario education, learning, skills and capability development would have a central place in the new agenda. It also would depend on whether a minimalist approach would be taken in setting goals and priorities, whether there would be options of setting optimal goals in addition to the essential ones, and how national adaptation and adjustment of the global goals would be approached. These questions remain under discussion and still all the pros and cons are to be considered.

There are other pertinent parallel events and activities noted below.

Education First Initiative

In September 2012, the UN Secretary-General launched Education First. The aim is to use the convening power of the United Nations Secretary-General to help rally a broad spectrum of actors for the final push to 2015 and lay the groundwork for a bold vision for education post-2015. The intention is to provide a “breakthrough in education.” Education First will:

- Rally a wide range of actors for the final push to 2015 and ensure that the promise of universal access to primary education is kept;
- Spur a global movement to put quality, relevant and transformative education right at the heart of the social, political and development agendas; and
- Generate additional and sufficient funding for education through sustained global advocacy efforts.

Three priority areas and 10 action points were identified. The initiative’s priorities are to expand access to education, improve the quality of learning and foster global citizenship. The 10 Key Actions that can help the nations of the world meet these challenges: 1. Enrol all children in school, 2. Sustain education in humanitarian crises, especially conflict, 3. Ensure all children are literate and numerate, 4. Train more teachers, 5. Equip classrooms with books and learning materials, 6. Prepare students for livelihoods, 7. Improve child nutrition, 8. Instil lifelong learning, 9. Foster global citizenship, and 10. Close the financing gap.

Education First is guided by a 16- member Steering Committee including the Secretary-General, heads of several UN Agencies, President of the World Bank Gordon Brown (former British Prime Minister, who is Secretary-General’s special envoy for global education) and other global personalities. There are also an 8-country group of champions from different regions of the world. Bangladesh represents Asia in the country champions group. The Centre for Universal Education at Brookings Institution (CUE) in Washington DC serves as the institutional base for organising technical support for Education First. A Learning for All Ministerial Meeting on April 18-19, 2013 was held under the auspices of UN Education First and the World Bank with high level

representatives of 9 countries including Bangladesh, to consider appropriate strategies and actions in the run up to EFA 2015 deadline and beyond. These countries were considered to have both the need and the potential to make significant progress.

In 2011, CUE began to develop an agenda entitled a Global Compact on Learning: Taking Action on Education in Developing Countries. Through this initiative, CUE has attempted to create a momentum to move the global policy agenda forward. It aims to provide a set of shared policy goals for better learning outcomes on which governments, the private sector, and civil society can work together.

CUE has also joined UNESCO's Institute of Statistics to convene a Learning Metrics Task Force. This Task Force is engaged in identifying common learning goals and measuring learning outcomes for children and youth globally. The Task Force has sought feedback to its proposed formulation of goals and indicators from civil society and academic networks. CAMPE in Bangladesh organised consultation with its Education Watch Group and provided feedback to the Task Force on its initial propositions. In July 2013, it remains work in progress to be developed and refined with further consultation, (<http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/universal-education/about-us>)

Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

Launched in 2002, initially known as the Fast Track Initiative, Global Partnership in Education (GPE), describes itself as a partnership that "include donor and development country governments, civil society groups, global institutions, and private sector organizations." Its "strategic objectives" focus on fragile and conflict affected states, girls' education, learning outcomes in basic literacy and numeracy, teacher effectiveness and increased funding for education (<http://www.globalpartnership.org>.)

Bangladesh has not yet been a beneficiary of Fast Track or GPE funding. Discussion is underway at present for potential support for priority activities, which would provide a push to a higher-level achievement of EFA goal by 2015 and lay the ground for further effective action beyond 2015. It is not clear whether there is the possibility, formally or informally, of a link between Education First and GPE in respect of making additional resources available to Bangladesh.

Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is a civil society movement that aims to end the global education crisis. It works on the premise that education is a basic human right and that governments have to act now to deliver the right of everyone to a free, quality, public education.

GCE membership is comprised of a variety of national, regional and international civil society organisations, teachers' unions and child rights campaigners. Together, the Campaign works on holding governments to account for their promises repeatedly made to provide Education for All. It encourages formation and strengthening of national coalitions to bring about positive change in their education systems, monitor commitments made by their governments and represent their countries on the international political stage.

GCE was established in 1999 and served as a civil society voice during the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, influencing the six Education for All goals, GCE's campaign work continues throughout the year; in addition, it organizes an EFA Action week every year in April as a global awareness-raising, advocacy and mobilization activity focusing on a relevant theme each year related to EFA.

Rasheda Chowdhury, Executive Director of CAMPE and Convener of PFM, as a member of the governing Board of GCE, has been active in GCE and has organised GCE-related activities and events and dialogues. High profile awareness raising and policy advocacy activities have been organised in every year in April in Bangladesh and elsewhere on the occasion of the Global Action Week for EFA under GCE auspices.

Two urgent tasks with regard to EFA at this time, as expressed by GCE, which resonate well with the concerns being expressed by civil society in Bangladesh, are:

First, we must build and maintain pressure to achieve existing goals – a target that is close or achieved for some goals in some countries, and woefully off-track for others.

And, crucially, we must plan and campaign to ensure that any future global frameworks and goals, whether for education or more broadly, emphasise and advance the universal right to education. (<http://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/campaigns/education-post-2015>)

16. Bangladesh Post 2015 EFA and Education MDGs Discourse – The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) Consultation

In Bangladesh, CAMPE, in fulfilling its obligation to its education constituencies, and in its role as the coordinator of PFM, is holding consultations with its constituency. On 19 February 2013, a discussion was held in which civil society, government and Development Partners representatives participated and reviewed draft of post-MDG education paper prepared for PFM. The UNESCO-UNICEF paper on education prepared for UN was used as a background paper. (UNESCO-UNICEF, Discussion paper: synthesis of debates and key questions for consideration in discussing education goals - Draft for discussion and further development, November, 2012).

