



SDG 4 : The New Paradigm

Rasheda K. Choudhury

Executive Director (CEO)
CAMPE, Bangladesh
&
Vice President, GCE

SDG 4 : The New Paradigm



Background

- Since 1990, leaders, visionaries and human rights activists all over the world have been strengthening their efforts to achieve “prosperity with human dignity for all”.
- MDGs were adopted in 2000 but even after 15 years the global community realised that the desired results could not be achieved because of the ‘minimalist’ nature of the MDGs and also because of lack of strong political will combined with inadequate resource flows.

Achieving SDG 4: Realities and Challenges

The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2016, based on current trends, worryingly projects that,

*“ Universal primary completion will be achieved in 2042, universal lower-secondary education completion in 2059, and universal upper-secondary completion in 2084 – putting SDG4 **54 years off-track**.*



Achieving SDG 4: Realities and Challenges

- Gender equality is a long way off: women in many countries do at least double the amount of unpaid work as men, and only 19% of heads of state are women.
- *Then came 9/11 (2001) when the whole world woke up to the harsh realities of a planet where groups of people started becoming divisive, race and religion started playing a negative role in the civil and political arena, while the concentration of economic power, technological advances and global decision making processes in the hands of a few made the scenario even more volatile.*
- Against the backdrop of such a scenario of progress and prosperity on the one hand and deprivation and violence on the other, the SDGs were adopted by the global community in September 2016.
- By 2020, the world could have 40 million too few workers with tertiary education relative to demand.
- The GEM report calls for “stronger commitment to financing of education, strengthened state implementation and statistical/ monitoring capacities, and stronger planning mechanisms”. *Its emphasis on ensuring equity, and its focus on the role of education in overcoming social inequalities have been welcomed by the global civil society.*

Achieving SDG 4: Realities and Challenges

- “ Although many countries have increased spending on education, as a share of government spending, expenditure on education has changed little since 1999, while donors have failed to live up to their commitment. In fact, lack of adequate finance was among the most significant obstacles to achieving the MDGs and it might remain the same. *The GEM report also raises the concern that the growth of private schooling threatens national commitments to free education.*
- “ Over the years, it has become evident that countries that have invested in education, health and social protection, particularly those that promote equity have done better, even when they experience slower growth.
- “ However, while the Report talks about early grade reading assessment (EGRA) as being a “reliable and valid measure”, it ignores the existing research, both in developing and developed countries, highlighting methodological concerns with this approach.

Concluding Remarks

Both government, civil society and the education community must continue to promote ***all human rights for all***, even in the face of pressure from conservative/ obscurantist forces to restrict them, if we are to achieve sustainable development. This means going much further than the targets set out in the MDGs, which did not address structural inequality or discrimination.

Thus the major questions remain:

- “ Is the international community, including development cooperation education actors, ready to start, plan, implement and monitor the commitments made at the UNGA in September 2015?
- “ Are we committed enough to ensure the “right to education for all” with appropriate strategies and adequate resources?

Concluding Remarks

- “ Will there be democratic space for the broader education community to participate (from planning to implementation to monitoring)?
- “ Will it be possible for all stakeholders, including civil society and other non-state actors, to ensure transparency, accountability and efficiency in implementation and monitoring?
- “ Will there be enough resources (financial, technical and human) to ensure timely and effective implementation of SDG 4?
- “ Will the Government of Belgium be willing to enhance its ODA, particularly in human capacity enhancement, as stated in the SDG 4 Framework for Action (recently adopted at the UNESCO High Level Meeting), considering the current refugee crisis and the scenario emerging from the “threat of terrorism”?

Concluding Remarks

As societies all over the world – rich and poor, urban and rural, ethnic and non-ethnic – have been evolving and changing rapidly, keeping pace with the fast growth of technology, social media and socio-political changes, the global community needs to take note of these dimensions and act accordingly for making our world a better place for all. After all, the campaigners, the visionaries and the framers of SDGs have given us a vision for future – **a global society that is economically strong, socially just, culturally vibrant and environmentally sustainable.**

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE?

or

IS IT JUST A DREAM ?

or

FLAMBOYANT RHETORIC ONLY?

In conclusion, can we, as civil society and development cooperation education actors be practical enough to acknowledge the ground level realities, the international power game, shrinking ODA and start working on those with firm conviction?



THANK you