

SDG4/Education 2030 and 7th Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh: Aligning National and Global Objectives Strategies and Indicators

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals 2030, titled “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” with 17 goals and 169 targets (including 43 means of implementation) were adopted at the United Nations in September 2015. The education goal SDG 4 has 7 targets and 3 means of implementation.

The Seventh Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (SFYP), “Accelerating Growth, Empowering Every Citizen” for the years 2016-2020, produced by General Economics Division, Planning Commission, can be regarded as the blueprint for the early critical phase of SDG implementation.

Bangladesh prepared its own post-2015 Development Agenda and contributed to the international discourse through UN. With the lead of the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission, based on a consultative process initiated in 2013, goals and targets were developed in the context of Bangladesh. Through this process, 11 goals along with 58 targets with corresponding 241 measurable indicators were proposed. (See “Post-2015 Development Agenda: Bangladesh Proposal to UN,” General Economics Division, Planning Commission, June 2013.) Civil society in Bangladesh also produced what is described as “a people-centred, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable Post-2015 Development Agenda.” It came up with 13 Goals, 50 Targets and 199 Indicators. (See “Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda – Perspectives and Recommendations from Bangladesh Civil Society,” People’s Forum on MDGs, published by CAMPE in September, 2013.) There is considerable overlap and some differences between these two agenda.

The authors argue that it is not so important at this stage to dwell on the specific differences between the official and civil society formulation of post-2015 goals, objectives, targets and indicators or between the national and the global agenda. It is more important to look ahead in order to come to a consensus on the agenda for sustainable development that serve the aspirations for development and change for the people of Bangladesh. This paper focuses

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specifically on the education agenda of SDG 4 and Education 2030 as well as the Seventh Five-Year Plan Education objectives.

Key words: SDG4, Education 2030, 7th Five Year Plan of Bangladesh, Civil society SDG Agenda, Education targets and priorities.

1. Background

In September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 with a pledge to “transform our world” was adopted by world leaders at the United Nations. Earlier in May 2015, the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Korea, set the ambitious Education 2030 agenda, replacing EFA 2015, to ensure “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN 2015). The Education 2030 agenda is reflected in SDG for education (SDG4), one of the 17 SDGs.

Bangladesh prepared its own post-2015 Development Agenda and contributed to the international discourse through UN. With the lead of the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission, based on a consultative process initiated in 2013, goals and targets were developed in the context of Bangladesh. Through this process, 11 goals along with 58 targets with corresponding 241 measurable indicators were proposed. (See “Post-2015 Development Agenda: Bangladesh Proposal to UN,” General Economics Division, Planning Commission, June 2013.)

The GED-led process organized consultation with government agencies, research and academic institutions and civil society. Civil society in Bangladesh, especially the development NGOs held their own dialogue about progress in MDG and the post-MDG agenda beyond 2015. With the coordination of Dr. Q. K. Ahmed, the exercise, produced what is described as “a people-centred, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable Post-2015 Development Agenda” as a contribution to the international discourse and to the national formulation of an appropriate framework along with goals and associated targets and indicators. The civil society came up with 13 Goals, 50 Targets and 199 Indicators. (See “Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda – Perspectives and Recommendations from Bangladesh Civil Society,” People’s Forum on MDGs, published by CAMPE in September, 2013.)

There was a large degree of overlap between the official and the civil society agenda as well as some differences. The civil society concern was that in some ways MDGs were restrictive and became more so in implementation, which should be avoided in formulating the post-2015 agenda and implementation strategy. For example, in respect of education, MDG (and EFA goals) narrowed the educational canvas severely by focusing on universal primary education and gender parity at least in terms of targets and indicators. Other areas, such as early childhood education and development, skills and learning for youth and adults and quality of education did not find a place in MDG. Tertiary education was kept outside the scope of MDG and EFA. Even though a broader range of objectives was mentioned in EFA,

not having necessary elaboration of targets and strategies signaled a lower priority to these objectives. Moreover, even the minimal goals in MDG were not fully achieved. Civil society concern was that the lessons of this experience be fully taken into account in the post-2015 agenda.

As shown in the Annex, there is substantial commonality between the official and civil society (PFM) proposed targets and indicators for education. Both, for example, emphasize implementation of compulsory education up to grade 8. Livelihood and life-skills are given priority in both. Quality inputs with adequate facilities and sufficient trained teachers are given priority.

Both have various non-education targets which are relevant and important for creating the conditions for learners and population groups to participate in education effectively and benefit from education. For instance, the target of elimination of child labour is intricately linked with responsive education opportunities for children. Fighting violence against women in all its forms is given priority by both. Natural disasters, to take another example, predictably affect some population and some areas every year and preparedness plan must include provisions for keeping education services going. Coping with natural disasters must also be part of the curriculum and educational experience of students.