Looking Ahead. Considering progress of Bangladesh in achieving the second MDG and challenges the country still facing in primary education sub-sector following six-points have emerged as key elements for the post 2015 development agenda.

1. A rights-based approach to educational development up to a certain level (for now, from pre-primary to class VIII) with specific standards to each level protected by law should be the first item to be considered. Setting of standards is also required for schools and teachers. An accreditation board should be formed to scrutiny the standards of pupils, teachers and the schools in general. Making its observations public (including ones for individual institutions) would help the parents and the communities to be aware of the standard of their schools and being involved with the process of school development and act accordingly.
2. Early childhood care, education and development should be incorporated in post-2015 agenda because of their proven strong influence on later learning, juvenile behaviour and adult life. Expansion of one year pre-primary is not enough. It is important to work together with health and nutrition departments for the first 1000 days development after birth.
3. Post compulsory primary and basic education should also have set milestones for progress. Incorporation of skills-based pedagogy into the existing education system and expansion of such education and linking it with the world of work should be the priority.
4. The “shadow education system” of private tutoring contributing to inequality cannot be ignored any longer. Positive dimensions of it should be incorporated into the school programme.
5. Decentralization of educational administration should be in place at least up to upazila level. Upazila level planning and implementation of universal quality primary education, maintaining set standards for pupils, teachers and the schools, involvement of communities and civil society organizations with the process, conducting primary completion examination and certification, and local resource mobilization should be the priority areas to be decentralized.
6. Present education budget is inadequate; it should be increased up to 20% of total national budget or 6% of GDP. It would not be possible to keep the promises of the education policy without additional resource mobilization. There is scope to be innovation in managing better the financing provisions, which can promote quality with equity. (Excerpted from “People’s Forum on MDGs, Bangladesh, Looking Beyond MDGs, 2015–2025: Universal Primary Education,” CAMPE, January 2013.)

Specific suggestions about Goals and Indicators for post-2025 EFA Agenda. Goals and indicators for early childhood, universal basic education – primary, universal basic education – post-primary, adult and lifelong learning have been proposed. Indicators were proposed for “desirable goals,” and “minimum goals” as shown below. These proposals have emanated from the on-going discussion and have been underscored in the February, 2013 sharing meeting mentioned above.

Early Childhood

Global Goal: All young children participate in organized early learning and development programs beginning at birth and start school on time.

Minimum goal indicator: (i) participation rate of children from birth to age of school entry in organized parenting, family and community-based child development programs, nutrition and health care and preschool education; (ii) net intake rate in first grade primary

Desirable goal indicator: (i) age-appropriate growth and development of children from birth to school entry in defined domains of growth and development; (ii) adequate resources for ensuring participation of children (birth to school entry) in programs with equity and quality; (iii) governance and management mechanisms to achieve goals applying quality assurance and equity criteria.

Universal basic education - primary

Global Goal: All children build the foundation of learning and communication tools - basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills (reasoning, thinking critically and acquiring sense of individual and social obligations and rights). Life skills, which is already part of curricula in many countries suggested as more concrete than global citizenship.

Global Minimum Indicator: (i) Children acquire basic reading, writing and numeracy skills by the end of the nationally defined primary stage; (ii) children participate equitably in primary education programmes (in terms of gender, ethnicity, geography and personal special needs or attributes) of comparable quality. Arguably, it is not really justifiable to be so reductionist as to suggest only basic reading skills and that too by age 15.

Global desirable indicator: (i) age appropriate levels of skills in reading, writing and numeracy acquired at internationally comparable standards; (ii) availability of adequate resources from public and other sources to achieve goals applying quality and equity criteria; (iii) governance and management arrangements characterized by accountability, transparency and stakeholder participation.

Universal basic education – post- primary

Global Goal. All children and youth further develop their learning and communication skills and acquire transferable skills for work, life and further learning and lifelong learning

Global minimum indicator: (i) Children and youth acquire reading, communication and numeracy skills at defined level for post-primary education; demonstrate problem solving and reasoning skills; and develop awareness of individual and social obligations and rights; (ii)) children and youth participate equitably in primary education programmes (in terms of gender, ethnicity, geography and personal special needs or attributes) of comparable quality up to compulsory education age as set in relation to national legal prohibition of child labour.

Global Desirable Indicator: (i) Children and youth acquire reading, communication and numeracy skills at the post-primary education stage at age appropriate internationally comparable standards; (ii) availability of adequate resources from public and other sources to achieve goals applying quality and equity criteria; (iii)

governance and management arrangements characterized by accountability, transparency and stakeholder participation.

Adult and Lifelong Learning

Global goal. Acquiring functional literacy skills for use in work and life and further learning by all those without such skills.

Global Minimum Indicator: (i) Rate of youth and adult functional literacy determined by appropriate assessment method; (ii) Participation rate in population of youth and adult population in functional literacy and lifelong learning programmes; (ii) Availability of community learning centres and learning spaces for .adult and lifelong learners.

Global desirable indicator: (i) Youth and adult functional literacy rate applying international comparative standards; (ii) Availability of resources for equitable participation by youth and adults in programmes with defined quality standards, (iii) Existence of governance and management mechanisms adequate for equitable participation in programmes with quality assurance.

