Millennium Development Goals: Achieve Universal Primary Education from Indian Perspective

Shoiab Ahmad Bhat

* Research Scholar in the Deptt. Of Sociology, Institute of Social Sciences, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Agra (U.P.)

Abstract- Education is a decisive component of human development, and progress towards this goal will deeply influence that towards other Millennium Development Goals. Primary education is the source for high-quality skills development in numeracy and literacy, which are critical for skills development in scientific and technological education. All human beings should have the prospect to make a better life for themselves. Regrettably, too many children in the world today grow up without this prospect, because they are denied their basic right to even attend primary school. The millennium development goals discernible a strong dedication to deal with the problems of the right to development, to peace and security, for gender equality, and eradication of the poverty in its all form and to promote sustainable human development. The focal point of this research paper is to assess the progress of the Goal two that aims at achieving Universal Primary Education from Indian perspective. The related target is to ensure that, the children everywhere (both boys and girls) would be able to complete full course of primary schooling by the year 2015.Education is a powerful instrument for reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and social well-being, and laying the groundwork for sustained economic growth. It is essential for building democratic societies and dynamic, globally competitive economies. Providing universal primary education, however, remains a great challenge. In this regard the present study is an effort to analyse the stipulation and situation of primary education in India.

Index Terms- Education, human, development, primary, skills, scientific, technological, millennium, development, goals, universal, instrument and globally.

I. An Introduction of Millennium Development Goals

The aim of the MDGs is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. The MDGs emphasize the role of developed countries in aiding developing countries, as outlined in Goal Eight. Goal Eight sets objectives and targets for developed countries to achieve a "global partnership for development" by supporting fair trade, debt relief for developing nations, increasing aid and access to affordable essential medicines, and encouraging technology transfer. Thus developing nations are not seen as left to achieve the MDGs on their own, but as a partner in the developing-developed compact to reduce world poverty.[1]

The millennium development goals represent a consensus among nations on a core agenda for development. They constitute eight global objectives each with one or more quantitative targets, which the developing countries plan to achieve by 2015. These objectives encompass the following

II. Millennium Development Goals and Targets: At a Glance

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	1. Halve the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day by 2015 2. Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015
2. Achieve universal primary education	3. Make sure that all boys and girls are able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	4. Get rid of gender differences in primary and secondary education by 2005
4. Reduce child mortality	5. Reduce the number of under-five children who die by two thirds by 2015
5. Improve maternal health	6. Reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	7. Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015 8. Halt and begin to reverse the spread of malaria and other major diseases by 2015
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	9. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources by 2015 10. Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015 11. Make a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

	by 2020
8. Develop a global partnership for development	12. Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally 13. Address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction 14. Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States 15. Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term 16. In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth 17. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries 18. In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies

Further, we are now beyond the mid-point between the adoption of the Goals and the target date of 2015. Important progress has been made and there are many notable successes that offer encouragement. In all but two regions, primary school enrolment is at least 90 percent; about 80 percent of children in developing countries now receive a measles vaccine and 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water since 1990. But, despite significant achievements towards some targets, much more needs to be done. Numerous Goals and targets are likely to be missed without additional, strengthened or corrective actions that are urgently needed. At the current rate of progress, the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day is unlikely to be reduced by half in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2015; a quarter of all children in developing countries are still undernourished, and 100 countries will fail to achieve gender parity in both primary and secondary school enrolment.

Achieving the MDGs is now all the more challenging because the development environment is more threatened now than it has been at any time in the recent past. A global economic slowdown, a food security crisis of uncertain magnitude and duration, the development impact of climate change, all directly affect efforts to reduce poverty and to attain the MDGs more broadly. And, for many developing countries, there is a risk that important advances made can quickly unravel.[2]

III. The Global Prospects for Universal Primary Completion By 2015

A new World Bank database developed for this study shows that over the 1990s the average rate of primary school completion in the developing world (on a country weighted basis) improved only from 72 to 77 percent, far short of the progress needed to ensure achievement of the education MDG of universal primary completion. On a population-weighted basis, buoyed by China's high reported completion rate, the global picture looks slightly better, rising from 73 to 81 percent over the decade.

