



**SOCIAL INCLUSION:
GENDER AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION SWAPS
IN SOUTH ASIA**

SYNTHESIS REPORT

Amanda Seel

For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY



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Foreword

The gaps in our understanding of gender and equity issues of disadvantaged groups in education programmes in South Asia are brought together in this report about sector-wide approaches (SWAp). The report synthesizes a series of case studies undertaken in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka under the auspices of the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA). A common element is that social exclusion and gender inequality are deeply intertwined with poverty in the context of education in South Asia.

All three studies found some positive and significant changes in relation to addressing educational equity and inclusion, which link to the move towards a SWAp modality. All offer important lessons and new ideas that have arisen out of creative attempts to address a range of disparity issues in each unique context.

UNICEF ROSA would like to acknowledge the tremendous work undertaken by the researchers in the three countries and the insights provided by governments and all stakeholders which contributed to the country reports. In particular, thanks go to Bobbi Shuey for providing research support to the teams, and to Amanda Seel as coordinator of the whole study and writer of this Synthesis Report.

The move towards SWAps has a clear theoretical potential to strengthen equity and inclusion in the provision of quality education. It is hoped that, through this synthesis of the three country studies, policy makers and practitioners will gain deeper understanding of how far this is the case in practice, and how further improvements might be made to educational programmes throughout the region and beyond.



Frances Turner
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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIEC	Access and Inclusive Education Cell (Bangladesh)
AIEF	Access and Inclusive Education Framework (Bangladesh)
AusAid	Australian Agency for International Development
BNFE	Bureau for Non-Formal Education (Bangladesh)
BNP	Bangladesh National Party
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Programme (Nepal)
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CENWOR	Centre for Women's Research (Sri Lanka)
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DEO	District Education Officer (Bangladesh, Nepal)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DNFE	Department for Non-Formal Education (Bangladesh)
DoE	Department of Education (Nepal)
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education (Bangladesh)
ESDP	Education Sector Development Programme (Sri Lanka)
ESDFP	Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (Sri Lanka)
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EDI	Education Development Index
EFA	Education For All
EFA-N	Education For All – Nepal
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EU	European Union
FTI (EFA)	Education For All Fast Track Initiative (on Education For All)
GAD	Gender And Development (Approach)
GAP	Gender Action Plan (Bangladesh)
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEDS	Gender and Equity Development Section (Nepal)
GEP	General Education Programme (Bangladesh)
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GMR	Global Monitoring Report (on Education For All)
GNP	Gross National Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Information, Education, Communication.
ILO	International Labour Organization

INGO	International NGO
JARM	Joint Annual Review Mission (Bangladesh)
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoE	Ministry of Education (Sri Lanka)
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports (Nepal)
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (Bangladesh)
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoWCA	Ministry of Women’s and Children’s Affairs (Bangladesh)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTBF	Medium Term Budget Framework (Sri Lanka)
MTR	Mid Term Review
NAPE	National Academy for Primary Education (Bangladesh)
NEC	National Education Commission (Sri Lanka)
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NEREC	National Education Research and Evaluation Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NFE	Non Formal Education
NFPE	Non Formal Primary Education
NIE	National Institute of Education (Sri Lanka)
NPA	National Plan of Action
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (UK)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBA	Programme-Based Approach
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme (Bangladesh)
PESP	Primary Education Stipends Programme
PLU	Programme Liaison Unit (Bangladesh)
PSQL	Primary School Quality Level (Bangladesh)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan/ Paper/Programme
PTA	Parent–Teacher Association
ROSA	Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF)
ROSC	Reaching Out-of-School Children (Bangladesh)
SCiSL	Save the Children in Sri Lanka
SDC	School Development Committee (Sri Lanka)
SDP	School Development Planning
SESP	Secondary Education Support Programme
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SIP	School Improvement Planning/Plan (formerly also a Sector Investment Programme)
SMC	School Management Committee
SMT	School Management Team (Sri Lanka)
SSA	Schools Sector Approach (Nepal)
SWAp	Sector-Wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance
TRSE	Technical Report on School Education (Nepal)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WID	Women In Development (Approach)

Executive Summary

A. The Study

Background and purpose

1. This study consists of three linked case studies, from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, as well as a synthesis report. Each of the country case studies explored how education programmes supported through a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) are conceptualizing and addressing issues of social exclusion and gender inequality, and with what results. A central understanding of the study has been that social exclusion and gender inequality are deeply intertwined with poverty in the South Asia context. The move towards SWAps has a clear theoretical potential to strengthen equity and inclusion in the provision of quality education – this study aimed to make a contribution to our understanding of how far this is the case in practice, and how further improvements might be made.
2. The study had the following overall purpose: *‘To understand in detail the nature and extent of the “social exclusion challenge” facing a range of education SWAps in South Asia and how these challenges are being conceptualized, prioritized and addressed, in order to inform “good practice” within those countries and to learn lessons for other countries in the region and beyond.’*
3. The country case studies were ‘self-selecting’ and in each case the research was conceived as an activity within the SWAp. Country case studies were undertaken using a mix of document review and qualitative research, mainly through semi-structured interviews. The synthesis report has sought to reflect on the overall findings of the studies and set these within a wider international context.

The SWAps

4. The case study SWAps were Bangladesh PEDP-II 2004–09, Nepal EFA-N 2004–09 (also with some consideration of SESP, as it is envisaged that the two will merge into a single sub-sector approach) and Sri Lanka ESDP 2005–09.

B. Contexts

5. The three countries represent three markedly different contexts for the introduction of an education SWAp, variously facing challenges including poverty, conflict, political insecurity, large populations and difficult terrain. However, they have all embarked on a SWAp with some important strengths: commitment to improving educational equity, some level of capacity and experience from previous initiatives and projects, and generally good progress in education over the past decade.
6. **Bangladesh** has one of the largest centralized education systems in the world and is reaping the benefits of strong policies to reduce the costs of education and close the gender gap. There is a uniquely large and complex NGO scene, with NGOs providing up to 15% of education services focused on rural areas and ‘hard to reach’ groups.

7. **Nepal** has managed to maintain its still-establishing education system through a decade of conflict and to continue to make gains in enrolment and gender parity. With the agreement on an interim constitution the context is becoming more favourable. The recognition that social exclusion was a key fuel to the conflict had provided a new impetus for achieving a more equitable and inclusive society. Institutional strengthening and building up of local-level democracy are now urgent tasks.

8. **Sri Lanka** has the benefit of strong governance, well-established state institutions and commitment to free primary and secondary education for the past five decades. The most challenging factor has been the two-decade long internal conflict, with continuing outbreaks of violence despite an official ceasefire in 2002. Comprehensive education reforms, focusing on quality and equity, have been in force since 1997.

C. Findings

The equity and inclusion challenge

9. In each case, the social exclusion challenge is vast. Dimensions of disparity include not only poverty and gender, but also caste (especially **Nepal**) and other forms of status-based exclusion, ethnicity/language and disability. An additional excluded group are those children who – often as a result of being ‘multiply-disadvantaged’ – are without adequate care and protection. Conflict and natural disasters further compound social exclusion. The many dimensions of poverty and social exclusion are strongly related to educational disparity. There are a range of *demand*-related factors, including the ‘opportunity cost’ of education for the poorest children and attitudinal barriers (such as gender- or caste-based discrimination or the belief that disabled children are uneducable). There are also *supply*-related factors. Some of these relate to equity in *access*, for example charges for education or availability of schools or education programmes in places and at times where all children can benefit from them. However, there are also two significant forms of ‘inequity in quality’, namely inequality of *provision* of quality schooling and inequitable practices and discrimination *within* schools. The SWAPs are faced with the challenge of understanding both *who* are the excluded children and *where* they are, geographically and in relation to the education system, and devising strategies to overcome a complex set of barriers to educational equity and inclusion.

SWAP nature and scope

10. The ‘SWAPs’ under consideration were found to be something rather different in each case. All have evolved out of earlier ‘umbrella’ programmes and, rather than representing a dramatic change of direction, are slowly evolving to include more of the characteristics of the ‘prototype SWAP’. In each case, the adoption of a ‘SWAP’ label was concurrent with the commencement of pooled budget support. **Bangladesh** PEDP-II is essentially top-down and has a number of features of a ‘giant project’, including a rigid and detailed Macro Plan. By contrast, **Nepal** EFA-N has a Core Document that serves more as a general statement of aspirations and broad directions than a strategic framework that guides prioritization and budgeting. While EFA-N is the major programme of government for basic education, there are many smaller projects operating in parallel and a mix of centralized and decentralized interventions. **Sri Lanka** ESDP perhaps most resembles the ‘theoretical’ model of a SWAP, with a clear strategic framework linked to an MTBF that guides decentralized implementation. However, one difference is that the degree of donor input (and thus influence) is far lower than for most countries that have embarked on a SWAP.

SWAp goals and overall strategy

11. Achieving equity and inclusion are included or implied as strategic-level objectives in all three countries. **Bangladesh** PEDP-II has commendable goals for gender equality, but less clarity on dimensions including poverty and other excluded groups, though this is now being addressed through the development of an *Access and Inclusive Education Framework*, with steps now being taken to rectify the lack of comprehensive mainstreaming of equity in the original plans. **Nepal**, whilst adding a goal to reflect its diverse ethnic and linguistic context, has been less clear about reducing equally (if not more) serious caste-based disparities. The programme also suffers from a lack of a clear strategic framework or mechanisms for mainstreaming and a mismatch between stated objectives and the EFA goal-based components that guide implementation. Equity goals are perhaps most strongly articulated in **Sri Lanka**, where it is clear that equity is not just a matter of access, but also of quality and resourcing. Sri Lanka has attempted a ‘mainstreaming’ approach to equity from the beginning; however, there is a neglect to specify gender as one of the dimensions of inequality to be mainstreamed and addressed.

Analysis of equity issues to inform SWAp design

12. In each case, the SWApS have been designed making use of previous analyses and available data, for example Bangladesh’s PEDP-I projects and PRSP, Nepal’s previous BPEP and analysis for EFA-2000 and Sri Lanka’s analyses for its Education Reform Programme. In each case, there is some good analysis of educational disparities and their causes, and the identification of vulnerable groups. However, there are some gaps. **Bangladesh** PEDP-II focuses mainly on gender and disability (though this is now being rectified through the preparation of the AIEF) and faces a major problem of lack of data for most dimensions other than gender. **Nepal’s** analysis, likewise, was limited by available data and was – at that time – stronger in relation to gender, poverty and language than in relation to the vital caste dimension. **Sri Lanka** undertook rigorous analysis in relation to poverty and regional disparities but has tended to be ‘gender blind’, presumably on the basis that parity has already been reached.

Consultation, participation, communication

13. The findings from all three case studies indicate a general insufficient attention to the need for good structures and processes to enable participation of primary stakeholders, particularly those most at risk of being excluded and overlooked. In **Sri Lanka**, the need for more capacity for facilitating consultation and participation at all levels was identified. In **Nepal**, whilst districts – and some schools – have felt more included than before, there is still a lack of mechanism for ‘two-way’ communication and for reaching right down to community level, as well as including teachers more systematically. In **Bangladesh**, likewise, the culture remains ‘top-down’. However, the development of the AIEF has sought to include organizations that are representative of, or have experience of supporting, disadvantaged groups of education stakeholders and has committed to making PEDP-II more inclusive and participatory.

Monitoring and evaluation

14. This is a major area which has been prioritized in the SWApS, but also faces difficulties. Despite important improvements in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** in terms of gender-disaggregated monitoring, the other dimensions of disparity are not yet being well captured. In all three contexts, there are significant capacity implications that need to be better addressed. Beyond the first step of accurate data collection (of data that is useful and measures the right thing) is

the more complex one of ensuring skills for analysis of a range of data and information for its use in decision making at different levels. Whilst **Nepal** has undertaken a successful time-bound initiative for gathering qualitative and quantitative data (the TRSE), none of the three countries has yet institutionalized a good system for coordinating and making use of wider learning, for example in relation to pilot initiatives or qualitative research.

Institutional capacity

15. Given that the whole purpose of a SWAp can be seen as institutional development for better management and delivery of quality education, it is very significant that in all three countries there are concerns about the priority being given to this area. This is the case generally, and in relation to the institutional structures and capacity that is needed to analyse key equity and inclusion issues, identify strategies to address them and to implement and monitor these strategies. There has as yet been a lack of systematic identification of the skills, competencies, understandings and attitudes that are needed at different levels, and within individuals playing specific roles in the education system, in order to make effective progress in mainstreaming gender and equity concerns and implementing targeted programmes. There has also been limited identification of the loci (individuals and institutions) of existing knowledge and expertise in specific areas. Institutional development has tended to be narrowed down to capacity building; and capacity building, in turn, narrowed down to training and provision of TA. These have their place, but to achieve real institutional change that will result in effective practice to achieve educational equity and inclusion requires more attention to incentives, attitudinal change processes and more empowering institutional structures.

Strategies for equity in access

16. Overall, reducing the *cost barriers* to education is seemingly given high priority in all three countries, with **Sri Lanka** having a particularly comprehensive approach to mitigating the 'lost opportunity' costs. It is possible, however, that poor children who are outside their own families are still being missed for special stipends and assistance. In **Nepal**, there is a worrying inconsistency between an official policy of free primary education and initiatives (community schools and ECD) that involve community cost sharing. *Attitudinal barriers* are being recognized as important, but there as yet seems to be less confidence in how to address them. In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** this seems to have been left to NGOs and the media. *Enrolment drives* have been undertaken in **Nepal** (a *Welcome to School* campaign) and **Sri Lanka** (though revitalizing compulsory education committees and NFE). *Facilities and classroom construction* are seen as major strategies in all three countries and the importance of water and separate latrine provision for girls' enrolment (in particular) is well understood. However, there do not yet appear to be systematic approaches to ensuring that facilities and classrooms are equally accessible to children with a range of disabilities (not only mobility-related) or to ensure that all children can equally use and enjoy all of the school's facilities and resources.

17. Overall, it is clear that *provision of teachers* is seen as a serious priority and there is some attempt to improve participation of women in the teaching profession and to match teachers to the needs of schools to promote equity. However, the deployment of the 'right' teachers in the 'right' place still continues to suffer from an over-focus on average pupil: teacher ratios as opposed to the actual needs of schools to be able to provide good education to all children. Meanwhile, there is perhaps insufficient attention to creative approaches needed to

recruit and skill teachers from educationally disadvantaged groups, and to enable women to live and work in rural areas away from their own homes. Behind this, particularly in **Nepal**, seems to be an unwillingness to include teachers – and teacher organizations – in problem solving and decision making. *Flexible approaches* such as multi-grade approaches and NFE are recognized as having an important role in enhancing access to children of remote populations and ‘hard to reach’ groups. However, in all three cases, there are challenges in terms of conceptualizing these within the sector as a whole and providing sufficient funding to ensure parity of quality. *ECD* is being seen as a useful strategy for ‘levelling the playing field’ for socially excluded and minority language children in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** but *ECD* generally continues to suffer from a lack of clear aims, indicators and quality-assurance mechanisms.

Strategies for equity in quality

18. An important general trend is towards *School-based management/Whole school development*. This is seen as having strong potential to reduce disparity through enabling schools and local communities to make decisions about priorities. There are some examples of positive change, but effectiveness is currently constrained by a mechanistic approach. There has seemingly been insufficient attention to ensuring adequate financial support and technical guidance to schools facing the greatest challenges and to ensuring mechanisms and processes for equal participation of less powerful groups and individuals, as well as of children themselves.

19. In each case, there are strategies related to *curriculum reform*, the introduction of *active learning methodologies* and revision of *assessment systems*. To some extent, the equity aspects of quality development are being recognized, for example the need for the curriculum to be free of stereotyping and bias. However, for the moment the addressing of ‘equity in quality’ appears to mainly take the form of ‘adding on’ training or curriculum modules to cover different equity-related issues, for example gender or special needs. There has yet to be a bringing together of various overlapping approaches (active learning, child-friendly schools, inclusive education) that have existed in each case (perhaps due to differing project inputs in the past) into a single comprehensive approach to enhancing ‘quality’ in the widest sense. Despite the efforts of a range of initiatives and projects, rote learning continues to dominate in most classrooms and the implications of achieving the in-depth changes in the teaching–learning process that are needed to achieve equity and inclusion (including supportive school-based mentoring, effective supervision and inspection systems – and recurrent funding for these elements) are generally vastly underestimated. In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, there are a range of pilots of *mother tongue teaching/bilingual approaches* in minority language areas. These reportedly are achieving small-scale impacts, but for the moment the whole area seems to suffer from a lack of policy and it is not clear whether the strategies being piloted are being considered in relation to strategies for quality development as a whole. All three countries have placed a priority on *resources for teaching and learning* but continue to suffer from very basic flaws in procurement and delivery systems.

Partnership mechanisms and processes

20. There is significant overlap of agencies that support education in the three countries. All of the major agencies have conducive policies for supporting the addressing of equity and inclusion in education SWAs, including commitment to SWAs and donor harmonization (the Paris Declaration) on the one hand, and to MDGs, gender equality, the EFA goals and key rights-based commitments on the other. In each case, previous ‘donor histories’ and contextual

factors have affected the ethos and ‘donor dynamics’ of the SWAp. Formalized mechanisms for joint policy dialogue and review have been agreed and a Code of Conduct developed. Whilst in **Sri Lanka** it is too soon to say, in **Bangladesh** partnership processes, though not without difficulties, have generally been seen as representing a considerable improvement on the situation of the former PEDP-I umbrella programme. Major challenges relate to the very bureaucratic nature of government, the size and complexity of the programme (and number of donors) and the complex nature of government and NGO education provision and interrelationships. By contrast, in **Nepal**, donor coordination seems to have been beset by difficulties, including the continued addition and subtracting of activities, new initiatives outside the agreed programme, uncoordinated TA and the blurring of government/TA boundaries, and the bilateral pushing of ‘pet themes’. This is in part related to failures on the DP side to respect internal agency policies and commitments, but also to lack of capacity within the MoE for managing DPs effectively, disincentives for good coordination stemming from existing MoE hierarchies and – very importantly – the lack of a sufficiently robust overall strategic framework to provide an anchor and ensure focus.

21. In both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, development partners have been generally proactive in keeping equity issues on the agenda. Specific examples of supportive actions include jointly agreed TA to gender mainstreaming in the PRSP process in **Bangladesh**, support to the integration of learning from previous projects and initiatives, using joint reviews to press for acceleration of certain actions and support to analytical and research work to enhance understanding of social and education disparity and thus support the mainstreaming processes. It seems clear that where DPs have been able to provide strong, coordinated support, it has been possible to make progress and overcome significant obstacles. By contrast, weaknesses in coordination – particularly in **Nepal** – have particularly affected work on equity and inclusion, because of its complex, ‘cross-cutting’ and often culturally sensitive nature.

D. Country Conclusions and Recommendations

22. All three studies found some positive and significant changes in relation to addressing educational equity and inclusion, which link to the move towards a SWAp modality. All offer important lessons and new ideas that have arisen out of creative attempts to address a range of disparity issues in each unique context. At the same time, in each case, elements of SWAp design, approach, strategic frameworks and institutional and partnership arrangements are not yet as conducive as they could be in facilitating the effective addressing of equity and inclusion. Even taking account of the challenging socio-political contexts, there is scope for further improvements to enhance effectiveness. These generally imply not so much a change of direction away from a SWAp, but to the contrary moving more deeply and fully *into* a SWAp modality. There seems to be a general need to move beyond concerns about pooled funding to a stronger focus on a flexible, sound and consistent policy and strategy framework and budget, plus robust structures and adequate capacity to enable analysis, mainstreaming and monitoring.

23. In **Bangladesh**, key recommendations pertain to building in more flexibility to allow for greater responsiveness and synchronicity with the intended decentralization, urgent attention to the work burden of DPE (implying agreement of priorities as well as stronger support to capacity development), support to more effective and timely data collection and monitoring systems, full integration of the Access and Inclusive Education Framework into the Macro Plan and integration

of the Access and Inclusive Education Cell into the structures of the DPE, to provide a sustainable mechanism for mainstreaming gender and equity concerns.

24. In **Nepal**, the key recommendations relate to achieving a more robust, comprehensive and evidence-based strategic framework for the whole sub-sector, with clear government leadership and a higher level of donor ‘buy in’ and coordination, in order to strengthen capacity and institutions at all levels to bring about accelerated progress in equity in educational access and outcomes. It is observed that Nepal’s current application to the FTI might catalyse the development of a more rigorous framework and bring more discipline both in internal coordination and to the external partnership process.

25. In **Sri Lanka**, overall, the ESDP has provided direction for achieving outcomes, through its objectives, targets and strategies and by catalysing involvement of the general education sector from the centre to school level. Key recommendations relate to greater attention to gender-disaggregated monitoring at different administrative levels, and capacity-building for decentralized planning – including attention to facilitation of the participation of disadvantaged community members.

E. Ways Forward: Pointers for Achieving Education SWAp That Promote Equity and Inclusion

26. The **equity and inclusion challenge** is likely to be greater and more complex than first expected. The standard ‘access, quality and management’ approach of many sector-wide education programmes is likely to need considerable unpacking, to include not only general ‘pro-poor’ cost reduction and quality improvement strategies, but more nuanced strategies to address attitudinal barriers and the situation of ‘hard to reach’ children, as well as rigorous targeting mechanisms.

27. **The SWAp framework and approach** will greatly influence its effectiveness. A rigorous and realistic strategic framework is vital and this needs to be both flexible and implementable in the context. On the one hand, the framework needs to cover all programmes and activities within the sector/sub-sector as defined, but on the other to ‘look beyond itself’ towards other sectors, civil society or private sector organizations and the primary stakeholders themselves. Mechanisms for consultation, communication and participation need to be built in from the beginning

28. The **informational and analytical basis for SWAp design** needs to contain as rigorous an analysis as possible of the full range of educational disparities and the dynamics of educational disadvantage and exclusion, using qualitative and quantitative sources, with particular efforts to identify ‘hidden’ and ‘hard to reach’ children and to ‘cross-disaggregate’ to understand how different factors impact upon each other. It is also useful to analyse the wider political, institutional and historical context of social exclusion, identifying both the opportunities and possible threats. Such an analysis needs constant updating as an integrated part of monitoring and policy review.

29. **Designing specific interventions and strategies** entails effective identification and tracking of ‘hard to reach’ target groups and individuals and a balance between access and quality strategies, incorporating an expanded and comprehensive understanding of ‘quality’.

Clear overall policy guidance is required in areas including the role and purpose of NFE or other ‘special’ educational programmes, how inclusion will be achieved in practice (e.g. for children with specific disabilities) and on the role and usage of minority languages in the classroom and in education. Likely areas of coverage include:

- Ensuring free primary education, mitigation of lost opportunity costs
- Whole-school development/school-based management that provides a comprehensive framework for achieving quality with equity and inclusion
- Directly addressing attitudinal barriers and discrimination
- Ensuring that there are ‘teachers for learners’ – sufficient in quantity and quality to achieve universal quality provision and equity between schools. The teaching force should represent the diversity of the society, particularly ensuring adequate numbers of women teachers and teachers from socially excluded groups
- Development of a curriculum, teaching methodologies and assessment systems that are free of bias and actively promote equity and non-discrimination, with attention to adequate and ongoing training, monitoring and supervision to enable in-depth change in approaches, attitudes and practices
- Buildings and facilities that promote access for all, backed up with guidance and policies to ensure that all children can equally use and benefit from all the resources and facilities of the school
- Building in responsiveness to cyclical natural events, outbreaks of conflict or natural disaster and to HIV/ AIDS.

30. To ensure progress on inclusion and equity, **systems for data collection and analysis, monitoring, evaluation and learning** need to include data disaggregation and equity-relevant detail; linkages between data collection, information gathering and research, and their use for monitoring and policy adjustment; and strong attention to skills and competencies needed for data/information gathering, analysis, monitoring and learning at all levels.

31. **Institutional and capacity development** is particularly vital for making progress on equity and inclusion. A wide range of skills are needed for addressing different aspects of equity and inclusion in education systems at different levels. Overall institutional structures and incentives are important and need to be aligned to the overall purposes of the SWAp and conducive to a coherent mainstreaming approach. Institutional development for equity implies attention to equal opportunities and non-discrimination at different levels of educational administration and management, as well as the teaching profession.

32. The quality of **development partnerships** influences of the overall effectiveness of the SWAp. DPs can help by supporting the development of a robust strategic framework at the outset, supporting the development of effective partnership mechanisms and then using these to make considered and sensitive inputs at appropriate times, with regard to the overall pace of change and capacity development. Since addressing gender and social exclusion are long-term, and sometimes culturally sensitive, issues, attention should be paid to building up relationships of trust within the longer-time commitments that a SWAp makes possible. DPs can support planning for joint reviews to ensure that equity and inclusion issues are appropriately covered and that the process itself is inclusive of representatives of excluded groups. Differentiated forums and mechanisms can help to allow for participation of a diverse range of stakeholders beyond the direct funders, including women’s organizations, teacher unions and NGOs. DPs could make their support more effective through being clearer on their own internal policies and commitments and supporting stronger mechanisms within each SWAp DP group for ensuring

‘institutional memory’ and working according to ‘comparative advantage’, recognizing the role of both generalist and specialist educational expertise.

33. Developing **national policy and institutional environments** that are conducive to achieving equity and inclusion in education might involve encouragement of a focus on educational rights/sense of entitlement (in addition to poverty reduction), supportive legislation (e.g. on representation on SMCs, non-discrimination, birth registration, rights of migrants and refugees) and support to the development of a strong media and civil society. Support to wider initiatives of public service reform and ‘good governance’ needs to include encouragement of administrative structures and mechanisms that bring basic services closer to the users and for mainstreaming gender and equity concerns across government policy, sectors and institutions as a whole.

1. Introduction and Methodology

1.1 A Synthesis of Three Case Studies

This report synthesizes the learning of three linked case studies, from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Each of the country case studies explores how education programmes supported through a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) are conceptualizing and addressing issues of social exclusion and gender inequality, and with what results.

The studies take as their starting point the assertion that good quality education is both a right of all children and a development imperative. In South Asia, a large number of girls and children from socially excluded and vulnerable groups are not satisfactorily completing a full cycle of basic education. In addition, there are many children who, despite being in school, are not fully enjoying their rights to a good quality education in a context of equal opportunities, protection and non-discrimination. In many countries in South Asia, complex conflict and natural disasters have compounded the challenges of achieving equity in educational access and outcomes.

A central understanding of the study has been that social exclusion and gender inequality are deeply intertwined with poverty in the South Asia context. If education is to reach all children and provide them with equal opportunities, planning for education needs to be based on a sound analysis and understanding of the complex dynamics of poverty and social exclusion and their impacts on children's life situations and educational opportunities.

The move towards SWAps, implying greater policy coherence, improved efficiency, scope for evidence-based planning and more effective targeting of resources to where needs are greatest, has an obvious potential to strengthen equity and inclusion in quality education service provision. However, up until now, there has been only limited exploration, mainly in relation to gender, as to whether and how this potential is being realized in practice. Most of the published literature on education SWAps relates to the first programmes to be established, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa. This set of studies aims to add to our overall knowledge by focusing on the South Asian context and the full range of social exclusion issues that are pertinent to this region.

The initiative was spearheaded by UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), following a Regional Education Meeting in February 2006, which had the theme of '*SWAps and Disparities*'. The Keynote Paper for this meeting, '*Addressing Social and Gender Disparity*',¹ catalysed lively discussions and inputs, and a strong agreement among the diverse range of participants² of the need for further understanding of this area.

At country level, the studies have been a joint venture of the governments, education ministries and development partners (DPs). Whilst UNICEF has provided overall coordination, in each case an important principle of the research has been that it is seen as an activity 'within the SWAp'. The studies were discussed, agreed and approved through the normal SWAp forums and communication channels and designed to be of practical use and value to participating governments and DP groups. Indeed, in Bangladesh and Nepal, it has proved possible to fully synergize the studies with preparations for Mid-Term Reviews of the respective programmes. This synthesis seeks to compare and contrast country-level approaches and to draw more general lessons for policy and practice, for South Asia and beyond.

¹ Seel, A. for UNICEF (2006) *Addressing Social and Gender Disparity through SWAps and PBAs in Education: What is the Evidence and the Way Forward?* Now published in amended form as '*Addressing Social and Gender Disparity in South Asia through SWAps and PBAs in Education: How Can We Use World Experience?*'

² Including government and DP representatives from a range of South Asian countries.

1.2 Background to the Studies: Developments in Commitments, Understanding and Practice

1.2.1 International commitments to equitable and inclusive education

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The Millennium Development Goals, developed in 2000, constitute the set of international commitments that currently drive the ‘development agenda’, with poverty reduction as central to the current development discourse. In many countries, the MDGs act as the basis for poverty reduction strategies and sector plans. Meanwhile, many development agencies have revised their policies and priorities around the meeting of these goals. Among eight areas of MDGs three have direct bearing on education:

Goal 1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Goal 2. Achieve Universal Primary Education

Target 3. Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Goal 3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.

The Education MDG is often referred to as the ‘UPE Goal’, but it is noted that the emphasis is not only on enrolment, but on actual completion of primary education. Social exclusion is only directly addressed in the MDGs with regard to gender inequality and the gender MDG refers only to numerical *parity* of enrolment (not a wider concept of gender *equality*).

The EFA ‘Dakar’ goals

The EFA goals were also developed in 2000, at the Dakar World Education Forum. They constitute a considerable strengthening and revision of the earlier EFA goals (developed in Jomtien, 1990):

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that **by 2015** all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete **free and compulsory primary education of good quality**.
3. Ensuring that the **learning needs of all young people and adults** are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
4. Achieving a **50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015**, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

5. **Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015**, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to, and achievement in, basic education of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the **quality of education** and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The EFA goals do not contradict the education-related MDGs, but do considerably expand on them. There is a stronger emphasis on the quality and relevance of education, an expanded concept of gender equality (including the concept of 'equity in quality'),³ and a more explicit mention of socially excluded groups (namely 'vulnerable and disadvantaged children', 'children in difficult circumstances' and 'those belonging to ethnic minorities').

Failure to achieve the 2005 gender goal

The MDG and EFA goals for gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 have not been achieved. Indeed, at the current rates, this target will not be achieved by 40% of the remaining countries by 2015. The Global Governance Initiative Report (2005)⁴ highlighted this failure as one of the 'world's biggest failures and missed opportunities'. The 'Beijing Plus Ten' Conference (2005) called for renewed efforts to achieve this goal, without which wider progress on gender equality becomes impossible.

