



PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION

MDG 2 and 3: DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Target 2.A: To ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary school

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by no later than 2015

Indicators: Goal 2.	2.1. Net enrolment ratio in primary education
	2.2. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary
	2.3. Literacy rate of 15 – 24 year-olds, women and men
Indicator: Goal 3.	3.1. Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

1. Strategic Plan

The basic education strategic plan is moored in the objective of ensuring that quality education is provided to all learners in the South African schooling system¹. Its intended outcome is for improved quality of basic education while related outputs include improving quality of teaching and learning; undertaking regular assessment to track progress; improve early childhood development; and ensuring credible outcomes focused planning and accountability system. Every programme and activity in the department should assist in achieving the outcome and its related outputs. While analysing its performance environment in the strategic plan, the department noted the importance of assisting the country in achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 which aims at eradicating extreme poverty and hunger around the world. While recognizing that reducing poverty is a central concern for the South African government, basic education department wants to give South Africans a better educational start in life and equip them with widely recognized skills to reduce unemployment and thereby reduce poverty. Therefore, while aiming to achieve MDGs 2 and 3, the department of basic education sees its overall picture as being able to contribute to poverty eradication.

MDG 2 ensures that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary school. Its set indicators are to increase net enrolment ratio (NER) in primary education; increase proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary; and increase literacy rate of 15 – 24 year-olds, women and men. MDG 3 ensures a promotion of gender equality and empowers women in order to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by no later than 2015. Its set indicator is to balance ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education. All in all, education system needs to achieve the four indicators for both MDG 2 and 3. Programme 2

¹ Basic Education, (2011)



and 5 of the strategic plan of the department of basic education squarely respond to the four indicators for goals 2 and 3. Programme 2, Curriculum Policy, Support and Monitoring deals with developing curriculum and assessment policies for Basic Education and assists in monitoring the implementation of such policies. Programme 5 for the department is Educational Enrichment Services. Its aim and objective is to develop policies and programmes in order to improve the quality of learning in schools. Following is how the department intends to achieve these targets.

Net enrolment ratio in primary education

Programme 5 responds to this target. It does so through the care and support in schools sub-programme. This sub-programme combines a lot of wellness activities that ensure that learners remain at school. Generally, one of its objective is to improve learner performance and retention by developing guideline documents for school governing bodies and teacher training programmes to promote human rights, diversity and social cohesion, and thus facilitate education excellence and reduce the number of school drop-outs². Learners are motivated to remain in school if their performance is positive and when their health is sound. According to the department, this programme has assisted quite positively in increasing a net enrolment ration, particularly in primary and quintile 1 and 2 schools.

Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary

Similar to net enrolment ratio in primary education, this target is addressed by programme 5. However the objective in this case is to improve learner retention by ensuring that all children remain effectively enrolled in school up to the year in which they turn 15. This is done through different activities like well organised school sport, physical education activities and music education programmes.

Literacy rate of 15 – 24 year-olds, women and men

Programme 2 has a sub-programme called *Kha Ri Gude*³ *Literacy Project*. It aims to expand the provision of basic literacy education for adults. Its objectives and measures are to reduce the number of illiterate adults in South Africa by 2.2 million by 2012. There are currently 38 930 registered volunteer educators, supervisors, coordinators and monitors. This sub-programme has a staff complement of 10 and 90 per cent of its budget is used for stipends to volunteer educators, learner and teacher support materials, and assessments. In 2010, at a cost of R2.6 million, a team of 43 monitors was appointed to monitor a sample of learning sites each month to improve the quality of teaching and learning and ensure the integrity of the project.

Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

Programme 5 responds to this target. Through care and support in schools sub-programme, the department aims to improve gender equity in schools by ensuring that a policy framework and a monitoring and evaluation framework for the basic education system are put in place in 2011/12. This is made possible by ensure that gender related barriers in the basic education system are reduced by implementing an advocacy programme to reduce sexual violence in schools and address other gender related barriers.

² Basic Education, (2011a)

³ *Kha Ri Gude* is a Venda Phrase that means 'Let us Learn'



It is notable that some of the programmes in the department's strategic plan are not targeted and direct intervention to the MDG 2 and 3 indicators. They are general programmes that happen to have activities that may full or partly respond to the indicators.