On either basis, however, the global average masks large regional differences in both the distance from the MDG and the progress made over the last decade, as can be seen from figures 1 and 2. Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest completion rate by far, with barely half of all school-age children completing primary school; it is followed by South Asia, with an average completion rate of about 70 percent. The Middle East and North Africa showed a disturbing pattern of stagnation over the 1990s, with the average completion rate remaining around 74 percent. The Europe and Central Asia region (92 percent) is closest to the goal of universal primary completion, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (85 percent) and East Asia and the Pacific (84 percent).

Moreover, within every region, trends at the country level diverge sharply, with rapid progress registered in some countries, stagnation in others, and declines elsewhere. For example, while the global average completion rate for girls improved more than that for boys over the 1990s, it still lags that of boys, at 76 percent compared to 85 percent. Serious gender disparities are evident in at least 13 countries, where girls' completion rates trail those of boys by more than 10 percentage points. While countries such as Tunisia, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have made impressive progress in narrowing the gender gap, in other countries it has widened, or narrowed only because of declines in boys' completion rates rather than improvement in girls'.

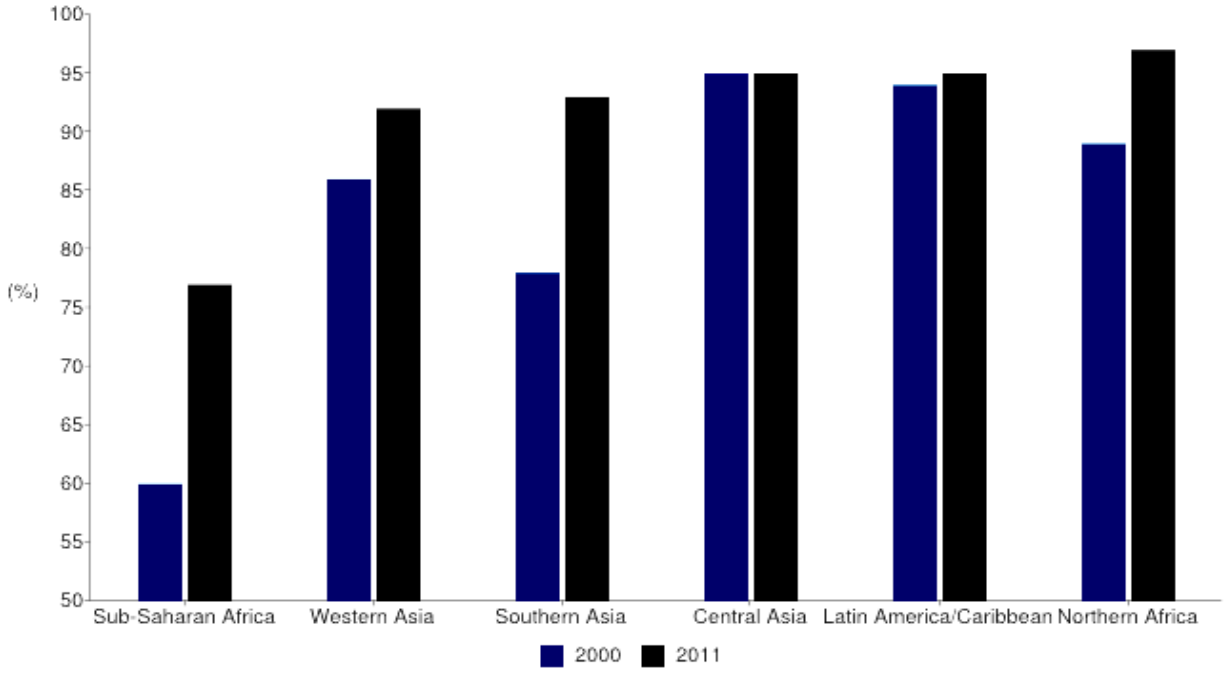
Overall, though, the trends over the 1990s provide some encouraging evidence that where political will is strong, effective reforms are adopted, and international support is adequate, dramatic progress in increasing primary completion rates is possible. A significant number of countries, from Brazil and Nicaragua in Latin America to Cambodia in East Asia to South Africa and The Gambia in Africa, registered improvements in the primary completion rate of 20 percentage points or more in less than a decade. This holds out hope that any developing country

whose completion rate is currently 70 percent or higher could meet the MDG by 2015, provided it can achieve and sustain the rate of improvement registered by these high-performing countries.