Rights commitments

A number of international rights conventions and declarations commit signatory countries to addressing social exclusion and inequality and ensuring each and every child accesses good quality, relevant education as a right. Particularly relevant rights principles include that of *universality* (i.e. rights apply to all people) and *non-discrimination* (rights apply equally without regard to status, wealth, gender or other differences). The key rights vehicle concerned with children, including their education, is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Key areas of the CRC that are most relevant to this study are presented in the box below.

Education in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*

Article 28 (Access to Education)

1. State parties recognize the right of the child to education and, with a view to achieving this right *progressively* and *on the basis of equal opportunity* they shall, in particular:
 - a) make primary education compulsory and available free for all;
 - b) encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
 - c) make higher education accessible on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
 - d) make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
 - e) take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.
2. State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity.

³ As stated in the EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO (2003): 'Equality is a more complex notion. Full gender equality in education would imply that girls and boys are offered the same chances to go to school and enjoy teaching methods, curriculum and academic orientation unaffected by gender bias. And more broadly, equal learning achievement and subsequent life opportunities for similar qualifications and experience.' (p. 116)

⁴ Global Governance Initiative. *Global Governance Initiative Annual Report 2005*. World Economic Forum 2005.

Article 29 (Educational Content)

1. State parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
 - a) the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their full potential;
 - b) the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
 - c) the development of respect for the child's parents, cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own;
 - d) the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
 - e) the development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions. (Subject to certain principles and minimum standards regulations.)

Other Articles:

Article 23 details the rights of disabled children to education.

Article 31 specifies the right to play, recreation and leisure.

Article 32 covers child work.

1.2.2 Understanding poverty, gender inequality and social exclusion

International understanding of the interaction between poverty, gender and social exclusion has developed both through academic study and practical experience.

Poverty

Earlier models of development often assumed that economic growth would reduce poverty. In the education sector, concern for national development and economic growth was the initial driver for the expansion of education systems from the 1950s through to the late 1980s, with this initial drive tending to focus on physical expansion (e.g. building schools), as well as technical skills training.

Gradually, it became apparent that this approach was not 'trickling down' to large numbers of poor people. 'The poor' are not only those without money or resources, but also those who experience a wide range of disadvantages related to access to resources and services, and to associated power, status and participation. Poverty is not only 'absolute', but also 'relative' in a particular context. The approach has shifted to one of a direct focus on poverty reduction, including attention to access of the poor to quality basic services. This is now very explicit in the MDGs and the emphasis on national poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs).

In the education sector, the sharpened focus on direct poverty reduction has catalysed a stronger emphasis on universalizing access to primary and basic education. Since the mid-1990s, education efforts have shifted to a wider range of *access* strategies, such as reducing costs to poor parents, combined with policies to address the *quality* of education, often related to provision of facilities, trained teachers and basic educational resources. These approaches have certainly reaped some rewards, the initial dramatic results of the 'UPE' policies of Uganda and Malawi being oft-quoted examples.

Gender

Gender discrimination is perhaps the most universal form of social exclusion. Gender issues, and the interaction of gender discrimination and poverty, have attracted rigorous academic analysis and now benefit from a strong conceptual basis. An overall documented trend is the move from 'Women in Development (WID)' approaches, which implied special programmes for women and girls as a 'disadvantaged' group, to 'Gender and Development (GAD)' approaches, which imply analysis and addressing of the unequal power relationships between males and females. Central to a GAD approach is the concept of *gender mainstreaming*:

Gender mainstreaming means the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects. In the education sector, this would include not only the activities of governments, but also those of schools, colleges, education institutions and, where appropriate, of NGOs and the private sectors as well ... Rather than adding on a women's component to existing policies, plans, programmes and projects, a gender perspective informs these at all stages, and in every aspect of the decision-making process. Gender mainstreaming may thus entail a fundamental transformation of the underlying paradigms that inform education.⁵

A mainstreaming approach was strongly endorsed by signatories to the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). UN agencies, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of OECD and other international bodies have developed comprehensive guidelines for mainstreaming gender at national, sector and institutional levels and many governments and development agencies are – at least in theory – committed to such an approach.

This is no less the case in the education sector, where it has been gradually realized that not only were girls benefiting less than boys from the expansion of educational opportunities, but also that the education of girls and women is one of the essential strategies for making progress on poverty reduction. A GAD approach implies that, whilst cost reduction strategies remain vital to reduce the pressure on poor parents to have to choose which of their children to educate, it is also necessary to directly address discriminatory attitudes and practices. It also implies attention to ensuring gender equity in the school and classroom, so that girls are not held back due to poor self-esteem, discrimination, low expectations or harassment but, to the contrary, are empowered by their education to take a more equal role in society.

Social exclusion

Some countries have long recognized that other forms of social exclusion also need attention if progress is to be made in realizing rights and achieving development goals. India, for example, has well established mechanisms and policies for targeting its 'scheduled castes' and 'scheduled tribes'. However, internationally, attention to forms of social exclusion other than on the basis of gender has been more recent and, as yet, there is a less coherent conceptual framework on which to base analysis and action. One example of a recent attempt to address this lack, which usefully summarizes the learning to date, comes from DFID's publication *Addressing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion* (DFID, 2005). This draws on a range of earlier work, including an earlier DFID publication on *Disability, Poverty and Development* (DFID, 2000).

The paper defines 'social exclusion' as follows:

⁵ Leo-Rhynie, E. (1999). *Gender Mainstreaming in Education: A Reference Manual for Governments and Other Stakeholders*. Commonwealth Secretariat.

Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household, and in the community. (DFID, 2005)

The paper notes that in all societies some groups are socially excluded. However, the groups affected and the degree of discrimination vary from one society to another, as do the forms that social exclusion takes. Discrimination can be ‘open and deliberate’, ‘unofficial’, or ‘subtle and unintended’. It can be based on ‘who you are’, but also on ‘where you live’. It is also explored in detail how social exclusion causes poverty and hampers poverty reduction and development efforts, as summarized in the box below.

Social Exclusion Causes Poverty

Social exclusion causes the poverty of particular people, leading to higher rates of poverty among affected groups

- It hurts them materially – making them poor in terms of income, health or education by causing them to be denied access to resources, markets and public services. It can also hurt them emotionally, by shutting them out of the life of their community.
- Socially excluded people are often denied the opportunities available to others to increase their income and escape from poverty by their own efforts. So, even though the economy may grow and general income levels may rise, excluded people are likely to be left behind, and make up an increasing proportion of those who remain in poverty.

Social exclusion reduces the productive capacity – and rate of poverty reduction – of a society as a whole

- It impedes the efficient operation of market forces and restrains economic growth. Some people with good ideas may not be able to raise the capital to start up a business. Discrimination in the labour market may make parents decide it is not worthwhile to invest in their children’s education.
- Socially excluded groups often do participate but on unequal terms. Labour markets illustrate this most clearly by exploiting the powerlessness of excluded groups and at the same time reinforcing their disadvantaged position.
- Social exclusion also increases the level of economic inequality in society, which reduces the poverty-reducing impact of a given growth rate.

Social exclusion makes it harder to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

- Social exclusion explains why some groups of people remain poorer than others, have less food, die younger, are less economically or politically involved, and are less likely to benefit from services. This makes it difficult to achieve the MDGs in some countries without particular strategies that directly tackle exclusion.

Social exclusion leads to conflict and insecurity

- Social exclusion is a leading cause of conflict and insecurity in many parts of the world. Excluded groups that suffer from multiple disadvantages may come together when they

have unequal rights, are denied a voice in political processes and feel marginalized from the mainstream of their society.

- Peaceful mobilization may be the first step, such as marches, strikes and demonstrations. But if this has no effect, or if governments react violently to such protests, then groups are more likely to resort to violent conflict if they feel there is no alternative.
- When social groups feel unequal and suffer compared with others in society, conflict is more likely. Research over several decades has revealed that political and social forms of inequality are the most important factors in outbreaks of violence (particularly ethnic conflicts, revolutions and genocides).
- Social exclusion also causes insecurity in the form of gang violence. Young people who feel alienated from society and excluded from job opportunities and decision making may turn to violence and crime as a way of feeling more powerful.

From DFID (2005). *Addressing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion*.

The growing focus on social exclusion is, again, reflected in the education sector. Both in Africa and South Asia, countries that have successfully expanded access to the majority of their populations are finding that the remaining minority (sometimes called the ‘last 10 per cent’, though it might be more or fewer), are a ‘hard to reach’ category, not responsive to general ‘pro-poor’ policies. Certainly, these children are poor, and a disproportionate number are girls. However, almost without exception, they are also affected by other forms of social exclusion, for example on the basis of caste, ethnicity, language, disability or citizenship status (e.g. being a migrant, IDP or refugee). These are the *multiply-vulnerable* children, perhaps living in isolated communities with languages and cultures that differ from the mainstream. Many do not benefit from a supportive family setting, but live in severely stressed families, in families constantly displaced or on the move, in refugee camps, as orphans in child-headed households, in other people’s families, in institutions, or alone on the street. They are almost certainly working for survival, but many are ‘hidden’ from public view: e.g. caring for sick relatives or younger siblings in an isolated rural home, working as unregistered migrants in the informal economy, working as bonded labourers, abused and exploited as child sex workers or domestic servants, or even trafficked across international borders. Others are disabled children, kept hidden away at home.

The barriers such children face in even accessing education can be formidable. Besides the many demand factors, schools or other education programmes might not be physically accessible, sufficiently flexible or perceived as safe, acceptable and relevant. Furthermore, when socially excluded children do access school, the education they receive is often not sufficiently congruent to their language, culture or specific learning needs. Even more ‘excluding’ is the fact that schools and education systems frequently reproduce the discriminatory attitudes and practices of the wider society. Children of socially excluded groups are therefore at greater risk of dropout, as well as learning less, and thus benefiting less from education.

It is therefore being learned that addressing ‘equity in access’ and ‘equity in quality’ are complex, requiring attention to the specific life situations in which girls and boys find themselves, to ‘demand’ as well as ‘supply’ factors, to attitudinal as well as economic barriers, to school–community relationships and to the ethos, teaching approaches and management of each school. Indeed, the whole education system needs to become flexible and inclusive, and a positive force for equality, inclusion and rights, if the complex dynamics of social exclusion and gender discrimination are to be addressed and reversed.

1.2.3 SWAp as effective modalities for assistance to education sector development

The development of the SWAp concept

In tandem (but not necessarily explicitly linked) with developments in our understanding of social exclusion and how it can be addressed have been substantive changes over the past decade in the way in which educational development is conceptualized and how international assistance to the sector is managed. From the mid-1990s a trend away from traditional project approaches began. The new concept at that time was of a ‘Sector Investment Programme’ (SIP). These programmes aimed to support governments in planning coherently for the whole sector within the context of an over-arching, realistic and costed policy framework, backed by concurrent attention to macro-economic stabilization and public service reform. Funding was to be provided flexibly as a part of government budgets, with governments and ministries of education able to make choices about resource allocation. Financial procedures were to be harmonized and monitoring at sector and programme level integrated, to meet diverse reporting needs. Donors would give up their control over specific project interventions, but gain participation as ‘development partners’ in education policy dialogue and broader budget framework negotiations.

The criteria proposed in the earlier formal definitions were largely a construct of development agencies (not government providers of education systems) and generally go beyond the status of practice in all but a very small number of examples. As implementation has got underway, it has been realized that ‘one size does not fit all’ and that national and local realities are the starting point for any sector programme. Few countries have been able to meet the ‘ideal’ wider context of macro-economic stability, action on corruption, civil service reform and decentralization. Similarly, differences in procedures and agendas of development agencies have proved hard to overcome and created difficulties in negotiating a coherent policy approach.

Therefore, over time, the term ‘Sector-Wide Approach’ (SWAp)⁶ has been adopted in preference to ‘SIP’, to describe what is more of a direction, process and ethos than a rigid blueprint or narrowly defined funding mechanism. While the term ‘SWAp’ is strictly speaking something of a misnomer, in that the modality is often applied to a sub-sector, there is nevertheless a sufficiently widely shared understanding of the characteristics of a SWAp. A summary of these characteristics put forward by ODI provides a useful working definition.

A SWAp includes support that :

- Is sector wide in scope;
- Is based on a clear sector and strategy framework;
- Is based on long-term plans;
- Includes host country ownership and strong coordinated partnership with external agencies;
- Is developed and implemented with the involvement of, and partnership with, all local stakeholders;
- Includes the involvement of all main external agencies;
- Is based on common implementation arrangements and effective donor coordination
- Relies on local capacity; and
- Includes provision for results-based monitoring.

(ODI, 2000)

⁶ Sometimes the term ‘Programme-Based Approach’ (PBA) is also used.

Some SWAp partnership groups have also formulated their own definitions. For example, in Cambodia supporting education through a SWAp is taken to mean that ‘*all significant funding in the sector supports a single sector policy and expenditure programme, under government leadership, adopting common approaches across the sector and progressing towards relying on government procedures to disburse and account for all funds.*’⁷

PRSPs, donor harmonization and the Fast Track Initiative on EFA

Increasingly, sector level support through SWAps is set within the context of support to Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs) that seek to chart an overall path towards achievement of the MDGs and to guide progress in the relevant sectors. Related to these overall changes in aid modality, most donor agencies have now committed to a harmonization agenda set out in the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2001). In Education, the Fast Track Initiative on Education For All (FTI) was set up in 2001, to encourage more effective sector-wide planning for achieving the education MDGs (especially universal primary completion), improve donor harmonization at national and international levels and to fulfil the commitment made at Dakar that no country with credible plans for achieving EFA should be thwarted by a lack of financial resources.

Education SWAps and social exclusion in theory

SWAps were developed as a pragmatic mechanism for more effective development assistance and, whilst they are gradually being linked more explicitly to poverty reduction frameworks, do not of themselves imply a rights-based or inclusive approach. Nevertheless, as it is becoming clearer that education systems need to address poverty, gender inequality and social exclusion as inter-dependent factors, the question arises as to whether and how the move towards a SWAp modality can consciously assist with this process. A major DAC study in 2000 on *Gender Mainstreaming in SWAps*,⁸ as well as a number of other papers and studies,⁹ make suggestions as to this potential, as summarized in the box below.

Potential of a SWAp in Education for Improving the Addressing of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

- The potential for improving policy coherence within the education sector and developing a costed, coherent programme framework and plan should be conducive to the better mainstreaming of gender and other equity issues in policies, strategies and budgets. SWAps and PBAs require the costing of alternatives, prioritization and targeting (avoiding duplication, wastage and contradictory policy and approaches).
- The potential to mainstream innovative approaches piloted in projects (often targeted at hard-to-reach groups) into overall sector policy.
- Improved potential to link formal and non-formal approaches within a coherent, flexible system.
- New partnerships for addressing gender and social equity should provide the environment in which the energies and expertise of different government partners, civil society and development partners can be maximized by working in the same direction towards clear goals.
- The longer-term time-frame implied in the approach should be conducive to supporting attitudinal change in complex and sensitive areas.
- The potential is there for enhancing linkages with the private sector and across government policies in other sectors, to reinforce the equity and inclusion dimensions of education policy.

⁷ Quoted in: MoEYS Cambodia/Education Sector Working Group (2005). *Seminar Report: Review of the Education Sector-Wide Approach in Cambodia*.

⁸ DAC/ ODI/ DFID/ CEC (Norton, Sibbons, Seel, Gibbard, Poulsen, Smawfield). *Case Studies on Mainstreaming Gender in Sector-Wide Approaches in Education* (Consists of India Case Study, Ghana Case Study, Uganda Case Study, Literature Review and Synthesis Report), 2000.

⁹ Including Kelly (1995), Bird and Norton (1996), Seel (1997), Elsdon and Evers (1998), Foster *et al.* (ODI) (1999, 2000, 2001). (See Bibliography.)

Education SWAs and social inclusion in practice

The 2006 UNICEF paper ‘*Addressing Gender and Social Disparity*’¹⁰ summarizes the findings of the published literature (as cited above), as well as exploring the evidence from the SWAp documents of twelve countries,¹¹ including four in South Asia. The overall conclusions about the achievements, as well as the problems/challenges, of education SWAs in addressing social exclusion in and through education are summarized in the box below.

Gender and Equity in Education SWAs: Achievements and Challenges to Date

Positive Achievements

- SWAs are increasing resources to primary education through cost sharing at higher levels.
- SWAs in different parts of the world are identifying gender/social inequality as a key issue to be addressed at a strategic level, setting equity-related objectives and attempting to implement a range of strategies to increase all children’s access to good quality basic education.
- SWAs have brought about improvements in equity in resource allocation by geographic location and improved prioritization and sequencing of strategies and resources, enabling effective implementation of policy priorities in a more systematic manner.
- Particular progress has been made in increasing girls’ access to school through strategies such as cost reduction/elimination and classroom/facilities construction in rural areas, which have benefited from improved efficiency attributable to the SWAp modality.
- There is some evidence of enhanced trust between governments and poor communities through strengthened transparency in educational service delivery, as well as some local economic benefits in poor communities (e.g. through the decentralization of some procurement functions to school level).

Problems and Challenges

- A focus on sector-wide efficiency and national development objectives over individual rights can lead to a de-prioritizing of the ‘hard to reach’ groups as ‘too expensive to reach’.
- The top-down, centralized and ‘formal’ approach of many SWAs can lead to weak involvement from civil society, a lack of recognition of informal processes and the reinforcement of existing gender and social biases.
- The focus (over some years) in some SWAs on central-level capacity building and agreeing on mechanisms has diverted attention away from the present, urgent needs of poor communities, allowing another generation of children to ‘slip through the net’.
- There is variation in the quality and depth of analysis that takes place, of patterns of educational disparity, the key causal factors and of how these interact. Analyses often fail to be multidimensional and to relate one factor to another. There continues to be less attention to gender than to poverty, and still less attention to other forms of social exclusion.
- As a result, strategies that are identified can prove inappropriate or inadequate/insufficient. Strategies devised to address gender disparity or social exclusion tend to focus overly on physical access and enrolment. There is less attention to ‘equity in quality’, more nuanced approaches to address attitudinal barriers or addressing the specific life situations of multiply-vulnerable ‘hard to reach’ children. Many countries,

¹⁰ See Footnote 1.

¹¹ Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Vietnam, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Uganda, Ghana, Rwanda and Zambia.

despite developing ‘comprehensive’ education policy frameworks as a part of SWAp development, continue to lack clear policies related to minority languages in education, or modalities of provision for disabled children.

- SWAps are not necessarily founded on good consultative processes either with disadvantaged individuals and communities themselves or professionals with understanding of specific equity issues.
- There has been limited use of the DAC guidelines for gender mainstreaming in SWAps in practice, and no guidance exists pertaining to other forms of social exclusion. The degree and approach to addressing gender and social exclusion issues is highly dependent on individuals and the overall ‘donor mix’ in a country (including the level of agreement and coordination in support of government efforts).
- Some development partners perceive themselves to be losing the diversity and richness of experience, field-based understanding and interpersonal relationships which project interventions had provided.

1.2.4 Implications for this study

On the basis of the available evidence, it can be postulated that the potential of SWAps to accelerate progress on gender and equity is not being fully realized in practice. One key rationale for this study is therefore to explore further what are the constraining factors and how this potential can be better realized.

Furthermore, there are gaps in our understanding, which this study hopes to help to fill. Relatively little has been documented (in systematic form) about the mainstreaming and addressing of equity in relation to the development of education SWAps *over time* and this study seeks to shed light on some of the *processes* and *dynamics* that influence the approaches taken. Also, most research into SWAps to date has been Africa-focused. There has been almost no systematic exploration of education SWAps in South Asia, which has large diverse populations, a vastly different social-economic and cultural context and generally lower level of aid dependency.

It is hoped and intended that the study will be informative and practically useful to governments and development partners, not only in the case study countries but across South Asia and beyond. If all partners can take the full opportunities offered by the SWAp modality to significantly accelerate progress in achieving equity and inclusion in the education sector, very many currently excluded and disadvantaged children will benefit and the possibility of achieving our international commitments will be much increased.

1.3 Study Purpose and Objectives

1.3.1 Purpose

The study has the following overall purpose:

To understand in detail the nature and extent of the ‘social exclusion challenge’ facing a range of education SWAps in South Asia and how these challenges are being conceptualized, prioritized and addressed, in order to inform ‘good practice’ within those countries and to learn lessons for other countries in the region and beyond.

1.3.2 Objectives

To achieve this purpose, the study had the following objectives:

- Explore and summarize the key dimensions of disparity and social exclusion that affect children in the three case study countries, and consider their implications for the education sector.
- Explore and analyse the ‘equity content’ of the selected education SWAps, in terms of overall goals/objectives, concepts used, policy frameworks, budgets, specific strategies, monitoring tools and institutional arrangements.
- ‘Tell the story’ of gender and equity within the education SWAps as they have unfolded and developed and explore the influence of partnership mechanisms and processes, such as policy dialogue and joint review.
- Explore the ‘equity and inclusion’ impacts of the SWAps to date, both in terms of direct impacts and in terms of changes in understanding, attitudes, capacity and ways of working.
- Identify recommendations for strengthening approaches to gender and equity in each country.
- Synthesize the key learning of each study into a single, more general report identifying overall themes and issues, examples of good practice, common areas of concern and ways forward.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Overall approach

Case study selection

The studies were intended to be exploratory rather than a scientific comparison, and it was also important that the studies should be of practical use to the participating countries. The case study SWAps were therefore ‘self-selecting’. Three countries, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, volunteered to be involved, following discussions between UNICEF country offices and the relevant ministries and DP groups. There were no requirements with regard to the nature and stage of the development of the SWAps to be considered, so long as the ministry and partners considered themselves to be engaged in a SWAp process.

Case study approach

It was clear that the studies needed to be exploratory, and to respond to the uniqueness of each programme. At the same time, it was necessary to ensure a degree of rigour and consistency across the three countries, in order to allow for some comparison and the identification of common themes and patterns. To do this, specific areas of enquiry were identified, grouped around four overall *Research Focus Areas*. These areas are summarized in the box below.

Research Focus Areas

1. The context for the SWAp

- The political, policy, governance and institutional context for the SWAp, as well as ‘threats’ such as conflict or natural disaster.
- Trends, patterns, causes and educational consequences of disparity, inequity and social exclusion.

2. Analysis of the SWAp content, with regard to conceptualization and addressing of disparity and social exclusion

- Comprehensiveness and depth of analysis of gender and social exclusion issues.

- Reflection of gender and social equity goals in overall goals/strategic objectives.
- Conceptualization of gender and equity issues (e.g. use of terms and concepts such as gender, mainstreaming, equity, cross-cutting, twin tracking, etc.).
- Concepts, approaches and tools used in incorporating gender and equity considerations and the addressing of equity in different stages and processes of SWAp development and implementation.
- Reflection of gender and social equity goals in the strategic framework (or plan) for the sector.
- Reflection of gender and social equity goals in the sector budget and financing allocation mechanisms (i.e. consistency with strategic framework).
- Institutional structuring and capacity for equity advocacy, analysis and mainstreaming.
- Mechanisms for consultation and participation of primary stakeholders, especially the most disadvantaged.
- Strategies to address 'equity in access' problems, as perceived, including addressing of educational costs/poverty barriers, attitudinal barriers, physical barriers and approach to non-formal/alternative provision.
- Strategies to address 'equity in quality' problems as perceived, including concepts of 'inclusive' and 'learner-friendly' practice (however labelled).

3. Analysis of SWAp processes, mechanisms and development over time

- The role of government and development partners (including 'donors' to the SWAp and the wider range of agencies, national and international, that support education).
- Development partner approaches, roles, influences and strategies related to addressing gender and social disparity within the SWAp.

4. Analysis of SWAp impacts

- Direct impacts on equitable inclusion in education/equity in learning outcomes.
- Impacts on policy change and ways of working with implications for effectively addressing equity and social inclusion.
- Impacts on knowledge, capacity and commitment with respect to understanding and addressing social exclusion in education.
- Contextual factors that have facilitated or constrained impact.

It is stressed that these categories were developed for the purpose of structuring the enquiry. It was not assumed that each and every feature would be present or relevant in every case. Furthermore, efforts were made to 'see what is there', and to also explore other relevant areas and issues as and when these presented themselves.

1.4.2 Methodologies

The four *Research Focus Areas* were explored using two key methodologies, as summarized below.

Analysis of secondary data and documentation

Given the timescale for the study, much use was made of secondary data and documentation. This was particularly useful for understanding the key social exclusion issues in each country, as well as the 'on paper' form and content of the SWAps and their formalized mechanisms and processes. The box below summarizes the key types of information that were utilized.

Secondary Data Sources

- MoE official disaggregated statistics
- Data on disparities from other ministries or other bodies
- Analyses and research undertaken by excluded groups themselves
- Analyses and research undertaken by development partners (including donors, UN, NGOs)
- Analyses undertaken for preparation of the SWAp, or to feed into education policy processes
- Overarching legislative or rights frameworks that guide the education sector
- Key plans/policy frameworks/strategic frameworks that guide the SWAp
- PRSP (or equivalent)
- Overarching legislative or rights frameworks that guide the education sector
- SWAp ‘working documents’, for example review mission Aides Memoire, code of conduct, monitoring reports
- DP reports, policies, country assistance plans and so on

Qualitative research through ‘appreciative enquiry’ with a range of informants

As the aim was to understand rather than to evaluate, the overall approach was one of ‘appreciative enquiry’, employing methods to allow in-depth exploration of processes and experiences and to consider what is going well as well as what are problems and constraints. The main tool utilized was that of ‘semi-structured’ interviews with individuals and small groups. *Question Guides* were developed for each category of informant, based on the research questions identified under the four *Research Areas*. These were used as prompts to help ensure consistency and coverage, whilst also allowing for un-anticipated questions and perspectives to emerge. The ‘prototype’ question guide is attached as an Annex. The box below summarizes the key groups of study informants.

Study Informants

- Government Ministries/Departments of Education – central levels
- Decentralized levels of Educational Governance, e.g. Districts, Upazillas, Zones, Provinces
- Other relevant ministries and divisions – including Finance, Gender/Women, Social Welfare, Health
- Schools/Communities located in disadvantaged areas
- Representatives of organizations of excluded groups, including women’s movements, Dalit organizations, etc.
- Development partners directly involved in the SWAp
- Wider development partners in education, including Education Networks/Campaigns, NGOs and CSOs, private providers, etc.
- Academics, consultants, experts

1.4.3 Methodological issues

Overall, it is the view of the research team that the approach taken was the most appropriate one for achieving the objectives of the study within the given time and resource frame. The combination of document review and semi-structured and informal interviewing enabled a good understanding of SWAp processes and dynamics, from a range of perspectives. Of course, as well as the advantages of the approach, the research experienced the usual challenges

associated with qualitative research. It is summarized below what these challenges were, and how they were addressed.

Inclusion in the research process

The research presented the dilemma of whether and how a piece of research focused on inclusion could *itself* be inclusive and participatory. It was concluded that it was more important to explore the structures for meaningful and ongoing participation *within the education system and SWAp themselves*, rather than to insist on lengthy ‘participatory’ exercises that would inevitably have been tokenistic and might have simply placed yet one more burden on schools and poor communities. That said, the research teams made every effort to include representatives of excluded groups and to make use of existing participatory studies. Efforts were also made to be participatory and open in style and to be aware of possible hierarchies preventing equal participation in research focus groups. Despite the limited time available, priority was given to making visits to schools and education programmes serving disadvantaged children and communities, to ensure a ‘reality check’ and to help the researchers to keep in mind the ultimate purpose of the research.

Timing

Each case study team was able to carry out the qualitative research broadly as planned, and noted with appreciation the many people who gave willingly of their time to help the researchers to gain important insights. However, inevitably, some data was not readily available and not all identified informants were available or could be contacted in time. Furthermore, the time-scale necessitated selecting priority informants and therefore leaving out others. It is therefore recognized that some useful insights and perspectives will have been missed.

Data validity

As with any qualitative research, the researchers have faced the challenging task of making sense of, and objectively communicating, a massive amount of evidence, information, opinion and conjecture. The research structure and question guides were designed to ensure as consistent an approach as possible, and that views of different stakeholders on the same issue could be ‘triangulated’. Every effort was made in the writing of the case studies to differentiate between facts, opinions and the considered analysis of the researchers.

1.4.4 The Synthesis Report

This Synthesis Report does not seek to repeat all the rich material of the three country case studies. It is assumed that those with an interest in a particular country will refer directly to the relevant case study.¹² The purpose of the synthesis is to reflect on the overall findings of the studies and to set these in their wider international context.

The synthesis proceeds from here to exploring the contexts in which the case study SWAps have developed, noting both the opportunities and constraints (Chapter 2). In Chapter 3, the ‘Equity and Social Inclusion Challenge’ for each of the education SWAps is explored. Chapter 4 analyses the overall approach to equity and inclusion in the three SWAps, from goal-setting to monitoring frameworks, whilst Chapter 5 goes a little more deeply into the specific strategies and policies for ‘equity in access’ and ‘equity in quality’. Chapter 6 considers the roles of the SWAp development partners and their influences on shaping the SWAps and the addressing of equity and inclusion in particular. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes the findings and recommendations of each of the country studies and identifies general ‘pointers’ for addressing equity and inclusion in education SWAps.

¹² The country case studies are referred to in this document as ‘The Bangladesh/Nepal/Sri Lanka Case Study’, as applicable and referenced in full in the Bibliography.

2. SWAp Development in Context

2.1 Introducing the Education SWAp in the Three Countries

2.1.1 Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the education programme being supported through a SWAp is the **Primary Education Development Programme II (PEDP II)**. It commenced in 2004 and evolved out of PEDP I, a previous ‘umbrella’ programme of 27 separate donor-funded projects, which ran from 1996 to 2004 (itself succeeding the General Education Project of 1990–95). PEDP-II covers the part of the primary education sub-sector that corresponds to the major remit of the Department of Primary Education of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), namely government-run formal primary education. It does not include government-run non-formal primary level education programmes, various privately run schools including madrassas, or NGO primary schools/non-formal programmes. The key document that defines PEDP-II is the *PEDP-II Macro Plan*. Government funding accounts for 64% of the total. The remaining 36% comes from 11 donors including nine giving basket funding and two giving parallel (but ‘on budget’) funding. A wider, looser, group of development partners (including NGOs) who engage in education in Bangladesh is also recognized.

