

**Assessing the progress of Gender Parity in Education
through achieving Millennium Development Goals:
A case Study of Quetta District Balochistan**

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Abstract

Using secondary data of Government Schools and literacy department for 10 years that is 2000-2010, this paper assesses the progress on the issue of gender equality within the framework of education related Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in district Quetta. The assessment is based on the selected indicators of goals by applying descriptive statistical tools such as ratio, mean and fixed chain methods. The major findings include; (a) the overall trend reveals positive change; (b) the pace of adult education is more biased against women; (c) the targets of literacy rate of children with 10+ years will hopefully be achieved; (d) the indicator to remove gender disparity related to net primary enrolment ratio will hopefully, be achieved; (e) the target of NER (Net enrollment ratio) will, perhaps not be achieved due to high drop out; (f) empowerment of woman through employment show bleak picture. The implications of findings for plan of action include: shifting more resources to primary education; creating more institutions for girls' education especially in the rural areas; strengthening institutional capacity of government sector and creating more jobs opportunities for women in the public sector

Key Words: Gender parity, millennium development goals, empowerment and positive discrimination and policy implications.

Introduction

Millennium development goals (MDGs) are defined as an agenda of development conceived in terms of measurable quantitative indicators. The goals are mostly related to social sector development specially education and health. It was agreed by the members of United Nations that by 2015, the member states should achieve the specific targets of eight goals, i.e. eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empower women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS and malaria; ensuring environmental sustainability; developing a global partnership for development.

Out of the above goals, the second and third goals are directly related to education sector and provide a strong base for achieving the remaining goals. Studies confirm the multiplier effects of primary and secondary education, especially of girls, on health, population control and poverty alleviation (Stern, 2001; Shabbir, 1994; UNICEF, 2004).

Realizing the importance of agenda, the province under the national commitment has started working on achieving eight specific goals with the collaboration of international UNO agencies (World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, National Commission for Human Resource Development (NCHRD), etc) and national NGOs. The efforts regarding education such as girls' scholarship, subsidies to private schools and community participation have improved the overall literacy rate jumping from thirty to forty six percent. According to different impact studies, the number of girls enrolled in primary schools in the province doubled as a result of subsidized recruitment of female teachers and the drive to increase girl's education also led to higher enrolment of boys (Kim, Alderman and Orazem, 1999).

Disintegrating the analysis of Education achievements at District level, we have found district Quetta is far better than the other Districts of Baluchistan. Being the hub of commercial and educational activities, the district has the highest literacy rate and least deprived in the provincial district ranking order (BPRS, 2004). Especially in 90s under the Quetta urban fellowship program, enrolment in girls' primary education was promoted with the help of NGO and private sector. More over the competition between the public and private sectors and even within private sector has improved the situation of enrolment and quality related education indicators in the urban areas.

Despite the positive achievements, the gender disparity in the education sector has not yet improved to the level of other capitals of Pakistan such as Karachi, Peshawar, Lahore, and Islamabad as is evident from education related indicators of MDGs. (PSLSM, 2007)

Rapid population increase, shortage of fund and poor governance are believed to be the main concerns of development practitioners about the complete realization of gender equity in primary and secondary education. This paper attempts to answer the questions whether the district would realize the education related millennium development goals by 2015, if not then what are the constraints and challenges and what should be the plan of action.

Methodology

Selection of Study Area

According to Quetta district profile 1997, the total geographical area of Quetta District is 265.3 thousand sq km. The population of District as per 1998 Census was 759941 but after rapid influx of population from the surrounding areas, as a crude guess, is quoted to be around 2.5 millions with the seven percent growth rate (City District Government, 2008).

Nature and Source of Data

The secondary data mostly developed by BEMIS of education department, which is relatively the authentic source of data, has been used to assess the progress of gender disparity in education. Every possible source of data has been approached including reports, briefs, and leaflets of the Government department. The study is confined to a greater extent to the government sector as the comprehensive and valid data are not available in the private sector.

Method of Analysis

A simple descriptive analysis has been carried out by using simple tools such as percentages, ratios and trend lines for analyses. Measurable selected indicators related to education goals have been addressed through mostly secondary information. The challenges and constraints related to education goals have been backed by the possible solution to achieve each of the goals.