There are also differences both in specific targets and emphases between the two agenda statements. A few may be highlighted here.

PFM has two out of 13 proposed goals for education highlighting basic education at an early age, for children and youth and skills and capacity development through lifelong learning. This reflects PFM's priority to human capability, agency and dignity as a central element in sustainable human development. GED's single education goal focuses on formal education and expanding access and completion of the formal education stages.

The GED agenda emphasize mainstreaming the current TVET programme which serves under 2 percent of the secondary school age-group. PFM puts stress on skills and capability of workers to be developed in diverse ways. It mentions 'skills for all' through expanding opportunities and participation in lifelong learning.

GED takes a conventional view of literacy with an "elimination" target date of 2020. This ignores past negative experience and the global lessons regarding meaningful and functional literacy as part of continuing learning opportunities. PFM proposes literacy as a component of planned and well-supported lifelong learning activities in every community.

Looking at the non-education goals and their potential links to achieving the education goals, some differences can be noted. PFM gives prominence to equity urging identification of the disadvantaged and taking pro-active measures to reach and serve them. Early detection of disabilities and special needs of children and necessary responses are mentioned by PFM.

Gender goals are seen more broadly by PFM with attention to participation in politics, economic activities and various social and civic roles.

Transparent, accountable and participatory governance is emphasized in PFM. More resources for education, specifically, setting a target for 6% of GDP for education and 4% for health is proposed in line with the overarching goal of placing human development at the centre of the vision for the “world we want.”

The authors argue that it is not so important at this stage to dwell on the specific differences between the official and civil society formulation of post-2015 goals, objectives, targets and indicators. It is more important to look ahead in order to come to a consensus on the agenda for sustainable development that serve the aspirations for development and change for the people of Bangladesh. This paper focuses specifically on the education agenda of SDG 4 and Education 2030 as well as the Seventh Five-Year Plan (SFYP) Education objectives.

2. SDG and SFYP

SDG titled “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” has been now formally adopted at United Nations in September 2015, including the overarching education goal SDG 4 (“Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”).

At the same time, the Seventh Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (SFYP), “Accelerating Growth, Empowering Every Citizen” produced by the Planning Commission is the blueprint for the early critical phase of SDG implementation. So it is necessary to look critically at the alignment between SDG and 7FYP, and adaptation and elaboration of SDG for Bangladesh. This is essential to develop the framework for implementation of both SDG and SFYP in a mutually complementary way.

SDG4 urged ensuring quality education for all. The Goal is comprised of 10 targets including three means of implementation. An exercise was undertaken to look at the degree of alignment between 7FYP and SDG targets. Apart from the 7FYP, two major sectoral policies, National Education Policy 2010 and the National Skill Development Policy 2011, were consulted for this exercise. As shown below (Table 1), each of the SDG4 targets has quantitative and subjective elements. Similarly, the 7FYP targets also have quantitative and qualitative aspects. A judgment about commonality or overlap between the two can be only tentative and indicative, subject to further elaboration and clarification, as noted in the comments column.

Table 1: Target alignment: SDGs vs. SFYP

SDG Targets	SFYP targets	Comments
4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	By 2020, achieving 100 percent net enrollment rate for primary and secondary education. Percentage of cohort reaching grade 5 to be increased to 100 from current 80 percent	Learning outcome and quality missing. Official and civil society SDG target is grade 8. Global goal encourages universal full secondary education by 2030.

SDG Targets	SFYP targets	Comments
4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education	One-year pre-primary education for all children entering primary; no specific target for early childhood development except a framework and policy for ECD (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs as the focal Ministry)	A lower target than official and civil society SDG – which proposed universal preprimary for 2yrs.
4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	By 2020, increase female enrolment in technical and vocational education to 40 per cent	Does not address quality and relevance issues of skills programme. (Within present structure, target may not be realized and may not serve the goal).
4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship	Strengthening education and training programmes to motivate the youth to complete education and to enable the working youth and the older workforce to acquire required skills.	Targets are vague – not quantified. Diverse skills opportunities, market responsive, private-public partnership approach needed, ensuring quality and relevance rather than expanding existing types of institutions.
4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations	By 2020, the ratio of literate female to male for age group 20-24 to be raised to 100 percent from the current 86 percent. Female to male ratio in tertiary education to be raised from current 70 percent to 100 percent	Literacy definition in a narrow sense is problematic; the 2020 target of full female literacy repeats past ‘illiteracy eradication’ targets, repeatedly missed and not very meaningful. PFM proposed functional literacy and lifelong learning opportunity.
4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy	By 2020, increase literacy rate to 100 per cent. MoPMENFE plan mentions network of community learning centers	Functional literacy approach through CLC’s collaborating with NGOs with known capacity and track record need to be promoted, with local government and community ownership
4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development,	This is a catch-all target in the global agenda without specifying of quality and quantity dimensions.	Both PFM and GED agenda adopted various targets for sustainable development promotion and action which