2. Budget

Literacy rate of 15 – 24 year-olds, women and men

Kha Ri Gude Literacy Project stands out as a sub-programme of programme 2 and received R540 million which amounts to 29.43 per cent of the programme budget of R1.8 billion. This sub-programme will continue to be prioritized over the MTEF period. It is anticipated that the sub-programme will receive a further allocation of R159.8 million over the METF period for *Kha Ri Gude* as an expanded public works programme of recruiting 41 000 volunteer educators and coordinators — thereby contributing to job creation. The Department has set huge target on this programme. It wants to reduce the number of illiterate adults in South Africa by 2.2 million by 2012. This sub-programme has received a substantial increase from 17 million in the 2007/08 to R540 million in 2011/12. This shows commitment by the department to invest more on reducing illiteracy.

Net enrolment ratio in primary education; Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary; and Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

The above three targets receive budget allocation within programme 5. Though there is no specific allocation for these three activities, allocation of the care and support in schools sub-programme of R4.8 billion helps fund line items and activities within the sub-programme for the realization of these targets. Expenditure grew from R1.4 billion in 2007/08 to R3.9 billion in 2010/11, at an average annual rate of 40.1 per cent. This was due to increased allocations to expand the national school nutrition programme conditional grant, which plays a huge role in keeping children in schools. The planned expansion of this programme to secondary schools began in 2009/10 will also help in retaining children well beyond grade 9.

3. Programmes/ Projects

Initiatives to improve education access and retention

The Department has introduced number of initiatives and incentives for children to come to schools, these include initiatives to reduce repetition, conditions/facilitating for parents to send their children to schools⁴.

- a) **The National School Nutrition Programme:** This programme is aimed at improving access to quality education. Although the programme initially catered for only primary school learners, since 2008, the budget of the programme has been progressively extended to include poor learners in secondary schools as well. In 2009, it provided meals

⁴ Department of Basic Education, (2011c)



to more than 7 million learners in over 20 000 schools. 6 million primary school learners benefitted from this programme in 2009/10, while close to 1 million secondary school learners did so. The programme was extended to Quintile 2 secondary schools in 2010/11 and the Department intends to increase the number of secondary school learners who benefit from this programme in 2011/12. The NSNP will thus be expanded to include learners in Quintile 3 secondary schools during the 2011/12 financial year.

- b) **No-fee schools:** The no-fee school policy is an initiative aimed at improving education access for learners coming from poor family background. It stipulates that schools that have a no-fee status are not permitted to charge fees to parents (although it does not exclude voluntary contributions and the hosting of fund-raising events). In 2010, about 70% of learners (over 8 million learners) in 81% of public schools (close to 20 000) benefitted from the no-fee policy.
- c) **The Workbook Project:** The Department has been distributing millions of workbooks to public schools since January this year. These workbooks are intended for learners in Grades 1 to 6, in language and mathematics subjects and are available in all 11 official languages. Workbooks are designed to assist teachers who have large classes and who may not necessarily have access to stimulating reading material for learners. The workbooks will relieve teachers of having to write up lessons and exercises on the chalkboard, or struggling to produce their own worksheets when the school does not have photocopy facilities. In turn, learners may find lessons more interesting and the work they do more stimulating. This could therefore encourage learners to attend school.
- d) **Expansion of Grade R:** The Department has expanded the provision of Grade R in schools dramatically over the past decade. The number of learners enrolled in Grade R in schools increased from about 300 000 in 1999, to over 600 000 in 2009. The Department intends to expand Grade R provisioning even further by improving the quality of Grade R provided by schools. Studies indicate that a child who attends pre-primary programmes is likely to remain longer in the education system.
- e) **Reduction of teacher administrative workload:** The Minister of Basic Education undertook several initiatives in 2010 to reduce the administrative workload of teachers. These include the discontinuance of learner portfolios and the number of projects that learners are expected to undertake. These initiatives intend to facilitate more teaching time and greater attention to learners, thereby increasing opportunity to learn. Studies have indicated that improved opportunities to learn will reduce repetition, which in turn, is likely to reduce dropout since repetition is a strong predictor of dropout.
- f) **Textbooks:** The Department has encouraged provincial education departments to set aside budgets to ensure that learners are provided a textbook for every subject. Parents whose children are in public schools are therefore not expected to purchase textbooks for their children, and this reduces the cost of schooling for parents. It is expected therefore that parents will have little reason for not sending their children to school.



- g) *Full Service Schools* were established, that would ensure that learners with disabilities have access to education and thereby reduce disparities.