Suggested general goals for post MDGs Agenda

Along with the discourse about post-2015 EFA, a related discussion is going on about post-MDG global agenda and the education agenda within the larger development agenda. Out of six EFA goals set in Dakar framework, two related to primary education and gender equality were incorporated into MDG. It is likely that the post-MDG global agenda will similarly include only one or two education-specific goals. These have to serve as the proxy for the global education priorities. From this perspective, two education goals and related indicators have been highlighted in Bangladesh discussion on the post-MDGs agenda:

Global Education Goal 1

Compulsory education up to age of work eligibility: all children must begin primary education at right age and complete compulsory education up to age 14 or the age of work eligibility, whichever is later.

Proposed indicators for Goal 1

- Participation in organised ECD programmes and preschool,
- Adequacy of provisions in ECD,
- Age-grade congruence in primary school. Starting with entry in grade 1,
- Adequacy of provisions for primary and post-primary education,
- Successful completion of primary and post-primary education,
- Achievement and assessment of defined competencies.

Global Education Goal 2

Building the learning society: provisions must be made to enable all youth and adults to participate in lifelong learning programmes related to work, citizenship and personal fulfilment.

Proposed Indicators for Goal 2

- Assessed functional literacy achievement;
- Availability of learning centres, spaces, programmes, and learning technology networks;
- Participation rates of youths and adults in lifelong learning.

Additional National Indicators Related to Both Goals:

Additional indicators related to priorities and appropriate for specific country circumstances can be added. In the context of Bangladesh the following may be considered.

1. Selected learning outcomes - assessed competencies;
2. Assessment of governance measures –decentralisation, accountability, transparency;
3. Resources – adequacy and use;
4. Disparity in participation, provisions, and outcome; and
5. Teachers – numbers and quality attributes.

(Excerpted from “Looking Beyond EFA and Education MDG 2015,” Contribution of CAMPE to PFM, discussed in civil society consultation on 19 February, 2013)

These are proposals under discussion in civil society forums. These ideas and suggestions should be the subject of dialogue involving government and major stakeholders, which may result in a common national position. It may also bring out some divergences between government and civil society positions.

17. Linking education and development – Dakar Review

Education stakeholders from civil society, private sector, academics, governments and the United Nations met in Dakar, Senegal on 8-18 March, 2013 to review global education progress since 2000, and formulate recommendations for an education goal for the post-2015 development framework.

The deliberations, despite differences in views on how to address the challenges, converged on four priorities:

- Equity: A post-2015 education goal must include a clear focus on reaching the marginalized, and in particular populations affected by conflict and disaster were frequently mentioned, as were people living in poverty, ethnic minorities, rural girls and those living with disabilities.
- Quality Learning: The goal must also include a strong emphasis on improving the quality of learning outcomes and experiences, something that the existing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have failed to do.
- Expanding Access to More than Just Primary Education: The goal must include a continuum of learning opportunities from early childhood on.
- Cross-Cutting Nature of Education: The post-2015 development agenda must include education as a cross-cutting issue that supports other development goals. One way for this to be operationalized is to produce targets that integrate education into other development sectors such as health and the environment. The idea of conceiving of education as helping building resilience across a range of other issues was introduced in this light.

A similar consensus around these themes was cited in the summary report of the global thematic consultation (with only 600 answers from different countries) on education: *Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, still in draft (Anderson and Winthrop 2013).

A synthesis of the Dakar meeting outcomes was to be presented to UN High Level Panel and would inform the secretary-general's report to the U.N. General Assembly this fall (see below). The explicit education goal focused on equity with quality is in line with the discussion and emerging consensus in this respect in Bangladesh.

18. EFA and UN High Level Panel on Post-MDGs

The UN High Level Panel on Post-MDG met in Monrovia, Liberia at the end of January 2013, at the midway point of the consultative process. The agenda for the Panel's meeting focused on sustained prosperity and sustainable development; education was not explicitly on the agenda.

The communiqué from Monrovia emphasized achieving structural transformations through a global development agenda. It underscores sustainable growth with equity, creation of wealth through sustainable and transparent management of natural resources, and partnerships. (<http://post2015.org/2013/02/04/monrovia-hlp-communiqué>)

It recognized the “indispensability” of opportunity for all, including “ensuring universal learning.” Does this quite indicate recognition of the critical role that education plays in economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection; or that it is a development challenge in itself, but also the linchpin for achieving all other development goals? We have to wait and see (Anderson and Greubel 2013).

The UN High Level Panel met again for the fourth and last time in Bali on 25-27 March 2013. Their post-meeting communiqué underscored the need for a ‘people-centred and planet-sensitive development agenda, which is recognised through equal partnership of all stakeholders’. No specific mention was made of education goals or priorities and how these might figure in the overall development agenda.

The report of the High Level Panel on post-2015 development agenda, based on four rounds of consultation, was finally submitted to the Secretary General on 31 May, 2013. It is presented as “bold and practical” recommendations with great optimism “that a transformation to end poverty through sustainable development is possible within our generation.” Five transformational shifts including a new Global Partnership as the basis for a single, universal post-2015 agenda for humanity are proposed. (http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf)

The five transformations advocated are: 1) Ending extreme poverty rather than only reducing it; 2) Putting sustainable development at the core of development; 3) Transforming economies for jobs and inclusive growth with a sustainable patterns of consumption and production; 4) Building peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; and 5) Forging a new global partnership with a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual accountability that must underpin the post-2015 agenda.