SDG Targets	SFYP targets	Comments
including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development	Similarly, in SFYP, no specific target – but some are implicit in other targets.	implies education, awareness raising and behavior change of population; educational implications should be made explicit and included in targets and indicators. Similarly, responsible citizenship, tolerance and respect for diversity can be explicit educational target.
4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all	All children will have access to an appropriate, relevant, affordable and effective education regardless of gender, age, physical or financial ability, ethnicity, being autistic & disabled, with impairment or HIV status; All primary schools to have at least one and all secondary schools to have at least three multimedia classrooms; 30 per cent of primary schools and 100 per cent of all secondary schools to have an ICT laboratory	Specific targets can be set for facilities and infrastructure development to meet quality standards including acceptable class-size, single shift full-day school, playgrounds, safe premises and boundary walls of schools etc.
4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries	No specific target set. There are opportunities and need for specialized professional development in the education sector in collaboration with overseas institutions provided that this is undertaken as part of a human resource development plan and policy in the education sector.	There are professional development needs in specialized technical areas such as curriculum development, ICT-mediated learning, assessment of learning, educational measurement and evaluation, educational management, language and science teaching. There should be plan for international collaboration for specialized professional/technical capacity development.

SDG Targets	SFYP targets	Comments
4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States	Expand in-service training to teachers; Establish 12 Primary Teacher Training Institutes	Bangladesh does not have a system of pre-service professional preparation for teaching though teaching is the single largest occupation for absorbing tertiary education graduates. Teaching is the last choice as an occupation for talented college/university graduates. New thinking is needed, more than just more in-service teacher training. Four connected steps may be - education as part of undergraduate general degree, attracting best students to this programme in some 100 degree colleges with incentives, ensuring academic standard for this course, initiating a National Teaching Service Corps with high salary and status.

Source: Adapted from CPD, Education Budget Trends in Bangladesh (draft).

Recognising the importance of qualitative aspects of the targets and their adaptation to specific national contexts, an international Technical Advisory Group (TAG) has been at work in developing indicators for SDG4. Four levels of indicators are proposed:

- a) Global - a small set of globally comparable indicators for all SDGs, including SDG 4. These are under development through a consultative process led by the United Nations Statistical Commission to monitor progress towards the associated targets;
- b) Thematic: a broader set of globally comparable indicators proposed by the education community to track the education targets more comprehensively across countries; they will include the global indicators; 43 such indicators for all SDGs have been formulated and broad agreement has been reached.
- c) Regional: Additional indicators may be developed to take account of a specific regional context and relevant policy priorities.
- d) National: Indicators selected or developed by countries to take account of their national context and which will correspond to their education systems, plans and policy agendas.

The thematic indicators may be the take-off point for preparation of national indicators. The thematic as well as the national indicators are expected to be based on five criteria: relevance

to the population to be served, alignment with the concepts in the target, feasibility for regular annual or periodic data collection, ease of communication to stakeholders, and interpretability for policy and action. (UNESCO, 2015, Education 2030 Framework for Action)

The importance of national adaptation and formulation of targets and indicators are illustrated by the fact that there are several other targets that were mentioned in the SFYP and the National Education Policy 2010 which do not directly correspond to the SDG4 targets. (Table 2). These targets relate to certain national priorities for Bangladesh.

Table2: Additional Selected SFYP targets mentioned in subsector description of strategies

All primary schools to have at least one and all secondary schools to have at least three multimedia classrooms; 30 per cent of primary schools and 100 per cent of all secondary schools to have an ICT laboratory
Provide leadership training to head teachers
Ensure decentralization of primary education management
Establish a career path for teachers
Establish at least one primary school in the villages that have none
The ratio of teacher and students in primary education will be 1:30 by 2018
Continue competency-based national assessment for G5 (nomenclature of G8), but at the same time continue public examinations and increase pass rate in public examinations
SFYP mentions participation in Program for International Student Assessment (PISA); not mentioned by MOE
Provide non-formal education to diverse types of children deprived of education, like un-enrolled or dropout children and hard-to-reach children to enhance their employability and productivity through skill training; nationwide network of community learning centers, starting with at least 5000 centers, one in each union/ward.
“Basic literacy” for 32.5 million youth and adults by 2018
Stipends for 100% of students at primary and secondary level and for selected girls in tertiary education
Increase higher education participation rate from 12 per cent to 20 per cent
Strengthen role and authority of UGC for quality assurance in tertiary education (recasting it as National Higher Education Council as recommended in NEP?)