Results and discussion

In this section, we will discuss goal 2 and goal 3 i.e. achieving universal primary education and promoting gender equality and empowerment under the targets that by 2015, children every where boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education.

Goal 2. Achieving Universal Primary Education

There is a consensus that Primary education is a vital and pre-requisite for combating poverty, empowering men and women, protecting children from hazardous and exploitative labor, promoting human rights, Moreover, primary education is a potent source of alleviating poverty. During literature review; it was found that spending on primary education tends to favor the poor while spending on higher education benefits primarily the richest group. (Hammer, Nabi, and Cercone, 1995).

While assessing the progress on second target of MDG of ensuring universal primary education from gender perspective, we have found that the District is moving ahead especially with respect to the first three indicators but is less on track towards achieving full course of schooling with complete gender equity. The trend analysis of overall enrolment in primary education reveals fluctuations and shows positive improvement in gender equity.

The district may achieve the goal of general access to primary education if the efforts and progress made by the private and public sector continues, which however, seems to be frustrating for three main reasons. First, expenditure on education in real terms is declining, hardly two percent of allocated budget goes to development of education and the remaining is left for non development activities. As regards incremental change in budgetary allocation, 9 to 11 percent in financial terms has been increased which is quite insufficient especially when the inflation rate is more than 12 percent. In other words, real financial increase is rather negative indicating alarming situation. secondly, the role of private sector is shrinking due to deteriorating Law and Order situation in the district According to Development Statistic of Balochistan (2009), the growth in the number of Private Schools during 2007-2009 has been declining by more than 50% in the district implying that the girls' education enrollment which is normally high in the Private schools will be badly affected. Last but not the least important retarding factor is inflating population i.e. seven percent growth rate frustrate the efforts of achieving universal primary education.

While evaluating the progress on the selected indicators of second goal i.e. net enrolment ratio, it was found very low and there appears to be less chances of raising it to 100 per cent in 2015. The trend of net enrolment ratio reveals almost 70 per cent away from the target. According to rough estimate 36 percent drop out rate has been noted in primary education due to poverty, non attractive class room especially in the rural areas. However, the gross primary enrollment rate is on decline but it doesn't seem to be too distant from the target level.

To achieve the goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in true sense requires not merely increasing the number but to seriously consider the quality of basic education as an equally important objective. Improving the quality of primary education thus constitutes an important challenge that the Quetta District will have to address on a priority basis. There are significant differences in the primary school enrollment ratios between rural schools and urban schools and those in different income groups. The indicator related to the literacy rate of children and adult show quantitative increase. The trend reveals that enrolment especially in children is increasing due to the efforts of Directorate of non-formal education and NCHRD. According to an estimate by NCHRD the overall literacy rate 10 years plus is 70 percent out of which 83 percent is male. Whereas the adult literacy among women is much lower than male due to poor social mobilization and weak monitoring system of the concerned departments.

Table 1

Goal 2: Achieving universal primary education

Indicators	2001-02	2004-05	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2015
Net enrolment ratio in primary education (male/female/both)	0.29	0.30	0.31	0.30	0.29	1.00
Literacy Rate of 15-24 years old (male/female/both)	-	0.66	-	0.67	0.70	1.00
Gross primary enrolment rate (male/female/both)	0.62	0.58	0.54	0.52	0.56	1.00
Net secondary enrolment rate (male/female/both)	0.11	0.13	0.14	0.16	-	1.00
Literacy rate of children with age 10 years+ (male/female/both)	0.68	0.71	0.79	0.79	0.78	1.00

Source: (BEMIS) 2002-10 Literacy Trends in Pakistan Balochistan, 2008-09.