2.1.2 Nepal

In Nepal, the study focused on two programmes, that might best be described as programme-based approaches that will converge into a single SWAp, the **Schools Sector Approach (SSA)**, by 2009. The larger and more complex of these is called the **EFA Programme**. To avoid confusion with the international EFA movement, in this synthesis it is referred to as **EFA-Nepal (EFA-N)**, but it is noted that this is not a title used within the country. EFA-N was developed in 2004, as a sub-sector programme covering the basic education sector (i.e. early childhood, primary, primary-level NFE and adult literacy and basic education). As in the Bangladesh case, EFA-N evolved out of an earlier umbrella programme, in this case the Basic and Primary Education Project – BPEP (Phases I and II). Officially, the government contribution is 76%, but this has gradually reduced somewhat, to 72% this year. EFA-N has seven donors that pool funds to cover the remaining c.24%. A number of donors and NGOs also support separate projects in the primary education sector which are not included in the EFA-N budget. The second programme in Nepal is the **Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP)**. Despite the name, this is in fact a targeted project operating in specific poor districts to improve access to secondary education. Only 20% is government-funded, with the remaining 80% coming equally from its two donors (ADB and DANIDA).

2.1.3 Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the **Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP)**¹³ was designed in 2003–04 and agreed by late 2005. National implementation commenced in early 2006, and therefore has been underway for only one year at the time of this study. The programme covers ‘general’ education, namely primary (and pre-primary) and secondary, but not the higher levels. At this stage, pooling is limited to World Bank funds (incorporating DFID’s funds) and a UNICEF contribution. However, there has been clear alignment of ‘on budget’ funds to specific components of the programme. Donor funds, however, account for only 5.7% of total funding.

¹³ The Core Document of ESDP is sometimes referred to as the ESDFP – Education Sector Development Framework and Programme.

2.2 Contexts for SWAp Development and Addressing Social Exclusion

2.2.1 Demography and development status

Table 2.1 presents key demographic and socio-economic data for the three countries. These national statistics mask a range of disparities which, as the subject of this study, are explored in more detail in the next chapter. Bangladesh and Nepal have higher overall poverty levels, whilst Sri Lanka is considerably better off. While Bangladesh and Nepal have many comparable indicators, there are also important differences. **Bangladesh** faces the challenge of high overall population (and population density). Because of the large numbers of young people, even with good progress on reducing family size the population is projected to grow by more than 30 million by 2015, and also to continue to urbanize rapidly. **Nepal**, by contrast, has higher overall economic inequality and large numbers of people living in remote rural areas. Bangladesh is more homogenous, with over 90% of the population being Bengali-speaking Muslims, but has sizable minority and indigenous groups, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Nepal is by far the most diverse, with its many ethnic groups speaking up to 100 languages/dialects covering 24 main language groups. **Sri Lanka's** population is broadly divided into Sinhalese Buddhists living the southern, central and western parts of the island and Tamil Hindus and Muslims residing in the northern and eastern provinces.

TABLE 2.1 Selected demographic and development indicators for the three countries

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL	SRI LANKA
Population	141.8 million (2006)	26.6 million	20.6 million
% Population under age of 15 (2004)	35.9%	39.5%	24.5%
Projected annual population growth rate 2004-2015	1.7%	1.9%	0.7%
% urban population	24.7%	15.3%	15.2%
Human Development Index (HDI) Rank (2004)	137	138	93
HDI Value (2004)	0.53	0.527	0.76
GDI (Gender Development Index) Value	0.524	0.513	0.75
Gini Index (measure of inequality)	31.8	47.2	33.2
Education (EFA) Index	0.46	0.51	0.81
GDP per capita (US\$)	\$406	\$452	\$1,033
Population living below \$2 per day (2004)	82.8	68.5	41.6
Adult literacy % (for over 15 years) by gender	Male – 52.3% Female – 29% Total – 43%	Male – 62.7% Female – 34.9% Total – 49%	Male – 92.3% Female – 89.1% Total – 91%
Life expectancy at birth (years)	63.3	61.4	73.9
Under 5 mortality rate (per thousand live births), 2004	77	76	14
% People undernourished	30	17	22
% People with sustainable access to an improved water source	74	90	79

All information from UNDP Human Development Report 2006, unless otherwise indicated

2.2.2 Commitments to education, gender equality, equity and inclusion

International rights and development commitments

All three countries benefit from relatively favourable environments in terms of stated commitments to education, gender equality, equity and social inclusion. All three are committed to the MDGs (with Sri Lanka also committed to universal lower secondary education), the EFA Dakar Goals, to various actions on child labour and to key rights commitments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1990), the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1981) and the Beijing Declaration (1990).¹⁴ Some of these commitments are enshrined in national constitutions and laws; for example, Sri Lanka's 1978 Constitution stresses the right of equal access to education at all levels, whilst its Women's Charter of 1993 translates the CEDAW commitments into national law.

PRSPs

Each of the three countries has a poverty reduction strategy that recognizes the significance of gender equality and social inclusion to poverty reduction and national socio-economic development. **Bangladesh** drafted a *National Strategy for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction* (also commonly referred to as the PRSP) in 2002. The strategy notes the linkage between poverty and poor quality education. It recognizes the importance of recent female gains in primary and secondary education and the need to maintain these, and also the need to address social exclusion of the *Adibashis* (indigenous peoples). **Sri Lanka** has had somewhat mixed experiences with poverty reduction strategies, as these have tended to be repeatedly re-written with frequent changes of government. However, the latest document 'Mahinda Chintana' of 2005, which restated national commitments to poverty education, education and social equity, has been able to inform the development of the education SWAp.

Nepal offers an interesting example of the development of awareness, understanding and commitment over time. Women's issues have been mentioned in 5-year national socio-economic development plans as far back as the Fifth Plan of 1975–80, when the focus was on WID-style welfare projects, including training women teachers to work in rural areas. By the Ninth Plan of 1997–2002, the focus had changed to a GAD approach of 'gender mainstreaming' and women's empowerment. In this plan, also, Dalit issues were discussed for the first time. The Tenth Plan of 2002–06 also acts as Nepal's poverty reduction strategy (PRSP). This commits to clear poverty reduction targets and emphasizes the key role of 'equitable' quality education in poverty reduction, as well as including comprehensive discussion of gender, caste, ethnicity, disability, language and child labour issues. The newly-agreed *Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007* also articulates extensive commitments to addressing gender and social exclusion. These include ending caste- and ethnicity-based discrimination, realizing the rights of women and girls, advancing children's rights and recognizing educational and cultural rights, including not only the rights of all persons to education, but also of minority language groups to education in the mother tongue.

2.2.3 The political, governance and institutional context

Commitments, of course, need to be translated into effective action, which depends in turn on the political and governance contexts, including the political system, the strength of government institutions, the nature of civil society, and the role of the media; as well as the level of peace, security and the rule of law. These contexts differ markedly across the three countries.

¹⁴ However, Bangladesh has excluded certain clauses from ratification, for example on women's rights within marriage.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh has experienced relative peace and stability since years of famine and unrest leading up to, and following, independence in 1971. However, recent years have seen an increasingly unstable political scene, with growing discontent over the pendulum swings of power between the Bangladesh

National Party (BNP) and Awami League. During the period of the undertaking of this study and 11 days in advance of a planned general election, the caretaker government installed by the BNP in 2006 was deposed, with the support of the Bangladesh military. The new interim government has generally been welcomed for restoring order and for its drives to address corruption and press for reform. However, there are also fears that elections might be delayed unduly and that democratic institutions will be undermined. In the meantime, the current uncertainty has had negative impacts on the economy and both inflation and unemployment have risen sharply.

Bangladesh has well-established government institutions and systems. These, however, until very recently, have remained resolutely centralized. Whilst on the one hand this has probably provided a degree of much-needed stability, and some protection of the poorest by limiting the power of local elites, on the other hand centralized implementation in such a large country has inevitably led to frustrating inefficiency and a culture of ‘top-down’ control. One ADB report (Roy, 2006) assessed that the institutional context is worsening, generating corruption and negatively impacting on economic growth and development efforts. A gradual process of decentralization is underway, including rounds of local elections in 2003–04, but as yet there has been no increase in resource flow to local bodies.

Despite the presence of women as the heads of the two leading political parties, generally women are massively under-represented in political and civil service posts at all levels. There is a Ministry of Women’s and Children’s Affairs, but it is relatively weak and has been unable as yet to take a clear role in mainstreaming gender across government sectors and institutions.

Bangladesh has a unique NGO scene. NGOs played an important role in famine relief and rural development in the aftermath of the war of independence. BRAC (the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee), one of the key organizations that emerged at that time, has since grown to be the world’s largest NGO, now managing up to 15% of Bangladesh’s health and education services as well as operating extensive micro-credit and business ventures. BRAC is thus not only a key player in poverty reduction in Bangladesh, but also in many ways a successful competitor with government services. As such, its relationship with government remains a complex one. Meanwhile, thousands of smaller NGOs supplement government services, supporting specific socially excluded groups and campaigning on a range of issues. On the one hand, the best of these undoubtedly make a contribution to Bangladesh’s development and also meet immediate needs of poor and excluded groups. On the other, there are huge differences in the capacity and competence of NGOs and the sheer number and diversity presents challenges in terms of achieving a coordinated development effort that uses available resources more effectively and efficiently.

The open media in Bangladesh also stimulates lively debate on education, poverty, rights and social inclusion issues. Newspapers and magazines frequently contain articles relating to education, gender, poverty, disadvantaged groups and legal, DP or NGO/CSO initiatives. Television and radio programmes also play important educative roles.

Nepal

In Nepal, an ancient feudal system held sway until the 1950s, and modern political institutions and systems, as well as Western-style civil society institutions, are only just establishing themselves. The early 1990s saw the introduction of a multi-party democracy, following three decades of one-party rule. However, the newly formed parties experienced rapid fragmentation and subsequent Maoist insurgency, leading to a decade of sustained internal conflict from the mid-1990s to 2005. During this time, weak political institutions were further eroded and the media repressed. At the worst point, almost half of the districts of Nepal became 'ungovernable', creating a very challenging environment for maintaining basic services, let alone introducing new initiatives. With the coming of peace and the agreement on a new interim constitution, the context is becoming more favourable. The recognition that discrimination and social exclusion were key 'fuels' to the conflict has provided a strong impetus to addressing these more vigorously, including more systematic representation of women, Dalits¹⁵ and Janajatis¹⁶ in statutory bodies. Institutional strengthening and capacity building, as well as building up local level democracy, are now urgent tasks for stabilization and rebuilding.

A women's movement came into being two decades ago, and has gradually established itself as an influential force, albeit as yet directly affecting a relatively small group of better-off, urban women, mainly from the more powerful caste groups. Reflecting international developments, the movement has moved from a 'welfarist' to an 'empowerment' approach. Dalits and Janajatis have only more recently become more organized, with improving direct representation in the media.

Since 1990, tens of thousands of small 'western style' NGOs have established themselves in Nepal, many of them linked with larger INGO parent organizations. These offer the potential to greatly support development at the community level, but at the same time differ greatly in capacity, agendas and approach. This creates significant coordination problems at the district level, as well as difficulties at the national level in accurately monitoring overall levels of assistance to different sectors, activities and population groups.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has had the benefit of strong governance and well-established state institutions since colonial times. Systems for political democracy have given a strong voice to civil society itself (i.e. the 'general public') for the past five decades. Early progress on literacy has supported this strong democratic participation. There has been devolution of administration and finance to provinces since 1987, so these systems are now quite well established, although there have been ongoing concerns about robustness of monitoring.

The most negative factor has undoubtedly been the two-decade-long conflict between rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam LTTE in the North and East and the Sri Lankan government. A 2002 ceasefire is officially still in force, but outbreaks of violence continue and there have been almost 5000 civilian casualties over past 18 months. Some international observers have expressed concern about the heavy-handedness of the crackdown by the new (late 2005) government, the economic impact of continued conflict, human rights abuses and corruption.

Sri Lanka's national and international NGOs played an important role in supporting emergency responses to the conflict and to the 2004 Tsunami. They also play a low-key but significant role in supporting general community development and welfare programmes with poor communities and vulnerable groups.

¹⁵ 'Dalit' is the preferred name for those social-occupational groups formerly labelled 'untouchable' within the Hindu caste system.

¹⁶ 'Janajati' is a general term for Nepal's many groups of indigenous peoples.

2.2.4 Education system development prior to the SWAp

Each of the three countries has moved into the SWAp modality in a different stage of the development of its education system, with some important policies and strategies to promote equity and social inclusion already in place reflecting the wider political and institutional contexts discussed above.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh the education system, reflecting government as a whole, has in recent times been centrally planned. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) focuses on policy development and overview, whilst the five divisions of the DPE are responsible for management and implementation of primary education, with limited devolution to districts, Upazillas (sub-districts) or to schools themselves. The education system experienced its major expansion in the late 1980s and early 1990s, spurred on by a Compulsory Primary Education Act passed in 1990. In 1992, the government launched the *National Campaign on Social Mobilization for Basic Education*, soon followed by the *Food for Education Programme*, introduced in 1993. This was replaced in 2002 by the *Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP)*, offering cash stipends to primary school-aged children from targeted poor families. The goal is to support over 5 million students in Bangladesh. This has also recently been extended to support poor girls in rural secondary schools by lifting the tuition fees that are normally payable at this level. Also in the early 1990s, a Department for Non-Formal Education (DNFE)¹⁷ was established within MoPME, with the aim of reaching disadvantaged and working children with education, as well as promoting adult (especially women's) literacy.

The National Education Policy (2000) stresses the development of minimum quality standards, reducing pupil:teacher ratios, introducing pre-primary education and improving civil society participation in education. For some years, Bangladesh has been one of the highest recipients of aid for education (Global Monitoring Report, 2007). A wide range of strategies for access, equity and quality were implemented under GEP and PEDP I, for example teacher training, deployment of women teachers in rural areas and improving school management and supervision. Many of these achieved some successes in their own terms, but were perhaps less effective in catalysing sustainable systemic change (hence the decision to move towards a SWAp modality in pursuit of a more joined-up approach).

As noted previously, NGOs that emerged in the 1970s to support the building of the country, and recovery from conflict and famine, continue to play a significant role in service delivery. In education, BRAC is by far the most significant. Its pre-primary programme now operates 21,000 schools with 588,000 students, about 65 per cent of whom are girls. By the end of 2005, BRAC was operating 31,877 primary-level programmes providing access to education for more than 1.4 million children of the rural poor (65 per cent of whom are girls and 14,471 are children with disabilities). Furthermore, since 2002, BRAC has taken on the running of several hundred 'community schools' (that had been set up by communities but were non-functioning). The BRAC Education Programme is so extensive that donors fund through a donor consortium a modality that resembles a 'mini SWAp'.

Other NGOs work mainly in primary-level non-formal education, for rural children (especially girls) and various categories of urban working children, as well as adult literacy. A number of these are

¹⁷ Now disbanded and replaced by a Bureau of NFE in DPE.

well established and respected, having strong experience in reaching particular disadvantaged children, for example working children or disabled children. As well as running their own programmes, many NGOs have been involved as sub-contractors for the DNFE programmes. Success has been mixed. The well-established NGOs, especially BRAC, have been able to use their own trained personnel, materials, etc. to improve the quality and relevance of the DNFE standard programme and thus deliver good outcomes. However, smaller NGOs have experienced frustrations owing to the lack of flexibility and relevance of the government programmes, which are also of too short a duration to deliver meaningful 'equivalence'. Meanwhile, many 'briefcase' NGOs have sprung up with the sole purpose of winning government NFE contracts, tarnishing the reputation of all NGOs by their mismanagement and lack of transparency.

The umbrella organization CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education), set up in 1991, has provided a focus point for NGO coordination and campaigning on education and now has 425 members. CAMPE produces an annual 'Education Watch' report, that has been able to influence government policy. Ahmadullah (2005) notes of CAMPE:

Apart from being a network and a link between the grassroots and policy levels, CAMPE as an advocacy agency has ensured that the voices of NGOs are not completely ignored by the State and that some semblance of partnership is maintained, by providing space for NGOs in decision-making processes, and not treating them as mere implementers of state policies.¹⁸

Given the expansion of state education, the establishment of NGO-run community schools as well as the existence of madrassas and private schools, there is now a rather confusing situation of 11 distinct categories of primary schools (not including non-formal primary level education which is not recognized by the government as offering equivalency). However, two of these categories, Government Primary Schools (GPS) and Registered Non-Government Primary Schools (RNGPS) together serve approximately 84 per cent of enrolled children.

PEDP-II was thus developed in a very complex educational environment. On the one hand, there was already some conducive and successful policy, as well as a great deal of capacity and experience in developing quality education for excluded groups. On the other hand, neither government nor any other single institution had a proper overview of all the primary-level education going on in Bangladesh and there were no structures for overall quality control or learning from 'best practice'. Furthermore, an unhelpful perception had arisen of certain management and methodological approaches being inherently 'NGO' – or 'non-formal' – approaches, impeding the development of a shared professional understanding of 'what works' in addressing educational exclusion in the Bangladesh context.

Nepal

Nepal had no schools at all as recently as 1950, at which time a small elite was sent to India or further afield for education. Systemic expansion began in earnest from the mid-1980s and has shown remarkable growth to reach over 90% of primary school-aged children. Education is still in a stage of establishment and expansion, now focusing on reaching to more remote communities. The Ministry of Education and Sports takes a policy-setting and overall monitoring role, whilst the Department of Education has until recently been strongly involved in implementation, though this is now increasingly in the hands of the District Education Offices of Nepal's 75 districts.

¹⁸ Ahmadullah, M. (2005). Complementary Provision – State and Society in Bangladesh. Chapter 5 in Nitya Rao and Ines Smyth (Eds) (2005). *Partnerships for Girls' Education*. Oxfam.

Like Bangladesh, Nepal is currently one of the 12 highest recipients of education aid. Donor-funded projects in education commenced in the late 1980s, and became more coordinated in the early 1990s with the start of BPEP and (a little later) two major secondary education projects. NGOs have been active since the early 1990s, mainly in non-formal primary-level education, ECCE and adult education. Many of Nepal's projects, especially in adult literacy, gained international reputation for their creativity and innovation whilst, at the same time, failing to catalyse sustainable systemic change in attitudes, understanding or practice. A recent phenomenon in Nepal has been the rapid growth of private primary schools, now reaching almost 10% of total provision.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has had a long history of a mass education system, with the intent of 'universality' since pre-independence times. From independence, education was recognized as a cornerstone of national development, with a key role to play in reducing inequity and enabling upward mobility (that had to some extent been suppressed by the colonial education system). In 1948, primary, secondary and even tertiary education were made free, and a programme commenced of building rural secondary (Grade 1–11) schools. Mother tongue instruction in Sinhalese and Tamil were also introduced at this time in the respective communities so that by the mid-1960s Sri Lanka had achieved 75% NER and was seen as an 'outlier' among developing countries. From 1981, free textbooks have also been provided.

Since 1948, a range of 'schools types' have evolved, with Type 1 schools (25% total) providing Grades 1–13 (i.e. including 'A' level provision), Type 2 Schools (44% total) providing Grades 1–11 and Type 3 Schools (31% total) providing either Grades 1–5 (Primary only) or Grades 1–9 (Primary and Junior Secondary). Only 2% of primary education is private. While the different school types represent an attempt to achieve full coverage, over time there has been increasing concern that the Type 3 schools, in particular, have been disadvantaged by inequitable funding allocation mechanisms and teacher allocation. By the mid-1990s it was recognized that whilst educational access had been successfully near-universalized, the quality of education remained low in many schools.

In 1997, the National Education Commission (NEC) set out a major programme of educational reform, including making education compulsory in the 5–14 age group. A key goal was of achieving an '*equitable distribution of quality schools*'. One strategy for achieving this has been the development of well equipped 'model schools' in each of 324 local divisions. In 2003, further comprehensive reform proposals were put forward, providing the basis for the planning exercise to inform ESDP. Over the past decade of ambitious and far-reaching educational reforms, there have been repeated concerns voiced about the effectiveness of implementation, and this provides part of the rationale for a SWAp.

The general public has been active, through established democratic channels and the media, in ensuring that there has been no dilution in the long-established free education policies and the concept of education as a 'public good'. Given that the government was perceived as successful in providing mass education, very few NGOs provide education services directly, but many work in emergency education, advocacy or to support community-level education initiatives in poor communities. With support from Save the Children in Sri Lanka (SCiSL), 63 of these have formed the *Coalition for Educational Development*, aiming to act as a 'watchdog' in the implementation of the reform agenda.

3. The Equity and Social Inclusion Challenge for the SWApS

3.1 Overall Trends in Education

Each SWAp has been launched with the intention of achieving universal primary education and improving educational quality, areas in which progress has been made but still more is desired. Table 3.1 presents key educational indicators for the three countries.

TABLE 3.1 Key educational statistics for Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL	SRI LANKA
Education (EFA) Index 2007	(Low EDI) 0.722	(Low EDI) 0.668	Not available
Net primary enrolment ratio (NER) 1999–2004	1999 – 89% 2004 – 94%	1999 – 65% 2004 – 79%	1999 – Not available (MoE Stats) 2002 – 96% 2004 – 98%
Changes in gender parity 1999–2004. (Net primary enrolment ratio of females to males)	1999 – 0.99 2004 – 1.03	1999 – 0.77 2004 – 0.91	(MoE Stats) 2002 – 0.98
Completion rates, 2004 (Children reaching grade 5/6 as % of grade one students)	65%	61%	Retention rates: 96.9% ^m 98.3% ^f
Secondary GER (2004)	Lower – 69% Upper – 37%	Lower – 71% Upper – 25%	Lower – 95% Upper – 70%
Secondary gender parity (secondary enrolment ratio of female to male), 2004	Lower – 1.19 Upper – 1.00	Lower – 0.88 Upper – 0.82	Lower – 1.04 Upper – 1.00
Participation in organized ECCE programmes, 2004	1999 GER – 26% 2004 GER – 12%	1999 GER – 11% 2004 GER – 36%	Not available
Adult literacy % (for over 15 years) by gender, 2004	Total – 43 Male – 52.3 Female – 29.0	Total – 49 Male – 62.7 Female – 34.9	Total – 91 Male – 92.3 Female – 89.1
Comparison of adult (over 15) and youth (15–24 only) literacy rates for 2004	Adult – 43 Youth – 49.7	Adult – 49 Youth – 70.1	Adult – 91 Youth – 95.6

All statistics from UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, unless otherwise stated. (Most figures given are for 2004, around the time of the commencement of the SWApS in Bangladesh and Nepal)

The 2007 GMR notes the overall higher level of educational development in Sri Lanka, which has the highest secondary education rates in the South Asia region, gender parity through to the upper secondary level and near gender parity in adult literacy rates. Nepal, by contrast, is noted to have an NER of below 80%, ‘significant numbers’ of children out of school, a cohort survival rate of fewer than two-thirds, relatively low enrolment and high gender disparity at the secondary level; plus an overall 23% primary grade repetition rate, with a 43% repetition rate for Grade 1. Adult literacy rates remain below 50%. Whilst the overall challenge is great, Nepal is also picked out as having shown the greatest NER increase in the region: 14 percentage points in five years

from 1999 to 2004, whilst over the same period substantially reducing the gender gap at the primary level. The sharp difference between overall adult literacy rates and those in the 15–24 age group are also indicative of the rapid progress in education in recent years.

Bangladesh falls between the two. It shares with Sri Lanka a primary NER of above 90% with near gender parity (but still having many more out-of-school children owing to its overall large population). However, it shares with Nepal the situation of having a primary cohort survival rate of fewer than two-thirds. Despite the progress in female education, this is not yet reflected in adult literacy rates as a whole, which remain below 50%, with even a slightly higher gender gap than for Nepal.

3.2 Patterns and Dimensions of Social and Educational Disparity and Exclusion

The national figures given above mask far more complex disparities within each country. Sri Lanka, for example, despite its overall good indicators, estimates that 8% of its 6–15 year olds are out of school. The country case studies contain detailed examinations of the different dimensions of disparity that are at work. In each case, there are complex interactions of gender discrimination, poverty and social exclusion. These, combined with gaps and weaknesses within education systems themselves, act as barriers to achieving equity in educational access, opportunity and outcome. The paragraphs below begin with an analysis of economic and geographic disparity, to consider progressively more factors that work together to create complex patterns of inequality, which are in turn reflected in educational disparities.

3.2.1 Economic and geographic disparity

In all three countries, poverty is concentrated in particular areas, especially the more remote rural areas and in the slum areas of the growing cities. It is manifested in poor nutrition and health (especially of women and children), low levels of education and inadequate shelter. Poverty is closely linked with means (and security) of livelihood. The poorest are to be found in the harshest and most unpredictable environments, lacking access to markets, extension services, centres of power and decision making, information and the media. In all three countries, poverty drives the need for children to work. This is commonly within the family unit, including domestic tasks, subsistence agriculture and in the informal economy in urban areas. However, poverty also leads to child work beyond the family unit, including in commercial agriculture, small businesses, domestic work in other households and industry.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, poverty is especially entrenched in rural areas, particularly experienced by those owning little or no land. Much of the country experiences chronic environmental instability, in the form of annual flooding of up to 80% of its land area. Some areas, for example the alluvial islands (*chars*), coast and a major tectonic depression (*hoars*), face particular environmental insecurity, with annual local-level conflicts over the claiming of newly formed or shaped land as it emerges from the receding floodwaters. In the north of Bangladesh, an annual period of unemployment and famine called '*Monga*' is experienced after the planting of rice paddy. In rural areas, many poor children work in agriculture and domestic work within the household, with girls preferred for the latter task.

With the rapid growth of Dhaka and other major cities, urban poverty is also a growing phenomenon, with increasing numbers of people seeking to eke out a living within the informal

economy. Over 3000 slums have been identified in Dhaka alone, these being identifiable communities that lack proper sewerage and electricity. Many children work as domestic servants and in the informal economy in such tasks as flower selling, tea-boys, car-washing, waste-picking and so on.

Nepal

Nepal has the highest Gini Index (a measure of inequality of distribution of income) of the three countries, indicating the greatest wealth disparities. The majority of the population is poor and rural and many communities are remote from the nearest road or town. As in Bangladesh, many rural children, especially girls, support their families in domestic and subsistence tasks. Collecting firewood, fodder and water can be a day-long task, particularly in hill areas affected by deforestation and high population growth.

Kathmandu and other large towns have growing slum areas occupied by poor migrants from rural areas. As in Bangladesh, one result of this has been a sharp growth in the number of children working in the informal economy, as well as of street children.

Sri Lanka

While Sri Lanka is considerably ahead in terms of overall development indicators, there are remaining pockets of intense poverty and deprivation. 23% of the population falls below a nationally defined poverty line, but this figure is only 6% in Colombo whilst it is over 37% in Moneragala (one of the poorest districts). Particularly disadvantaged are the plantation workers, living in enclaves created in the colonial period and subsequently by-passed for economic development for a number of decades. 95% of child work is in rural areas, most of this in plantation or subsistence agriculture or domestic tasks within the household. Rural poverty is also concentrated in fishing communities and remote rural areas. Poverty is also higher than average in urban slum areas; for example, one study of a slum in Colombo found over 60% of children to be malnourished. Overall, it is estimated that around 7.5% of 5–17 year olds in Sri Lanka are in paid work, but over 90% undertake significant unpaid tasks within the household.

Poverty-related educational disparities and dynamics

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have made impressive progress on expanding educational access to the poorest parts of the population, so that national enrolment statistics indicate reasonable parity between poor and wealth groups. In Sri Lanka, primary overall NER for the highest income quintile is 97% whilst for the lowest income quintile it is 95% (this gap, however, widens from 2% to 8% at the lower secondary level) and there is also reasonable parity across rural and urban areas.. However, for Nepal the overall enrolment disparities are more stark. Furthermore, all three countries have poverty-related disparities across regions, especially when it comes to dropout and achievement levels. Tables 3.2–3.4 are illustrative of some of these disparities.

TABLE 3.2 Nepal: Poverty-related variations in NER

	URBAN	RURAL	MOUNTAINS	HILLS	TERAI
Primary NER	89.9	72.0	73.9	83.6	65.1

The data from Nepal indicates considerable variation in NER according to wealth level, between rural and urban areas and also between the ecological belts.

TABLE 3.3 Nepal: NER by level of education and consumption quintile

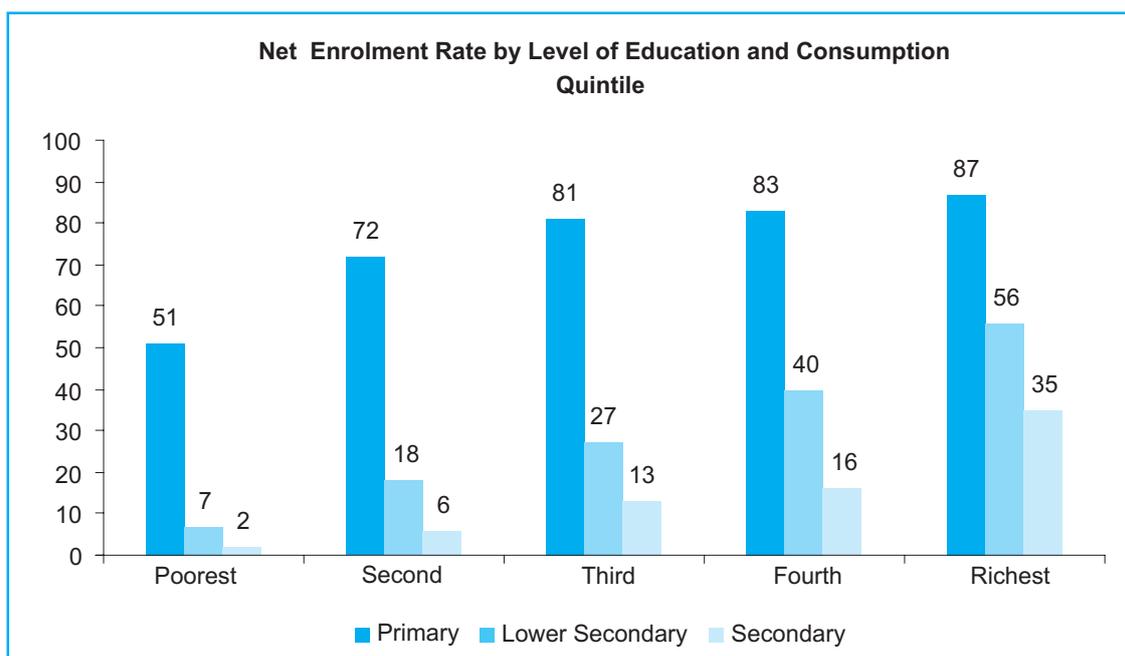


TABLE 3.4 Examples of poverty-related disparities in Sri Lanka

a) Grade 5 attainments in rural and urban areas in literacy and numeracy

	PERCENTAGE GRADE 5 CHILDREN OBTAINING DEFINED LEVELS OF MASTERY IN LITERACY IN THE MOTHER TONGUE		PERCENTAGE GRADE 5 CHILDREN OBTAINING DEFINED LEVELS OF MASTERY IN NUMERACY	
	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN
1997	66%	75.8%	56.8%	63.1%
2000	73.7%	84.2%	57.0%	77.0%

b) Grade 4 attainment in the Northern and Western Provinces of Sri Lanka (NEREC, 2003)

	PERCENTAGE G4 CHILDREN REACHING THE DESIRED STANDARD OF COMPETENCY IN THE SUBJECT	
	NORTHERN	WESTERN
The Mother Tongue (Either Sinhala or Tamil)	54.5	72.8
Mathematics	50.3	71.1
English	35.6	54.3

c) Grade 5 pass rates, 2003, by school type

SCHOOL TYPE	PASS RATE
Type 1 A and B	82.0
Type 3	59.3

These data for Sri Lanka suggest considerable disparity by region, but even more variation between rural and urban areas and between school types. The first graph also suggests a widening gap since the late 1990s in urban and rural attainments, especially for numeracy.