The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education held two reporting meetings with the department in July 2010 and in May 2011. The 2010 meeting was held on the 20 – 22 July in order to get an insight on what the department will report on to the President when he will have to compile the country's 2010 Millennium Goals progress report. The department reported to the committee on the following targets within goal 2 and 3 respectively: net enrolment ratio in primary education; functional literacy levels; progression through the school system; and policy incentives for participation and gender parity in the school system.

Firstly, on net enrolment rate (NER) in South Africa, the department indicated that the age level it will report on is 7 to 13 or grade 1 to 7 which is recognized primary schooling age. They indicated that girls' net is higher at 98.8 per cent in 2009 while boys' net enrolment rate was at 96.4 per cent in 2009. This was not a significant difference and they were aware of the reasons behind this. Completion rates of primary education and higher for those aged 18 year increased from 89.6% in 2002 to 93.8% in 2009.

Secondly, they reported that illiteracy rate of the 15–24-year-olds has been decreasing steadily from 13% in 2002 to less than 10% in 2009. This was evident by the indications that the literacy rate among 15–24-year-olds has steadily increased in the past eight years. In fact the rate increased from 88.0% in 2002 to 91.0% in 2009. Functional literacy level for female youths was at 93 per cent, slightly higher than the male counterparts at 89 per cent.

South Africa is on track to achieving universal primary education by 2015. The worrying factor was that the department's survey shows that children complete primary schooling at an older age than expected and that class repetitions is still a cause for concern. They also reported on good policy interventions for school completion which which are yielding good results. These include no-fees in poor communities, free scholar transport and school nutrition programmes. In essence, the department assured the committee that South Africa will achieve the goal of universal primary education well before the year 2015.

Lastly, they reported on ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary schools. They reported a higher gross enrolment ratio (GER) for boys than girls at primary schooling while the secondary schooling female GER is higher than the male.

In 2011, the department on the 31st May reported on three indicators for MDGs 2 and 3. The indicators reported on are, net enrolment ratio in primary education; proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary; literacy rate of 15 to 24 year-olds, women and men; and ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education. The department however presented the report using the 2009 data which was more similar to the one they used the previous year though it was adjusted to reflect some of the variables that were not included when they reported in 2010. They reported that the adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER) is at 98.6 per cent for both girls and boys alike⁵. This is higher than NER they reported on in 2010 which was at 91 per

⁵ Department of Basic Education (2011b)



cent. This shows a continued increase of the NER since 2002, which then was at 88 per cent. The literacy rate of the 15 to 24 years old that have completed grade 7 and above was at 91 per cent same as the 2010 progress report.