At the trend rate of progress achieved over the 1990s, by 2015 the global primary completion rate will not exceed 83 percent. On a population-weighted basis, the world would come closer to achieving the MDG, with about 9 out of every 10 children globally completing primary school. But, as figures 1 and 2 indicate, underlying this global average would be a wide gulf in performance across regions. Ultimately, the MDG will not be attained unless every child in every country has the chance to complete primary school, and change will have to happen at the level of national education systems in order to reach the goal. Therefore, the focus of this analysis is the country-by-country prospects for reaching universal primary completion (UPC) by 2015.[3]

Universal primary education would be a hollow achievement if the focus were simply on enrolment rather than on the completion of primary education. In 2010, the global primary completion rate (measured by the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education) reached 90 per cent, compared with 81 per cent in 1999. Regional values ranged from 70 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa to almost 100 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean and also in the Caucasus and Central Asia.[4]Education is included in all major international human rights treaties. All countries in the world have signed unto one, if not more, of these documents, thus accepting to bear duties in realising education as a right. In practical terms, this means recognising that education is not merely a policy goal but consists of entitlements, obligations and freedoms. According to UN documents and interpretation, these are reflected in 4 key elements (4As): Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adaptability.

Too many children are still denied their right to primary education, if current trends continue the world will not meet the goal of universal primary education by 2015.Adjusted net enrolment rate in primary education, 2000 and 2011 (Percentage).



(Source: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013)

IV. Millennium Development Goals: Achieve Universal Primary Education from Indian Perspective

India is far behind in the goal to achieve universal primary school enrolment. In 1999, the net primary enrolment rate was only 52.5 percent—a long way off from the goal of 100 percent enrolment by 2015 (World Bank, 2004).9 Primary completion rates rose slightly between 1993 and 2000, from 58.7 percent to 61.4 percent, but dropout rates are clearly still very high.

Although more than 90 percent of Indians have a primary school located within one kilometre of their residence, the quality of the teaching and the lack of facilities, such as classrooms and basic water and sanitation, lead to a lack of functional literacy in many of the children who manage to complete school (Bajpai and Goyal, 2004). Another major factor affecting student enrolment in and completion of primary school is teacher absenteeism. Data from a 2003 World Bank survey indicate that about 25 percent of teachers were absent on any given day they were supposed to teach.

The Indian government has set goals for improving access to and completion of elementary education that are more ambitious than the MDGs. The National Program of Universal Education, known as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched by the government as part of its commitment to universalize access to and ensure completion of primary

schooling by 2010. The SSA sets out to have all children complete five years of schooling by 2007, to have all children complete eight years of schooling by 2010, to eliminate gender and social disparities in primary schooling by 2007 and by 2010 in secondary schooling, and to have universal retention of children in primary school by 2010. The Tenth Five-Year Plan sets out to increase the literacy rate to 75 percent by 2007 and to reduce gender gaps in literacy and wage rates by at least 50 percent by 2007. While it is extremely promising that the government itself has laid out these goals, which go beyond the MDGs within a shorter time frame, it remains to be seen whether any of these will be met.

The literacy rate of 15-24-year olds increased from 64.3 percent in 1990 to 73.3 percent in 2001. It is noteworthy that primary school completion rates were lower than youth literacy rates, bringing to light the question of the definition of literacy and/or the manner in which it is measured. While the increase in literacy rates is of significance, the numbers may be misleading as to what such literacy rates actually mean about the presence of effective literacy in the population (Bajpai and Goyal, 2004).