The box below summarizes the poverty-related dynamics of educational demand and supply that not only help to explain the statistical disparities identified, but also give a more in-depth understanding of the inequalities in the *whole educational experience* of children from poor backgrounds in comparison with their better-off peers.

Dynamics of Poverty and Education

Demand

- Many poor families and individuals in the three countries greatly value education and make great sacrifices for it.

However

- Poverty can worsen at certain times of the year during which children are very vulnerable to dropping out of school in order to support family survival. *In Bangladesh, many children stop attending during the 'Monga' period, to support their families or because hunger makes travel and study impossible.*
- Owing to ill-health and poorer nutrition, poor children are more likely to be disadvantaged in their learning and also more likely to stay away from school to care for (or take on the role of) sick relatives.
- Child work makes regular school attendance, persistence and achievement more difficult, putting poor, working children at a disadvantage. *60% of children in Bangladesh tea estates were found to be out of school, whilst those that do enrol do so late. In Sri Lanka, whilst few working children do not enrol, child work is a key cause of higher dropout of poor children. One ILO study found that whilst over 90% of a sample of child workers were enrolled in school, only 63% were attending regularly and that children working more than 28 hours/week (4 hours per day) were generally late for school.*
- The poorest parents are least likely to have benefited themselves from education, so might be disillusioned/unaware of the benefits.
- The poorest parents are at a disadvantage in supporting their children's learning and early development, including access to play, rest, leisure and recreation.

Supply

- Policies in all three countries to remove direct costs have already reaped benefits, narrowing the gap in enrolments between the poorest and the wealthiest. In Bangladesh and Nepal, some good quality NFE is tailored to the needs of rural and urban poor, taking account of the reality of children's work.

However

- Some of the poorest communities still do not have schools within easy reach. *In the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, only one in five villages has a primary school (compared with two schools for three villages in the rest of the country) and over half of Upazillas in the area have no roads. In the Barisal 'hoars' over 800 villages lack easy access to a primary school.*

- In all three countries, provision is least sufficient in some of the poorest communities, in terms of both schools/classrooms and qualified teachers. *In Sri Lanka, many poor rural areas are served by 'Type 3' schools, which overall have the lowest standards.*
- There are still charges and costs that the poorest cannot reach, leading to non-enrolment or, more often, dropout at moments when family or community resources are at a low point. *In Nepal, some schools continue to charge enrolment and exam fees, and some of the costs of books, stationery and clothing fall on poor households. Boat transport to school in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh is often unaffordable for the poor indigenous inhabitants of that area.*
- Competitive examination systems lead to the proliferation of private tuition, putting poorer students at a disadvantage. *In Sri Lanka, the wealthier households spend a greater percentage of their greater household resources on education than the poorest (52% as opposed to 6%), implying a huge overall gap in expenditure per child and severe disadvantage for those who cannot afford tuition. In Bangladesh, likewise, the poor are incrementally excluded by an examination system which favours those able to pay for 'cramming'.*
- It has so far proved difficult for formal systems to become more flexible to respond to factors such as the local agricultural season. Some are served by good quality NFE, but others are left outside or offered a second class service.
- Whilst education is denied to many working children, poor education also increases the risk of children entering the labour market prematurely. *In Sri Lanka, almost all 14–17 year old boys in the fireworks industry are school dropouts.*
- The experience of 'relative poverty' encourages some children prematurely into work in preference to completing their education. *In Sri Lanka, urban children (boys in particular) drop out of school to take up paid work out of choice, in order to be able to have consumer goods.*

3.2.2 Gender discrimination

Poverty does not act alone in causing educational disadvantage and exclusion. Gender discrimination is a very strong feature of Nepali and Bangladeshi society and is also significant in Sri Lanka. In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, as shown in Table 3.1 in the previous section, women have far lower literacy rates. They are also disadvantaged in terms of access to resources and services and face discriminatory wage regulations and inheritance laws. Power dynamics within the household are highly unequal and rates of gender-based violence are high. Early marriage and dowry customs continue to be common. In **Sri Lanka**, women continue to be under-represented in government, business, the media and all levels of public life. Gender discrimination interacts with poverty: on the one hand, women experience deeper poverty than men; whilst on the other, where resources are scarce this tends to maintain discriminatory practices.

Applying a 'gender lens' to the child work discussed above reveals strongly gendered patterns in the kinds of work that boys and girls undertake. Girls tend to do more than boys in the domestic and subsistence spheres (including caring for sick relatives, siblings, etc.), and are more prominent than boys in many 'hidden' forms of child labour, including as domestic servants or sex workers. By contrast, most 'street children' are boys, and boys are preferred in certain businesses and kinds of factory work.

Gender-related educational disparities and dynamics

The tables in the previous section indicate the overall gender gaps in education. In **Nepal**, these continue to be obvious in terms of an overall gap in favour of boys. This is especially the case for certain caste groups (explored in the next section), in rural areas and in poor households. For example, a 2001 household survey¹⁹ found that whilst for girls whose head of household had higher education NER was over 92%, for girls whose household head had no education at all NER was under 58% (for boys 72.4%). Furthermore, the overall achievement of parity in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka masks a somewhat more complex picture. For **Bangladesh**, enrolments are now in favour of girls at the primary and lower secondary levels; however, there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case in terms of achievement or attendance rates in rural areas. For **Sri Lanka**, there continue to be slightly better overall enrolment rates for boys, but also higher dropout rates, particularly for urban boys. Tables 3.5 and 3.6 illustrate some of the patterns.

TABLE 3.5 Primary NER of males and females in rural/urban and richer/poorer groups in Bangladesh and Nepal

	RICHEST 40%		POOREST 60%		URBAN		RURAL	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
Bangladesh	89.4	91.1	79.7	84.4	80.6	83.9	83.4	87.2
Nepal	87.7	83.2	75.4	57.9	92.5	87.3	78.7	64.9

From Nepal 2001 Demographic and Health Survey and Bangladesh 2004 Demographic Health Survey

TABLE 3.6 Primary NER in the regions with the highest and lowest rates, Sri Lanka

	NER Boys	NER Girls
Western Region (Highest NER)	95.2%	92.6%
Eastern Region (Lowest NER)	93.4%	91.6%

From Sri Lanka Case Study

The box below indicates the key gender-related dynamics of educational access and opportunity identified in the three countries, revealing some of the realities that are only touched on by the statistics.

Dynamics of Gender and Education

Demand

- Many families and individuals, of all social and economic groups, value education for girls as well as boys, and this trend is growing.

However

- There continue to be families that do not value education for girls at all, or as much as for boys.²⁰ Discrimination in favour of boys tends to come into play when poor families are forced to choose which children to prioritize for education and which to keep at home or pull out of school during hardship periods. *In Sri Lanka, girls are under-represented in the prestigious 'DVS' schools (National model schools). In Nepal, improved gender parity may in part merely reflect the higher enrolment of boys in private schools.*

¹⁹ Nepal 2001 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS).

²⁰ See, for example, Raynor, J. (2005). *Educating Girls in Bangladesh: Watering A Neighbour's Tree?* Chapter 4 in Sheila Aikman and Elaine Unterhalter (Eds) *Beyond Access: Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender Equality in Education*. Oxfam.

- Early marriage continues to be a significant cause of dropout of girls in Bangladesh and Nepal.
- Differing work patterns of girls and boys result in gendered patterns of school enrolment, attendance and dropout. *In Nepal and some regions of Bangladesh, rural girls have lower attendance and persistence because of their work responsibilities, whilst in urban areas of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, boys in particular drop out of school to take up paid employment.*

Supply

- All three countries have had successful drives to improve gender parity in enrolment, including such features as stipends, improving number of women teachers and providing basic facilities. Nepal and Bangladesh also have successful NFE programmes that target rural girls.

However

- Many schools are still without basic facilities such as water and separate latrines for girls and boys. (These facilities do not exist or they are non-functioning.) This disproportionately affects girls' enjoyment of school and attendance/persistence of pubescent girls.
- Many rural schools in Nepal and Bangladesh do not have women teachers who can support girls through their education and provide 'role models' of educated women.
- A widespread tendency is for schools to reproduce the attitudes of the wider society, for example holding lower expectations of girls, which affects their confidence and performance.
- Educational programmes for pregnant girls or mothers of school-going age are almost non-existent.
- Gender stereotyping persists in many textbooks and educational materials, constraining the aspirations of both girls and boys, but particularly disadvantaging girls.
- Outright harassment and abuse of girls and women teachers persists in some schools.

3.2.3 Discrimination on the basis of caste, social or residency status

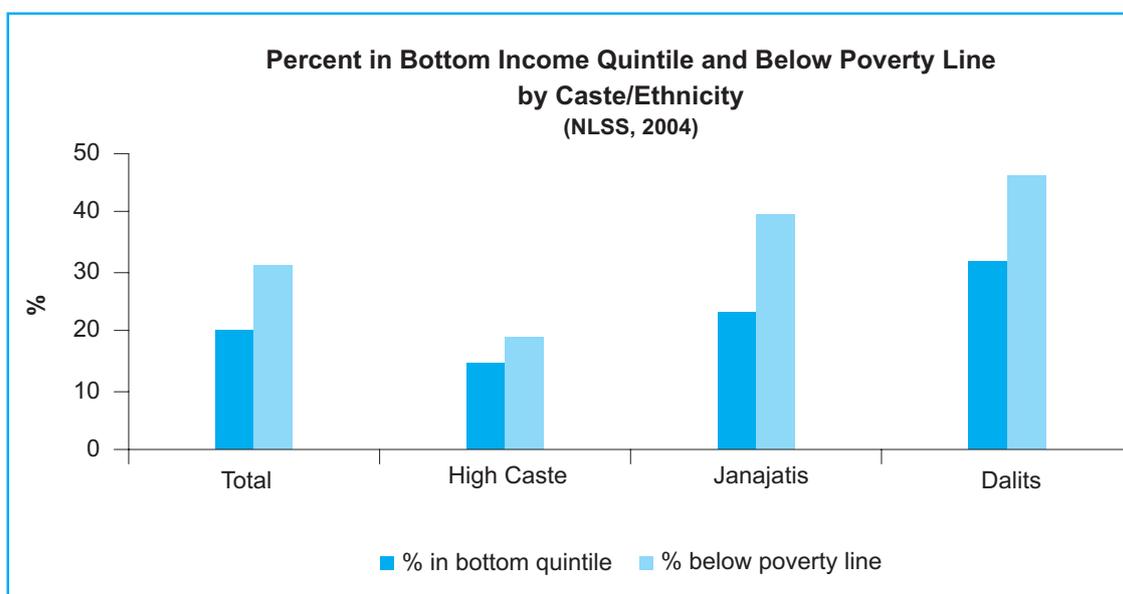
Nepal

In this section Nepal is considered first, since caste-based discrimination is a very significant form of social exclusion, which needs considering in relation to gender and poverty. Nepal's long history of rigid caste hierarchy and oppression has led to significant disparities between different groups in terms of wealth, power, status and access to services. To present a complex situation rather simply: the 'high caste' Brahmin–Chhetri groups dominate social, political and economic life; whilst at the other end of the scale Dalits ('low caste' occupational groups) suffer extreme discrimination. Both groups are Nepali-speaking and have their historic origins in India. In between in the hierarchy come Nepal's diverse Janajatis (indigenous peoples). These have traditionally either been Buddhist or had their own animistic and shamanistic religions but, over time, many have to some extent incorporated Hindu practices and beliefs. Most Janajati groups have been assigned to 'mid-caste' positions, but a number have a lower status. Muslims constitute a further excluded group who, alongside foreigners, are assigned the status of 'unclean but not untouchable'.

The direct effects of discrimination against Dalits and other low status groups include daily experience of exclusion, lack of respect, violence and verbal abuse. Discriminatory attitudes are

justified with reference to the ‘unclean’ occupations to which the various Dalit groups are assigned. Over the centuries, this has resulted in an entrenched sense of inferiority, lack of confidence and powerlessness, which is only just beginning to be challenged. This intense social exclusion, combined with the confining of particular castes to specific occupations, has resulted in far greater poverty levels among these groups, as illustrated in Table 3.7.

TABLE 3.7 Percentages in the bottom income quintile and below the poverty line by caste/ethnicity



From Nepal Case Study

There are differing gender norms across different caste and social groups. Within the home, gender relations among Dalits tend to be less rigidly defined or ritualized than among the ‘high caste’ groups. However, whilst greater wealth is bringing about changing attitudes amongst many Brahmin–Chhetri families, the sheer level of poverty of many Dalits causes many Dalit women and girls to continue to be doubly disadvantaged, owing to extremely high work burdens and greater vulnerability to abuse and assault.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a number of communities experiencing similar discrimination. These include Dalits within Bangladesh’s minority Hindu community, including pig raisers, cobblers, sweepers, snake charmers, cremation attendants, leather-workers and others. They also include over 1.5 million ‘*Beday*’ (River Gypsies). These groups are treated as inferior by other Hindus and the majority Muslims alike. Discriminatory practices include the use of derogatory names, restrictions on inter-mixing and inter-marriage and restricted rights to political participation and services. For example, the nomadic boat-based lifestyle of the *Beday* has often been used as an excuse for exclusion from services and the right to vote.

There are also other groups that are not technically ‘castes’, but have similarly been historically discriminated against, as landless labourers at the bottom of complex social hierarchies that exist within Bangladesh’s majority Muslim rural communities. Another group are the sex workers, generally despised and socially isolated. One study identifies the children of sex workers as being ‘*some of the most excluded children in Bangladesh*’. Again, the link between poverty, gender discrimination and social exclusion is clear.

Bangladesh also has two key groups of refugees. The largest group consists of around 300,000 Muslim Biharis, who, denied citizenship at the time of independence from Pakistan, have remained stateless in a number of camps. This group suffers both social and economic discrimination and high levels of unemployment. The other group are the Rohingya, Muslims from the bordering Rakhine state of Myanmar. Most have now returned to Myanmar but 26,000 (10% of the total number) remain, currently in a limbo situation.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, too, has a range of groups that experience discrimination on the basis of their social status. In particular, the people of the plantation estates, already referred to as being one of the poorest groups, have also suffered historic discrimination and prejudice that is only now beginning to be addressed. Others experience prejudice on the basis of being slum dwellers, migrants or working in the sex industry or other occupations considered undesirable.

Caste- and status-related educational disparities and dynamics

Table 3.8 illustrates some of the caste-related differences in NER in Nepal, while Table 3.9 gives a detailed picture of the high levels of grade repetition and dropout among Dalit children in Nepal.

TABLE 3.8 Examples of NER related to caste/ethnicity of head of household

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Brahmin–Chhetri	93.0	97.8	87.7
Hill Janajati	81.4	84.0	78.8
Terai Dalit	37.5	54.6	21.3
Muslim	32.1	38.0	25.9

TABLE 3.9 Promotion, repetition and dropout of total Dalit students (%), 2005/06

GRADE	PROMOTION			REPETITION			DROPOUT			SURVIVAL		
	GIRLS	BOYS	TOTAL	GIRLS	BOYS	TOTAL	GIRLS	BOYS	TOTAL	GIRLS	BOYS	TOTAL
1	46.9	26.6	34.1	22.4	12.5	16.2	30.7	60.9	49.7	100.0	100.0	100.0
2	71.5	38.7	49.5	22.1	9.5	13.7	6.4	51.8	36.9	60.5	30.4	40.7
3	74.7	42.7	53.0	19.2	8.0	11.6	6.1	49.3	35.3	55.5	13.0	23.3
4	71.1	39.1	49.4	19.6	9.1	12.5	9.3	51.9	38.1	41.7	7.4	14.0
5	60.2	30.8	40.1	15.1	8.0	10.3	24.6	61.2	49.6	36.8	3.2	7.9
6	67.6	71.1	69.3	17.4	15.3	16.4	15.1	13.6	14.3	26.1	1.1	3.5
7	71.7	84.8	78.7	15.4	12.8	14.0	12.9	2.4	7.3	21.3	0.9	2.9
8	71.6	61.0	65.7	23.2	17.5	20.0	5.2	21.5	14.4	18.0	0.9	2.7
9	70.7	60.4	64.8	16.3	14.0	15.0	13.0	25.5	20.2	16.7	0.6	2.2
10				11.4	8.8	10.0						

Source: Nepal TRSE, 2006 (Nepal Case Study)

It is noted that all groups show an overall gender disparity in NER in favour of boys, which is particularly high for the groups with lower enrolments overall. However, even higher is the overall disparity between the Brahmin–Chhetris and the Dalits and Muslims. A key observation from

Table 3.9 is the very high dropout, particularly of boys, of Dalits in Grade 1 and the fact that fewer than 1% of Dalit boys survive beyond Grade 6.

The box below indicates the key dynamics of educational access and opportunity that are related to caste-, occupation- and 'status'-based discrimination in the three countries.

Dynamics of Caste/Status-Based Discrimination and Education

Demand

- There is increasing demand for education on the part of excluded groups. *In Nepal, there is increasing demand by Dalits for education. In Bangladesh, the Beday community is organizing to demand its educational rights.*

However

- Social exclusion and low educational indicators perpetuate the cycle of lower demand for education. *In Bangladesh, the literacy rate of Dalits is only 30%, half the national average. In Nepal, some Dalits perceive that education is of no use in the absence of good social connections, or that children will lose out on learning traditional skills of the caste with no guarantee of alternatives. Others have been unaware of support (such as scholarships) on offer. In the Sri Lankan plantation estates, there continue to be families who see no use for education.*
- The very nature of social discrimination is that it leads to low self-esteem and lack of confidence on the part of children from these groups, which in turn puts them at considerable disadvantage in their education.
- Because socially excluded groups experience high levels of poverty, all the poverty-related factors also apply here.

Supply

- Discrimination on the basis of caste or social group is illegal in the three countries and there are drives to improve educational participation of these groups. *In Nepal, more Dalits are being accepted into schools. Sri Lanka recently removed requirement of a birth certificate for children to register in school.*

However

- Socially excluded communities continue to have a lower level of provision than high-status communities. *In Sri Lanka, 68% of plantation schools are 'Type 3' serving only grades 1–5, whilst this is the case for fewer than 30% of schools nationally. Only 25% Bihari refugees in Bangladesh attend government schools, whilst schools for Rohingya refugees are overcrowded and offer only three subjects and five grades.*
- Children are still denied access in practice. *In Nepal, some Dalit children in secondary schools have been refused lodging places in local homes, effectively denying them access.*
- As with gender discrimination, discriminatory attitudes are reproduced in the school and classroom. *Bangladeshi sex workers complained that their children are discriminated against at school by teachers and not befriended by other children. Some Dalit children in schools in Nepal do not have equal access to water and other facilities.²¹ A number of studies cite incidents of Dalit children being labelled as 'slow' or 'stupid'. Some children have felt stigmatized by being in receipt of 'Dalit Scholarships'.*

²¹ This observation was made by a member of UNICEF ROSA and is to be the subject of further research in Nepal and India.

- There continues to be under-representation of Dalits and other excluded groups as teachers, headteachers and in school management bodies. *In Nepal, fewer than 6% of SDC members are Dalits.*

3.2.4 Minority linguistic or ethnic groups, including indigenous peoples

Bangladesh's population is often thought to be homogenous, with over 90% being ethnic Bengalis, speaking Bengali (Bangla) as their mother tongue. However, the 1.5% indigenous (*Adiabashi*) population implies over 1.2 million people. These are mainly concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, but are also in other areas. They have their own culture, beliefs and languages that are different from the mainstream. Some of the socially excluded groups mentioned in the previous section also have languages other than Bengali, including Telugu, Urdu and Hindi.

As has been mentioned, **Nepal** has the greatest diversity of the three countries in terms of language and ethnic groups. The largest groups include Newar, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Sherpa, Danuwar and Tharu. There are Janajatis in all ecological zones, including the high mountains, hills and Terai (plains).

Both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** have tended to be monolingual (or bilingual taking into account the role of English) for purposes of governance, official business and the media. This inevitably results in exclusion and disadvantage for those who do not share the majority language and culture (sometimes called the language of power), particularly for the smaller groups and those with oral languages and cultures. There is also a tendency for minority languages and cultures to be regarded as incomplete or inferior.

For **Sri Lanka**, a different situation pertains. Buddhist Sinhalese make up the majority of the population, but the Tamils form a sizeable minority and a majority in the provinces of the North and East. Neither of these groups constitute a 'minority' or 'indigenous' group equivalent to those of Nepal and Bangladesh, and government, official business, the media and education have long since operated in both languages.

The observations made about poverty in **Bangladesh** particularly pertain to many indigenous/minority groups. This seems to be related in part to discrimination but also because minority languages and cultures have tended to survive in more remote and harsh environments, which are also economically marginalized. Bangladesh's indigenous peoples have benefited less from economic development, have been excluded from the political process and have less access to services and the labour market. Rates of child labour in agricultural tasks and fishing are higher (for both girls and boys) for indigenous children as compared with the majority population. In **Nepal**, too, there are many Janajati groups that are poor and 14 groups have been identified as 'extremely marginalized Janajati groups'. However, it is noted that not all Nepali Janajatis are poor. Newars are relatively wealthy and powerful; and many Gurungs, Rai, Sherpa and Limbu have become so, through being the main groups recruited as Gurkhas, as well as living in areas benefiting particularly from tourism and mountaineering. The relative poverty and disadvantage experienced by some **Sri Lankan** Tamils relates to the impact of the conflict rather than ethnicity or language per se, and is thus discussed further presently in the relevant section.

The links between ethnicity/language and gender are complex. Both in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, some indigenous groups (notably the Buddhist groups of the higher Himalayan regions and the CHT) have more equal gender relations and more empowered women than other groups in the respective societies. However, as was shown to be the case with Dalits, women in minority groups might suffer a double disadvantage because of low status afforded by the wider society or because of higher levels of poverty and geographic isolation.

Ethnicity- and language-related educational disparities and dynamics

The box below summarizes the language/ethnicity-related dynamics of educational access and opportunity, focusing particularly on **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

Dynamics of Ethnicity/Language and Education

Demand

- There is increasing demand from indigenous and minority language groups for education, and a general desire to have access to the 'majority language' as well as to maintain the mother-language and culture.

However

- Some indigenous groups have lower self-esteem and confidence. *In Bangladesh, studies into the education of CHT children found them to be more timid than mainstream children, whilst parents and community members generally made fewer demands on schools and participated less in their children's education.*
- Literacy rates (in any language) tend to be lower in communities that have an oral language, disadvantaging children in their education.

Supply

- There have been a range of pilots in bilingual education and making the curriculum more locally relevant. Nepal has recently changed its policy to allow for mother tongue education for all children.

However

- Overall, the curriculum still does not fully reflect minority cultures. *In Bangladesh a single national curriculum is imposed on all government schools. In Nepal, there is a tendency towards promotion of 'high caste' Hindu culture and values.*
- Not all schools in minority areas have (any) teachers from the same ethnic/language group as the children.
- Because many indigenous areas are also remote and poor, many indigenous areas are served by small, multi-grade or incomplete schools with comparatively less-qualified teachers. While these schools are still struggling with general methodological change (such as implementing active learning), it is almost impossible for them to successfully introduce meaningful bilingual and culturally relevant approaches.
- Minority language children often face discrimination and low expectations. *In Nepal, Janajatis are sometimes labelled by their teachers as slow because they do not understand Nepali. One teacher from the Terai observed, 'Nepali-speaking children speak first, fast and sit at the front. Tharus speak last, slow and sit at the back.'*

- By the same token, school managers and teachers lack skills in interaction with local communities and drawing on local knowledge and skills. *In Nepal, one study finds only 3% of SMC members to be Janajatis (even lower than for Dalits, perhaps reflecting a 'language barrier'). In Humla District in Nepal, schools are often disapproving of the local tradition of sending children to Buddhist monasteries and there is rarely an exploration of the potential benefits, or ways in which monastic and general education could be combined.*

3.2.5 Disability

In the three countries (as elsewhere) there are disabled children and adults in every community. Of course, the term 'disability' covers a range of impairments and conditions at a range of levels of severity. These have differing impacts on the lives and livelihoods of those affected. However, one finding across the three countries is that many disabled children and adults face prejudice and social isolation. The poorest suffer most, having least access to information, support, health care or ECD services. In many traditional communities, disability is still often perceived as a punishment, especially more severe or less-understood impairments or conditions. Disabled girls face particular discrimination and are particularly at risk of abuse and harassment.

Because of fears, prejudices or simple lack of knowledge and resources, many disabled children are kept hidden away at home. Disabled children from poor families also risk being put into work rather than school. One study of child beggars in Colombo found that the majority had some form of disability.

Disability-related educational disparities and dynamics

In all three countries, the enrolment of disabled children is well below the national average and very many continue to be out of school. One study in **Sri Lanka** found over half of blind people, 65% of intellectually disabled people and 87% of those with disabilities limiting the use of both hands had never been to school. In both **Sri Lanka** and **Bangladesh**, some study evidence suggests that disabled girls are even more likely than disabled boys to be out of school.

The box below summarizes some of the key dynamics of disability and education.

Dynamics of Disability and Education

Demand

- There is increasing demand for the education of disabled children, in particular their inclusion in mainstream schooling, reflecting growing international concern and commitments.

However

- Disabled children continue to suffer from discrimination and the belief that they are 'uneducable'.
- Many disabled children are hidden away at home and thus 'hard to reach'.
- Lack of knowledge of disability and back-up for poor families in supporting their disabled children's development can lead to even further disadvantage (for example, children with impaired mobility are not stimulated to play and explore their environment and thus their cognitive development is also affected).

Supply

- In all three countries, there is a commitment to including children with disabilities in education.

However

- Many schools remain physically inaccessible or un-usable for children with limited mobility or with sensory disabilities.
- In contexts where teachers' general skills for implementing effective teaching–learning approaches remains limited, where disabled children do gain access then schools still might be unable to respond appropriately to their personal or educational needs.
- In contexts where pupil assessment capacities are generally weak (and examination-focused), there is an even greater challenge in accurately diagnosing specific disabilities and assessing the educational level and needs of disabled children.
- There is a lack of general resources for quality improvement (to the detriment of the least academically able) and of specific resources needed to support successful inclusion of children with specific disabilities (e.g. Braille typewriters).
- As with other forms of discrimination, discrimination against disabled children, including active abuse, is often reproduced within the education system. *A study of the Bangladesh DPE/Esteem Project (2001) found that disabled girls who did manage to enrol in school were subject to physical, emotional and sexual abuse.*

3.2.6 Children without adequate care and protection

In all countries an additional dimension to those above has been identified. It is difficult to define exactly, but relates to situations where factors such as gender discrimination, poverty, migration and social exclusion have come together to seriously negatively affect the care and protection of the child. Whilst recognizing that there are cultural variations, as well as differences in opinion, on the detailed needs of children and of the environments in which they can thrive, there is nevertheless a common agreement on some absolute minimums (as reflected in the CRC). These include basic physical care and emotional support from relatable adults and protection from abuse and exploitation.

In each of the three countries, there are many children for whom these basic rights of care and protection are not being met. These include children without adequate presence of parents or adult carers, for example orphans, children coping alone because adults have migrated away to work or abandoned the family, perhaps because of poverty or domestic violence. One study of a very deprived urban district of Colombo, where many parents had out-migrated to work, found that the majority of children lived outside their own immediate families and that many households were affected by alcoholism, family tensions, violence, bullying and drug use.

There are also children whose parents or other adult relatives are physically present, but for whatever reason are not able to provide adequate care and protection. This might, for example, be due to family illness, experience of trauma, domestic violence or because the whole family is in an extremely stressed situation, for example working as bonded labourers. One study of migrant squatters in a small town in Sri Lanka found the social cohesion and traditional moral rules of the group to have completely broken down, leaving girls unprotected and the victims of frequent harassment and sexual assault.

There are also situations when it is the children who have moved out from the family, by being put out to work, run away, married off prematurely, pushed, thrown out or trafficked within the country or even overseas. (This situation is, of course, directly related to the ones above.) These include children working as domestic servants outside their own homes, children living and working on the street, children in the worst forms of child labour and children exploited for commercial sexual purposes. One sample study of street children in Sri Lanka found 60% to have experienced physical abuse, 66% to have experienced sexual abuse and 86% to be malnourished. In Bangladesh and Nepal, young girls who have been entered into child marriages also frequently find themselves in hostile surroundings and deprived of the care and support they need.

Another vulnerable group of children are those who have been institutionalized. Again, this relates closely to the situations described above – children end up in homes because they are already in some way deprived of adult care and protection. Some have been orphaned, cannot be cared for adequately due to poverty, and many are disabled. While some homes offer good standards of care, many are under-staffed and over-stretched.

The situation of children in detention and prison provides cause for concern in all three countries. In **Bangladesh**, there are many children in adult prisons, some of whom have been imprisoned for the crime of ‘vagrancy’, in other words punished by the state for the failure of adults to protect and care for them. In **Sri Lanka**, children who have committed only petty offences are mixed with those involved in far more serious crimes. In few cases is there any support to children for rehabilitation.

It is stressed that not all children in child-headed households, those outside of their own family and those in institutions are deprived of love and support, but the chances of abuse and neglect are certainly very much higher, while for children in detention in the three countries some level of abuse appears to be the norm rather than an exception. One saddening aspect of the situation is that once children have been neglected and abused, especially if they are also poor, they often become easy targets for further abuse and exploitation. Furthermore, children deprived of normal family protection often also lack adequate legal protection, as is the case for over 300,000 child domestic servants in Dhaka alone. Poverty and social exclusion increase the risk of lack of protection and vulnerability to abuse.