Source: Based on education subsector texts in SFYP, chapter 11.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially the PFM formulation, has put increased emphasis on the recognition of the relevance of a lifelong learning perspective in linking skills to productivity. A prominent part of this perspective is the reality of the spectrum of skills including cognitive, non-cognitive and technical skills acquired through quality primary and secondary education as well as vocational-technical education and various forms of on-the-job learning including apprenticeship. This will help the future

generation to be more skilled and better equipped for the job market and contribute to the economic growth of Bangladesh.

It is noteworthy that SFYP or its sectoral chapter for education does not mention resource constraints and a declining trend in resource allocation as a share of GDP and the national budget as a major obstacle to achieving SDG4 and indeed the SFYP targets. In fact, rather surprisingly, projection under the medium Term Budget Framework projects a continuation of the proportionate decline for public education resources in the future.

The vital area of governance and management of education receives cursory attention with repetition of platitudes about decentralisation and greater authority and responsibility at school and local level. Specific strategies, objectives and targets in this respect are not indicated. The anomaly of two Ministries of education running school education creating serious coordination, continuity, and articulation problems in respect of curriculum, teachers, maintaining quality and standards and expanding services in a rationalized way finds no mention. The slow progress in implementing the National Education Policy 2010 and the need for a permanent Education Commission (recommended in the Policy) with appropriate role and authority to guide and monitor education reform is not noted as an issue.

The brief review of achievements and challenges in education raise the critical point that effective action has to be taken to translate the targets, strategies and indicators into results in terms of learning, skills and capabilities of people. Adequacy of resources and budgets is a necessary condition for realizing this aim. However, how the resources are used will make the real difference. Adequacy has to be examined along with efficiency and effectiveness of resource use, as well as the consequences for equity in educational opportunities which is a social priority.

3. What targets mean

The tabular comparison above may not have done full justice to the objectives and targets of different sub-sectors of education. In fact, as indicated above, various education subsector needs, current development initiatives, strategies, priorities, objectives and targets in the medium term are described in SFYP– not altogether in a consistent form. Moreover, what these mean in respect of what actually is going to be done over the next five to ten-years , availability of necessary resources, priorities among various needs or objectives, and implementation and monitoring mechanisms are not clear.

It appears that various development projects with some external inputs, though the external share is only a small fraction of total expenditure, drives the development activities – cases in point are PEDP3 and projects of the Ministry of Education for secondary education and TVET. These appear to reflect only partially the priorities, and strategies of the Five Year Plan. How SDG4, SFYP and the sectoral activities in education will be aligned and constitute a coherent development programme in the next five years and beyond is not clear.

It may be recalled that priorities emphasised in the strategic directions for the Sixth Plan included: extending compulsory primary education to grade 8, eliminating adult illiteracy,

removing education gap between the rich and the poor, creating a new generation equipped with skills and scientific knowledge, and overall improvement in quality of education. (Sixth Five Year Plan Part 1, p. 117) Little progress during the plan period has been made in respect of the first two clearly specified priorities on compulsory education up to grade 8 and elimination of illiteracy. The other priorities of general nature, with no specific targets, were also not areas of stellar success.

Another strategic priority was to empower local government “as the engine of delivering services and carrying out development activities” (ibid.). No qualitative change in development budgets and activities reflecting this strategy can be noted in the development budgets and activities during the Sixth Plan period.

4. What is Missing

The new Plan can indeed be an opportunity to articulate goals and objectives for education and skills development in the light of Education Policy, National Skills Development Policy, aspirations for a middle income country and the global SDG 2030 and Education 2030 agenda.

The Plan needs to identify structural and operational constraints for education and skills development and indicate what should be done to overcome these obstacles. The structural weaknesses will require a sustained and longer term effort, yet must be pursued with a sense of urgency. More immediate steps need to be taken on operational issues, but still designed within a framework of structural reforms.

Major structural issues which, on the basis of recent studies and policy advocacy of education researchers and stakeholders, have come to the fore, include:

- Very low level of public resources for education by international comparison, lack of criteria and benchmarks for resource allocation (and proportional reduction of education allocations as share of GDP and total government budget) in recent years;
- Extremely centralised governance and management structures for the large educational system of the country;
- Insufficient numbers of teachers of required quality standards and inability of system to attract and retain capable people in the teaching profession;
- Supply-driven skills development with low quality and relevance, and minimal attention to apprenticeship and needs of the informal economy (though it accounts for over 80% of employment);
- Unacceptably low quality of degree colleges (with three quarters of tertiary enrolment in these colleges, which also are the suppliers of primary and secondary teachers -- creating a vicious cycle in quality of education);
- School education divided under two ministries (unlike anywhere else in the world), creating problems of curriculum continuity, student assessment and teacher preparation and supervision.

Major operational issues include the following.