Goal 3. Promoting Gender Equality and Empower Women:

Available theoretical and empirical literature stress improved educational and employment opportunities as critical means for women to attain greater control over their lives. For sustainable development it is essential that both men and women should play their active role at social, political and economic levels. There is a dire need of gender specific development in order to reduce poverty and women empowerment for which their involvement in decision making and their social transformation are the core ingredients

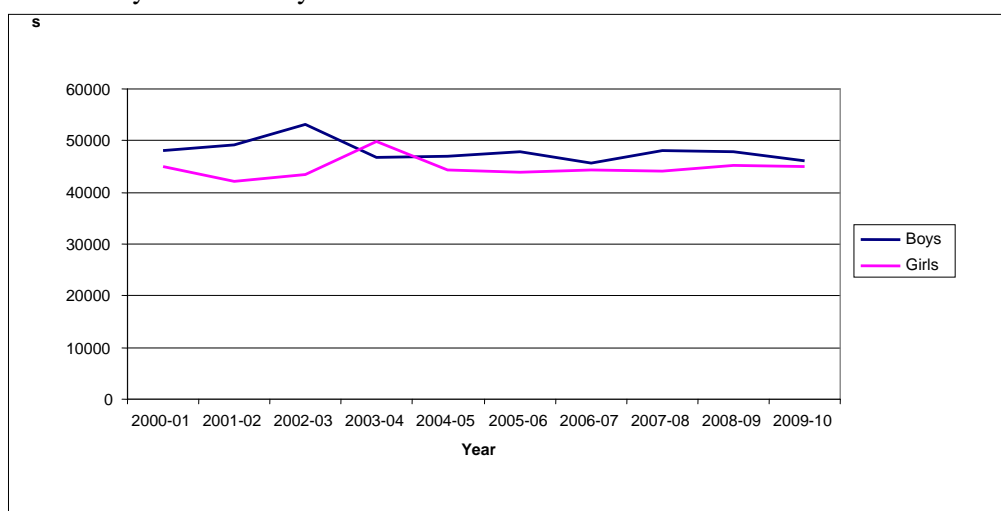
While looking at the progress on this goal, district Quetta has made progress though not quite impressive towards ensuring gender equity in education, number of girls to boys at the primary and secondary education levels is still not at par; as such target for these levels is less likely to be achieved by 2015

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The comparative results about the millennium development goal for gender parity in primary and secondary education reveal progress but not steady. More progress in the universal primary education is evident from the figure 1

Figure 1

Trend Analysis of Primary Enrolment



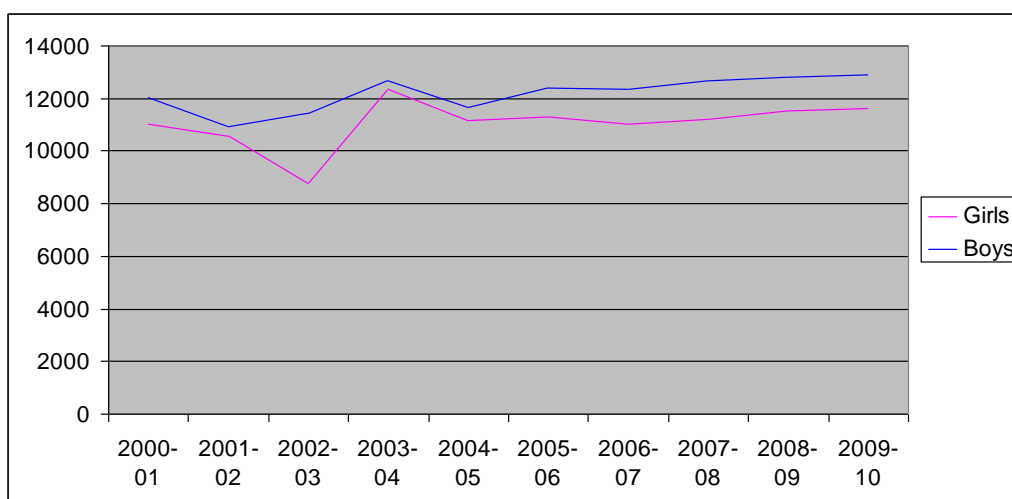
in which the gap is narrowing with declining total enrollment. This implies that a girl to boys' ratio is favorable due to the efforts of agencies of UNO such as UNDP and UNICEF.