Both girls and boys are deeply affected by a lack of adequate care and protection. There is an overall tendency towards different responses, based on South Asian gender norms as well as the differing work/lifestyle patterns of girls and boys noted earlier. Girls tend to be particularly at risk of depression and passivity and this is exacerbated when they are in hidden or isolated family situations or forms of work. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to respond by becoming aggressive and antisocial, joining gangs and becoming involved in crime and drug use. However, it is stressed that these are *tendencies* and certainly not absolute differences in the ways that girls and boys respond to emotional stress. There are also differing levels of resilience between individual children.

Patterns and dynamics of education disparity related to child abuse and protection issues

In comparison with the other dimensions of social exclusion discussed, there are fewer statistics to help give an overall picture of educational access and performance of children affected by abuse, neglect or a lack of care and protection. These issues are, by their very nature, sensitive

and incidence of types of abuse and neglect very difficult to measure. The data in Table 3.10, however, gives some indication of the differences in enrolment of children in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** who are, or are not, related to the head of the household in which they live. It is notable that the effect is a very marked one, particularly so for urban children.

TABLE 3.10 NER of children related, or not related, to household head in Nepal and Bangladesh

	BANGLADESH			NEPAL		
	TOTAL	URBAN	POOREST 60%	TOTAL	URBAN	POOREST 60%
NER of children related to household head	85.1	83.3	82.1	73.7	90.7	66.9
NER of children not related to household head	41.8	36.3	53.7	41.8	27.9	41.4

From Nepal 2001 Demographic and Health Survey and Bangladesh 2004 Demographic Health Survey

One study in **Sri Lanka** found the academic achievements of children in state institutions to be markedly less than those of children living in their own families, attending the same schools. Furthermore, each country case study found an abundance of qualitative material giving evidence of the scale of the disadvantage experienced by these children, as well as the complex and interacting factors involved, as summarized below.

Dynamics of Education Disparity Related to Child Abuse/Protection Issues

Demand

- By the very nature of the problem, 'demand' for education for this group of children might be very muted, because of a lack of supportive adults to speak for them.
- Lack of care, support and protection, not to mention active abuse and exploitation, seriously affect children's self-esteem, confidence and learning capacity. Such children's poor emotional health and undeveloped social skills puts them at risk of experiencing school failure, in turn further exacerbating their difficulties.

Supply

- Some orphanages and children's homes enable children to enrol in local schools or make their own provision. There are some innovative and effective programmes to meet the needs of specific groups of children in specific difficult circumstances, such as street children and domestic workers (generally with NGO involvement).

However

- There is a serious lack of data on some of these neglected groups of children, including those in institutions. These children are not only 'hard to reach' but 'hard to trace'.
- Where children are supporting themselves (and their siblings) they might not be able to avail themselves of free education policies. *In Bangladesh, stipends are paid to parents and there is not yet a system for children who fall outside conventional families.*
- Education for children in institutions and detention centres is inadequate. *In Sri Lanka, children's detention centres do not provide any educational opportunities. Some children in orphanages are denied access to local schools due to lack of a birth certificate. Most are denied access to the best schools.*

- Many vulnerable children face prejudice, or even further abuse, at school, rather than support and protection. *One study in Sri Lanka found teachers to hold more negative views of children from a local children's home than of children living in their own family homes.*

3.2.7 Exacerbators of inequality: conflict, emergencies and HIV/AIDS

In the three countries, various factors act as additional 'exacerbators' of inequality and social exclusion.

Conflict

Conflict has had, and continues to have, considerable negative impacts in both Nepal and Sri Lanka. **Nepal** is emerging slowly from a decade of conflict that has created trauma and displacement. The recent conflict in part stemmed from social exclusion on the basis of caste and ethnicity. **Sri Lanka's** prolonged two decades of conflict has likewise caused widespread displacement. In both cases, poverty has been deepened. People have lost property and land as well as means of livelihood such as tools or equipment. There is some evidence of an increase of gender-based violence in conflict affected areas, and in Nepal conflict has also exacerbated caste divisions.²² Thus the disparities related to poverty, caste and gender already explored are generally worsened in conflict situations.

In both cases, significant numbers of children and youth have become involved in the conflict. One study in Sri Lanka found that children were generally motivated by psychological factors such as revenge, a sense of 'honour' or fear. However, children already experiencing a lack of care and protection, including those from single-parent families or where one parent had migrated to the Middle East to work, as well as abuse within the household, were predisposing factors. Many children experienced far worse situations than those they had left, including being forced to participate in massacres, tortures and the killing of friends. Conflict has also led to more children being institutionalized. Some are orphans but others are from families that can no longer afford or manage to care for them. Conflict thus adds more children to the group described above as being deprived of love, care, support and protection.

Natural disasters

Sri Lanka suffered greatly from the effects of the December 2004 Tsunami, in which over 200,000 people lost their lives. The disaster disproportionately affected poor people, namely the fishing communities of the East, North and South coastal regions, who, in addition to the loss of family members and friends, have suffered the loss of livelihoods and homes and the disruption of basic services.

Bangladesh experiences regular cyclones and flooding (especially in certain fragile areas as discussed previously). **Nepal's** fragile mountain environment is subject to periodic landslides and earthquakes, whilst the Terai (plains area) is affected by periodic flooding. In both cases, it is the poorest who are least able to protect themselves and their assets, and whose lives and livelihoods are most affected when disaster strikes. Indeed, in one sense these are 'expected cyclical events' that only result in 'disaster' because of the low priority given to prediction and preparedness and powerlessness of the poor to be able to protect themselves.

²² Centre for Human Rights and Social Justice (2005). *The Missing Piece of the Puzzle. Caste Discrimination and the Conflict in Nepal*. Centre for Human Rights and Social Justice.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS, thankfully, is not at a high enough level in any of the three countries to have a significant effect on overall patterns of poverty and social exclusion. However, it is prevalent in certain impoverished communities. Incidence tends to be high among migrants and those involved in the sex industries. For example, HIV/AIDS is far more prevalent in Sindupalchuk district of **Nepal**, where trafficking of young girls (mainly of the Tamang ethnic group) to India has been ongoing.

Educational disparity compounded

Some available statistics reveal disparities related to the experience of conflict. For example, one study in **Sri Lanka** found that while over 86% of Sinhalese complete 10–13 years of education, this is only the case for 50% of Tamils and Muslims. The higher dropout at the end of primary or lower secondary school for Tamils and Muslims was concluded to be unrelated to any ethnic or cultural factors but related to living in conflict-affected areas. An NIE/UNICEF study found dropout rates of 15% in conflict areas, compared with only 4% nationally.

Some of the education demand and supply factors that are exacerbated by conflict, natural disasters and HIV/AIDS are summarized in the box below.

Education Disparity Exacerbated by Conflict and Emergencies

Demand

- Conflict creates security concerns that reduce demand for education.
- Conflict causes dropout for children to support their families or (particularly for boys) to become directly involved in fighting. *In Sri Lanka, the areas worst affected by conflict have over four times the national dropout rate.*
- The trauma that children suffer has negative impacts on learning, for example poor concentration, withdrawal, aggression or lack of trust of peers or adults.

Supply

- Conflict and emergencies destroy physical infrastructure, or result in schools being used for purposes other than education. *In Sri Lanka, over 100 schools were destroyed by the Tsunami. One study found 162 schools in conflict-affected areas to be non-functioning, 321 schools to be operating in temporary sheds, 63% to have no latrines and 50% to have no water supply.*
- During conflict and emergencies, even where pupils still attend, teachers might not be able to, especially if they live outside the community.
- Teaching and learning resources might be destroyed, or there might be problems in delivering supplies to schools.
- Within the school environment, children as well as teachers are under stress, making it more difficult to focus on learning.

3.2.8 Disparity in quality provision: unequal schools

The discussion above makes it clear that educational exclusion and disparity are not all to do with demand- or access-related factors. Supply factors are equally important. There are two

kinds of 'inequity in quality', first of all inequality of provision of quality schools and secondly inequitable practices and discrimination *within* schools.

The former can be in terms of the quality of infrastructure and facilities, of qualifications of the teachers, the pupil:teacher ratio, the level of resourcing, the scope of the curriculum, the hours of contact time and the number of grades on offer, between some schools and others. While, of course, there are schools (and NFE programmes) providing excellent education in very difficult circumstances, as well as children who are not poor or marginalized but are educationally disadvantaged because they happen to be in a poor school, the general pattern is that the poorer and more marginalized the community or catchment area of the school, the more difficult it is for the school to deliver quality education. The schools that actually need additional resources often receive the least. The very children whose needs are often the most complex, who would benefit most from the best provision (e.g. ECD services, a child-friendly and protective school environment, teachers able to manage a range of ability levels, a school able to offer quality bilingual education) are the ones who often get the poorest deal.

Inequitable practices within schools include differential levels of teacher attention, teacher expectations and valuing, treatment within the classroom (e.g. seating arrangements, delegation of chores) and access to school spaces, resources and facilities. There might be deliberate discrimination, but very often there is unconscious differential treatment of different groups of children based on societal norms that have become internalized. A rigid curriculum, narrow adherence to rote-learning approaches or to a single language of instruction can also result in education being more accessible and meaningful to some children than to others.

3.3 Implications: The 'Equity And Inclusion' Challenge for the Education SWApS

It is clear that had the above analysis stopped at the point of discussing poverty, and perhaps gender, it would have been incomplete. Many other factors are also at work in causing educational disparity. If SWApS are to support equity and inclusion, it seems that they have an initial challenge of understanding firstly *who* are the children not yet accessing good quality education – through exploring the various dimensions discussed above as well as the links between them – but also *where* they are, not only geographically but also in educational terms. The above analysis suggests that they include:

- Those who have never enrolled, many of whom are from the 'extreme poor', live in remote areas, in areas disrupted by conflict and/or in life situations that make them 'hard to reach' (for example living outside their own families, in illegal and harmful forms of work, or disabled children hidden away at home).
- Those who have been 'pulled out' of school because of poverty, conflict, early marriage, the need or desire to work (some then becoming 'hard to reach' as a result).
- Those who have been 'pushed out' of school because of discrimination, boredom or non-learning due to poor 'quality' in the widest sense.
- Those who remain in school but are disadvantaged/discriminated against or at risk within the system – in danger of dropping out, underachieving, or not acquiring key skills for life, work, health and full participation in community and society.

Considering this complexity, it can be seen that the challenge for the SWAps is a large one. The standard 'access, quality and management' approach of many sector-wide education programmes is likely to need considerable unpacking. Certainly, policies to make education both free of direct costs and affordable, as well as to raise general quality, will be important in all three countries. However, a range of further measures are likely to prove necessary. One of these relates to the *attitudinal barriers* that affect the education of so many children, be they Dalits in Nepal, *Beday* in Bangladesh or plantation children in Sri Lanka. Another relates to ensuring a *broad enough understanding of 'quality'*, to include the concepts of 'learner friendliness', flexibility, continuity, inclusion and non-discrimination; to ensure that minority language children, those affected by conflict, children from socially excluded groups and disabled children can have an equal chance to learn. A third area relates to *targeting for equity*. This might imply unequal treatment in order to redress identified disparities between both individuals and schools. Fourthly, there would be the need to *identify the hard-to-reach children* who might not benefit from general access policies (such as free education) because of their life situation or lack of adult care and support, for whom special targeted programmes might be necessary. Furthermore, it might be expected that the SWAps in the region might build in preparedness and responsiveness to potential further outbreaks of conflict and to likely natural events, to improve continuity of quality provision and thus prevent further exacerbation of disparity.

These thoughts will be kept in mind when moving on into the next chapters, which explore the approaches to equity and inclusion being taken in the three case study SWAps.

4. Equity and Social Inclusion in the Education SWAs: Goals, Concepts and Approaches

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Country comparison table

Table 4.1 summarizes some of the key features of the case study SWAs.

TABLE 4.1 Key features of the case-study SWAs in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL		SRI LANKA
	PEDP II	EFA	SESP	ESDP
Scope	Government controlled formal primary education plus some linkage to government-funded NFPE and NGO education provision	Major (but not only) government and donor activity in basic education	Secondary Education Sub-sector, in certain districts only	Pre-primary, primary and secondary education including NFE; and basic adult literacy/education. (Minimal private and NGO provision)
Duration	2004–09 – 6 years	2004–09 – 5 years	Mid-2003–mid-2009 – 6 years	2006–10 – 5 years
Framework	Strategic framework in form of detailed single macro plan – PEDP-II Macro Plan	EFA 2004–09 Core Document – a general document based on EFA goals	SESP Plan – essentially a project document	Strategic framework plus sector-wide plan based on conglomeration of zonal and provincial level plans
Implementation approach	Top down, centralized but with aim of gradual devolution	Mix of top down and bottom up, with aim of decentralized implementation	Traditional project approach	Bottom up and decentralized
Linkage to wider poverty reduction/education/social development plans	Linked to Poverty Reduction Strategy and 15-year EFA Action Plan (2000–15)	Linked to Nepal Tenth National Plan (which acts as Nepal’s ‘PRSP’) and Nepal EFA Action Plan	Linked to Nepal Tenth National Plan (which acts as Nepal’s ‘PRSP’)	Linked to latest Poverty Reduction Strategy known as ‘Mahinda Chintana’

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL		SRI LANKA
	PEDP II	EFA	SESP	ESDP
Total funding	\$1,815m over six years	\$158m (at outset)	\$75m	\$643.92m in first year
Government/Donor funding	64%/36%	75.6%/24.4% Government in lead but not strong; donors influential	20%/80% A donor dominated project	94.3%/5.7% Government in strong lead
Partnership structures for policy dialogue and joint review	Educational Local Consultative Group (ELCG) – DP forum. Joint Annual Review Missions (JARMs). Code of Conduct adopted	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan and Annual Workplan and Budget. Six-monthly reviews. Code of Conduct adopted	Joint Annual Reviews	Structures being put in place, to include joint review

	Bangladesh		Nepal		Sri Lanka	
	PEDP II		EFA	SESP	ESDP	
SWAp funders,²³ with % of donor total.	IDA (WB)	23%	ADB ²⁴	ADB 40%	UNICEF/ AusAid	40%
	DFID (UK)	23%	IDA 33%	DANIDA 40%	ADB	20%
	ADB	15%	DFID 23%		IDA (WB) – including DFID funds	30%
	EU	15%	DANIDA 19%		Plan International (INGO)	7.5%
	Netherlands	8%	NORAD 16%		UNFPA	5.5%
	Norway	6%	Finland 9%		JICA	<0.5%
	SIDA	4.5%	UNICEF		GTZ	<0.5%
	CIDA	3%			UNESCO	0.5%
	UNICEF/ AUSAID	2%			Indian Credit	1.14%
JICA/Japan	0.5%					

²³ In Bangladesh, these include pooling and parallel funding donors, in Nepal these include only the ‘pooling donors’, whilst in Sri Lanka these include all funds that are ‘on budget’ under the ESDP Framework and Plan.

²⁴ Figures are not yet available for ADB and UNICEF, who have recently joined the EFA-N pool – their funding will be around \$30 million and \$1 million respectively for the remainder of the programme.

4.1.2 Bangladesh

PEDP-II was originally designed as the total programme of the government for the formal primary education sector, to be implemented by the Department of Primary Education (DPE) of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), with coordinated (including pooled) support from development partners. The initial intention was to focus on Government Primary Schools and Registered Non-Government Primary Schools, which together account for over 90% of formal education provision. It was also planned to include all schools in certain activities, particularly training. However, for a variety of reasons,²⁵ it was not possible to fully include government-funded non-formal education programmes, nor to develop a framework for PEDP that provided strategic direction for NGO education programmes. This left an obvious gap and, early in PEDP-II and in an atmosphere of some controversy, a new NFE Bureau was established within DPE and a new NFE project (Reaching Out Of School Children – ROSC) developed. Thus, PEDP-II is now the major (by far) – but not the only – programme of the DPE and has lost some of its original institutional coherence.

PEDP-II is well defined in terms of content. Indeed, rather than the flexible strategic framework that is usually associated with a SWAp, PEDP-II has a detailed Macro Plan, 'project proforma' and a PEDP Liaison Unit (PLU) within the DPE, supported by ADB as a lead donor. Thus PEDP-II combines some features of a SWAp and some of a more traditional large multi-funded project. It is also noted that, while PEDP-II was designed to take place within, and actively support, progressive devolution of decision making, the PEDP-II Macro Plan is essentially top-down and based on the centralized approach to educational management that has existed up until now.

In practice, so far this hybrid approach does seem to have led to improved coordination and coherence in comparison with PEDP-I. However, there also continue to be major challenges of unwieldy implementation, inflexibility and huge burdens on DPE officers at the central level. It is anticipated that these overall design issues will be a major focus of the upcoming MTR.

4.1.3 Nepal

It was noted in the introduction of EFA-N that, while viewed as a SWAp by the involved partners, it in fact might best be described as a programme-based approach representing a mid-way stage towards a SWAp (the SSA). The sectoral range of EFA-N is in fact a little broader than PEDP-II, covering pre-primary education/ECD programmes, non-formal education and adult literacy, in addition to formal primary education. However, the missing factor in EFA-N is a *strategic framework and budget* for the sub-sector (basic education) that it intends to cover. The EFA Core Document is very general and at best can be described as statement of aspirations and broad directions. Furthermore, EFA-N can only be said to be the major – not the only – programme of the government in the basic education sector. There are also many separate projects and initiatives in the sub-sector that fall outside EFA-N, including some with separate project budgets and many implemented by NGOs that have escaped government perusal altogether. Even some of the pooling donors give additional project funds outside the pool.

Within this rather muddled picture and lack of clear articulation of strategy, it is difficult to identify overall strategic directions in basic education in Nepal. Whilst, in theory, the overall move is towards decentralization, reflecting the wider strategy of government, there are at the same time quite a number of 'top-down' and centrally managed components in EFA-N and many of the approaches being taken appear contradictory.

²⁵ These included the complexity of the context, the problems with the former DNFE and a general desire to 'get going' with something manageable, following a rather convoluted planning process.

4.1.4 Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's ESDFP covers the full pre-primary, primary and secondary sectors, including non-formal basic education for children and youth. There is a clear strategic framework that acts as the core document, which focuses on overall strategic directions. Meanwhile, detailed planning takes place at decentralized levels. Bottom-up school plans have been consolidated as zonal plans, which in turn have been consolidated as provincial plans. The total sector programme incorporates these provincial plans, alongside those of the central Ministry and other relevant institutions. There is use of a Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) for year-on-year planning at all levels within the predicted resource envelope. Whilst only the WB funds government directly (so this cannot be described as a pool), the funding and activities of other education donors are 'on budget' and within the overall framework. In these respects, the SWAp in Sri Lanka conforms with the theoretical model to a greater degree than the other two.

There is one important difference, however. Donor funds are less significant than in most other countries that have embarked on a SWAp and government leadership is particularly strong. Concerns about the distortional or 'capacity-draining' effects of projects have been a less important rationale for a SWAp than is usually the case. The 'core' DP group of donors expecting to give substantial long-term support to the sector is relatively small, whilst this group is supplemented by a number of donors that have recently come into the sector for a time-bound period, with the specific rationale of supporting 'social cohesion' through education.

4.2 SWAp Goals, Performance Indicators, Plans and Budgets

4.2.1 Country comparison table

Table 4.2 summarizes the overall goals and objectives of the three programmes.

TABLE 4.2 Goals, objectives and performance indicators

BANGLADESH PEDP-II	NEPAL EFA-N	SRI LANKA ESDFP
<p>Goals</p> <p>1. Increase primary school access, participation, and completion in accordance with the government's EFA and other policy commitments</p> <p>2. Improve the quality of student learning and performance outcomes</p>	<p>Goals</p> <p>EFA-N takes its goals from the EFA Dakar Goals, adding an additional one on mother tongue teaching, namely: 'Ensuring the right of indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through the mother tongue'</p>	

BANGLADESH PEDP-II	NEPAL EFA-N	SRI LANKA ESDFP
<p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the quality of the education provision to all children. Although at present it is planned that the most direct interventions will be introduced in GPS and RNGPS schools, there will be interventions that will impact all children in all schools 2. Improve educational opportunities for all children of primary school age, including the opportunities of children with special needs 3. Promulgate and advance key educational reforms, especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ definition and implementation of a minimum standard of educational services or Primary School Quality Level (PSQL) ■ designation and formation of a Primary School Cadre providing an appropriate career and promotion structure for primary teachers and others with primary education expertise and experience ■ organizational capacity building and systematic change, consistent with a policy of increased devolution of authority and responsibility, to ensure improved management and monitoring, and the institutionalization and sustainability of interventions made under PEDP-I and PEDP-II 	<p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure access and equity in primary education 2. Enhance quality and relevance of primary education 3. Improve efficiency and institutional capacity 	<p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote equity by enabling all children in the country to access and complete basic and secondary education 2. Improve the quality of basic and secondary education 3. Enhance the efficiency and equity of resource allocation 4. Strengthen education governance and service delivery

BANGLADESH PEDP-II	NEPAL EFA-N	SRI LANKA ESDFP
<p>Components</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building 2. Quality improvement in schools and classrooms 3. Quality improvement through infrastructure development 4. Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling 5. PEDP-II implementation, management, and monitoring 	<p>Components</p> <p>Components are matched to the Nepal EFA goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanding and improving ECD 2. Ensuring access to education for all children 3. Meeting the learning needs of all children (including indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities) 4. Reducing adult illiteracy 5. Elimination of gender disparity 6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education 	<p>Components</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equity in Access 2. Equity in Quality 3. Equity in Resource Allocation 4. Governance
<p>Performance Indicators (Selection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The number of disabled children out of school (reduced by 30 per cent by 2010) ■ Student absenteeism (reduced to 20% by 2010, with no discrepancy between boys and girls) ■ Education achievement by gender (achievement of girls improved to at least the same level as boys by 2010) ■ Transition rate from Class 5 to Class 6 (increased to 40 per cent, with gender parity, by 2010) ■ Schools achieve a minimum quality standard as defined by Primary School Quality Level Indicators (PSQL) 	<p>Performance Indicators (Selection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Primary NER and completion, by gender, ethnicity, caste, district, region, ecological zone ■ Numbers of OOS children ■ % woman teachers 	<p>Performance Indicators (Selection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Primary and secondary NER ■ Numbers of OOS children ■ Numbers of children in receipt of mid-day meals, textbooks, uniform material, etc. ■ Number of active attendance committees ■ Number of disabled students enrolled in regular schools ■ Number of special education centres and centres for street children ■ % professionally qualified teachers in difficult schools ■ Cognitive achievement scores on first language, mathematics in Grades 4, 8 and 10, by school, district, urban/rural areas and sex

4.2.2 Bangladesh

It can be seen in the above table that Bangladesh PEDP-II set clear overall objectives in relation to some aspects of equity, particularly gender and disability. It has already been noted that PEDP-II

has a clear but rather cumbersome Master Plan, reflecting its centralized and bureaucratic system. The overall plan has four major components, plus a fifth that is concerned with implementation and management. Each of the four major components has its own Action Plan, in which some of the activities of former (PEDP-I) projects are re-conceived and integrated.

At the PEDP-II design stage, it was conceived that equity and inclusion would be covered predominantly in Component 4, through continuation of a range of strategies (including free education and the stipends programme) to promote access. On the quality side (Component 2), a key integrating concept is that of ‘minimum standards’ known as *Primary School Quality Levels* (PSQL). The intention is to shift focus from programmes of inputs to channelling resources and targeting training to those schools where these standards are not yet achieved. The PSQL include some equity-related measures (for example, standards for latrine provision), but are not comprehensive, particularly with regard to headteachers’ and teachers’ skills for ensuring equity in school management and the teaching–learning process.

While PEDP-II was still in the design stage, it came to be perceived that a further mechanism was needed, for guiding actions across all components for addressing equity concerns. A series of workshops and consultations between 2003 and 2005 led to the development of the *PEDP-II Access and Inclusive Education Framework*. This articulates an approach that focuses on equitable inclusion of *all* children (i.e. going well beyond inclusion of children with disabilities and special educational needs, as the term is often used elsewhere). It identifies how gender, equity and inclusion can be mainstreamed in and through the components of PEDP-II, focusing particularly on Components 2 and 4. There is also a stronger emphasis on school-level change and community participation than in the Macro Plan: ‘*implementing the principles of inclusion education will require everyone in the system to proactively create equal opportunities in school and support teachers to meet the needs of children in the classroom.*’ To enable implementation of this framework, an Access and Inclusive Education Cell (AIEC) has been set up in the DPE.

The AIEF highlights four areas (in terms of target groups) in which actions need to be taken in order to make primary education more inclusive: Gender, Children with Disabilities/Special Needs, Indigenous Children and Vulnerable Groups. Action Plans have been developed around these thematic areas. However, for the moment, the Action Plans that are approved are seen as ‘additional’ and are not fully integrated into PEDP-II component workplans or the workplans of the relevant staff. They are also not yet sufficiently linked to each other and it is now planned to merge them. The new AIE Cell is, however, not yet fully capacitated, equipped and empowered to take forward its mainstreaming agenda.

In summary, there has been important conceptual development in relation to gender and equity, with the development of a concept of ‘inclusive education’ that makes sense in the Bangladesh context. The concept of mainstreaming is taking root, and there are the beginnings of frameworks and institutional structures to help this to happen in practice. However, there are still many challenges ahead to achieve a fully coherent and mainstreamed approach. There is also an apparent gap in the current plans with regard to emergency responsiveness, given that in Bangladesh most ‘natural disasters’ are expected cyclical natural events.

4.2.3 Nepal

While Nepal shares with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka overall objectives that relate to ‘access, quality and management’, it is notable that the overall goals are related to the Dakar goals

and it is these, not the three strategic objectives, which have shaped the design of the components that have guided implementation. The EFA-N core document does not take the form of a strategic plan for the sector, but is a more general framework that seeks to bring together seven thematic plans that were developed around the seven EFA goals. The core document itself states an overarching goal for the programme to *'ensure each child access and completion of free and compulsory quality basic and primary education, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and geographical location.'* The summative text of the document commits to addressing gender equality and social inclusion. However, there is a mismatch between this and the thematic plans that form the basis for each component. These plans include a specific plan for gender equity, but at the same time none of the others has a gendered perspective. Different disparities appear rather randomly in different plans; for example, Dalits are referred to in the life skills plan, 'vulnerable groups' (not defined) in the ECD plan and women in the plan for adult literacy. Even the plan for indigenous languages gives the impression of referring to a homogenous group. There is minimal linkage between one component plan and another.

This is combined with the complex situation of a 'SWAp' that is defined by pooled funding, with much project activity still going on outside it. Under each theme there operate a range of government interventions utilizing government and 'pooling donor' resources alongside various separate projects. The framework is so broad that almost any initiative could be justified as 'fitting'. Whilst the overall strategic direction is decentralization of decision making and resources to school level, for the time being this is taking place in parallel with a range of other approaches. Annual EFA-N planning and budgeting processes tend to take the form of the presentation of a 'wish list' to donors. As this is not based on clearly agreed priorities or clarity on overall funding availability, there is no particular rationale for prioritizing one activity over another or protecting some expenditures whilst dropping others.

This creates problems in defining Nepal's overall approach to gender and equity. There is increasing talk of the need for mainstreaming of equity issues, but no agreement on overall priorities or a clear structure to enable mainstreaming to happen. Whilst there are many creative initiatives underway, a range of different – even contradictory – approaches exist alongside, but in isolation from, each other (for example, mother tongue language teaching as separate from general quality development). ECD and NFE have tended to be seen as parallel and competing programmes/sub-sectors, rather than as strategies with the potential to accelerate the achievement of universal access to quality primary education. There is also no coherent approach for responding to the impact of recent conflict, or to any future outbreaks of violence, or natural disasters. In last year's Annual Strategic Implementation Plan (ASIP), around 6.2% of the budget was explicitly for gender and social exclusion activities, but no mechanism exists for assessing the degree of overall alignment of budgets to equity-related outcomes.

4.2.4 Sri Lanka

The Sri Lanka ESDP takes a rights-based stance to quality education for all and the reduction of disparities. Since provision is almost universal, the main focus is on quality and preventing dropout. There is also a focus on the restoration of normalcy after conflict and the Tsunami and the role of education in achieving social cohesion.

In Sri Lanka ESDPF's articulation of its goals and objectives (above), there is clearly an overt commitment to equity across the board, with attention to quality as well as access. How equity will be addressed across the components is expanded in the box below.

Sri Lanka: Equity Considerations Across Four Education Themes

Equity in Access

- Reiterated commitment to free education and other incentives
- Upgrading schools in each area to ensure more equal distribution of opportunities
- Reactivation of compulsory education units at local level
- NFE programmes for disabled children, street children and other excluded groups
- Expansion of adult literacy and basic education opportunities/community learning centres

Equity in Quality

- Curriculum reforms
- Improved examination and assessment
- Teacher development
- Focus on cognitive achievement and 'higher order' skills
- All of the above with a focus on the weakest schools

Equitable Resource Allocation

- A more flexible system that is expected to benefit disadvantaged schools
- Priority to allocations for 'higher order' processes (e.g. teacher development) and inputs (e.g. learning materials)

Strengthened Governance and Service Delivery

- School improvement linked to democratic and participatory processes
- HRD strategy with capacity building at all levels

Sri Lanka has taken as its overall approach the concept of a *Programme of School Improvement* (PSI) linked to the definition of quality standards and more efficient channelling of resources. Schools and communities will be more involved in planning strategies to achieve the quality standards, with disadvantaged schools targeted for extra support. This approach should, in theory, allow for responsiveness to local needs and mainstreaming of gender and equity concerns at school level. At the same time, 'social cohesion' and equity will be promoted through the curriculum, implying not only its *content* but also the *approaches* used to teaching and learning.

There is clear policy for the revitalization of NFE units, for bringing in the remaining out-of-school children and offering second chance programmes for older children who dropped out of primary school before completion. There are also some funds for 'emergency preparedness' training and for the incorporation of disaster management in the teacher training and school curricula, as well as a special targeted project (GTZ-supported) of support to the conflict-affected areas of the north and east.

In marked contrast to Nepal, budgets are aligned with the key operations under the four themes and a tracking system is planned to monitor expenditure. A results monitoring framework has been developed to assess progress in the implementation of the four thematic areas (discussed further in Section 4.5.3).

While there are some clear strengths, there are also some apparent weaknesses and gaps in the overall approach outlined in the ESDP. There are limited targets related to specific

vulnerable groups. Despite the focus on ‘inclusion’, there appears to be some confusion over policy for children with disabilities, with assumptions that NFE programmes will provide ‘special’ education. Gender is not well articulated as a dimension of equity, suggesting that the achievement of near-parity has resulted in overlooking deeper and wider gender equality issues. There appears to be a possible contradiction between the focus on equitable resource allocation and the development of ‘model schools’ and the link is not clearly articulated. Despite the stated rationale for the involvement of some donors being that of ‘social cohesion’, it appears to have proved more difficult to translate this aspiration into an articulate statement of approach.