India is off-track in terms of improving the proportion of girls to boys in primary education. The ratio was 0.71 in 1990-91 and climbed to 0.77 by 1999-2000. It is estimated that if improvements continue at their current rate, the ratio of girls to boys in primary school will be 0.83 in 2015, which is substantially below the goal of equal schooling for girls and boys by that year. In secondary and tertiary education, there is even more room for improvement, as in 1999-00, the ratio of girls to boys in secondary school was 67 and in tertiary school it was a mere 51 (HDR, 2003).

Gender disparity in schooling varies across India and is greatest in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, where gross primary enrolment rates are about two thirds or less for females than for males (World Bank, 2004). At the same time, gross primary enrolment rates for girls and boys are on or near-par in Punjab, Haryana, Sikkim and Kerala. Between 1980-81 and 1999-00, there was a lessening of gender disparity in primary enrolment ratios in most states, but Uttar Pradesh and Orissa actually experienced a minor relative decrease in their ratios.

As mentioned earlier, among other factors, the provision of midday meals for school children has been seen as a key element in increasing enrolment and retention of students. Historically, Tamil Nadu has been successful in using the midday meals scheme to enhance rates of enrolment and retention over time. In Tamil Nadu in 1986-87, the total primary school dropout rate (girls and boys combined) was 22.9 percent and by 2000-01, it had decreased to 14.4 percent. The dropout rate for girls during the same period was reduced by more than two-thirds, from 25 percent to 16 percent. At the same time, the dropout rate for boys decreased from 19.8 percent to 12.9 percent (Government of Tamil Nadu, various years).

There are wide interstate disparities in dropout rates of children in grades one through five. In 1999-00, over 50 percent of children in Bihar did not complete primary schooling, while over 90 percent of children completed primary school in Kerala (World Bank, 2004). Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, followed Kerala with the country's highest primary school completion rates-- all above 75 percent. The north eastern states, along with Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan ranked at the bottom, with completion rates at about 50 percent or lower. Taken together, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan account for almost one third of India's population, and the poor performance of these states not only fails the children within them, but diminishes India's chances of meeting the MDG on education.

Madhya Pradesh, one of India's poorest states, has been working to improve its poor education record and in 1997, the state government began the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in an effort to ensure universal access to primary school throughout the state. The EGS is part of Madhya Pradesh's broad decentralization program and it builds a three-way partnership among the state government, local governments (usually a village council or panchayat), and the community. The responsibility of identifying needs for schools falls on the community, the panchayat oversees the schools' functioning, and the government grants funds for salaries, training and supplies within a three-month time period following community identification of need. The binding time frame is essential, in that its statutory framework forces movement from rhetoric to action, similar to the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra (Government of M.P., 2000). Another key element is one that reflects a decentralized aspect of the scheme: teachers are locally appointed and overseen by the panchayat, which can help reduce the high rates of absenteeism that plague the educational system.

Within the first year of operation, an average of 40 primary schools emerged each day in Madhya Pradesh, revealing the overwhelming demand for facilities. Of the 15,568EGS schools that cropped up between 1997 and 1998, most of them were in tribal areas; SC/ST make up almost 70 percent of enrolment in these schools and girls account for about 45 percent enrolment. Not only has the EGS been instrumental in scaling up access to schools, but it has provided access to segments of the population that have been traditionally left behind, making strides towards greater social and gender equality in the state. The program spread to Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in 1999 and to Orissa in 2000.