- Dysfunctional learning assessment with too many public examinations which do not measure competency and distort teaching-learning;
- Serious problems of discipline, even criminal involvement, of political party-affiliated student bodies in tertiary education vitiating academic atmosphere;
- Curriculum burden and weak continuity and articulation through grades;
- Geographical, ethnic, and language-based access deficits; severely inadequate opportunities for children with disabilities;
- Proliferation of private universities without essential quality control; and
- Slow and fragmented approach to Education Policy 2010 implementation.

If the government recognises the need to prioritise and guide educational development to serve national development aspirations, the planning function has to be strengthened in appropriate ways. A panel of education experts with insight and interest in the interface of education and national development should be brought into the process of crafting and elaborating the Plan. The Plan has to be used as the basis for budgets in the two education ministries (Ahmed. 2015).

The Seventh Plan comes at a critical juncture for shaping development priorities and strategies to let the country move into the rank of middle-income countries and adapt national goals to SDG2030 and EFA2030 agenda for Bangladesh. Education and skills part of the Plan has a key role in this effort.

5. Ensuring SDG/7FYP Implementation

Need for a coordinated national effort

GED has identified, in attempting to map Ministries/Divisions role for implementation of SDG Targets, 49 Ministries/Divisions including the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Division, who would be directly or in supportive role involved in implementation of the SDG targets. Probably, as many as 40 Ministries /Divisions will have to take the lead role for attaining SDG targets. Six constitutional and/or quasi-judicial government bodies, listed below, and the national Parliament also will be involved in SDG implementation.

1. Bangladesh Jatio Shangsad (National Parliament)
2. Anti-Corruption Commission
3. Human Rights Commission
4. Comptroller and Auditor General
5. Election Commission
6. Bangladesh Bank
7. Information Commission.

All the six Divisions of the Planning Commission, including GED will be linked with maintaining an oversight of national SDG implementation. (As explained in a presentation by Shamsul Alam, Member of the Planning Commission to Consultation on Stakeholders' Engagement on SDG Implementation in Bangladesh, Planning Commission, 30 March 2016.)

Role of CSOs, NGOs, Media

GED has noted "Possible role of the CSOs, NGOs and media on SDG Implementation." The roles of these bodies mentioned were:

- Effective and coherent role of CSOs, NGOs, and media on SDG awareness and promotion will be sought and to be devised.
- CSOs and NGOs support to Government in strengthening capacity across the board (including private sector and media) for SDG implementation
- Catalytic role of CSOs and NGOs in promoting innovative ideas to generate resources at local level.
- NGOs support should be based on their action plan relating to SDGs targets
- A vibrant multi-stakeholder mechanism to support the Government in SDG implementation, particularly in participatory monitoring and accountability.
- CSO and NGO involvement in monitoring of SDG implementation especially for the governance related targets of SDG 16. (Ibid.)

It may be noted that CSO/NGO role is mostly seen in public awareness raising, capacity development, and generating local resources. They are also seen as supporting the government in monitoring and accountability. They could carry out their own activities based on their own action plan, presumably by raising their own funds for this purpose. The areas of activities mentioned are important and the modality of collaboration in a supportive and supplementary mode is also necessary.

But what about a genuine partnership approach in which CSOs and NGOs in respective areas where they are active and have a track record and the government agencies, especially at the local government level come together to plan, design, strategise, carry out implementation and assess and monitor results? One would think that Bangladesh NGOs which have carved out a record of success in various areas of development and social services such as education, health, poverty alleviation, micro-credit, environmental protection, and human rights, would be seen as partners in fulfilling the national sustainable development agenda.

An M&E Framework

GED's roadmap for aligning SDG and 7FYP also anticipates the preparation of an M&E framework for SDG Target implementation including development of national and local indicators and Key Performance Indicators; identification of data gaps and ways of overcoming these; as well as refining assessment of resource needs. (Ibid.)

These essential steps will be fruitful only when a credible and workable plan for implementation of the SFYP/SDG combined, aligned and adapted for the national context is worked out. As the discussion above on the education objectives and targets shows, there is much that remained to be done in this respect, with good faith efforts from both sides.

6. Challenges Ahead

GED has appropriately alerted all about the challenges ahead for initiating the formulation of a credible and implementable action plan for each sector. Necessary steps indicated are:

1. Placing SDG and SFYP for the sector within a longer term framework of priorities and objectives beyond the Seventh Plan at least up to 2030.
2. Critically reviewing SFYP targets, each Ministry's own on-going plans and activities and anticipated needs and priorities including external assistance possibilities where appropriate
3. Engaging other Ministries, agencies and stakeholders including NGOs and CSOs who may have a role in implementing the plan
4. Developing participatory monitoring and accountability approach, methods and tools involving key stakeholders.
5. Identifying areas of change and criteria for prioritising and localizing SDG actions.
6. Analysing financial and capacity needs and identifying current and possible new sources of funds and partnerships.
7. Updating sectoral plan with necessary adjustments keeping in view the alignment of SDG-7FYP and sectoral priorities.