The HLP report, looking ahead beyond 2015, after initial general obeisance to human rights, human dignity and equality, goes on to repeat the income poverty theme and adds to it the environmental theme, which appears to have dominated the recent development discourse under the Rio+20 process. These two themes are placed at the top of the list and in fact the other themes are justified in terms of their links to these two.

A widely expressed view that has surfaced in the discourse on post-2015 agenda is that MDG 2015, contradicting to a degree the spirit and core principle of the Millennium Declaration, took an economic view of development. They underscored poverty reduction, emphasizing income poverty, as the first, and presumably, the most important MDG, to the achievement of which other goals would contribute. To what extent and how are the pitfalls of this restrictive view being addressed in the new agenda? Is it enough just to add the planetary limits to development, strongly pushed by the RIO+20 community, to the poverty goal? (See « Comments on HLP Final Report » by Manzoor Ahmed in NORRAG, POST-2015 AGENDA: Reactions from around the web to the High-Level Panel Report, 10 June, 2013. www.norrag.org/en/latest-news/archive/2013/June/10/detail/)

Is there a mixing up of ends and means in the HLP conceptualisation and formulation of the framework? It is titled “Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development.” Should this not be the other way round? Is sustainable development or, more appropriately, sustainable *human* development, not the end? This end would be realised through eradicating poverty and transforming economies, i.e., by changing the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption (ibid.)

Can the overarching framework serve genuinely as *the framework*, not merely as a template, for identifying, selecting, and justifying goals and targets, formulating indicators, and adapting and adjusting these to specific conditions and needs of people – at the same time retaining the advantages of common standards and criteria, international league table comparison, competition among countries and emulation? How can the process of goal setting, monitoring of progress and assessment of outcome encourage both the particularistic and the

universalist features of the global development enterprise. The HLP report suggests the *targets* related to the global goals to be adapted and formulated at the national level. The *indicators* certainly need to be varied and calibrated according to national circumstances. These principles and methodology need to be encouraged and diligently followed in guiding and designing implementation of the new development agenda. The methodological issues deserve collective and deliberate effort. A good job has not been done on this score for MDG2015. The lessons must be learned to do a better job this time (ibid.)

There is a degree of convergence in concepts regarding the key elements in a framework for thinking about the post-2015 agenda, as attempted to be synthesized by the Bangladesh People's Forum for MDG (see below in the concluding section of this paper).

Part III – Way Forward: the view from Bangladesh on how national vision and goals and global priorities may converge

Bangladesh has been engaged in the UN-led discussion on post-MDG and international post-EFA discourse. It has hosted some regional events and its representatives – both official and from civil society – have joined some of the international events. Bangladesh also has been active in some of the civil society international discussions on both post-2015 agenda on development and education.

At the same time, there have been national consultations on post-2015 MDG and EFA. So far these have been parallel processes of government and civil society. There has been no visible initiative on the part of government or UN to bring these together. Many questions still remain open about and the process will continue aiming for different milestones up to 2015, which may create the opportunity for reaching a consensus or at least partial convergence on a national position. At the moment, it is work in progress.

This part will summarise what is known about the emerging ideas on the content of the post 2015 agenda from key stakeholders, including divergences and convergences, and the potential national contribution to the content and process of the international negotiations.

19. PFM and the Global Discourse

At the time of this writing, only tentative statements can be made about the way forward and the view from Bangladesh on how national vision and goals may converge or diverge with global priorities.

Whether it will be a new global framework which provides the basis for setting national goals and indicators or it will be a set of specific global goals in line with current MDG 2015 are still to be decided. How and if global framework, goals and indicators will be adapted at the national level remain under discussion. How education and the aspects of human capability development will be reflected in the broader post-2015 development vision and agenda are still an open question.

The dialogue, discussion and debate that has been on-going in the country, informed and influenced to a degree by the international discourse and process has been noted in Part II above. As mentioned above, the contribution of CAMPE on education to PFM on the education theme reviewed MDG accomplishments, constraints and problems faced in making progress, and what might be considered relevant for Bangladesh for the future. The paper also indicated in general terms a way forward for determining the post-2015 priorities, as explained below.

Based on a synthesis of the thematic papers prepared by PFM members, an initial formulation of the post-2015 development agenda has been released for discussion and review on 18 May, 2013. A further revision was presented on 8 July, which did not include any significant change regarding education goals, targets and indicators.

Proposed Post-2015 goals, targets and indicators

Twelve global goals representing major themes of the post-2015 development agenda, based on the thematic papers and their PFM review, and informal discussion, are listed below. Related targets to be fulfilled by 2030 and indicators are proposed keeping in view the Bangladesh context.

1. Extreme poverty, redefined as income below \$2 (PPP) per person/day, will be eliminated with special attention to reduction of vulnerability of systematically deprived groups.

2. Hunger and malnutrition will be eliminated.

3. All working age people will have “decent” work.
4. All children up to age of prohibition of child labour (age 14) will complete compulsory education of acceptable quality.
5. All youth and adults will have opportunity to participate in lifelong learning related to livelihood, work, citizenship and personal fulfilment.
6. All children and adults, especially mothers, will have access to basic health care of acceptable quality.
7. Women will have equal opportunity in work, citizenship and social roles and will be protected from all forms of gender-related violence.
8. Reduce in major ways threats to sustainable development emanating from climate change.
9. Capacity will be built in science, technology, research and innovation to support the post-2015 development agenda.
10. Protection will be offered and vulnerability reduced of people in fragile states and states in conflict.
11. Measures will be adopted in governance, devolution of public administration, partnership building and transparency to support the development agenda.
12. Development oriented commitment and synergy will be built at international and national levels to mobilise the resources to fulfil the global development agenda.