4.3 Analysis of Gender and Equity to Inform SWAp Design

4.3.1 Bangladesh

There was no PEDP-II specific analysis of educational disparity in Bangladesh; rather, the analysis in the Macro Plan draws largely on work undertaken for the PRSP and for the final evaluation of PEDP-I. In the Macro Plan, there is a discussion under the heading of ‘*Issues of Equity and Inclusive Education*’. It is noted that ‘*poor and working children, girls, tribal and religious minorities, disabled children, children in different geographic and educational environments, and refugee children are at particular risk of being marginalized in the formal education system and require targeted strategies if equitable enrolment, completion and attainment are to be achieved.*’ For each of a wide range of under-served groups, there is presentation of statistics and issues that affect access, retention and achievement. However, this analysis was necessarily based on available data, which is far from complete. There are problems of *clarity*, for example a lack of clearly articulated definitions for types and level of severity, and also a general lack of *systematic linkage* of one issue with another. A number of groups and issues identified in this current study are not identified. Furthermore, government data tends to be on the optimistic side – a problem prevalent in many countries stemming from the systemic ‘incentives’ for over-reporting enrolments and progress at each level. A recent analysis on dropouts in a study by BRAC University, for example, found higher levels of dropout than official government data. PEDP-II was therefore based on a reasonable, but incomplete, analysis of the key dimensions of inequality and social exclusion that affect educational access and opportunity in Bangladesh.

Further analysis has been undertaken since, in the development of the various action plans and the Access and Inclusive Education Framework. Overall, this is found to be more detailed and nuanced than that for the Macro Plan, though again the same challenges of incomplete data were faced.

4.3.2 Nepal

In Nepal, the programme themes were not identified from a Nepal-specific analysis; rather, the EFA goal themes *defined* the shape of the analysis. MoE-led teams for each goal undertook thematic reports. There were thus separate reports on access (UPE), quality, gender and Nepal’s ‘additional’ goal relating to linguistic minorities, whilst other key dimensions relevant to the Nepal context (most glaringly, caste discrimination) were covered to a lesser extent under the general access theme. These certainly included some data on equity issues, especially for

gender, for which a 2002 gender audit was utilized. However, at that time, data on dimensions other than gender was quite limited. The Nepal Case Study concluded that analysis was very piecemeal, and the approach did not allow for a single, multi-dimensional analysis allowing for the linkage of one issue with another:

In programme design, MoES/DoE tends to rely on input-based information collected and produced by MoES/DoE itself and on district-level aggregated data rather than school-level data. Other available sources have not been well utilized, and the 'evidence base' for policy making and prioritization of activities remains weak.

In the section on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning it is noted how this situation has changed over time and how analyses are increasingly addressing the full range of disparities, as well as linking these to each other more systematically.

4.3.3 Sri Lanka

The Sri Lanka ESDFP was not preceded by a special analysis of equity and social exclusion issues, as there was extensive work to draw on that had been undertaken for the report of the National Education Commission (2003). This was a very intensive exercise, covering the situation in poor remote villages, the plantation sector, disabled children, street children and the destitute. Also utilized were studies of cognitive achievement of students from different backgrounds by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre 2002–03, data from the latest School Census, as well as the documented experience of recent donor-funded projects in education and a range of micro-studies on specific issues or population groups. It appears that these analyses have supported the creation of an ESDFP framework in which equity considerations are quite comprehensively covered. There is confident articulation in the SWAp framework of what the key issues are, along with identification of different 'categories' of disadvantage.

Nevertheless, there are some areas in which it appears that analysis could have been more thorough. In particular, the assumption of the achievement of 'gender parity' seems to have led to a lack of attention to gender disaggregation in analysis, making it impossible to identify any localized or context-specific gender disparities or issues, or to monitor whether gender national parity is being maintained over time. Linked to this has been relatively little attention to analysing 'gender equity in quality' issues.

4.4 Consultation, Participation, Communication

4.4.1 Bangladesh

The PEDP-II planning stage included a series of consultation workshops, culminating in a national seminar in 2003, attended by various experts, government, and non-government and donor agencies. These were run in a participatory manner and thus allowed for some degree of participation at the design stage. PEDP-II also took account of the PRSP, which in turn involved a Participatory Poverty Assessment. Likewise, in the development of the Access and Inclusive Education Framework and the various Action Plans, a range of stakeholders had opportunity to participate, including organizations representative of, or working with, disadvantaged and excluded groups.

However, what appears to be missing as yet is a mechanism for ongoing two-way communication with, and participation of, the *primary stakeholders*, namely children (in school and out-of-school), parents and communities, especially those currently marginalized. This need is noted in the Access and Inclusive Education Framework, in which it is recognized that decentralization under PEDP-II would allow for greater ongoing community involvement in educational decision making and monitoring.

4.4.2 Nepal

Government and DP study informants (for the Nepal Case Study) generally perceived that the EFA-N design process was more participatory and inclusive than for the previous BPEP phases. However, there is no documentation of consultations over thematic plans. There was apparently no systematic process to ensure the involvement of women, the disadvantaged, primary stakeholders or pupils. Dalit and Janajati organizations, as well as teachers' organizations, reported no involvement.

This problem has apparently continued into the implementation phase. The 'top-down' structures for implementation have not encouraged ongoing participation and 'two-way' communication and accountability. With a fixed programme framework and budget allocation being handed down from the centre, the sense of responsibility of the system towards students and community has tended to weaken. Teachers' unions are beginning to be included in various forums and discussions, but only to a limited extent. Meanwhile, communities have felt 'burdened' with extra responsibilities, rather than genuinely empowered through greater decision-making power or sense of entitlement.

4.4.3 Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the ESDFP planning stage was participatory in that it built up from school level. Headteachers, teachers and others were therefore not only informed but actually involved. However, one important issue that emerged during the planning process was that school-based planning did not necessarily automatically lead to the participation of pupils or the community, particularly of more disadvantaged members. Headteachers and local officials might not have had the motivation or incentive to be inclusive, or lacked the necessary skills to facilitate participation. The planning exercise has led to realization of the urgent need to build local level capacity, including community capacity for monitoring, if the new approach is to be successful. A further realization has been the need to include the Divisional Offices, since these are the closest administrative level to schools and communities.

4.5 SWAp Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

4.5.1 Bangladesh

The PEDP-II Macro Plan included provisions for a comprehensive baseline survey and the strengthening of the EMIS for data collection, analysis, reporting and use. The indicators to be measured include many pertaining to improving equity and inclusion, including:

- Enrolment, cohort survival, dropout and achievement by grade and gender
- Proportion of female Headteachers
- Percentage of female members of SMCs
- The proportion of female AUEOs (Assistant Upazilla Education Officers)

- Percentage of schools to have adopted explicit strategies to improve educational opportunities for disabled children

However, the baseline study has taken two years to complete and is still not yet formally 'approved'. There is thus now baseline data available, but it is already out of date. This also means that there has as yet been no monitoring data for use in joint reviews or for the upcoming Mid-Term Review. Again, progress has seemingly been constrained by attempting such a massive centralized exercise in such a large education system.

With the focus up until now on baseline development, there has as yet been little attention to the task of strengthening DPE's systems for data collection and monitoring. Some progress has been made, in particular in a system for the collection of gender-disaggregated data. However, there is still work to be done in terms of definitions and classifications (e.g. of disabled children) in order to improve disaggregation across other dimensions of disparity. There is also the vital underlying challenge of building capacity for data *analysis* and for *use* of data and information to inform decision making. The conceptualization of PEDP-II as a giant project, with limited built-in flexibility, has perhaps served as a disincentive for attention to this task. It is of great concern that, whilst the MTR might provide an opportunity for changes to be made to the Macro Plan, there might not be good information available to provide an evidence base on which to adjust policies and approaches.

4.5.2 Nepal

Nepal has seen a great deal of activity in relation to monitoring, evaluation and research. EFA-N includes support to strengthening both the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and the Training Management Information System (TMIS). There is also a system of biannual Flash Reports (with technical support from UNESCO) that give a 'cross section' of data to reveal key trends. The Technical Review of School Education (TRSE) is an annual report covering access and quality issues in the sector that links to the six-monthly Joint Review Meetings of government and DPs. There is also a (Norway-funded) Formative Research Project, which has undertaken research in a range of policy areas with the intention of feeding into policy. Furthermore, the DoE undertakes its own mini research projects and DPs also undertake separate monitoring activities to meet their own reporting needs.

Considerable improvements have been made in data collection and it has been an achievement in itself that reporting and amalgamation of basic data (enrolments, completion, etc.) has been maintained in the difficult security situation in many districts. As in Bangladesh, there have been marked improvements in the disaggregation of data, particularly by gender, and more recently the Flash Reports are also picking up on other equity dimensions (particularly ethnicity and caste). Some MoES/DoE officials perceive a 'culture change' in attitude to research, noting that the reports are now more likely to be used, rather than simply read and then shelved. One example given was of the findings on scholarships from the formative research leading to an increase in the amounts of funds for girls and Dalits, as well as linking scholarships to an attendance rate of minimum 80%.

However, a number of challenges remain. At central level, there is not yet an agreed, usable single classification system for collecting and analysing disaggregated data for variables other than gender (e.g. for caste, ethnicity), though there are at least now a number of good classifications available²⁶ that might be adopted. The TRSE is a time-bound activity and the formative research, likewise, is a project, and there are concerns that when these are completed

²⁶ For example the one that was developed for the Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment (GSEA), now published as DFID/ World Bank (2006) *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal*.

there will not have been sufficient institutionalization of the new approaches, or sufficient capacity developed to enable the ongoing commission, gathering and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information to provide a good evidence base for policy adjustment. Monitoring is also made overly complicated by too many separate exercises and systems, an issue returned to in Chapter 6.

There are also difficulties at district and school levels. Much is being expected, both of districts and schools, but they lack adequate financial and technical backup (particularly at school level). The focus has been on upward reporting, rather than for school and district level planning purposes that respond to local needs, therefore capacity for analysis and evidence-based planning at district level remains weak.

4.5.3 Sri Lanka

A *Results Monitoring Framework* is being developed as an integral part of ESDP. It is too early to judge how effective this will be in practice, but it is certainly promising that attention is being paid to clearly differentiating monitoring of inputs/activities from desired outcomes. There is also specific funding for *monitoring* (an ongoing internal process), *evaluation* (a more formal and external process) and *research* (for qualitative learning). Also encouraging is the proposed use of participatory methods of monitoring, such as citizen report cards and community score cards.

However, there are some surprising gaps, given the equity emphasis of the ESDP goals and overall strategies. Despite the intentions outlined in the ESDFP (see the performance indicators in Table 4.2), the framework has not been designed for disaggregation by gender or other key dimensions and it seems that the data to be collected nationally will contain only provincial level aggregations, not information on zones, districts or divisions. Given the situation in Sri Lanka of highly localized pockets of poverty and educational exclusion, as well as complex gendered patterns of dropout, this would seem to be a major omission that is likely to weaken effectiveness in achieving equity and inclusion.

Also, in common with the other two countries, there seem to have been problems in identifying measures of quality development. Unless these lacunae are addressed, it seems that the efforts being put into developing the framework might not reap the hoped-for results. The experience of the SWAp planning exercise also suggests that there will need to be considerably more attention to local level capacity for data collection, analysis and use. A number of principals and local officials consulted during the Sri Lanka Case Study were apparently experiencing difficulties with the new framework and it seems there is a danger that, as in Nepal, this comes to be seen as yet another top-down reporting requirement, and not a useful tool for decision making and resource allocation at local levels.

4.6 Institutional and Capacity Development for Understanding and Addressing Educational Disparity

4.6.1 Bangladesh

PEDP has a specific component related to management and organizational development which recognizes the importance of 'governance'. It stresses capacity development for the *implementation* of PEDP-II. Implicitly this includes implementation of strategies to address

equity. However, perhaps because of the separation of MoPME from DPE, there is seemingly less attention to long-term analytical and policy development capacity, either generally or in relation to analysing and addressing equity issues.

Likewise, there has so far been limited scope for adjusting institutional structures to reflect the intended ‘mainstreaming’ approach. The main initiative has been the setting up of the Access and Inclusive Education Cell within DPE, with some TA support. This Cell is taking overall leadership on implementation of the Access and Inclusive Education Framework and its related action plans. It has also commenced the task of supporting capacity development across DPE. However, it is not clear the extent to which this cell is embedded institutionally or how far shared responsibilities for mainstreaming are written into job descriptions and performance management mechanisms across DPE. For the time being, the achievements of the Cell appear to depend on the energy, commitment and persuasive powers of its overstretched team members. Furthermore, there has been rather rapid turnover of national and international TA to support the AIEC, as staff purportedly found it difficult to be effective in the stifling institutional environment.

Meanwhile, existing relevant expertise is seemingly being under-utilized within PEDP-II. There has apparently been little systematic identification of possible sources of professional expertise to support educational inclusion through PEDP-II, including that of the National Association for Primary Education (NAPE) and institutions linked to other sectors (e.g. Ministry of Social Welfare, which has until recently been responsible for education of disabled children). NGOs with proven competences and experience in working with specific ‘hard to reach’ groups have been engaged in consultations, particularly on the Access and Inclusive Education Framework, but the structures do not exist for enabling them to play a systematic support role in developing system-wide capacity.

Overall, in Bangladesh, there is a sense that the huge capacity implications of PEDP-II were recognized by many from the start, but that the warnings were not heeded.

4.6.2 Nepal

The EFA-N pooled fund includes funds for capacity building. So far, this has mostly been in the form of various training programmes for teachers and schools (covered more fully in Chapter 5 under quality-related strategies), as well as districts and ministry departments. At central level, this has included TA at the beginning of the programme focused on building up a ‘sector mentality’, as well as ongoing inputs into various areas. Overall, not only has capacity building been patchy but, because of the weaknesses of the overall strategic framework and in donor coordination, it has proved impossible to achieve a rational overall approach to institutional and capacity development, or even an agreement on what are the key priorities.

With regard to equity and inclusion issues, there have been some successes. There appears to be steadily improving understanding of the issues, in particular a new willingness to consider caste and ethnicity in addition to gender. The Nepal Case Study notes that ‘*different levels (simple and sophisticated) and methods (quantitative and qualitative) of equity analysis exercises included in training programmes positively impact the planning and programming exercises.*’ A former *Women’s Education Section (WES)* has been combined with the IE section to form a new *Gender and Equity Development Section (GEDS)*, which will have more of a strategic, mainstreaming function. However, so far, capacity support seems to have focused on

the management of scholarships and other equity programmes, but less on *institutional* concerns, e.g. structures, roles and responsibilities, incentives or ensuring equal opportunities within the administration itself. The NFE unit seems to have been given low priority, with implications for equity and inclusion.

Meanwhile, the districts are experiencing increased responsibility and demands upon them, without increased powers or a systematic approach to building capacity or developing structures for being effective in the new roles. There is a tendency for the District Education Plans (as well as the central Annual Strategic Implementation Plan) to be seen as a written product, not a *process* of capacity building for analysis of needs, identifying strategies and targeting effectively. (There is a parallel problem with School Improvement Plans, that is picked up again in Chapter 5.) Again, there is a lack of attention to capacity building for NFE supervision. This lack of support at the district level has led to a situation where in some cases there is greater understanding and capacity in relation to equity issues demonstrated by teachers and trainers (owing to training opportunities and many project inputs over the years) than by those who supervise and manage them. This leads to another issue, that there has as yet been little building-in of incentives and rewards for effectively promoting equity and social inclusion. Promotion and reward are still linked primarily to seniority and years of service. Not only might there be little incentive for supporting equity and social inclusion measures (beyond personal commitment and interest), but, because of the lack of institutionalization of EFA-N initiatives (and the continued adding of new ones), there is even a disincentive, since 'equity' initiatives are isolated from what is seen as the 'regular' programme, viewed as 'additional' or even as 'diverting energy'.

4.6.3 Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, there is attention to governance and capacity building in the fourth component of ESDP. However, so far, whilst the programme itself is focused on the Programme for School Improvement (PSI), most capacity-development efforts seem to have been targeted at central levels. Because of the permeation of 'equity' throughout the components, there are capacity-building efforts that should impact on the addressing of equity, for example related to resource allocation, monitoring, identifying out-of-school children and so on. However, even at these levels, there has possibly been an over-reliance on training, but relatively little use of other tools for ensuring progressive and systematic development, not only of required narrow 'implementation' skills, but also of the broader requirements of change, which might include changes in attitude and 'mindset'. At the lower levels, there is some evidence that the PSI has re-motivated some schools and teachers, for example to visit the homes of students having difficulties or not attending. However, it seems that more is needed to overcome the apathy/lethargy that prevails to a large extent.

With regard to addressing gender and equity, analytical skills are now required at every level, down to that of schools and communities. Meanwhile, as touched upon previously, there is a need for attention to attitudinal change and for considering what factors act as incentives for local-level administrators to 'act equitably'.

5. Strategies to Address Social Exclusion and Gender Disparity

5.1 Strategies for Equity in Access and Completion

5.1.1 The strategies

All three countries are implementing a range of specific strategies to address the demand and supply barriers to access and completion. Table 5.1 summarizes the main strategies that are being utilized in each case.

TABLE 5.1 Strategies for equity in access and completion

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL	SRI LANKA
Addressing barriers related to poverty and educational costs	Continued free primary education and stipend programme covering 40% of students, mostly girls. Intention to review the government stipend and provide 100% stipend support for indigenous children Expanded access to lower secondary education is not a part of PEDP-II. Secondary education project in a separate ministry	Primary education free of fees Scholarships to cover direct costs, targeted at girls, Dalits, disabled children and disadvantaged ethnic groups ECD strategy requires community cost sharing SESP focuses on expanding access and reducing the gender gap in secondary education selected poor districts	Re-iterated commitment to free education and other incentives. Good coverage of direct costs and range of incentives including uniforms, transport, materials New programme of grade 1–3 midday meals in primary schools in disadvantaged communities Expansion of adult literacy and basic education opportunities/community learning centres (with recognition of links to access to schooling) Free secondary education is well established. Stipends under ESDFP for secondary students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and for senior secondary students from poor backgrounds for science and IT

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL	SRI LANKA
Addressing the attitudinal barriers to access and equity	‘Advocacy’ is strongly emphasized in Action Plans for gender, disability, indigenous children and vulnerable children	Wider movements in society to challenge subordinate position of women, Dalits and some ethnic groups Within EFA-N ‘advocacy’ as a component of a range of programmes and initiatives	
Enrolment drives/ compulsory education		‘Welcome to School’ campaign and identification of ‘hard to reach’ children at district levels	Reactivation of compulsory education units at local level. Island wide survey of ‘hard to reach’ children, undertaken at local levels, linked to enrolment in primary education and NFE
Expanding access through new schools and facilities	Significant school building, including attention to separate latrines for girls and boys, water provision and ramps for access to physically disabled persons Construction of residential schools and hostels where required	Significant school building, including attention to separate latrines for girls and boys and water provision	Upgrading schools in each area to ensure more equal distribution of opportunities
Teacher deployment and incentives	Increasing overall number of teachers and number of women teachers Incentives for female teachers in rural areas Relaxing qualification level for indigenous teachers	Redeploying teachers to areas with shortages Schemes to train, support and deploy Dalit, Janajati and Female teachers	40% salary supplement for difficult or remote postings
Expanding access through flexible approaches	Multigrade schools in Chittagong Hill Tracts	Expanding multi-grade schools in remote communities	

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL	SRI LANKA
		Double shifting as a short term strategy in urban areas	
Non Formal primary-level provision	NFPE through separate ROSC project and NGO programmes, not within PEDP-II	Range of NFE programmes targeted at street children, rural girls and others	NFE programmes for disabled children, street children and other excluded groups
ECCE	Pre-primary classes in targeted poor areas	Pilots of pre-primary classes in poor, Dalit and minority language communities 'Matching funds' scheme for communities to set up ECD programmes	

5.1.2 Commentary on strategies

Reducing the costs of education

In all three countries, poverty was identified as a major factor causing children to not enrol, or to drop out prematurely. All three have eliminated direct fees for primary education and taken steps to remove other direct costs, while Sri Lanka has a particularly comprehensive approach to also mitigating the 'lost opportunity costs'.

In **Bangladesh**, the move to a SWAp modality, and the assurance of longer term, more flexible financial support from donors, seems to have helped more effectively enabling the channelling of funds to school level and for developing a stipends system that disadvantaged students can rely on for their full cycle of primary education. **Sri Lanka's** approach of even more focus on removing the cost barriers through provision of school meals is not yet proven, but there is strong optimism based on experiences to date. Some, however, consider that even the wide range of measures taken might not prove comprehensive enough to completely prevent dropout. In **Nepal**, meanwhile, it has been found that the targeted scholarships are not necessarily reaching the neediest children and the amount is not adequate even to meet direct costs, let alone compensate for the 'opportunity costs' of education. Formative Research found that only 50% of eligible girls and Dalits, and a limited number of street children and conflict-affected children in only four districts, are benefiting and that there is a misuse of scholarship funds in some schools. A new approach is therefore now being piloted, based on poverty mapping.

In **Nepal**, there are also considerable concerns about the impact of the 'community schools' initiative, which is intended to improve community participation in school management but also appears to be having the effect of markedly increasing the amount that communities have to contribute, thus undermining the strategy of free education. Furthermore, the approach to ECD of providing 'matching funds' for community-led efforts, is, as the Nepal Case Study puts it, '*equal treatment to the unequal*', therefore more likely to exacerbate inequity than to act as an equalizer by

extending ECD opportunities to those who would most benefit. It seems surprising that it is being assumed that parents who cannot pay for primary education would be able to pay for ECD and the contradiction in approach is indicative of the underlying lack of coherence of the EFA-N programme.

Whilst only the **Sri Lanka** SWAp includes secondary education (where it has been free for some decades), it is worth noting that in **Nepal** (SESP) and in **Bangladesh** (through a separate secondary education project in the MoE), efforts are being made to reduce the costs of lower secondary education to children from poor backgrounds, especially girls. This is apparently effective up to a point – for example in **Bangladesh** gender parity has been achieved at this level. However, it is noted that many of the poorest (girls and boys) have already dropped out at primary level in Bangladesh, whilst in **Nepal** girls, Dalits and Janajatis have disproportionately dropped out. Full equity in secondary education is therefore not yet achievable. In Nepal SESP, it is also being found that eligible girls cannot avail themselves of eligible scholarships because there is not yet a secondary school within reach and/or appropriate boarding facilities are not yet available.

Overall, reducing the cost barriers to education is seemingly being given high priority. However, there is a need for even further attention to the indirect and opportunity costs, as well as ensuring overall policy consistency.

Addressing discrimination and attitudinal barriers

It was shown in Chapter 2 that attitudinal barriers to educational equality are significant, particularly caste- and gender-based discrimination in **Nepal** and **Bangladesh**. All three countries have identified in their education plans that there are barriers such as ‘low interest’,²⁷ discrimination against girls or Dalits or traditional beliefs about disability. However, strategies for addressing these areas do not come across strongly in the overall plans, except for the focus on ‘advocacy’ in the Bangladesh AIEF. Particularly in Bangladesh and Nepal, there are wider movements and media campaigns to address social exclusion, but explicit linkages are not being made. It is not clear why this is so. The **Sri Lanka** study suggests that it might be owing to a disillusionment with traditional top-down ‘IEC’²⁸ approaches, combined with an uncertainty about what to do instead. It is observed that education administrators are not necessarily good ‘people persons’, whilst those with good community mobilization skills in other sectors, or NGOs, have not been fully brought into the SWAp.

In **Nepal** and **Bangladesh**, former and current projects have helped schools and communities to successfully address many of the attitudinal barriers themselves. Strategies used at community level include bringing on board local political and religious leaders, as well as young people who have successfully overcome discriminatory barriers and completed their education (e.g. minority girls), to advocate the benefits to others in their communities. The challenge seems to be to find ways to scale up these successes within the SWAp.

Enrolment drives/enforcement of compulsory education

Only **Sri Lanka** appears to have focused on enforcing compulsory primary education, though it is also compulsory in the other two countries. The main approach has been to undertake an island-wide survey of out-of-school children and to reactivate the compulsory education committees (*‘Grama Niladaris’*). This seems to be having some success in identifying out-of-school children and bringing them into school and NFE programmes. However, there have been

²⁷ Some international research, however, suggests that ‘low interest’ in education is often a misperception of dominant groups or teachers, and that even the very poor will make great sacrifices for their children’s education if it is perceived as relevant to their needs and life situations (e.g. Sibbons, Boyle, Brock, Mace (2003). *Reaching the Poor: The Costs of Sending Children to School*. DFID Education Paper No. 47. DFID).

²⁸ IEC= Information, Education, Communication – a top down strategy commonly used in the 1980s–90s.

some challenges, for example some committees proving unmotivated and refusing to organize meetings as no per diem payments are provided.

Nepal has also made attempts to identify and reach the 'hard to reach' children, but this has been difficult to achieve because of the non-functioning of many district governments. There was also an attempt at a special enrolment drive called 'Welcome to School', which focused on getting all children of the right age into Grade 1 at the beginning of the 2006 school year. It proved very successful in terms of intake, but insufficient planning of what would actually be the approach to the children once enrolled meant that in many cases teachers were unprepared. Grade 1 classes were even more crowded than usual, and as a result many children dropped out within weeks.

Overall, it appears that enrolment drives might have their place, but only if properly synergized with quality improvements focused on NFE and Grade 1.

School infrastructure and facilities

There has been a strong focus in all three countries on infrastructure and facilities with, in each case, some attempts to channel available funding to those schools that have the most need. In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** the focus is mainly on classrooms and very basic facilities (including latrines) for expanding access, whilst in **Sri Lanka** the emphasis is also on enhancing the quality of the wider learning environment. It seems that in all three cases there is now a strong awareness of the way that poor water and sanitation provision particularly disadvantages girls, and there are also some attempts to promote access for people with mobility-related disabilities. In all three countries, particularly Nepal and Bangladesh, there do appear to be improved enrolments that are linked to physical expansion and, indeed, examples of children who cannot enrol because of a lack of infrastructure (e.g. secondary-level girls in Nepal). In Nepal there has also been some flexibility for provision of temporary classrooms in conflict-affected areas.

Whilst the provision of facilities seems to be having a clear impact, in each case there is little evidence of an attempt to look more broadly and deeply into developing facilities to promote equity and participation. None of the three countries appears to have comprehensive guidelines for facilities development or definitions of minimum standards. For example, it might be expected for there to be consideration of caste issues in relation to water and sanitation provision (in Nepal), policies on reflecting local building styles in minority areas and also consideration of features to enhance access not only for those with mobility impairments but also for those with other kinds of disability. A further gap seems to be in relation to guidance to schools on the best use of new classrooms and facilities (many schools in Nepal delegate the best new classrooms to the upper grades, by which point the poorest children have already dropped out). In **Nepal** and **Sri Lanka**, despite attempts at targeting, criteria for identifying and prioritizing schools for upgrading have been unclear. Furthermore, there are a number of implementation challenges, some linked with overly centralized implementation modalities, others (e.g. Sri Lanka's latrine construction programme) due to funding bottlenecks. Overall, it appears that further advantage could be taken of the strong focus on classrooms and facilities to enhance equity in access and opportunity.

Teachers for learners

The three countries all face certain problems of teacher supply and deployment. **Nepal**, for example, has only around 31% trained teachers and this percentage has slightly decreased

over the past 5 years (Global Monitoring Report, 2007). **Bangladesh**, likewise, has a great need for trained teachers, whilst **Sri Lanka** has shortages in certain subjects. With regard to equity and inclusion, a key issue is that overall shortages, and shortages of well-qualified teachers, are most acute in poor and remote rural communities that are already disadvantaged. Bangladesh and Nepal also have shortages of women teachers in rural areas and of teachers from excluded or minority communities (e.g. Dalits, minority language groups).

All three countries have strategies to recruit and train new teachers, as well as to offer incentives to qualified teachers to work in rural and 'difficult' areas. In **Nepal** and **Bangladesh**, these include particular strategies related to women, Dalit and indigenous teachers. **Bangladesh** has been able to deploy over 9000 teachers since the start of PEDP-II, which is seen as one of the major concrete achievements up until now. Incentive schemes, however, are meeting with mixed success. It has been realized that additional salary might not be enough – this also needs to be paid on time and accompanied by measures to ensure that teachers are secure and supported in 'difficult' or remote postings.

In both **Nepal** and **Bangladesh**, moreover, there are tensions between the need to improve teachers' overall qualification level and the need to enable those from excluded groups who have been denied good basic education to become teachers. Not only are donor policies apparently changing on this issue, but countries are also under pressure to keep a ceiling on their total teacher numbers, which tends to result in 'rationalization' entirely according to theoretical class sizes, with limited attention to the geographic and political realities and the actual needs of schools in order for all children to have an appropriate mix of competent teachers to meet the full range of their learning needs.

Overall, it is clear that provision of teachers is seen as a serious priority and there is some attempt to improve participation of women in the teaching profession and to match teachers to the needs of schools to promote equity. However, the deployment of the 'right' teachers in the 'right' place still continues to suffer from an over-focus on average pupil:teacher ratios as opposed to the actual needs of schools to be able to provide good education to all children. Meanwhile, there is perhaps insufficient attention to creative approaches needed to recruit and skill teachers from educationally disadvantaged groups, and to enable women to live and work in rural areas away from their own homes. Behind this, particularly in **Nepal**, seems to be an unwillingness to include teachers – and teacher organizations – in problem solving and decision making.

Flexible and non-formal/alternative provision

Multi-grade approaches are being expanded in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, whilst many of the smaller 'Type 3' schools in **Sri Lanka** are facing closure. It seems inevitable that this latter policy will exclude some children from school, or cause late enrolment. The plantation communities would be disproportionately affected and there could also be an impact on girls' enrolment, particularly in areas where there are security concerns. In **Bangladesh**, there have been pilots to implement flexible school calendars and timing according to local needs, but there is no clear evidence on their effectiveness as yet.

Non-formal education has already been discussed in relation to its overall conceptualization and role within (or outside) the case study SWAps. It has been noted that in **Bangladesh** NFE is outside PEDP-II.