Whereas the gender gap in secondary education tends to widen with increasing total enrollment and drop out especially among girls has been noted due to low priority on the part of parents. Concerted efforts will be needed to address the particular challenges of easing the transition of females from the primary to secondary levels, reducing their dropout after the completion of secondary education and promoting greater female enrollment into technical, professional and vocational institutions at the district level where the chances are higher.

Promoting women empowerment through employment is another important indicator of the third goal of MDG which is assessed in terms of share of women in wage employment in the non-agriculture sector. It was envisaged that education will enhance the capabilities of women thus creating job opportunities. The results in the context of district reveal disappointing scenario especially in the public sector. Ten years data ranging from 3 percent to 5 percent show very slow progress.

Figure 2

Trend Analysis of Secondary Enrolment



Currently 5.2 percent women labor force in the district is reported to be in the non agriculture sector, mainly absorbed in the education and health sector. This result presents paradoxical situation, on the one hand education has enhanced their capabilities and on the other hand employment opportunities are almost dead slow. The situation may be attributed to Stereotype thinking, tribal setup, restrictive norms and poor institutional response of government especially in the context of Quetta.

Table 2

Goal 3: Promoting gender equality

Indicators	2001-02	2004-05	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2015
Ratio of girls to boys in primary education (net)	0.69	0.64	0.85	0.81	0.90	1.00
Ratio of girls to boys in primary education (gross)	1.12	1.04	1.00	1.02	1.01	1.00
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education (net)	1.00	1.08	1.15	1.9	1.06	1.00
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education (gross)	1.09	1.07	1.00	1.00	1.1	1.00
Ratio of illiterate female to males among 15-24 year-olds	-	0.68	0.70	-	-	1.00
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agriculture sector	0.1	0.05	0.05	0.6	-	14

Source : (BEMIS)2002-10 Literacy Trends in Balochistan, Pakistan. 2010.

Issues & Challenges

Despite being better off as relative to other districts of the province, the District Quetta is faced with the challenge to overcome the difficulty of providing quality education to highly inflating population in the district. At the urban level, dualism in terms of standard education in the rich and middle-income areas and poor quality of education with poor facilities in slum areas is a matter of concern. Controlling early drop out and retaining children is a challenge indicating the critical area for policy attention. The other specific issues and challenges regarding achieving of both goals may be summarized as under:

- There is a dire need to expand secondary education as the numbers of the children completing the primary schools continue to increase. In last three years just two schools have been upgraded due to shortage of fund. Thus increasing access to secondary level education in the Quetta District due to over population is an emerging challenge.
- Improving the quality of education in the Government school is another major consideration that cannot be overlooked. Overcrowding of classrooms, shortage of qualified teachers, especially in the remote areas, and inadequate learning resources are some of the challenging factors that strongly affect the quality of learning in schools.
- There is growing demand for more schools in the public sector. To accommodate the growing number of students in a situation of financial crunch is a big challenge. The severity of problem is likely to be greater as 18th amendment putting more pressure on the province to bear the burden of education without the federal government financial support.
- The prevailing low levels of adult literacy (30%) among women constitute a major barrier that must be overcome to ensure substantive progress towards promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.
- The lacuna on gender-segregated data, province and more seriously in Quetta District has also been proved to be a major constraint in formulating appropriate sustainable policy for women. The surveys are conducted on different issues of education by different agencies and departments but their results are quite contradictory to each other as such not trust worthy. Poor Coordination regarding information sharing, among concerned departments is a major issue.

Conclusion and suggestions

On the basis of above analysis, it is clear that gender parity has improved due to different government and private organizations interventions in Quetta district during last ten (10) years. However the progress in some indicators, such as net enrolment ratio in primary and secondary education and woman empowerment is discouraging. The situation regarding achievement of universal primary education is becoming more challenging due to rapid population growth and declining public fund. The possible implications of these results for policy include: (a) getting primary education compulsory; (b) discouraging dropout especially among girls by giving

financial incentives; (c) enhancing quality education through effective monitoring system creating more jobs for woman especially in the public sector; (d) facilitating the transition of girls schooling into technical and vocational education; (e) strengthening and creating institutional capacity building of education department.

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