Two goals above - goals 4 and 5 - are specifically concerned with education. The proposed targets and indicators related to these two goals are shown below (Table 4).

Table 4. Proposed Education Goals, Targets and Indicators for the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Goal	Targets	Indicators
4. All children up to age of prohibition of child labour (age 14) will complete compulsory education of acceptable quality	<p>4.1 All children from birth to transition into primary school participate in organised ECD programmes including preschool;</p> <p>4.2 Ensuring acceptable quality with adequate provisions for primary and post-primary education including teaching personnel ;</p> <p>4.3 Completion of primary and post-primary</p>	<p>4a Proportion of children with birth registration with urban-rural and gender breakdown;</p> <p>4b Proportion of parents/care givers of young children from birth to 8 years participating in organised parenting skills and knowledge programmes with income quintile and urban-rural breakdown;</p> <p>4c Proportion of children 3-5 years participating in ECD programmes with income quintile and urban-rural breakdown.</p> <p>4d Proportion of children 5-6 years participating in preschool programmes with income quintile and urban-rural breakdown.</p> <p>4.e Proportion of primary and secondary schools meeting essential quality standards for physical facilities,</p>

	education by all eligible children; 4.4 Major expansion of secondary education.	learning equipment and environment and teaching personnel standards. 4f Proportions of students entering and completing primary school at designated age with gender, urban-rural breakdown; 4g Gross and net enrolment in primary and secondary education; 4h Assessed achievement by students of competency standards in languages (First language and English), mathematics, and science at primary and secondary levels with gender and urban-rural breakdown.
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5. All youth and adults will have opportunity to participate in lifelong learning related to livelihood, work, citizenship and personal fulfilment.	5.1 Universal availability of learning centres, spaces, programmes, and learning technology networks; 5.2 Eighty percent of youth and adults participate in lifelong learning; 5.3 Assessed basic literacy competency achieved by all youth and adults and self-sustaining functional competency achieved by 80 percent of youth and adults.	5a Proportions of youth and adults making regular use of learning centres, spaces, programmes, and learning technology networks, with gender, income quintile and urban-urban slum-rural breakdown; 5b Proportion of youth and adults participating in literacy and post-literacy, work and livelihood skills training and personal fulfilment in community learning centres and other education programmes with gender, age and urban-urban slum-rural breakdown. 5c Assessed competency achievement of youth and adults in literacy at basic and functional or self-sustaining levels.
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Source: PFM 2013. "A New Global Partnership: For Sustainable Human Development through Eradicating Poverty and Transforming Economies, » Post-2015 Development Agenda based on a synthesis of position papers prepared for Bangladesh People's Forum for MDG (PFM)," Draft, 8 July, 2013.

A government draft also has been prepared under the auspices of the Planning Commission, but has not been made public. It is hoped that there would be an opportunity for all concerned to look at both and engage in some exchange of views. It will be then clearer how and to what extent the positions of the government and civil society converge or diverge.

20. CAMPE's Role in post-2015 EFA discussion

The UN-led process has continued somewhat methodically with a timetable and milestones up to the fall of

2015 when the UN General Assembly has its final say about the post-2015 development agenda. A similar systematic and time-bound approach has not been evident, at least from the national perspective in Bangladesh, regarding the articulation of post 2015 EFA. There is, however, urgency about spelling out the education goal(s) and associated indicators that may be included in the broader post-2015 development agenda. CAMPE, as noted earlier, has been engaged in the discussion in the country, and to a degree internationally, about post-2015 EFA agenda.

Besides the contribution of CAMPE on the education agenda to PFM, noted in Part II, a sense of the tenor and substance of the on-going discussion is revealed in observations from CAMPE sent to Brookings Institution Centre for Universal Education (CUE) in response to request for comments on its proposal for list of global learning needs and a prototype framework for measuring learning outcomes. This work by Brookings is related to the Education First Initiative mentioned above.

The questions that CAMPE and Education Watch groups considered important, forwarded to CUE and are likely to figure prominently in the continuing post-2015 discussion in Bangladesh, are summarised below.

1. How can an overarching vision for development – the World We Want – put human capability enhancement at the centre? Can human capability -- empowerment and agency of people -- to achieve human rights and human dignity for all be the touchstone and the rationale for post-MDG sectorial/thematic goals in poverty reduction, building a sustainable world, healthy individuals and communities, and people equipped with productive skills and capacities for gainful livelihood and rewarding life?

An overarching vision based on the human capability approach to development does not undermine the sectorial/thematic goals being discussed, but provides a justification for their choice and prioritization and can help in considering targets and indicators for the different goals as well as their nation-specific adaptation. This also suggests a way of connecting closely and robustly the Education First initiative of the UN Secretary General and the post-MDG and EFA dialogue.

2. What should be the time frame for the Post-MDG and Education First agenda? There seems to be a vague mention of 15 to 20 years. Arguably, a momentum has been built around and with MDG and EFA. Whatever may be the shortfalls by 2015, greater progress would have been made worldwide because of the goals than it would have been without the goals. Should we not try to capture the momentum, encourage an intensification of the efforts at national and international levels, by adopting a 10-year timeframe up to 2025? Surely, the job will be not done by then, but there is likelihood of greater progress with a shorter deadline.
3. There is a need to focus on measuring learning outcomes. But the goal of course is not just to measure but also to ensure that better learning is achieved. Equitable and effective participation in programmes of acceptable quality has to be ensured. Along with what students learn, we need to be concerned about equitable participation and that the resources and governance provisions for this are in place. Shouldn't measurement metrics include these in appropriate ways?