In **Nepal**, NFPE is seen, at least in theory, as an important strategy for reaching all children with quality education. Programmes that have been running for some time are being continually reviewed and improved and there is considerable expertise available, particularly within NGOs. However, NFPE continues to suffer from a lack of strategic planning, e.g. calculating the likely need in each district in relation to the existence of ‘hard to reach’ groups and in relation to trends in the formal system. There has also been limited support to capacity development for NFE within the DoE and at district level, as well as ongoing poor coordination and learning between government-supported and NGO-run programmes. In the absence of a clear overall strategy, as well as realistic calculations of the costs of delivery quality NFE that has real ‘equivalence’, NFE seems to be one of the first areas to suffer when funding is short. As a result, NFE programmes are not reaching all the children who need them and appear to be more of a ‘second class system’ for the poor, rather than part of an overall system for delivering quality education for all children.

In **Sri Lanka**, there are similar issues. There has been an attempt to revitalize NFPE under the ESDP, following years of under-funding and neglect. Enrolments have increased and, for the first time, there are government-run learning centres for street children, a group that had formerly been left to NGOs. However, there continues to be a reluctance to fund NFPE to the level needed for minimum quality. While Sri Lanka (like Nepal) does not face such a complex situation as Bangladesh, there is nevertheless scope for greater synergy and lesson-learning between formal and non-formal education and between government- and NGO-supported programmes.

Overall, it seems that both multigrade approaches and NFE are recognized as having an important role in enhancing access to children of remote populations and ‘hard to reach’ groups. However, in all three cases, there are challenges in terms of conceptualizing these within the sector as a whole and providing sufficient funding to ensure parity of quality.

ECD as an equity and inclusion strategy

In **Bangladesh**, there is some coverage of ECD in PEDP-II with the aim of reaching the most excluded, including indigenous children, with bilingual ECD programmes. In EFA-N, there is a whole sub-component on ECD, though it receives a small percentage of total funding. This, according to the Core Document, is to be targeted at the poorest and most excluded communities, as well as minority language children, to include one year pre-school classes and community-based approaches. Evidence from ECD projects in the region, especially in **Nepal**, show that ECD can be effective in ‘levelling the playing field’ when programmes are tailored to community needs, language, culture and existing parenting practices, as well as linked with health and nutrition support and wider economic activities.

However, evidence on the actual impact of these programmes under the SWAps is lacking. In both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, in common with many other countries, there is a lack of agreed indicators either for *quality of ECD provision*, or for *expected developmental outcomes* for young children who participate in ECD programmes, without which impact cannot be measured. In **Nepal**, a major concern (already noted above) is that ECD under EFA-N has switched to a ‘matching grants’ approach. Some relatively poor children might be benefiting from ECD programmes, but it seems almost certain that the poorest and most excluded will be disadvantaged by this policy, and therefore that the potential of ECD to support equity and social inclusion will not be realized.

5.2 Strategies for Equity in Quality and Learning Outcomes

5.2.1 The strategies

Table 5.2 summarizes the main strategies that are being used in each of the three countries to promote good quality education with inclusion and equity.

TABLE 5.2 Strategies for equity in quality and learning outcomes

	BANGLADESH	NEPAL	SRI LANKA
School management and community participation	School Level Improvement Plans (SLIPs)	School Improvement Planning and Community Schools Initiative	Programme of School Improvement, linked to School Development Committees and School Management Teams
Curriculum, assessment and methodology	Introduction of learner-centred, child friendly and inclusive approaches	Active learning and a learner-centred curriculum	Modernization of assessment and examination system. Active learning approaches Monitoring of curriculum content and materials by language, content, ethnicity and gender, ensuring parity between Sinhala and Tamil versions
Language, literacy and bilingualism	Mother tongue/ bilingual education in minority areas	Intention of bilingual education for non-Nepali speakers. Pilot projects in some areas	Education in two main languages is already well established – focus on improving quality, as well as teaching of English
Teacher competence, training and support/ supervision	In-service training programmes – gender modules integrated		In-service training programme and development of teacher support networks
Increasing and equalizing resources for teaching and learning	Provision of standard textbooks to all pupils	Improving textbook provision and supply General learning materials, especially for lower grades	Strong focus on the area, with emphasis on ‘higher order’ resources and on all schools achieving defined levels of resourcing

5.2.2 Commentary on strategies

Decentralizing funds and decision making to school/community level combined with improving school management and community participation

This general strategic direction in all three countries is to channel more funds to school level so that schools can develop their own quality improvement strategies that take account of the local situation. Combined with this are measures to improve school management, including community participation in management. School Development Planning (under different names) is the key tool for achieving this move from an input-based 'package' approach to the participatory development of holistic strategies for school improvement. In **Nepal**, things have gone further, with the complete handing over of some schools to community management.

This undoubtedly has the potential to improve equity, by increasing participation of disadvantaged stakeholders and using available resources better to respond appropriately to local problems and priorities. There is some evidence of positive change, for example schools in **Nepal** and **Sri Lanka** where the SIP approach has encouraged schools to work closely with communities, perhaps for the first time.

However, overall the results are not as positive as they have been in other countries. Generally, in all three countries, school development/improvement planning appears to be seen quite narrowly, in terms of 'jumping through hoops' in order to access funds (not yet a year-on-year process). In **Nepal** in particular, there seems to have been an over-focus on the mechanics of producing SIPs. These have been prepared, and PTAs formed, in more than 90% of schools. However, there has been very little use of the approach to improve school capacity either for engaging the wider community or for achieving meaningful quality improvement. Generally, only the headteacher and a few teachers have been involved, whilst where there has been good community participation it has often been due to NGO support. Most crucially, there has been a seeming failure to recognize the heterogeneous and unequal nature of many communities in Nepal, constraining the participation of less powerful groups. There is also no supportive legislation: the only requirement is for a minimum of just one woman on each SMC; there is no legal requirement for Janajati or Dalit representation on SMCs of schools serving their respective communities.

In **Sri Lanka**, likewise, there is concern that disadvantaged community members are not being included and that teachers and headteachers do not necessarily have the right skills to facilitate participation in school planning. Funds are not yet reaching schools reliably and this is sometimes being used as a reason for demanding further funding and contributions from parents, thus increasing disparity rather than addressing it.

In summary, the general trend towards school-based management has a strong potential. However, at the moment it is constrained by a mechanistic approach with insufficient attention to ensuring adequate financial support and guidance to schools facing the greatest challenges, to in-depth change processes and to ensuring mechanisms and processes for equal participation of less powerful groups and individuals, as well as of children themselves.

Curriculum, assessment and methodological change, linked to improving teacher competencies and motivation

All three countries are implementing a range of strategies to reform the curriculum and methodological approaches, including teacher training that is increasingly in-service, school-

based training. These reforms pre-dated the SWAps, but are possibly becoming more integrated because of them. In **Bangladesh**, there is not yet a clear articulation of links between curriculum, methodology and the goal of 'inclusive education', though beginnings have been made with the integration of 'gender modules' into teacher training and the revision of textbooks to reflect cultural diversity, under the various AIEF action plans. In **Nepal**, there is an emphasis on allowing a degree of locally determined curriculum, to enable better reflection of diversity, and there has also been work to rid textbooks of gender stereotyping. In **Sri Lanka**, it is recognized that equity needs to be addressed both in terms of content and of methods employed. The curriculum is uniform for the first nine grades, but it is planned to ensure attention to equity, rights and social cohesion. That said, the committees to review and vet the textbooks are not yet operational.

While there are clearly positive intentions, in each case it is proving a major challenge to support teachers (especially those in the older age group) in taking on new teaching approaches, ideas and practices. Teachers risk 'losing face' if they try out new methods and the children respond by become over-excited and unruly. Sometimes, also, new approaches are perceived to be 'culturally alien'. They thus require more than one-off mechanistic training in a few techniques. Long-term support to whole school staff teams is required for a whole new way of thinking to take root, adapted to the culture and context and at a realistic pace. For the moment, there seems to be insufficient attention to the implications of this for funding for appropriate training approaches and supportive school supervision systems. In particular, there continues to be a reluctance to commit sufficient recurrent (or even development) budget funding for these vital elements. Furthermore, in each case there seems to be the continuation of the practice of adding on modules to cover different equity-related issues, for example gender or special needs. There has yet to be a bringing together of various overlapping approaches (active learning, child-friendly schools, inclusive education) that have existed in each case (perhaps due to differing project inputs in the past) into a single comprehensive approach to enhancing 'quality' in the widest sense.

Strategies for minority language contexts

In both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** there have been a range of projects to explore possible approaches to languages for and in education in minority language communities. These have ranged from including the local language informally in the school, or within an ECD setting, through to full bilingual education including biliteracy. However, as yet, there seems to have been limited evaluation of impact, definition of policy and identification of effective, affordable and politically acceptable ways forward. There has been some attention to improving the availability of teachers who share the language of the local community. However, a wider issue, which seems not yet to have been adequately addressed, is that effective teaching of, or through, more than one language, requires teachers to have very good generic teaching skills. It is not clear whether policies and approaches for minority languages are being set within strategies for quality development as a whole.

Improving facilities and availability of resources at school level

All three countries have placed an emphasis on improving the level of resourcing for schools, with **Sri Lanka**, in particular, emphasizing the disadvantaged schools that do not have a minimum specified level of resources. There is some evidence of improved textbook availability in **Bangladesh**, and of some schools in **Sri Lanka** and **Nepal** acquiring teaching and learning resources through their school development plans. However, all countries continue to suffer from

very basic problems related to procurement, supply and timely delivery to schools. All schools suffer as a result, but remoter areas are the most likely to remain without books. Since these tend to have less-qualified teachers, for whom the books and guides are a much needed support, again this lack impacts on the poorest children more.

6. SWAp Partnership Processes and Mechanisms

6.1 Government/Development Partner Interactions

Chapter 2 introduced the development partners in each of the three SWAps. Here, the SWAp-specific mechanisms set up for development partner coordination and dialogue are further elaborated, after which it is considered how these have impacted on the addressing of equity and inclusion.

6.1.1 The development partners

Main agencies involved

Table 4.1 in Section 4.1.1 lists the key development partners active in education in the three countries. It is interesting to note the commonalities. In each country, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank are important financial contributors. Also common to all three countries is the bilateral DFID/UK and the two UN agencies with an education remit, UNESCO and UNICEF. The EU is a significant funder in Bangladesh, whilst in Nepal it has temporarily stepped out of the pool fund but continues a low-key involvement. Other key bilaterals are DANIDA/Denmark (significant in Nepal), AUSAID/Australia (working through UNICEF in Sri Lanka); as well as the Netherlands (Bangladesh), NORAD/Norway (Bangladesh and Nepal), Finland (Nepal), SIDA/Sweden (Bangladesh), JICA/Japan (limited input in all three countries) and CIDA/Canada (Bangladesh). Plan International and various members of the Save the Children Alliance are the major INGOs active in education.

Development partner policies and approaches

Table 6.1 summarizes the official (or stated) policies of these agencies, with regard to education, gender and social exclusion.

TABLE 6.1 DPs operating in education in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka: What are their overall official policies on SWAps, Education, Gender and Social Exclusion?

	OVERALL AGENDA AND OPERATIONS	EDUCATION	GENDER	SOCIAL EXCLUSION
WB World Bank	Provides both loans and grants As a bank, has strong economic rationale to its development agenda Leading role in theoretical development of 'SIP' modality Decentralized structure	Strong support to basic education Frequently an infrastructure focus Education expertise at central policy level, but less often at national level	Clear policies on gender equality and the need to educate girls and women	Increasing recognition of disability, ethnicity and language as dimensions that affect poverty reduction, reflected in recent publications and Briefing Notes

	OVERALL AGENDA AND OPERATIONS	EDUCATION	GENDER	SOCIAL EXCLUSION
ADB Asian Development Bank	<p>Provides both loans and grants</p> <p>More centralized than WB</p> <p>Participation in education SWApS in different countries, with increasing tendency to joining pooled funds</p>	<p>Strong support to primary and secondary education</p> <p>Traditional focus on educational policy development</p>	<p>Clear policies on gender equality and the need to educate girls</p>	
UNICEF	<p>Rights-based agenda, based on CRC</p> <p>Traditional focus on project support, but taking proactive steps to adapt to SWAp modality (including entering 'pools' in Nepal and Kenya)</p> <p>Strong emergency experience</p>	<p>Traditional focus on early childhood, primary education, girls' education and disadvantaged groups – often through support to 'child friendly' schools, ECCD and NFE</p> <p>Strong experience in education in emergency contexts</p> <p>Gradual move into more policy-oriented role</p> <p>Education technical expertise within country programmes</p>	<p>Strong focus on gender and on girls' education – coordinator of UNGEI (UN Girls' Education Initiative)</p>	<p>Aim to focus on whole range of children whose rights are not realized</p> <p>Specific teams covering social policy and child protection</p>
UNESCO	<p>Official coordination agency for international EFA movement</p> <p>Focus on technical support, especially monitoring and statistics</p> <p>No clear position on SWApS and limited capacity to fund – but frequently engages in SWAp policy dialogue forums</p>	<p>Education major part of remit</p> <p>Special focus on EFA</p> <p>Also retains an interest in the entire sector, including tertiary</p>	<p>Clear policy on gender equality</p>	<p>Extensive work in areas of education of children with disabilities and minority/indigenous languages and cultures</p>

	OVERALL AGENDA AND OPERATIONS	EDUCATION	GENDER	SOCIAL EXCLUSION
EU	Committed to operating through a SWAp modality in its social sector support	Focus on primary and basic education, but in context of whole sector	Clear policy of gender mainstreaming	
CIDA Canadian International Development Agency	Stated commitment to working through SWAps	Traditional focus on basic education and girls' education	Strong gender policies and dedicated gender advisers	
DFID Department for International Development, UK	Proactive on the move towards SWAps, overall trend towards budget support Overall MDG-focused policy and structure	Education is a priority area within its own advisers (under Human Development Division), with focus on the two Education MDGs	Has separate 'social development' division` covering cross cutting gender and equity issues Has taken lead in developing and documenting approaches to gender and social exclusion. Also a social development adviser within Education Section	
DANIDA Danish International Development Agency	Overriding goal of poverty reduction Stated commitment to working predominantly through sector programmes – including explicit commitment to supporting 'poverty and equity orientation' in SWAp policy frameworks and promotion of rights, gender mainstreaming, stakeholder participation and capacity building in SWAps	Education policy refers specifically to achieving MDGs and EFA goals, equity, disadvantaged groups and inclusive education	Education policy includes explicit commitment to gender equality and to supporting gender mainstreaming in sector programmes	Education policy includes explicit commitment to support promotion of human rights, equity, inclusion and participation in education sector programmes
Norway/ NORAD	Stated commitment to working through SWAps	Commitment to the MDGs and EFA goals, with emphasis on basic education and a rights approach	Commitment to gender and social exclusion within a rights approach	

	OVERALL AGENDA AND OPERATIONS	EDUCATION	GENDER	SOCIAL EXCLUSION
SIDA/Sweden	Stated commitment to working through SWAps	Basic education in 'whole sector' framework	Commitment to mainstreaming approach to gender	Social exclusion as part of a rights-based approach
Finland	Stated commitment to working through SWAps. Overall poverty reduction goal	Basic education in 'whole sector' framework	Commitment to mainstreaming approach to gender	Social exclusion as part of a rights-based approach
JICA	Traditional focus on infrastructure and 'hardware' Not able to pool funds, but has given parallel funding under SWAp frameworks in a number of countries	Traditional commitment to basic education and involvement on school construction programmes		
Netherlands	Strong supporter of SWAps	Basic Education one of key areas of support	Strong focus on gender Dedicated gender advisers in HO and country programmes	Social exclusion as part of a rights-based approach

From the official policies, the overall impression is of a group of donors strongly supportive of SWAps (regardless of ability to pool funds) and with well-defined policies on education and gender, though perhaps somewhat less so on other forms of social exclusion. However, there is clearly some scope for differences arising. General ones might be around different degrees of confidence in SWAps, ability to pool funds and need for 'attribution'; but these might also include tensions between a rights-based and socio-economic development approach, approach to gender (or 'girls' education') and approach to (and degree of articulation of) other dimensions of social exclusion.

Also, DPs clearly have differences in the kinds of expertise within their organizations at HO and national levels, and staff profiles are changing over time. Within each DP group (in terms of the people who actually attend meetings and engage on an ongoing basis) there is likely to be a mix of embassy bureaucrats, generalists, economists and those with professional expertise in education. Within this last group, this expertise might be focused at policy/systemic level or at the level of educational practice and implementation. This mix creates the potential for the creative use of 'comparative advantage' within SWAps but also the challenge of achieving this in practice.

Partnership histories

In reality, of course, the potential for DPs to come together to support a successful SWAp is not only dependent on their theoretical policies and positions. There is also the influence of recent partnership experiences in a particular context. In **Bangladesh**, for example, there were some positive factors, such as the improvements of DP coordination under PEDP-I, combined with the desire to address the issues presented by 27 different projects. However, there has also been the 'mixed experience' of a SWAp in the health sector. DPs in education needed to move slowly in persuading government that there was nevertheless a rationale for adopting some features of the SWAp modality in the education sector, whilst learning from the experiences in health.

In **Nepal**, donor coordination over the years seems to have presented more than the average degree of challenges and created considerable tensions at varying times, doubtless in part a reflection of the impact of the conflict on further weakening government capacity and leadership.

Meanwhile, in **Sri Lanka**, DPs' rationale for engagement in the SWAp deviates considerably from the usual one of offering support to general systemic development to achieve universal access and quality. Instead, it has been tied up with a donor agenda of supporting the development of 'social cohesion' and many of the DPs now involved have not had prior engagement in the education sector in Sri Lanka.

Thus, although many of the partners are the same agencies in the three countries, the donor ethos and dynamics at the start of the SWAps were different in each case.

6.1.2 Mechanisms for dialogue and coordination*Bangladesh*

PEDP-II has a range of mechanisms for coordination. It has been noted that it has some characteristics of a conventional project, and on a day-to-day basis the PLU supports coordination in terms of managing the transfer of pooled funding and financial report requirements.

On a policy level, the main mechanism is the Education Local Consultative Group (LCG), a sectoral sub-group of the overall LCG of the GoB and heads of donor agencies. The LCG predated PEDP-II, but has now taken on the function of strategic coordination of development partners. As in many countries, there is a Code of Conduct to guide the PEDP donors in their interactions with each other and with the GoB. ELCG is predominantly a DP forum, with a rotating chair agency that takes forward agreed issues with the relevant members of DPE and MoPME.

PEDP-II contains a number of processes for sector review. Chief among these are the Joint Annual Review Mission (JARM) and the Mid-Term Review that is coming up later in 2007. Two JARM meetings have occurred to date, in April 2005 and April 2006. The reviews have focused on reporting on implementation so far and agreeing changes in the following year, through field visits and working group meetings around specified themes.

There have been many challenges in achieving good coordination of such a large donor group. The introduction of the ROSC Project was just one example of where DPs were divided over the best way forward. There continues to be a greater separation of DP and government forums than in other education SWAps. However, overall, it seems that both government and DPs perceive

that coordination is improving since the days of PEDP-I with its disparate projects and that there is a greatly improved sense of shared purpose and direction. There has also been a gradual improvement in participation of NGOs (mainly through CAMPE and a few key INGOs) in policy dialogue and review.

Nepal

Like Bangladesh, Nepal EFA-N DPs have committed to a Code of Conduct and a system of joint reviews. In this case, key joint events are at six-monthly intervals: a Joint Review in late autumn and a meeting around May for agreeing funding and the workplan for the following year. There is also a monthly EFA-N donor meeting. The Nepal Case Study found there to be a strong sense of ownership by central government, linked to leadership of preparation of the core document, in contrast to the earlier phases of BPEP.

Despite some positive features and the setting in place of mechanisms that have proved effective in other contexts, Nepal's donor coordination scene seems to have been beset by difficulties. At the root of these appear to be three key causes. First is the relatively weak capacity of the Ministry for managing the donors effectively (combined, perhaps, with some disincentives for doing so as well as the coordination and hierarchy issues within the MoE itself). Secondly is the failure to ensure a sufficiently robust strategic framework that might have assisted coordination by ensuring a real agreement about priorities and available funds, as well as ensuring that all major activities of the sector come under the framework and were 'on budget', regardless of funding modality. Thirdly, there is some seeming unwillingness of donors to do as much as they might to respect the Code of Conduct or implement their own agency policies with regard to donor harmonization.

The Nepal Case Study details examples of the continual adding and subtracting of activities, new initiatives outside the programme, uncoordinated TA, the pushing of 'pet themes' during review meetings and failure to reach a common position on a number of key issues. There are also many examples of the blurring of boundaries of TA and government roles. The process for undertaking joint reviews does not seem to have taken account of learning from more successful approaches in other countries where the very same DPs engage. DPs perceive that review recommendations are not actively implemented, but MoE/DoE observes that the meetings tend to be unfocused and the recommendations very diverse, so that it is difficult to meet all demands and expectations.

In contradiction to the Paris Declaration, and in contrast to how many of the same DPs operate in other contexts, in Nepal most DPs remain 'traditional' in approach, maintaining their own procedures, projects, approaches and insisting on earmarking of funds and visible attribution.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, coordination mechanisms are just being established. The World Bank sits on the overall Sector Steering Committee, as the 'lead donor' in the SWAp. The six-monthly reviews so far have essentially been run as WB project review missions rather than the 'joint reviews' generally associated with SWAps. There was a Consultation Committee set up during the planning phase, through which donors shared information on their plans and negotiations took place over integrating these into ESDP. The key vehicle now set up for policy dialogue is the Donor Coordination Committee (DCC). However, so far, it appears that the major policy dialogue has in fact been bilateral, between the government and the World Bank, while the DCC has been

limited to more of an ‘information sharing’ role. Many of the tensions so far appear to have sprung from an over-concern about pooling funds as the main criterion for being seen as fully ‘in the SWAp’, with a lack of differentiation of potential roles of different kinds of DP. The NGO Coalition for Educational Development is seeking to play a role in supporting the community participation aspects of ESDP (e.g. monitoring of implementation), but for the moment channels for broader engagement have not been obvious.

6.2 Use of Partnership Mechanisms to Support Equity and Inclusion

In Sri Lanka there is little evidence as yet, since mechanisms are only being established. The observations here therefore are limited to Nepal and Bangladesh.

6.2.1 Policy dialogue on equity and inclusion

There are some examples in **Bangladesh** of the ELCG being used as a forum to encourage actions in areas related to equity and inclusion. DPs have also taken a role in ensuring that the learning from previous projects in the sector, as well as from ongoing NGO projects, has been taken account of in planning PEDP-II. For example, concepts of ‘child-friendly schools’ (developed in a UNICEF-supported project – *IDEAL*) and on addressing equity issues in school management (developed in a DFID-supported project – *ESTEEM*) have been integrated into PEDP-II strategies. This has prevented the ‘throwing out of the baby with the bathwater’ that tended to happen in some of the earlier education SWAps in Africa. There have also been explorations of how DPs might fund NGOs working in education through a more strategic joint mechanism, in order to help facilitate linkages across the education sector as a whole. However, as yet, a feasible way forward has not been found. The overall approach seems to be one of steady dialogue focusing on incremental steps, taking account of the unwieldy and inflexible nature of the bureaucracy.

In **Nepal**, social exclusion issues are frequently raised in meetings and communications. Gender, in particular, was strongly emphasized by DPs during the EFA-N Appraisal. During the case study research, MoE officials and DPs similarly perceived that DPs give a strong priority to equity and social inclusion issues and that they have progressively affected reform activities in the direction of mainstreaming, better targeting and better data disaggregation. However, the lack of a sufficiently clear strategic framework and the problems of donor harmonization have clearly constrained effectiveness. There has been a continued tendency for DPs (including INGOs) to associate themselves with particular issues, approaches or even sub-sectors (perhaps where they have had project experience). For example, one might press for actions on including children with disabilities, another on bilingualism, still another on the importance of ECD. However important the issue, this clearly makes it difficult for government to be proactive and focused, but is instead reactive in order to please all parties.

6.2.2 Coverage of equity and inclusion in Joint Reviews

In **Bangladesh**, in both JARMS so far there has been some coverage of equity and inclusion issues. Particular examples from the JARMS of the past two years have been pressing for completion of the AIEF and the approval of action plans. However, it has been noted that there is

no working group for the MTR that will focus particularly in this area and it is not clear that the issues have been fully mainstreamed into the ToR of the MTR groups.

In **Nepal**, also, the recent MTR ToR had limited coverage of gender, caste, ethnicity and other social inclusion issues, something that was strongly criticized by the MTR consultancy team. DPs have taken the opportunity in the joint annual reviews to call, for example, for expediting gender mainstreaming in line with the 2002 Gender Audit (2005 Aide Memoire), addressing high dropout and repetition in Grade 1 and the need for gender disaggregated data on Dalit and Janajati children (Aide Memoire June 2006). However, here again, the raising of too many issues and airing of contradictory stances and viewpoints during the review process has constrained the ability of government to identify and take forward key actions.

One interesting issue in both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, that reflects the pattern in other education SWAs, has been the gradual cutting down of field work as a part of the review process. Debates have arisen over whether this is necessary for fuller inclusion in review and in order that DPs (especially HO-based staff) have some sense of the ground reality or, on the other hand, are inevitably 'tokenistic' and a waste of time. Overall, the tendency seems to be that reviews are becoming more centralized, and that the cutting down of field work has not been replaced with alternative systems to enable participation of districts/local administrations.

6.2.3 Support to particular initiatives related to equity and inclusion

There are a number of examples of DPs making careful inputs at the 'right time', to help to move social inclusion up the agenda or to make progress in mainstreaming, capacity building or strategy development. In **Bangladesh**, one bilateral DP (the Netherlands), in discussion with the overall group, supported a gender adviser to the PRSP process, working across a range of ministries, which helped to support gender mainstreaming in the PRSP, national budget and into the social sectors, building up national capacity and strengthening existing institutional processes and structures for gender mainstreaming. DPs have also supported TA for the AEIC. This has represented the start of a structure for mainstreaming equity and inclusion across PEDP-II, but continues to face many institutional constraints, suggesting the need to pay more attention to wider civil service reform and restructuring.

In **Nepal**, DPs have supported a number of research studies, one notable one being the *Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment (GSEA)*, which looked in detail at gender, caste and ethnicity. This has proved important in raising discussion and debate, perhaps in particular in increasing focus on caste and gaining a more detailed insight into the complexities of the factors at work. However, so far it seems to have been used more within donor agencies than to have directly affected work in the education sector.

A number of donors have given support to specific capacity development activities related to gender, equity and inclusion. UNICEF, for example, has provided technical support to the GEDS, whilst UNESCO supports the data collection and analysis for the Flash Reports. Norway is currently supporting capacity-building activities with Dalit researchers, with a view to there being a stronger Dalit perspective to feed into the Schools Sector Approach when it comes on board. Again, there is much activity, but it is weakened somewhat by the flaws in coordination and overall strategy.

7. Conclusions, Recommendations and Ways Forward for Achieving Equity and Inclusion in Education SWAp

7.1 Conclusions and Recommendations of the Country Case Studies

7.1.1 Overall findings

The country studies aimed to understand the ‘social inclusion challenge’ presented in each context and whether and how a move towards a sector-wide approach in education is making a difference to meeting this challenge and addressing disparities. It was further explored how current approaches could be adapted, strengthened or improved in order to enhance overall effectiveness. All three studies find some positive and significant changes in relation to addressing educational equity and inclusion, which link to the move towards a SWAp modality. All offer important lessons and new ideas that have arisen out of creative attempts to address a range of disparity issues in each unique context. At the same time, in each case, elements of SWAp design, approach, strategic frameworks and institutional and partnership arrangements are not yet as conducive as they could be in facilitating the effective addressing of equity and inclusion. Even taking account of the challenging socio-political contexts, there is scope for further improvements to enhance effectiveness. These generally imply not so much a change of direction away from a SWAp, but to the contrary moving more deeply and fully *into* a SWAp modality. There seems to be a general need to move beyond concerns about pooled funding to a stronger focus on a flexible, sound and consistent policy and strategy framework and budget, plus robust structures and adequate capacity to enable analysis, mainstreaming and monitoring.

7.1.2 Bangladesh

Conclusions

The exploration of PEDP-II suggests seriousness in the intention to better address equity and inclusion, but also considerable challenges in doing this in practice. Ambitious objectives have been set, many of these directly relating to improving equitable access and completion for vulnerable and excluded children. There has been some good analysis of key disparity issues, albeit based on patchy data, located in different documents and not available as a coherent whole. Some strategies for equitable access and ‘equity in quality’ have been identified in the Macro Plan. The very process of development of PEDP-II led to the realization that access and equity could no longer be dealt with through a project or component, catalysing a different approach utilizing the concept of mainstreaming. More detailed strategies have now been identified for implementing Bangladesh’s vision of ‘inclusive, quality education’, as it pertains to gender inequality, indigenous children, disabled children and other vulnerable children. Important strategies for equity (e.g. scholarships, female teachers), for a long time managed by donor-funded projects, have been successfully established within the structures and responsibilities of DPE, with some evidence of improved efficiency as a result. In the process of these developments, there is evidence of improved understanding of a wider range of equity issues.

The process of development of the action plans has allowed for positive interaction and learning between different parts of government, teachers and other educators, development partners and

NGOs/CSOs with expertise in supporting the education of excluded groups. There has been successful establishment of a system for regular and coordinated DP input into policy dialogue and monitoring, through which DPs have consciously taken joint actions to encourage and support progress on gender and equity mainstreaming and forging linkages between formal and non-formal provision and between state and non-state providers. Despite all the challenges and some tensions along the way, government and DPs alike are agreed that they would not return to the days of PEDP-I, with its 27 separate projects.

There are, nevertheless, considerable challenges and areas where PEDP-II has not yet proved its effectiveness with regard to enhancing equity and inclusion. This is not so much due to the move to a SWAp per se, as to the retention of certain project features and the inflexible, centralized format, with insufficient synergy with the intended decentralization process. Inevitably, this has led to over-burdening at the centre, a sense of having substantial 'additional' tasks and considerable bottlenecks for implementation. Whilst this was anticipated from the beginning, it appears that insufficient steps were taken to mitigate the likely problems and to ensure that actions and targets were realistically linked to an achievable programme of capacity development, training and restructuring. The insistence on a project-style 'baseline' seems also to have mitigated against a manageable approach to making staged improvements to existing data collection, monitoring and analytical systems and enabling more timely availability of key data and information on which to assess progress.