In 2001-02, India spent about 4 percent of its GDP on education (GOI, Department of Education). Expenditure on education has been rising over the years, but is still lower than the targeted expenditure by the government of 6 percent of GDP. As a proportion of government expenditure on all sectors of education, about half was spent on primary education in 2000. The situation in 1990 was very similar, as India spent 3.8 percent of its GDP on education, of which about 1.8 percent was spent on primary education. In comparison to China, which has the largest education system in the world, India actually spends a larger percentage of its GNP on education, but its literacy rates are notably lower than China's.12 In 2000, China's literacy rate was about 86 percent, while India's was about 65 percent. China's net rates of school enrolment and its proportion of girls to boys enrolled in school are substantially higher than India's.[5]

Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education:-

By the measure of net enrolment ratio (NER), an appropriate indicator for enrolment, the country has already crossed by 2008-09, the cut-off line regarded as the marker value

for achieving 2015 target of universal primary education for all children aged 6-10 years Primary enrolment of 6-10 year old children by their NER measure has improved from 83% in the year 2000 to over 95% in 2007-08. The NER estimated from this trend works out to be about 75 % for 1990 and is about 96% for 2008. In the years 2008-09 and 2009-10, India's NER by the DISE statistics, are 98.6% and 98.3% respectively.

State-wise decomposition of NER as available for 24 States/UTs from DISE based reports for the more recent years does not really form any indicative basis for the purpose of estimating the States‟ trend in NER and their projected levels by 2015. Due to various shortcomings with the sub-national estimates of NER by DISE data, the national series of values only have been used for this report. The trend of national estimates suggests that the country is likely to achieve universal primary enrolment by the measure of NER well before 2015. However, the States‟ levels of Net Attendance Rate (NAR) presented by NSS report for the year 2007-08 have been used here as a proxy indicator to suggest indicative measures of the net effect of enrolment in schools in the year 2007-08 taking into account the expected high positive correlation between NER and NAR.

Against 95.9% NER for the country as a whole in 2007-08, the all-India level NAR for the same year is estimated to be 84%. Thus, of the children aged 6-10 years who are enrolled in Class I-V, only84% attends the school/classes. Universal enrolment of pupils in the primary grade therefore, does not necessarily imply students‟ cent percent attendance in schools. It is observed that only in the States/UTs of Assam (90%), Chhattisgarh (91%), Himachal Pradesh (91%), J&K (92%), Karnataka (92%), Kerala (91%), Maharashtra (91%), Mizoram (97%), Sikkim (90%), Andaman and Nicobar Is (93%), Daman & Diu (97%) and Lakshadweep (96%) have 90% or more children aged 6-10 years attending classes I-V of primary grade in 2007-08. Other States/UTs which have 80% or less children aged 6-10 years attending classes I-V include Arunachal Pradesh (75%), Bihar (72%), Jharkhand (79%) and Meghalaya (75%). Majority of States/UTs (19 out of 35) have 80-90% children of 6-10 years of age attending primary grade classes.

Table -1: Net Enrolment Ratio (Primary) Percentage

	STATES/UTs	2007-08 NAR	2007-08 NER	2008-09 NER	2008-09 NER	Projected Estimate	
						Target 2015	Likely Ach'nt 2015
1	Andhra Pradesh	86	98.2	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
2	Arunachal Pradesh	75	85.6	88	87.8	100.0	100.0
3	Assam	90	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.85
4	Bihar	72	82.2	84.5	84.31	100.0	91.17
5	Chhattisgarh	91	100.0	100.0	99.7	100.0	100.0
6	Delhi	89	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
7	Goa	89	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
8	Gujarat	89	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.85
9	Haryana	86	98.2	100.0	99.7	100.0	100.0
10	Himachal Pradesh	91	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.85
11	Jammu & Kashmir	92	100.0	100.0	99.7	100.0	100.0
12	Jharkhand	79	90.2	92.7	92.4	100.0	100.0
13	Karnataka	92	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.85
14	Kerala	91	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.85
15	Madhya Pradesh	88	100.0	100.0	99.7	100.0	98.85
16	Maharashtra	91	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
17	Manipur	87	99.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
18	Meghalaya	75	85.6	88	87.8	100.0	100.0
19	Mizoram	97	100.0	100.0	99.7	100.0	98.5
20	Nagaland	86	98.2	100.0	99.7	100.0	100.0
21	Orissa	85	97	99.8	99.5	100.0	100.0
22	Punjab	82	93.6	96.2	96	100.0	100.0
23	Rajasthan	83	94.8	97.4	97.1	100.0	100.0
24	Sikkim	90	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0
25	Tamil Nadu	84	95.9	98.6	98.3	100.0	100.0
26	Tripura	89	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.9
27	Uttarakhand	86	98.2	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
28	Uttar Pradesh	82	93.6	96.2	96.0	100.0	100.0
29	West Bengal	88	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.9
30	A & N Island	93	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.9