In other words, the concern is perhaps not access *plus* learning as distinct categories, but access *with* learning as one conceptual category. Equitable participation remains and will remain a major problem and the means for dealing with this with resources and governance arrangements should enter into measurement of progress. Moreover, participation itself, in safe, joyful and socially rewarding learning environments of children from birth to the end of compulsory education, say up to age 14, should be taken as a legitimate educational goal. This is especially relevant for protecting children from unacceptable child labour (generally up to age 14 by international convention) by keeping them engaged in an educational setting.

4. The categories of primary and post-primary education and the way they are separated reflect a holdover from past EFA thinking. Primary education of five or six-year duration is no longer adequate

basic education and most countries have extended or recognize the need to extend basic compulsory education to at least age 14 or 15 corresponding to about 10 years of schooling or its equivalent. Shouldn't the national and global goals be recast under compulsory basic education embracing primary and post-primary education up to a minimum of 14 years (which may be set at a higher level at the national level)?

5. Early childhood development seems to be equated with preschool education and school readiness, again a leftover from the past. School readiness is a critical goal, but with all the scientific evidence about early and rapid brain growth, early cognitive development and early deficits that cannot be overcome later, birth to school entry must come under the purview of ECD and reflected in goals and indicators.
6. Adult and lifelong learning appears to be neglected in the on-going international discussion. Surely, it is not the presumption that education and learning is done with by age 15. While tertiary and professional, technical and occupational education, the rights and entitlement based learning opportunities in basic, compulsory and lifelong learning must be part of post-2015 education agenda.

Although EFA goal 3 (promote learning and life skills for youth and adults) and goal 4 (increase literacy rate by 50 per cent) did not receive due attention and the literacy goal and target were set in a mechanistic and meaninglessly reductionist way, this is no reason to ignore these now totally. There is no justification for taking the task of meeting basic learning needs as an age-bound (under-15?) problem. With at least a quarter of the world's population functionally illiterate and lifelong learning opportunity for all needed more than ever in the era of the knowledge economy, adaptability of skills and communications technology, lifelong learning with functional literacy skills as the base has to be a core element of the basic education agenda. Admittedly, the goal, targets and indicators have to be defined in a way that makes sense in relation to the overarching human capability agenda.

As presented in Part II, specific suggestions about global goals and indicators in education encompassing early childhood, universal basic education – primary and post-primary, and adult and lifelong learning were made. Indicators for each goal were proposed at two levels – minimum and desirable. There is the presumption that global minimum and desirable indicators could be adapted at the national level on the basis of analysis and stakeholder discussion.

21. In Conclusion: A Framework for visualizing post-2015 Development – The World We Want

The civil society discourse and the story of articulation of the Bangladesh PFM position on the overall post-2015 agenda as well as the education-related goals underscore the need for adopting a conceptual framework for visualizing the post-2015 development agenda – the world we want.

The Millennium Declaration of 2000, from which MDGs were derived, asserted that every individual had the right to dignity, freedom, equality, a basic standard of living that included freedom from hunger and violence.

We have come a long way but still need to go far. We need to step back and look at what we could learn from the experience, what needs to be done differently and how to build on what has been achieved. One lesson is that in setting specific goals and targets, important to direct action towards achievable and verifiable results, the overarching purpose of establishing the right to dignity, freedom and equality for all have been side-lined. It is necessary to go back to the original intent of the Millennium Declaration and consider how a framework reflecting the overall goal binds together and provides the rationale for different specific goals and targets.

The framework also can guide the adoption of indicators and assessment methods and the adaptation of global goals to national and local contexts which can make the outcomes meaningful to people's life.

There is a degree of convergence or at least strongly voiced advocacy for several items for inclusion in a framework for thinking about the post-2015 agenda, as summed up below.

1. An overarching vision for development – the World We want – should put human capability enhancement at the centre. Human capability -- empowerment and agency of people -- to achieve human rights and human dignity for all can be the touchstone and the rationale for post-MDG sectorial/thematic goals in poverty reduction, building a sustainable world, healthy individuals and communities, and people equipped with productive skills and capacities for gainful livelihood and rewarding life.

There should be specific education and human development goals in the new agenda, as well as a rights and dignity perspective that should suffuse all goals and targets. An overarching vision based on the human capability approach to development does not undermine the sectoral/thematic goals, but provides a justification for their choice and prioritization and can help in considering targets and indicators for the different goals as well as their nation-specific adaptation.

2. A rights and equity perspective must subsume goals, targets, indicators and programme strategies. MDGs have not consistently addressed equity and the rights approach has been rarely applied directly in strategies and programmes. Full advantage should be taken of a wider acceptance of the rights approach and recognition of equity as a central concern in poverty reduction and people's empowerment in today's world.

3. Quality of the outputs and outcomes of programmes and services must be given attention. MDGs have accorded priority to coverage of service, sometimes ignoring what coverage really means. This is manifested prominently in the education goal for which only coverage has been pursued, ignoring learning outcomes. The low level of service availability and coverage may have prompted this approach in the past, but there is no justification any longer for neglecting the quality criteria.

4. An integrated and coordinated approach is essential in pursuing the development agenda. The value of synergies and the efficiency and purposefulness of a systemic approach must be recognised. An overall vision, as the one proposed above, should be used as the rationale to promote the links, interaction and complementarity among discrete thematic and sectoral goals and targets. A matrix approach that shows overlap and mutual support in relation to overarching priorities in human capability, rights and dignity can guide planning and design of strategies and programmes in specific national and sub-national contexts as well as in assessment and monitoring activities.