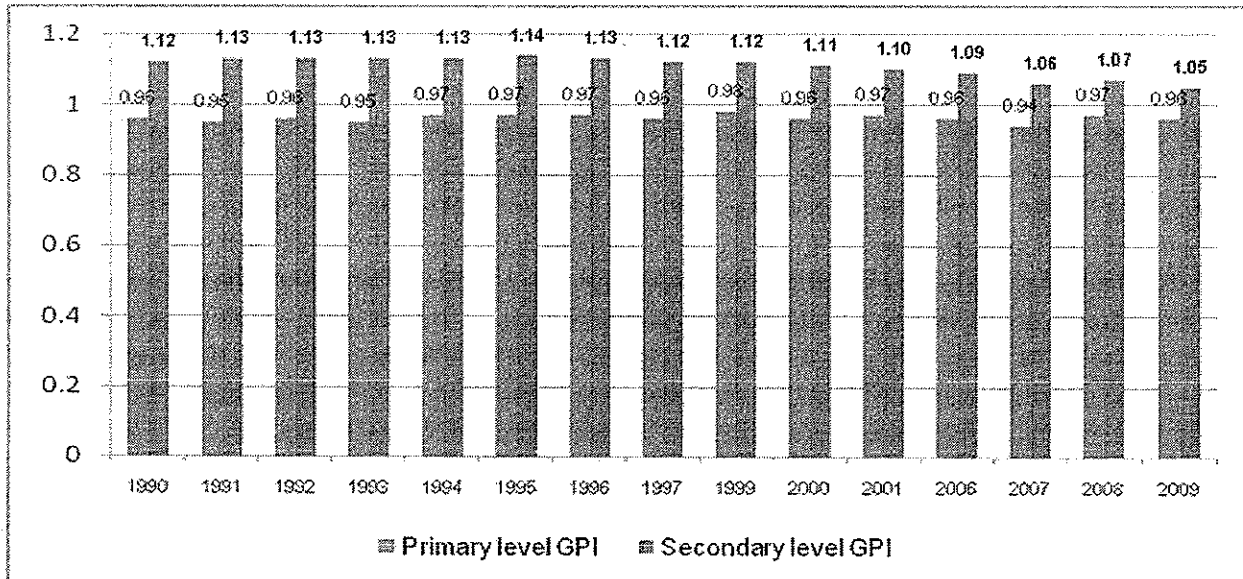


Figure 1: Source: Department of Basic Education

Figure 1 report on progress in goal 3, promoting gender equality and empower women. The percentages in figure 1 indicate the gender parity gap between boys and girls in primary and secondary schooling. At primary level the gender parity index (GPI) gap is at 0.96 per cent. The gap has been constantly the same 1990, though the department argues that it is closing. The main cause it attributed to the repetition rate among male learners. The GPI gap at secondary schooling is at 1.05. This figure records a reduction of the gap from 1.12 per cent in 1990. In fact more females than males are recorded as being in school than males. In essence, gender parity is not being achieved at primary school while in secondary schooling there is significant improvement.

The department reports that all education goals can be achieved well before the end of the year 2015.

4. Monitoring Mechanisms

Programmes 2 and 3 which are the anchor programmes for the education MDG targets have a sub-programme called Programme Management. This sub-programme, on both two programmes takes the responsibility of coordinating all monitoring and evaluation functions⁶. However, there is no clear outline on how these monitoring and evaluation functions will be carried out. There is however an indication that the department will improve gender equity in schools by ensuring that a policy framework and a monitoring and evaluation framework for the basic education system are put in place in 2011/12. This indicates that the department may bring a policy framework that will assist in monitoring some of the department's sub-programmes including the MDG targets. The

⁶ National treasury, (2011)



minister in her budget speech announced the establishment of the Planning and Delivery Oversight Unit which will help the department to monitor progress of its programmes to identify gaps and then bring the necessary intervention. Notably, the monitoring mechanism for MDG indicators is not visible.

5. Issues for Consideration

The committee's assessment was based on the overall picture drawn from the purposes and principles of what achieving the MDG 2 and 3 entail. The purposes and principles as set out in the UN's commitments to achieve MDG 2 and 3, include amongst others, Quality output in the education system, removing barriers to learning; making education a platform for full development of human personality; addressing out-of-school children challenge, including enhancing enrolment, retention, participation and achievement of children; operationalizing an inclusive education; enhancing progression of learners through school system; addressing infrastructural backlogs, classroom human resources, financial and administrative constraints. This was evident when members of the committee raised the following issues.

- Why is the department still using the 2009 data to report on the MDG 2 and 3 in 2011? When will the 2010 data be available?
- Will the department ever use the low standard and quality of the achievements in the education system as the indicator to achieving MDGs?
- The department should give further clarity on why the retention rate did not form part of the overall MDG report.
- Whether the department intends using the Mathematics and Physical Science performance as an indicator.
- What terms of reference is the department using to determine literacy levels? Are these universal terms of references?
- How is the low throughput of learners affecting the department in achieving MDG 2 and 3?
- Does the department plan to use the drop-out rate as an indicator to achieving MDG 2?
- Is the department aware of the impact of the learner-teacher ratio to the realization of MDG 2?

The Committee indicated that the efforts to achieving MDGs 2 and 3 should include access; gender parity; and most importantly quality of education delivered. The department may achieve access and the gender parity goals by 2015 but a lot still needs to be done to remove obstacles that hamper the delivery of quality education. Issues like infrastructure backlog; drop-out rate and retention; repeaters; inclusive education; Mathematics and Physical Science outputs; administration and management constraints in some provinces; and learner-teacher ratio are still a cause for concern within the education system. Because of the above challenges, the committee sees that a lot needs to be done by the department to achieving the intended purposes of achieving MDG 2 and 3.

The above obstacles indicate that achieving MDG 2 and 3 encompasses a lot of initiatives and activities. It needs a broader spectrum of programmes that must be carefully implemented and monitored. The department should therefore plan its strategic programmes to respond to the MDG targets in a holistic way.

6. Recommendations



- There is a need to address scholar transport challenges. Most learners are dropping out of school due to distances they have to travel to school.
- The department should remove most barriers to learning that specifically affect learners with disabilities. Most of these learners are out of school or the system is pushing them out of the system.
- Infrastructure backlog should be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Strengthen monitoring mechanisms within the education system which currently are not visible.
- Expand the health screening programme of children in foundation phase all primary schools.
- Put more effort on matters that will enhance quality in the education system.

References

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