32	Chandigarh	85	97.0	99.8	99.5	100.0	100.0
33	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	87	99.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
34	Daman & Diu	97	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.9
35	Lakshadweep	96	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.9
36	Puducherry	86	98.2	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	All India	84	95.9	98.6	98.3	100.0	100.0

(Source of data:- Estimates based on DISE data for the reference years concerned with adjustments made using NAR data of NSS report No. 532: Participation and Expenditure on Education in India 2007-08)

Attendance ratio drops drastically in upper primary grade classes VI-VIII (59% in 2007-08) in the country as a whole though the overall attendance ratio in Classes I-VIII is higher(86% in 2007-08) as compared to the primary level attendance ratio (84%). This signifies that a sizable number of pupils who are over-aged for attending Grade I-V and not counted for NAR(I-V) as well as a sizable number of pupils who are under-aged for attending Grade VI-VIII and so not counted for NAR (VI-VIII) are eligible for getting counted for the NAR(I-VIII), thereby pushing the NAR (I-VIII) level of the country as a whole and that for the States/UTs higher than corresponding NAR (I-V) levels. As a result, as many as 19 out of 35 States/UTs have 90% or more NAR in Grade I-VIII: Assam (91%), Chhattisgarh (90%), Delhi (91%), Himachal Pradesh (96%), J&K (93%), Karnataka (91%), Kerala (94%), Maharashtra (91%), Manipur (91%), Mizoram (97%), Nagaland (90%), Sikkim (93%), Tamil Nadu (92%), Tripura (90%), Andaman and Nicobar Is (94%), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (90%), Daman & Diu (97%, Lakshadweep (94%) and Puducherry (92%).

Table-2: Net attendance ratio in the Class-group I-VIII for selected State/UT : (2007-08)

	State/UT	Population category				
		Rural	Urban	Male	Female	All
1	Andhra Pradesh	84	89	83	88	86
2	Arunachal Pradesh	79	92	81	82	81
3	Bihar	74	79	70	78	74
4	Gujarat	85	90	84	89	86
5	Haryana	87	90	85	90	88
6	Jharkhand	80	90	82	81	81
7	Manipur	89	96	90	91	91
8	Meghalaya	80	86	81	81	81
9	Punjab	88	81	85	87	86
10	Rajasthan	83	87	79	88	84
11	Uttar Pradesh	84	77	81	85	83
12	Chandigarh	74	89	82	88	86
13	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	88	99	81	95	90
	All India	85	87	84	87	86

(Source of Data: NSS Report 532: Participation and Expenditure on Education in India 2007-08)

The sustainability of the NER at the level of attainment as in 2009-10 will largely depend on sustained improvement in survival rate in the primary stage upto Grade V, which has risen from 62% in 1999 to 72% in 2007-08. About 9.36% children who got enrolled in Grade I to Grade V dropped out of the system before completing the primary schooling during 2007-08 against 9.96% during the previous year.

Attaining 100% Youth literacy is also concomitant; going at the rate by which it increased between 1991 and 2001- from 61.9% to 76.4 %, India is expected to have youth literacy of 82.1% by 2007 and 100% by the end of 2012. The youth literacy rate among urban persons was 82% in 2001 against 59.7% for rural persons in 2001. The youth literacy among males was 76.7% in 2001 against 54.9% for females. The rural-urban gap in youth literacy also has significantly reduced. Compared to males", the youth literacy of females tends to move faster. The male-female gap in youth literacy is predominantly confined to the north, north-eastern and central Indian belt. Literacy trends from intervening survey results with post-2001 reference years also indicate the on-track movement of youth literacy.[6]