5. Setting the goals and targets is not enough. It should go beyond indicating the outcomes, but also should include goals regarding critical change and transformation required to create the conditions and means for achieving the outcomes. A critical area in this respect is building partnerships, especially, with the civil society and development NGOs and making use of the social and human capital they have built. But it calls for true partnership with NGOs with track record rather than subcontracting for government agencies which, experience shows, has not worked well.

6. Effective and accountable governance in practice is another area of particular concern in creating the enabling conditions at national, sub-national and local levels. Transparency, accountability and participation of stakeholders must be given high priority.

7. Goals and targets must match resources. An area of enabling conditions is linking goals and targets to commensurate resource provisions at national and international levels. Trade and market access, global financial architecture, policies regarding LDCs and managing climate change challenges and resources, must all be considered in relation to the development agenda, rather than through wholly separate mechanisms and interlocutors without consideration of the linkages, which is the current pattern. Countries must also prioritise resource mobilisation and allocation in relation to the goals. The post-2015 international and national development agenda need to create a basis for a development-oriented synergy among all of these processes which could be leveraged by developing countries.

8. Global goals are implemented through local action. The value of global goals for setting global benchmarks, rallying behind goals in human solidarity, mobilising resources, sharing and learning and competing to excel among countries is of paramount importance. At the same time, goals have to be implemented and achieved within countries, in local communities, in specific contexts. The need to adapt and adjust goals and targets should be recognised, setting additional and modified targets and indicators, or dropping some targets and indicators. Countries should be encouraged and supported in this adaptation, while maintaining comparability in a set of core targets and indicators to monitor and assess global and regional progress (PFM 2013).

Keeping in view the overarching framework and its key elements can lend the listing of goals, major targets and indicators coherence, integrity and authenticity which otherwise are likely to be lost.

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23. Annexes

Annex 1: I-PRSP CONTENT ANALYSIS: REFLECTION OF THE SUGGESTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Recommendations by Civil Society	Reflections in the Draft I-PRSP
<i>Ownership of the I-PRSP Document</i>	
Involve all stakeholders in a genuinely participatory process. I-PRSP has been prepared to get foreign loan not to eradicate poverty.	Silent
The I-PRSP that has been prepared without taking opinion of ethnic minority will not benefit them.	Partially addressed
PRSP should be prepared through parliamentary discussion	Not addressed
PRSP should not be prepared due to donor pressure or for getting foreign aid. PRSP should be prepared with direct participation of poor people	Partially addressed
The I-PRSP draft should be discussed at various levels (union, Thana, and parliament)	Partially addressed
Recommendations by Civil Society Reflections in the Draft IPRSP Ensure that all discussions between Government of Bangladesh and donor agencies relating to PRSP must be transparent and open for public scrutiny	Not addressed
Scholarship, education loan and subsidy should be provided to meritorious students of poor families	Partially reflected
Reduce unemployment through education and by creating positions	Partially reflected
<i>Children and women</i>	
Specific programmes to eliminate child labour. PRSP	Not reflected

document has omitted the issues of child rights, child labour and adolescent group	
Women need regular employment, reasonable incomes, descent work conditions and safe workplace	Partially reflected
Better access and justice for women	Partially reflected
The strategy for social protection appears the most divorced from reality because it fails to take into account livelihood insecurity faced by people, which is much greater for poor women and for female headed households and a major cause for a slide back into poverty	Fully reflected
Macro-Economic Perspectives	
Macroeconomic perspectives of I-PRSP deviates from the past trend. Unless concrete measures are taken to revamp the export and the external sector poverty cannot be reduced at a faster rate.	Partially addressed
The I-PRSP envisage a very sharp increase in revenue earnings in relation to the trend	Not addressed
Target revenue expenditure is shown in the I-PRSP as a constant proportion of GDP over the medium term period. This means that revenue expenditure will be growing at the same rate as the GDP. The rationale behind the accelerated growth of revenue expenditure is not clear. Fiscal prudence would demand putting a tab on the growth of revenue expenditure	Not addressed
Identify the programmes, organisations, institutions, ministries, agencies, policies, even persons, who made negative contribution to poverty reduction during the past 15 years.	Not reflected
Poverty Reduction Targets	
Without a I-PRSP, the rate of poverty reduction has been 1.1 percentage point per year during the 1990s. Therefore, IPRSP's target of 1.6 percentage point poverty reduction per year is not as high as expected. Moreover, no target for the reduction of extreme poverty has been specified in the document.	Not addressed
Micro-credit Policy	
Self-employment through micro-credit.	Fully reflected
Lessons learnt from micro-credit can be applied with equal success in providing agricultural credit, and providing credit to the people who do not have access to credit from conventional banks.	Not reflected

Good governance	
Give the citizens peace, personal safety and security, and clean governance.	Partially reflected
Food insecurity	
Food insecurity has received only some scant attention in the document. An elaborate discussion on the strategies and alternative policy options to enhance household food security in the context of both (rice) price stabilization and targeted food distribution in the face of declining food aid is essential.	Not reflected
Monitoring and evaluation system	
Creation of a strong poverty monitoring outfit for continuous monitoring of poverty upazilla by upazilla	Partially reflected

Source: CPD (2003). *Finalisation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy for Bangladesh: Review of the Process and Interim Measures*, pp. 51-52.