This process is expected to be guided by a national Steering Committee headed by the PM. (Ibid.)

The steps indicated for each Ministry/Division as listed above constitute an essential process that has to be undertaken seriously and methodically. How meticulously and diligently this is done with appropriate participation and involvement of stakeholders will determine how credible and workable the subsector strategy and plan are and how these fit into the national SDG plan and strategy.

The complexities of balancing priorities, diverse interests, capacities and resources in order to develop a workable and coherent subsector plan that also contributes to national SDG implementation cannot be underestimated. The issues and challenges have been discussed. The peculiarity of the education sector is that the main work of the sector is divided between two Ministries without a strong rationale for dividing school education between two Ministries (or a rationale that has outlived its usefulness). It would be appropriate to form a high level joint taskforce of the two Ministries and other stakeholders including concerned NGOs, academic and research institutions, civil society and the private sector to examine and formulate the objectives, targets, strategies and indicators for education that would constitute the common SFYP and SDG4 targets and indicators for education.

Considerable groundwork has already been done. The job now would be to refine, elaborate, and ensure consistency and alignment with national priorities, especially giving attention to issues which have not been addressed adequately. Based on the discussion above, the issues that the proposed task force would need to give particular attention are recapitulated below (also brought out in CPD-CAMPE paper on Education Budget Trends).

First, the downward trend in public funds for education, as share of GDP and the national budget in recent years is inconsistent with the government's own proclaimed goals. One of the lowest positions globally in this respect is not acceptable and must be reversed. Within a medium term time-table the proportion of GDP for public education budget should be raised to at least 4% and eventually to 6% and/or 20% of national budget. The education budget planning needs to be informed by the ambition of attaining the SDGs and 7FYP targets.

Second, the existing national objectives and targets as regards education included in SFYP need to be placed in and aligned with the framework of the targets and indicators of SDG4/Education 2030 and overall SDGs. The objectives and policies will need to be backed up by a set of quantifiable annual targets. The exercise to enact a new education law is a good opportunity to improve the legal framework for some of the targets, provided that the law reflects the education priorities.

The draft Act at present has no mention of adequacy and efficiency of resources and budgets for education or criteria and principles for education resource mobilization and allocation. A rights and equity-based education system, for example, requires that public education resources are allocated equitably, applying certain criteria, among upazilas, proportional to student population in each.

The highly centralized structure of education governance with decision-making and management concentrated in the capital city for a student population of some 40 million and 200,000 institutions remain essentially intact under the proposed draft law. Education resource mobilization and budget making and management can be strengthened by Upazila and district based-planning and management of basic and school education. This could be envisaged in the education law inline with the stated Education Policy 2010 objectives and the constitutionally required role of local government bodies in this respect.

Third, new thinking about teachers is needed. By far the largest expenditure item in education is the teaching personnel. Finance and budget measures have to provide for sufficient numbers of teachers and ensure effective teaching-learning. Apart from improving current in-service training of teachers, measures have to be taken to make teaching one of the first career choices for talented young people, rather than the last one. A ten-year plan has to be taken to bring about this transformation – learning from both developed OECD countries and those in East Asia including China.

Three key elements in this plan would be: (a) the creation of a National Teaching Service Corps (NTSC) with high remuneration and prestige, (b) attracting bright young people with stipend and lure of NTSC job into a teacher preparation track to be introduced in the four year

general degree program (BA or BSc) with education as a subject, and (c) ensuring high quality of this degree programme by enforcing quality standards in at least 100 government degree colleges in the country.

A nucleus of quality teaching personnel in thousands of primary and secondary schools could be created in ten years by placing 2 or 3 NTSC teachers in each school.

Fourth, non-formal alternatives for out-of-school children have to be effectively funded. Four to five million children of primary school age are still out of school, either because they have never enrolled in school or have dropped out early. Bangladesh NGOs, led by BRAC, pioneered the non-formal second chance primary education programme in the 1980s which has been successfully scaled up. A second chance programme must be a part of the main strategy for universal primary education, but this can work only if a partnership is built with the NGOs which have proven their commitment and capacity. The NFPE option will also be needed for anticipated compulsory grades 6-8.

Fifth, expansion of pre-primary education with acceptable quality has to be supported. A good start has been made in expanding a year of preprimary education now serving more than half of those entering primary school. Expansion of preschools with quality was foreseen to be undertaken through GO-NGO collaboration by coordinated planning in each upazila. A GO-NGO collaboration guideline was prepared by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, but was not implemented for lack of public funding for NGO contribution. Early childhood development for younger children also need to be expanded, for which the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is the focal point. A programme without acceptable quality for young children can do more harm than good.