Table-3: Literacy rates for 15+ age-Groups

	Indicator of literacy	Year	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Total
1	Literacy (%) in the age-group 15-24 yrs	2001	68.0	84.0	72.0	87.0	76.0
2	Literacy (%) in the age-group 15-49 years	2005-06	78.1	55.1			
3	Literacy (%) in the age-group 15+ years	2007-08	76.7	54.9	59.7	82.0	66.0

4	Literacy (%) in the age-group 15-24 yrs	2007-08	91.0	80.0	83.0	93.0	86.0

(Source of Data: - Population Census of India, 2001; NFHS-III report 2005-06 and NSS Report 532: Participation and Expenditure on Education in India 2007-08)

As per Census 2001, the States which reported youth literacy rates less than the national estimate of 76% are Andra Pradesh (73.6%), Arunachal Pradesh (70.1%), Assam (73.5%), Bihar (56.8%), Jammu & Kashmir (68.2%), Jharkhand (65.2%), Madhya Pradesh (74.6%), Meghalaya (74%), Nagaland (75.5%), Orissa (75.4%), Rajasthan (72%) and Uttar Pradesh (66.5%). The low levels are due to the prevailing huge gap in male- female literacy and urban –rural literacy in these States. For these States with Youth Literacy less than the national level as per Census 2001, the status as per 2007-08 NSS results is as under:

Table - 4: Percentage of literates among youth Census 2001 NSS 2007-08 for low performing States

State Name	% literates among youth: Census 2001					% literates among youth: NSSO (2007-8)				
	All	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	All	Female	Male	Rural	Urban
Jammu & Kashmir	68	57	78	63	83	88	83	93	87	94
Rajasthan	72	55	87	68	84	78	64	90	74	89
Uttar Pradesh	67	53	78	63	77	80	73	87	79	84
Bihar	57	43	69	53	80	67	55	77	64	86
Arunachal Pradesh	70	62	78	65	86	84	77	90	80	97
Nagaland	76	73	78	73	90	99	98	100	100	97
Meghalaya	74	74	74	69	92	97	96	97	96	97
Assam	74	68	79	71	90	92	90	94	92	97
Jharkhand	65	50	79	57	88	75	62	86	70	93
Orissa	75	66	85	73	89	84	78	91	82	95
Madhya Pradesh	75	63	85	69	88	85	77	92	82	93
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	67	48	80	60	89	85	63	99	83	97
Andhra Pradesh	74	65	82	68	86	87	82	92	84	94

(Source: Census 2001, NSSO 2007- 08)

As per the Census 2011 results, the all India literacy rate (7+years) has surged forward from 64.83% in 2001 to 74.04% in 2011 showing an increase of 9.21 percentage points. The literacy rate for males and females works out to 82.14% and 65.46% respectively. The increase in literacy rates in males and females during 2001 - 2011 are of the order of 6.88 and 11.79 percentage points respectively corroborating the conclusion of on-the -track movement of youth literacy.

V. NATION'S PLEDGE TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 has made elementary education a Fundamental Right for children in the age group of 6-14 years by providing that "the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine". This has been a path breaking legislation in India, where such a major commitment to the cause of elementary education has bound governments, community based organizations and civil society into a common resolve to achieve universal elementary education.

Drawing upon the Constitution and other policy statements articulated in the years that followed, the Government of India in partnership with State Governments has designed different strategies, interventions, schemes and programmes with specific objectives that impinge on girls' education.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right. SSA is being implemented in partnership with State Governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations.

The programme seeks to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants. Existing schools with inadequate teacher strength are provided with additional teachers, while the capacity of existing teachers is being strengthened by extensive training, grants for developing teaching-learning materials and strengthening of the academic support structure at a cluster, block and district level. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a special focus on girl's education and children with special needs. SSA also seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide.

The Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) is the world's largest school feeding programme reaching out to more than 11 crore children in 12.63 lakh institutions across the country. With a view to enhancing enrollment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995, initially in 2408 blocks in the country. The Scheme had undergone a number of revisions in the past and today, Mid day Meal scheme is serving children of classes I-VIII studying in Government, Local Body, Government Aided and National Child Labour Project Schools and the centres run under Education Gurantee Scheme (EGS)/ Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) centres including Madarasas / Maktabs supported under SSA. Studies have shown that, MDMS has helped in preventing classroom hunger, promoting school Participation, fostering social equality and enhancing gender equity thereby facilitating overall healthy growth of children.
With the committed initiatives by the Government and its successful initiatives, the Country will be achieving and maintaining the universalisation of Primary education and leading to sustained cent percent youth literacy.[7]

VI. Suggestions

1. Improve the quality of education. Providing access to schooling is not sufficient, the quality of teaching must be good. The identification of factors which influence learning and optimisation of such factors is essential: use of manuals, training teachers, curriculum reforms, teaching in national languages, understanding French as a teaching language, schooling organisation and school establishment management.
2. Supporting the development and piloting of efficient sector based policies. Improvement in the efficacy of educational systems is a prerequisite for their extension and overall efficiency, the alternative being deploying ever greater resources with proportionately diminishing returns.
3. Support the deployment of participative management of schools with development of greater levels of responsibility and synergy with local actors in the education community (parents and their associations, representatives of local authorities, teachers) in the expression of the education offer and demand and the management, follow up and evaluation of the primary education system.
4. Strengthen and maintain national political commitments to the provision of free and compulsory primary education for all and support such commitments through coordinated provision of technical and financial resources.
5. Promote primary education through a holistic approach to the entire education sector, with stronger planning and implementation processes and through linking education to broader development policy and budgetary frameworks.
6. Develop and strengthen inclusive and efficient education systems that are resilient to external pressures by reinforcing capacities and improving governance and efficiency.
7. Commit to reducing disparities and inequalities through fostering inclusive education policies and disaggregated initiatives, programmes and interventions aligned with broader policies in education and beyond.
8. Increase access to educational opportunities at primary level through removing all barriers, outside and within education systems, including cost and distance barriers as well as providing more accessible and flexible schools and classrooms.

VII. Conclusion

A completed primary education is a basic human right and is necessary for enjoying many other rights. It is transformative and empowering, and a means for accessing broad economic, social, political and cultural benefits. Primary education is a powerful driver for realizing all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and for sustainable development more generally. Education contributes to building more just societies through reducing poverty and inequalities. No country has ever climbed the human development ladder without steady investment in education. Primary education is a powerful driver for the realization of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and for sustainable development more broadly. India is making great strides in order to achieve the goal of universal primary education (UPE), which is the second of the MDGs and it requires that every child enrol in a primary school and completes the full cycle of primary schooling.

References

[1] Andy Haines and Andrew Cassels (2004), "Can The Millennium Development Goals Be Attained?" BMJ: British Medical Journal, Vol. 329, No. 7462, pp. 394-397.

[2] "Beyond the Midpoint: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals" (2010), United Nations Development Programme One United Nations Plaza, New York, p.2.

[3] Barbara Bruns, Alain Mingat, and Ramahatra Rakotomalala, "Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015 A Chance for Every Child", The World Bank Washington, D.C, pp.3-5.

[4] "The Millennium Development Goals Report" (2012), United Nations New York, p.18.

[5] Nirupam Bajpai, Jeffrey D. Sachs, and Nicole Volavka (2005), " India's Challenge to Meet the Millennium Development Goals", Center on Globalization and Sustainable Development, pp.11-14.

[6] "Millennium Development Goals States of India Report", (2010) Central Statistics Office Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India, pp. 8-13.

[7] "Millennium Development Goals India Country Report" (2011), Central Statistical Organization, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, pp. 42-45.

Authors

First Author – Shoiab Ahmad Bhat, Research Scholar in the Deptt. Of Sociology, Institute of Social Sciences, Dr. B. R.

Ambedkar University, Agra (U.P.), E-mail: shoaib_socio@yahoo.com, Contact : +91 9906918509