Annex 2: BRAC's Proposed Post 2015 Development Agenda

"As we move towards our target date, it's time to pay attention to formulating new targets beyond 2015 and develop a strategy to achieve them. While goals have been significantly reached in many areas including child mortality, maternal mortality and primary school enrolment, new targets must focus on left out groups such as the ultra-poor, women in general, people living in hard to reach areas etc. We must concentrate on quality and relevance of education too and not just access so that education also produces more livelihoods. There are other issues to look into." Sir Fazle Hasan Abed

Climate change and disasters

Climate change will be a major theme as it will have an impact on all achievements including those in the MDGs. No new MDG targets can be taken up without taking into account the impact of climate change. Climate change adaptation related work must be linked to mitigation efforts as adaptation alone is not sufficient. Fund-raising for adaptation purposes should also be prioritized.

Due to climate change both the intensity and frequency of natural disasters will increase. There will be more floods, drought like conditions, heavy rainfall, river-bank erosion, landslides, storm surges and cyclones, salinity etc. in the coming years. In defining the post 2015 agenda, inclusion of resilience to natural disasters and climate change will be important.

Education

Enrollment targets have been largely achieved but education inequity and quality issues remain. Situation analysis of the bottom quartile which includes ultra-poor, hard to reach population and other hyper marginalized groups is required to develop targets and indicators that address inequity. Quality of primary education needs to be measured and improved, which may positively impact drop-out rates. The post 2015 agenda needs to go beyond primary education and measure secondary school enrolment. Vocational and skills training is needed to address the needs of the growing youth population.

Eradication of extreme Poverty

Significant progress has been made towards eradicating poverty, however inequity issues remains. The post 2015 agenda needs to build on these achievements to further reduce poverty and focus on left out groups such as the ultra-poor, minorities and people living in hard to reach areas.

Gender based inequity

There has been an increase in the number of women entering the workforce, starting businesses or delaying in starting a family. Gender disparity, however, still remains an issue. The post 2015 agenda needs to address equity issues such as wage differences, gender-based discriminations in employment and violence against women. A clear correlation needs to be drawn between achievement in sectors and gender empowerment as a factor, and targets with the most impact have to be set.

Agricultural development, Food security and access

New technologies for agricultural development are needed to increase agricultural production and maximize utilization of arable land to ensure sustainable food supply. Food availability also includes ways to improve access to food for the poor. Access to nutritious food is critical so food security should also mean nutrition security. There is a need to secure safe food as well in view of large scale adulteration of food.

Health

The post 2015 agenda needs to further and sustain the achievements of the original MDGs. While progress has been made towards improving maternal and child health, the numbers still remain alarmingly high. In addition to improving maternal healthcare, improved family planning measures also need to be taken.

New communicable and non-communicable diseases are emerging, and diseases like malaria and tuberculosis are re-emerging with new faces, different strains that need more sophisticated diagnostics and treatment.

To reduce the incidence of non-communicable and life-cycle diseases, focus needs to shift to preventative measures, particularly at the policy and behavioural level.

Urban Issues

In the developing world, urban issues are dominating but policies are inadequate to address the problems. High population density in urban cities, coupled with significant rural to urban migration will escalate the problem. The urban space of the poor must be prioritized and organized. Urban policies addressing issues of housing, access to sanitation, safe drinking water, electricity, healthcare and education for the low-income population need to be developed. This requires a comprehensive delivery package- not just for housing and income but access to building environments and spaces.

Youth

The growing youth population needs special attention in the post 2015 agenda. To absorb the number of young adults entering the workforce we need to focus on creating opportunities and building capacity through education, and vocational and skills training. It is necessary to create an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurs and ensure safe working environments free of exploitation.

Legal empowerment

Legal empowerment for the poor, particularly women, is a critical area of work as there are huge unmet needs in this sector. However, right to legal support, right to property and right to enjoy full citizenship, amongst other things, can happen only through legal empowerment. Lack of formal sector's capacity to deliver such services to people in general has resulted in the growth of the informal legal services sector where, amongst other things, property rights of women have found space in the activities and discourse. As people become more empowered there will be greater demand for legal rights and services, which may overwhelm the formal justice system. The need to have complimentary systems to offer quick and inexpensive legal services is very important and needs attention.

Social Protection

Social protection measures need to be enhanced to reduce the vulnerabilities of the low-income population. The poor lack protection against vulnerabilities such as production/market failures, labour market insecurities, natural disasters, demographic vulnerabilities (children, disabled, and elderly), chronic poverty, and health and

financial shocks. Integrated and holistic social protection policies, including universal healthcare and minimum wages, need to be developed to support the poor in such vulnerable situations.

Market access of the poor

Market access is a very significant contributor to poverty alleviation and is an indicator of participation and empowerment of the poor. Income and consumption are two reliable indicators but empowerment of the poor can be seen through market responses to the needs of the poor and how much of it engages with them. We need to ensure access to financial markets, product market, labour market and information markets. Labour market access also needs to ensure occupational safety.

While market access research is done to measure obstacles to do business for the non-poor there are no such facilities for the poor. Measurement of market access will help develop strategies to develop new markets and competition management for the poor.

Governance and accountability

The role of various social and governance institutions that relate to the poor should be identified and measured both in the formal and the informal sector in order to assess the capacity of society to help achieve MDG goals now and in future. Accountability- financial and social- of both state and civil society service delivery organizations needs to be ensured in order to reduce corruption. States should legalize the formal role of civil society and facilitate active participation in the development process.

Road Safety

Road accidents are a significant cause of death across the developing world, and is likely to become the second largest cause of death by 2020. Adequate measures, such as enforcement of road safety laws, need to be taken in order to address this issue.

Source: BRAC Public Affairs Office