Sixth, lifelong learning has to be supported with literacy as the first step. The principles and practice of lifelong learning have come to the fore again in the context of SDG2030 and SDG-4 on education. To make lifelong learning a reality and expand functional literacy for youth and adults, a network of community learning centres (CLCs) offering relevant learning activities and supported by essential resources, complementing formal education, must be built up. NGOs have shown their commitment in this area with some 5,000 gonokendros (people's centers) run by different organisations. Core resources have to be provided by the government and partnership modalities have to be developed among government, NGOs and communities to build a nationwide network of CLCs.

Seventh, ideally, a significant increase in the revenue share of GDP and enhancing revenue-raising capacity of local government bodies should provide for necessary increase in education budgets. Both of these possibilities are up against formidable political constraints and a lack of political will to overcome the constraints. These would be still the longer term direction to be pursued. Meanwhile, two pragmatic measures could be considered -- an education cess (taking the positive and negative lessons from India and other countries into account) and tax incentives for individual and corporate contribution to education. Both of these measures have to be designed carefully with assurance of transparency and efficient

use of funds for visible results in order to make these steps acceptable to the public.

Eighth, Bangladesh's foreign aid strategy for education will need to be redesigned in view of targets of the SFYP and the SDGs. Foreign aid will be an important source for financing education, in spite of Bangladesh being labelled as a (lower) middle income country. It is necessary to engage in dialogue with the traditional development partners on a continuing basis for continued support to fulfil the SDG4 agenda appropriately adapted and indicators for assessing and reporting progress elaborated. External assistance has to fit into the priorities and strategies designed through participation and dialogue with stakeholders. The open dialogue needs to include the structural concerns which have to be addressed.

These are not the only issues which should be considered for the SFYP and SDG education agenda for Bangladesh. These are highlighted because these have been neglected or not given due consideration so far.

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ANNEX

Education Target and Indicators in SDG proposed by GED and PFM

1. GED-led Post-2015 Agenda – Goals, Targets and Indicators proposed for Education Goal 6: Ensure quality education and skills for all Targets Indicators

6.1 Ensure quality basic education for all

Indicators

- Proportion of children completing pre-primary education by age cohort
- Proportion of children completing education up to grade VIII
- Percentage of dropout by level
- Teacher-student ratio by level
- Percentage of female teachers at primary level
- Percentage of literate adults with livelihood and life skills
- Percentage of teachers trained Post 2015 Development Agenda

6.2 Mainstream Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and skills education in post primary curriculum

Indicators

- Percentage of education budget for TVET
- Percentage of students in TVET system
- Percentage of 15+ dropout children completing vocational and skills training regardless of level of education
- Availability of integrated TVET in post primary level
- Percentage of industries linked with TVET and skills development institutions
- Percentage of „out of school children“ join skills equivalence programme and obtain certificate

6.3 Ensure quality secondary and higher education

Indicators

- Percentage of students qualified in light of programme for international student assessment (PISA)
- Percentage of science graduates at secondary and tertiary levels
- Percentage of teachers trained
- Percentage of dropout
- Percentage of the higher education establishing with accreditation council
- Percentage of budget allocation for higher education.

6.4 Promote quality research (for knowledge creation/innovation)

- Proportion of budget assigned to research and innovation
- Number of research findings/innovations patented
- Proportion of investment in research and development (R&D) by the private sector

Other targets and Indicators relevant to the education agenda

- 1.1 Ensure rights of all children and strengthen protection of children from all sorts of

abuses (politically, economically, socially)

- 1.2 Ensure productive opportunities for youth
- 3.1. Halve the number of undernourished children under 5 years old
- 5.1. Eliminate violence against girls and women
- 5.4. Eliminate child marriage
- 7.1 Ensure decent and productive employment for all
- 7.4. Reduce child labour and eliminate worst form of child labour
- 8.4 Enhance the financial and administrative power of local government institutions 8.6 Promote equitable access to services
- 9.4 Encourage 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) approach for use of products and resources, reuse, recycled
- 10.3 Reduce the vulnerability and exposure of the communities to disasters
- 10.4 Ensure safe disposal and management of hazardous waste 10.10 Ensure reduction of ozone depleting substances
- 11.6 Encourage global partnership among philanthropic, corporate entities and civil society organizations.

(From "Post-2015 Development Agenda: Bangladesh Proposal to UN," General Economics Division, Planning Commission, June 2013.)

2. PFM Civil Society Post-2015 Agenda for Education

Two Education Goals out of 13 Sustainable Development Goals Proposed

Goal 4: Ensure that All Children Complete Primary Education (up to class 8 in Bangladesh, and as appropriate in other countries) of Acceptable Quality

Target 4.1 Ensure that all children of age 4+ up to reaching age 6 participate in pre-primary preparatory schooling.

Indicators: Proportion of children 4+ up to reaching 6 years of age participating in pre-primary schooling: by income quintile and location (rural, urban) also for particularly disadvantaged groups such as disabled.

Target 4.2 Ensure acceptable quality of education at both pre-primary and primary levels. children, ethnic minorities, slum dwellers, etc.

Indicators: a. Proportion of schools (preprimary and primary; if same schools teach both, then by level) with adequate and attractive physical environment (classrooms, teaching aid, first aid medical facility, recreation facility, play ground, etc.) for imparting of education.

b. Proportion of schools (preprimary and primary; if same school, then by level) with qualified teachers by location (rural, urban):

Target 4.3 Completion of primary education (up to class 8 as in Bangladesh and up to the relevant class in different countries) by all eligible children.

Indicators: a. Proportion of schools (preprimary and primary; if same school then by level)

with effective school management arrangements: effective school management committee, parent-teacher committee, students committee.

b. % of schools under proper supervision arrangements: by government officials by community committees

c. Enrollment rate at primary level, by location (rural, urban) and sex.

d. Proportion of enrolled students passing class 5, by location (rural, urban), sex, and level of performance.

e. Proportion of enrolled students passing class 8 or the top primary level class, by location (rural, urban), sex, and level of performance.

f. Dropout rate by class from class 1 to top primary level class, by location (rural, urban) and sex.

g. Identification of particularly disadvantaged groups and measuring their dropout rates by class and sex.

Goal 5: Create Skill Development Opportunities for All, Suitable to Their Ages (Children under 15, 15+-45, 45+) for Them to Make Best Possible Contribution to Their Own and *National Sustainable Development*

Target 5.1 Universal (with reference to demand) availability of skills imparting/training centres with adequate spaces, programmes, and teaching aid.

Indicators: a. Current availability of such centres adequately equipped in % of all existing centres by location (rural, urban) with briefs on types of training provided.

b. Proportions of youth and adults making use of the available learning centres by sex and location (rural, urban).

c. % of the skill learning/ training centres properly supervised and monitored for quality.

Target 5.2 Ensure literacy competency of the total population; and appropriate skills level of those who participate in the skill development programmes.

Indicators: a. Literacy and numeracy rates of population above 15 years of age and among total population by sex, location (rural, urban), and among disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities, disabled people, etc. b. Assessment of competency achievement of youth and adults in literacy and numeracy at basic and functional, self-sustaining levels.

c. Proportion of youth and adults, participating in vocational and livelihood skills training.

d. Competency achieved by those who have completed their chosen courses, by sex, age and location (rural, urban); also in the case of various disadvantaged groups.

e. Proportion of youth and adults participating in lifelong learning.

Other targets relevant for the education agenda (illustrative)

1.2 Identification of particularly disadvantaged population groups nationally and take steps to rid them of poverty

2.3 Ensure sustainable access to basic hygienic sanitation.

2.4 Reduce the proportion of undernourished children and improve their nutritional status.

- 3.1 Enhance employment opportunities.
- 3.4 Eliminate child (under 14) labour.
- 6.4 Increase early detection, referral and care of disabilities and special needs of children with reference to 2015 baseline (percent reduction targets to be set by individual countries).
- 7.3 Elimination of violence against women.
- 7.4 Equal participation of men and women in education, politics, economic activities, and civic roles.
- 8.2 Enhanced management of climate change adaptation consistent with evolving climate change impacts, mitigation consistent with the vision of global warming by less than 2°C by end 2100 with reference to pre-industrial level; and integration of disaster risk reduction in the process of sustainable development.
- 8.6 Increase resilience of communities and nations to natural disasters
- 8.7 Enhance quality of water, air and sound through minimising pollution
- 9.2 Reduce substantially men-women, rural-urban and rich-poor disparity from 2015 baseline in the field of digitization.
- 10.1 Improve effective participation and representation of all segments of population in governance at all levels of society from local to central and ensure effective, transparent governance.
- 10.2 Strengthen democratic local governance.
- 11.1 Development of mechanisms and mobilization of resources by the international community, aid providers and advocacy agencies to assist the vulnerable populations, communities and governments in fragile states and states in conflict/conflict zones to resolve the issues(s).
- 11.2 Intensification of efforts by the international community, national governments and civil society to protect children and women in fragile states and states or zones in conflict.
- 12.1 Increase domestic resource mobilization, with a target of 25% of GDP as the share of public revenue, and its proper allocation for sustainable development.
- 12.2 Increase public allocations for human capability enhancement, with a target of 6% of GDP for education and skills development and 4% for health care.

(From "Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda – Perspectives and Recommendations from Bangladesh Civil Society," People's Forum on MDGs, published by CAMPE in September, 2013.)