The use of a detailed and top-down Macro Plan also inevitably made it impossible to incorporate NFE and NGO activity, which might have been possible (or at least to make a beginning) with the use of a more flexible strategic framework. Whilst it is a very significant step that the initial insufficient attention to mainstreaming gender and equity fully into the Macro Plan itself has been recognized and addressed, the adding on of the AIEF and four new action plans at a later date has led to a rather messy situation. The establishment of the AEIC is a first step towards structures for mainstreaming, but it is not yet fully empowered or integrated into the regular structure of DPE. Thus, the action plans are not yet strictly speaking 'actionable', nor well integrated into overall workplans, budgets or regular job descriptions of DPE staff.

Recommendations

The box below summarizes the key recommendations of the Bangladesh Case Study.

Bangladesh

1. The Project Proforma should be changed as soon as possible after the Mid-Term Review is completed to make it more flexible. There should be the capability to reassess and readjust the Proforma in each of the remaining years to meet the dynamic context of education and social inclusion in Bangladesh while also meeting realistic targets.
2. The revised Project Proforma should provide realistic objectives for completion of PEDP-II tasks in the programme's remaining years.
3. Make realistic plans for what can be achieved by the AIEC in the next three years, based on a tightening and synergizing of the existing four action plans.
4. Add staff to the AIEC to allow for appropriate professional development training of the new and current staff while continuing a realistic work programme.
5. Hasten the implementation of the much-delayed 'Innovative Grants' programme, preferably so that it starts within 2007, in order to bring support creativity and innovation within the government sector.

6. Establish an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Social Inclusion to bring together key personnel in the ministries that deal with children's social inclusion issues (MoWCA, MoE, MoPME, Social Welfare, Food and Disaster Management) to identify how they will work together, what programmes can be worked on jointly and in a coordinated manner, and to share information and research findings.
7. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) staff must receive training, and further upgrading as necessary and feasible, on how to build gender and equity factors into their work, especially for qualitative use at the classroom level.
8. PEDP-II assessment and review teams, including JARMS and the end-of project evaluation, should include personnel that specifically evaluate progress on gender and equity and who are identified as gender and equity specialists.
9. Elevate the status of 'gender and equity' in all documents and meetings of PEDP-II and in its PLU. The PLU should (again) have one person who has overall responsibility for oversight of mainstreaming of gender and equity.
10. DPs should seek to further strengthen collaboration and continue to seek ways to support government–NGO partnerships in education, as well as better synergy of formal education and NFPE.

7.1.3 Nepal

Conclusions

The overall conclusion of the Nepal Case Study is that whilst there have been many efforts and initiatives to address the serious levels of educational inequity that exist in Nepal, these have not been as effective as they might have been, even taking into account the very challenging governance context.

Educational enrolments have continued to rise and the gender gap has continued to narrow, representing a huge achievement. There appear to be incremental improvements in understanding of the wide range of equity and inclusion challenges that Nepal faces and appreciation of the need for 'joined-up' analysis and the need to take a coherent and mainstreamed approach. Evaluations suggest that individual programmes and components under the EFA-N 'umbrella' have been successful in their own terms and there has also been significant progress in monitoring of equity trends. This includes better disaggregation of Nepal's many and complex dimensions of disparity and also improved generation and use of qualitative information to inform policy making (albeit currently through a project approach and not yet institutionalized). EFA-N is seen as representing a step forward from the previous BPEP-II, having a considerably strengthened equity focus.

However, there are many concerns. Mainstreaming of gender and equity concerns across the programme remains limited. There is a lack of consistency on the fundamental issue of free primary education and targeting of ECD to the most disadvantaged. Even the activities implemented by government using pooled funds are poorly linked across different components, and seen as competing rather than complementary. Furthermore, there are numerous activities in the sub-sector that fall outside the EFA programme and budget, risking duplication and undermining of capacity.

A key reason for these weaknesses is that the move to a SWAp modality has in fact been superficial and partial. Therefore, the potential benefits of such an approach in terms of achieving

better equity outcomes through improved policy coherence, clear agreement on priorities, much-needed institutional reform and capacity development, cannot currently be realized. The most critical gap is the absence of a coherent, costed, prioritized strategic framework for the basic education sub-sector. The EFA-N Core Document, based loosely on the aspirations of international EFA, does not suffice as a rigorous guiding document for prioritization, budgeting and sequenced implementation. Without this fundamental anchor, EFA-N cannot function optimally. Fragmented programmes proved insufficiently holistic, comprehensive and synergistic to ensure equity in access and quality. DPs have remained too free to continue to follow their own paths and pet themes, with insufficient regard to the institutional needs of Nepal's education sector, the coherence of the programme as a whole, or indeed their own commitments to harmonization.

The key recommendations of the study therefore relate to achieving a more robust and comprehensive strategic framework for the whole sub-sector, with clear government leadership and a higher level of donor 'buy in' and coordination, in order to strengthen capacity and institutions at all levels to bring about accelerated progress in equity in educational access and outcomes. Nepal's current application to the FTI might catalyse the development of a more rigorous framework and bring more discipline both in internal coordination and to the external partnership process. If this can be achieved, there is much experience and expertise on which to build, and there is an opportunity for magnifying impact through synergizing a new momentum in the education sector with the positive wider socio-political changes underway.

Recommendations

The box below summarizes the key recommendations of the Nepal Case Study.

Nepal

1. Develop a coherent equity-related education policy framework. Whilst overarching policy objectives will, of course, relate to progress towards the international EFA goals, the future SSA plan should be designed around more readily implementable components, with clearer mechanisms for mainstreaming gender and equity concerns across the board.
2. Fragmented programmes and incentives alone are not sufficiently holistic, comprehensive and synergistic to ensure equity in access and quality. Even if DPs' own procedures require earmarking of funds, these should be 'on budget' and managed within the MoES/ DoE.
3. The process of inclusion must operate both at school and system levels – therefore the institutional frame should be made consistent.
4. Consolidate efforts and initiatives made so far in the primary sub-sector and apply them also to the upper levels.
5. Explore mechanisms for ensuring inclusion of socially excluded individuals and groups in school- and community-level planning processes, along with mechanisms for greater weighting of funding to schools serving the most disadvantaged communities.
6. Expedite decentralization of textbooks and NFE materials publication and distribution.
7. Support and supervise local governments for locating the 'hard to reach' and thereby address the equity-related issues.
8. Ensure congruent and carefully defined and sequenced interventions to address equity on all fronts and at different levels.

9. NFE requires increased funding, and strong institutional and human resource capacities from the centre to the district level.
10. Ensure attention to disabled access and earthquake safety in building design.
11. Use Resource Persons and School supervisors more strategically to monitor and support schools.
12. Avoid blanket approaches like non-discriminatory provision of matching fund and equal amount of stipend to all irrespective of their socio-economic circumstances.
13. Considerable thought will need to be given to the institutional aspects and improved DP coordination, if the two current programmes (EFA and SESP) are to successfully evolve into a fully functioning School Sector Approach.
14. An institutional audit would be useful to shed light on existing lines of management, job descriptions, identifying reporting structures and examining the horizontal linkages between sub-sectors and make recommendations for a more conducive structure for effective sector management and coordination, including the effective 'cross-cutting' of gender and equity concerns.
15. Improve collaboration with other line ministries/agencies, NPC and I/NGOs.
16. In order to ensure donor harmonization and horizontal linkage between similar initiatives, one single TA and/or direct funding steering committee can be formed
17. It will be vital to develop deeper understanding of what is meant by a SWAp, focusing on the potential for accelerated sector progress, drawing on positive experiences from other countries (in many of which the same DP agencies are active). Meanwhile for better coordination among donors the Code of Conduct can be revitalized and examples from other countries from the region can be reviewed and adapted.
18. Institutionalize more inclusive and participatory consultation with primary stakeholders and directly address their specific issues.
19. Including the Teacher Union in different forums and discussions if incorporated within the SWAp frame would help to improve the success of the programmes.

7.1.4 Sri Lanka

Conclusions

In Sri Lanka, the ESDP is in its early days, but there are some very positive features. There are clear goals for equity and inclusion, with a particular focus on equity in learning outcomes. In consonance with Sri Lanka's long-time commitment to the achievement of social equity through education, the ESDP has incorporated existing effective incentives to families to increase education participation, as well as adding a new one to even further mitigate 'lost opportunity' costs for the poorest. The concern for equity is seen also in the development of schools in disadvantaged areas and in efforts to ensure an equitable geographical distribution of schools. There have been major changes in resource allocation mechanisms, to focus on achieving quality in more disadvantaged schools. The Non-Formal and Special Education Divisions in the Ministry of Education and officials at local levels and Compulsory Education Committees have been revitalized to a considerable extent and consequently the numbers of out-of-school children entering the formal school or non-formal centres have increased sharply. For the first time perhaps the educational needs of the most vulnerable groups of children have been recognized at official level.

Equity in access to quality education is conceptualized as access to high quality facilities, equipment, curricula, teaching–learning methods, textbooks and assessment techniques. It

includes also the promotion of values, social cohesion, and, implicitly, rights, in a country bedevilled by two decades of armed conflict. Innovations in resource allocation have been initiated to facilitate the access of disadvantaged schools to quality inputs and assets and to increase efficiency in the utilization of resources through monitoring and tracking. Mechanisms have been created to promote better management, more autonomy and productive and inclusive school–community relations. Overall, the ESDP has given directions for achieving outcomes through its objectives, targets and strategies and its involvement of the general education sector from the centre to school level.

There are, however, a number of gaps and weaknesses that are likely to need addressing if the new SWAp is to fully achieve its goals in the area of equity and inclusion. In the conceptualization of ‘equity’ there has been minimal attention to gender, seemingly based on an assumption of the achievement of ‘parity’. Despite the emphasis on equity, the results monitoring framework is not sufficiently disaggregated (geographically or by gender) to be able to pick up on trends or identify local pockets of disadvantage or exclusion. As in Bangladesh and Nepal, there are significant capacity limitations at lower levels in the system (the zone, division and school), the result of years of poor support and weak monitoring at these levels. More funding is likely to be needed to NFE if this sector is truly to be revitalized to bring in the remaining hard-to-reach children. Further thought is required on the likely equity impact of the decision to close many small Type 3 schools in remote areas. There have also, so far, been significant delays in releasing funds to schools and in textbook publishing and delivery, undermining both impact and confidence in the reform process. The existence of pockets of poverty and deprivation, the continuing threat of further conflict, and political pressures and interference at different levels are key threats to the process that need to be mitigated as far as possible.

Recommendations

The box below summarizes the key recommendations of the Sri Lanka Case Study.

Sri Lanka

1. Simplify the planning and monitoring instruments and provide more intensive training at zonal, divisional and school levels.
2. Sensitize and strengthen the Division Offices to be fully involved in the SWAp and to support schools and communities.
3. Selection of model quality schools needs to be more systematic and strategic.
4. Capacity-building programmes for educational personnel, particularly at zonal and divisional levels, need to incorporate a strong sensitization component that will develop empathy for the disadvantaged and appreciation of benefits of equity.
5. Ensure that the curriculum, materials and social climate of schools promotes full gender equality and dismantling of the ‘glass ceiling’.
6. Ensure sex-segregated data (including on dropout and achievement) is available from provincial to school level so that inequalities can be tracked and complacency dispelled.
7. Instruct local education officers and principals to ensure that community representation reflect all socio-economic strata and to work closely with community-based organizations (CBOs), particularly those whose membership includes the most disadvantaged families in the local community. CBOs can also bring pressure to bear on Compulsory Education Committees and Non-Formal Education officers to act with greater zeal and efficiency in identifying out-of-school children and enrolling them in institutions. The role of educational

personnel as ‘change-agents’ in the transformation of education and society has to be built into education governance and should encompass participatory leadership styles within the education system and in reaching out to communities.

8. The impact of the monitoring results framework will be reduced unless local monitors are also ‘monitored’ by a specific mechanism, by more interaction between educational personnel at different levels and by dismantling the compartmentalization of participating institutions.
9. Give immediate attention to rectifying delays of flows of funds to schools.

7.2 Ways Forward: Pointers for Achieving Education SWAps That Promote Equity and Inclusion

The exploration of the education SWAps in the three countries has raised a number of issues that are more general. These lessons are shared here as ‘pointers’ for the development of SWAps that promote equity and inclusion, in South Asia and beyond.

7.2.1 The equity and inclusion challenge

- *The challenge is likely to be greater and more complex than first expected*
One clear finding of the case studies was simply the complexity of the range of disparities that exist and their interrelations. Had the analysis stopped after having considered poverty, or even poverty in relation to gender, very much would have been missed: caste-based discrimination, disability, the situation of children without adequate care and protection and the exacerbating factors of conflict and natural disasters. From a systemic perspective, there are those never-enrolled, those pulled out and pushed out, as well as the ‘virtual dropouts’ who remain in schools but are disadvantaged/discriminated against or at risk within the system. Greater awareness is needed of those children who are unlikely to benefit from general ‘pro-poor’ policies targeted at poor families or schools in disadvantaged areas, because they are outside a caring, protective context (for example working in other households, in abusive forms of work hidden from public view, in institutions or on the street). Greater understanding of in-school factors that promote or constrain equity and inclusion is also required.
- *The standard ‘access, quality and management’ approach of many sector-wide education programmes is likely to need considerable unpacking*
Addressing equity goes beyond addressing the cost barriers and general quality development strategies, important as these are. An equitable and inclusive approach in any specific context might imply, for example: strategies to address the attitudinal barriers to access; ensuring a broad understanding of quality that embraces ‘learner friendliness’, flexibility, continuity, inclusion and non-discrimination; targeting for equity; identifying the hard to reach children; and building in emergency preparedness and responsiveness.

7.2.2 The SWAp framework and approach

- *A rigorous and realistic strategic framework is vital*
One lesson is that a clear, coherent policy framework, with costed priorities, is absolutely vital, perhaps the one ‘non-negotiable’ in order to be able to speak of a ‘SWAp’. Without it,

the desired coherence cannot be achieved and the cross-cutting issues of gender and equity cannot be effectively mainstreamed. Nepal EFA-N has clearly been constrained in its effectiveness from the lack of such an anchor.

- *The framework needs to be flexible, and implementable in the context*
Bangladesh has suffered from having a rigid and top-down Macro Plan rather than a more flexible framework. Nepal has found that the EFA goals, important as they may be for guiding the overall scope and direction of the basic education sector, do not necessarily provide a useful format around which to base implementable components of a sub-sector programme.
- *The framework needs to cover all programmes and activities within the sector/sub-sector as defined*
This lesson is, of course, far from new, but this study shows that there are still attempts to implement SWAPs that leave significant areas outside. Even if DPs' own procedures require earmarking of funds, they should be 'on budget' and managed within the MoES/ districts. Where there is substantial non-governmental activity in education, ways need to be found of including this within the overall framework and ensuring efforts are directed in the most strategic and effective way. It is also important to conceptualize NFPE (for children) in relation to formal primary education development, with regard to the equal rights to quality basic education of those children who cannot currently be reached with formal schooling.
- *The SWAp framework needs to 'look beyond itself'*
It is very easy for the SWAp planning process to be so all-absorbing that it is forgotten that the sector (or sub-sector) is not self-contained. To address social exclusion issues, cross-sectoral working will be vital, as well as taking account of NGO and private education providers. Linkages between sectors and providers, available expertise related to equity and inclusion within other sectors or institutions, as well as mechanisms for collaboration, could usefully be identified early on in the SWAp process. If the SWAp is not fully sector-wide, then there also need to be mechanisms for coordinating with other parts of the education sector, in particular ensuring synergy between primary education development and expansion of secondary opportunities with attention to equity.
- *Mechanisms for consultation, communication and participation need to be built in from the beginning*
The SWAp will only be successful in addressing equity and inclusion if there are opportunities for all primary stakeholders, but in particular those who have up until now been excluded and marginalized, to state their concerns, priorities and ideas. There is also a need for all 'actors' in the SWAp to feel ownership and feel engaged, informed and able to contribute. The experience of the three countries suggests that this needs attention on a number of fronts. One is the establishment of systems (such as school-based management/ whole school development) for the participation of communities, teachers and pupils in school management and monitoring, which needs developing with mechanisms for participation of the poorest consciously in mind. In tandem, wider mechanisms are needed for multi-directional communication, participation and dialogue with a diverse range of stakeholders.

7.2.3 Informational and analytical basis for SWAp design

- *Analysis of disparities and the dynamics of exclusion*
Decision making about strategies and approaches still tends to rely on previous projects, DP preferences and subjective ideas rather than a good quality evidence base drawn from a comprehensive and systematic analysis. The experience in all three countries suggests that analysis of disparity could be improved. Areas on which to focus include the use of a wider range of available quantitative and qualitative data and taking a multi-dimensional approach. The Sri Lanka case serves as a reminder that gendered analysis is essential, even where there is numerical parity. (In Sri Lanka, for example, this would help to ensure that gains made are maintained over time, to identify any localities or communities in which there continues to be disparity – in favour of either boys or girls – and also to go beyond parity to considering full equality.)
- *Understanding the political, institutional and historical context*
It is important not only to understand what the disparities are, but how and why they have developed. Furthermore, it can usefully be explored what forces in society are maintaining the status quo or bringing about change, what are existing perceptions of bias and what (and where) is the existing institutional capacity for addressing equity and social inclusion in education.
- *Ensuring regular updating of contextual analysis*
Whilst it might be appropriate to undertake a more extensive exercise at the beginning of a SWAp (depending on the availability of information), it is important not to see this as a one-off event, but as a starting point for strengthening monitoring systems to allow for ongoing analysis to inform policy change and decision making (see Section 7.2.5).

7.2.4 Designing specific interventions and strategies

There is a whole range of possible strategies to address barriers to access, inclusion and equity. As indicated above, a key principle is that these are based on the analysis of the context, prioritized and well sequenced. The experience of Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka suggests a number of points to keep in mind in relation to specific strategies.

- *Identifying and tracking 'hard to reach' target groups and individuals*
The 'hard to reach' are often in remote, rural areas where population data is weak. Others are unregistered migrants who officially do not 'exist'. Disabled children might be hidden away at home, while many of the most vulnerable children are 'hidden' and exploited illegally, for example as domestic child workers or sex workers. The experience from Nepal and Sri Lanka suggests that identification needs to be done at the local level, by encouraging and supporting each district, and indeed each school and community, to achieve 'universal coverage'.
- *Overall policy guidance is required*
In order to develop detailed strategies for equity and inclusion, overall approaches need to be defined, with regard to certain issues. One of these is the approach to inclusion vis-à-vis 'special' provision. Bangladesh, for example, has opted for a focus on inclusion of all children in mainstream schooling, while Sri Lanka's policy, whilst mainly focusing on

inclusion in regular schools, also includes the development of special programmes for severely disabled children and street children. In Bangladesh and Nepal, another area in need of clearer policy is in relation to use of minority and majority languages in schools. In Nepal, there is the declared aspiration to provide education in the mother tongue, but now decisions need to be made about how this can be done, to what level specific languages could be used in the classroom, the stage at which Nepali will be introduced as a second language and so on. Such guidance needs go beyond a statement of ideals, to helping move forward in practice by developing strategies that are realistic in terms of capacity and resourcing. 'Progressive realization' is a useful concept here.

- *Ensuring free primary education, mitigation of lost opportunity costs*

The evidence from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka is that educational costs continue to be a significant issue excluding the poorest at each level of education. Sri Lanka provides the positive lesson of using a SWAp to maintain existing free education and coverage of direct costs, as well as targeting an additional subsidy where it is most likely to have an impact. Meanwhile, Nepal provides a caution: to ensure that the SWAp does not bestow free education with one hand, whilst taking it away with the other through inconsistent policies on cost sharing.
- *Achieving a balance between access and quality strategies, incorporating an expanded and comprehensive understanding of 'quality'*

The studies suggest that the 'default' position tends to be that *equity in access* is emphasized and *equity in quality* is given less attention, at least until the point where access is near-universal, as in Sri Lanka. The current international shift of attention from access to quality provides opportunity for ensuring that the equity dimensions of quality – related to curriculum, methodology, school ethos and relationships – are better understood and addressed. Furthermore, the move away from quality as a 'package' of inputs, to approaches based on whole-school development, provides an opportunity for developing a holistic understanding of 'quality' that incorporates the overlapping concepts of 'inclusive education', 'child- or learner-friendly schools', 'equity in the classroom' and 'learning effectiveness' into a single coherent overall approach that makes sense in the context (including with regard to the selection of terms used).
- *Whole school development*

The three countries studied here all to some extent reflect the international trend away from a package of components towards channelling more funds to schools for whole-school improvement, using tools such as SIP/SDP. These undoubtedly have a potential for achieving quality UPE in each and every school and community, through better, more participatory identification of local needs and priorities, as well as relevant strategies to address these. However, the case studies suggested that a number of issues need to be addressed if this approach is to enhance and not undermine equity and quality of provision. For it to be effective, schools need to be able to plan against a reasonably predictable budget of a meaningful size. The real costs of education in a particular type of school or community need to be taken into account. Small schools and those in disadvantaged areas inevitably will have higher per capita costs than larger schools and this should be taken into account, with funds targeted to mitigate disadvantage. There are also very important capacity implications of this approach. Headteachers and teachers need to be able (and willing) to facilitate the participation of communities, particularly more disadvantaged

members. Schools and communities need not only to be able to identify their problems, but also to identify strategies to solve them, which implies access to knowledge of alternatives and support for local innovation. Administrators and supervisors at the relevant levels need to be able to manage the targeting and channelling of funds in a transparent way and to support schools in an effective and long-term school development process.

- *Addressing attitudinal barriers and discrimination*

In all three of the case study countries, discriminatory attitudes and practices are a significant barrier to participation and achievement of some children. To address these requires persistence, as well as creative and multi-pronged approaches. In Sri Lanka, it is being learned that ‘sensitization’ is not just enforcing or ‘preaching’, but requires the development of real empathy and understanding on the part of officials, schools and the more privileged and powerful groups to the situation of the less powerful and excluded. The Nepal experience demonstrates how the other side of this is the empowerment of excluded groups to be better able to advocate their own cause and to challenge discrimination.

- *Teachers for learners*

A key equity issue in all three countries, like many others, is ensuring that there are enough qualified teachers and that these are fairly distributed. Furthermore, to promote inclusion of girls, minority children and Dalits, there is a need to ensure that women, Dalit and ethnic minority teachers are properly represented in the teaching force as a whole, especially in schools where there is a need to improve enrolment and retention of girls or excluded groups, or to implement bilingual approaches. The experience in the three countries suggests that this is not easy to achieve. Financial incentives help, provided they are of meaningful amount and are paid on time, but attention is also needed to ensure that other factors that might constrain women or Dalit teachers (prejudices, security concerns, housing) are also addressed. Adequate ongoing support is needed to enable those coming into the teaching profession without the required qualifications to upgrade their knowledge and skills within a reasonable time frame, to prevent the setting of a second class cadre of teachers – and thus of schools.

More broadly, teachers are a central and vital link in the whole education system who seem often to be excluded from SWAp planning processes. There is a need to bring them in at different levels of policy dialogue, planning and decision making, directly or through representative teacher organizations, and to ensure a balance between empowering communities for educational decision making and ensuring that teachers can exercise professional judgement.

- *Curriculum, methodology and assessment*

A non-stereotyped, balanced and locally relevant curriculum, effective methodologies that take account of different abilities and learning styles and non-biased assessment systems that look more broadly than academic learning are all important aspects of ‘equity in quality’. However, it seems that the efforts required to bring about sustainable change in teaching–learning approaches are often generally underestimated, whilst equity concerns are ‘dealt with’ through one-off modules and workshops rather than seen as integral to good practice. A stronger focus on developing effective school support and supervision systems, ongoing training rather than one-off workshops and a greater willingness to fund the ‘software’ side of

quality (training, supervision and monitoring) is required if the necessary in-depth, sustainable changes in understanding and practice are to be achieved.

- *Buildings and facilities*
Buildings and facilities need to be provided taking account of a range of equity concerns. Where there are different providers or projects (or construction work is contracted outside the education sector), clear national guidance is required, which it should be possible for a SWAp to facilitate. In addition to provision of water and latrines for males and females (now widely accepted to be vital, especially for girls' retention and attendance), other features are important to consider, including access for disabled persons. Guidance needs not only to be in terms of the form of buildings and facilities but also of their use to promote improved participation and learning, with equity. For example, new classrooms might be better used by a large Grade 1 class than a small Grade 5 class, sports equipment or space needs to be available to girls as well as boys, school water sources or kitchens should not be spaces where caste-exclusion is practised. The building of new schools and facilities also provides opportunities that seem often to be overlooked to incorporate and reflect local building styles and artistic traditions and to engage pupils and communities in design and needs analysis.

- *Building in responsiveness to cyclical natural events, outbreaks of conflict or natural disaster*
Unfortunately, the case studies have not been able to provide much learning in this area. It appears that responsiveness to emergencies continues to be given limited systematic thought in SWAp design. While there has been some progress in incorporating emergency preparedness into training and school curricula, a greater challenge is to develop mechanisms for coordinated systemic responsiveness, including systems for rapid release of funding if disaster strikes and for coordinating national and local NGO relief efforts. It seems surprising that there has not been more attention to this in Bangladesh PEDP-II, where emergencies caused by annual flooding are the norm rather than the exception.

7.2.5 Systems for data collection and analysis, monitoring, evaluation and learning

- *Data disaggregation and equity-relevant detail*
SWAPs are already paying attention to monitoring and evaluation and very often the development of an EMIS is given high priority. For such systems to be fully effective in understanding current equity-related issues and trends and monitoring progress towards equity and inclusion, a number of issues need attention. First, whilst disaggregation seems to be improving, there needs to be attention to disparities in addition to gender that are relevant to the context, for example caste, ethnicity, language and disability. This often implies further work on categorization: Nepal is now benefiting from a much more practically useful categorization of caste, whilst all three countries could benefit from further clarity on classification of disabilities. As noted earlier, all relevant dimensions of disparity need to be measured, even if overall numerical parity has apparently been achieved. Furthermore, data for monitoring equity is also not only about measuring educational indicators across groups, but also progress on the creation of *environments for equity*, for example a measure of schools that have minimum standard facilities, proportion of disadvantaged schools that have adequate numbers of teachers appropriate to the needs of the children, and so on. The current move toward definition of a range of minimum standards seems a promising way of capturing a wider range of elements of quality in monitoring, helping to ensure special focus

on schools that have not yet achieved, or are not managing to maintain, minimum standards.

- *Linkages between data collection and use for monitoring and policy adjustment*
At all levels within education systems, whilst progress on a range of indicators is being seen, there is often little clear evidence of which strategies have caused the impact. There are gaps in both quantitative and qualitative data with which to analyse the effectiveness of existing policies to enhance access and equity, or to assess the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of pilots. Even where reasonable information does exist, there are weak mechanisms for systematically analysing it, in order to develop 'evidence-based' policy at central level or for schools to re-think their strategies. At all levels, there also tends to be a focus on 'upward reporting' (including for international purposes) rather than use of data at the level it is collected. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on mechanisms for linking the collection and collation of a range of data and information at different levels, rigorous analysis of that information and linking back to decision making. This might imply that in addition to officers responsible for EMIS-type tasks, there is also a need for positions that oversee more general learning and innovation in education, ensuring that pilots are properly designed to generate useful learning, which can actually be incorporated into sector-wide strategy.
- *Capacity for data collection, analysis, monitoring and learning at all levels*
Clearly, the above implies a greater emphasis on capacity building for a greater range of tasks than is often traditionally considered in relation to M&E. The focus should not all be on the centre (though this will be the locus of sector-wide monitoring and strategic policy analysis). With the shift towards district and school-level planning and monitoring, district officials, headteachers and school managers also need basic skills to analyse their local contexts as a basis for decision making and prioritization of funds and efforts.

7.2.6 Institutional development for equity

- *Institutional and capacity development is particularly vital for making progress on equity and inclusion*
Since the whole SWAp venture can be seen as one of strengthening educational sector institutions at all levels, it is clear that institutional development and capacity building should be a central concern. This is particularly important with regard to addressing equity and social inclusion, since these are complex and sensitive issues (sometimes at odds with prevailing cultural norms) that require involvement in a long-term change process.
- *A wide range of skills are needed for addressing different aspects of equity and inclusion in education systems at different levels*
As is shown in the paragraphs above, these might include skills for determining financial targeting mechanisms, analysing data and information, devising effective policies and strategies, mainstreaming gender and equity across a range of components and activities and many others. New understandings are also often required. Institutional development strategies need to be based on an identification of which skills and understandings are needed by which persons in which roles. Capacity building in a SWAp goes well beyond the provision of TA, but strategically placed good quality TA has a role to play within a clear overall institutional and capacity development framework.

- *Overall institutional structures are equally important and need to be aligned to the overall purposes of the SWAp*

Mainstreaming cannot be effective if gender and equity issues are assigned to a marginalized unit which lacks authority or skills to guide a process across all departments. Senior backing is needed, and addressing gender and inclusion also needs to be seen as a routine responsibility of all staff, specified in job descriptions (and thus taken account of in performance assessments).

There are also possibilities of building more intrinsic incentives for administrators and managers to address equity and inclusion issues, by supporting capacity for real engagement with disadvantaged stakeholders and the development of greater empathy and mutual respect. Teachers can also be motivated by attention to their professionalism and communication skills. So far, little attention has been paid to building up 'change agents' in the education sector, which can also include disadvantaged young people themselves.

- *Institutional development for equity also implies attention to equal opportunities and non-discrimination at different levels of educational administration and management, as well as the teaching profession*

In disadvantaged communities, improved representation of women or excluded groups in school management bodies will not 'just happen', but requires legislation combined with special efforts so that people can actually perform these roles. Likewise, members of disadvantaged or excluded groups might need specific assistance in order to become effective teachers and thus help to break the cycle of disadvantage. At all levels of the system there is a need to promote equal opportunity, prevent discrimination and actively encourage women and members of under-represented groups.

7.2.7 Effective development partnerships

- *Supporting equitable and inclusive education SWAps*

The quality of partnerships affects the overall effectiveness of the SWAp, especially in countries with weaker governance and higher donor dependence. This is particularly true in terms of its effectiveness in addressing equity and inclusion issues, which require a coherent and mainstreamed approach. Where capacity and governance is weak, this is all the more reason to have clear plans, priorities and mechanisms, and for DPs to support these.

Donors can help by supporting development of a sufficiently robust strategic framework at the start of the SWAp process, by supporting the institutionalization of effective partnership mechanisms and by then using these mechanisms for making considered and sensitive inputs at appropriate times and with regard to the overall pace of change and capacity development. As one ODI paper (Foster, 1999) puts it, there is a need for 'attending to elephants and ignoring the mice'. A distinction needs to be made between using 'comparative advantage', which implies a joint process in which this advantage is openly discussed and agreed, and the unhelpful pushing of pet issues or initiatives. Using comparative advantage effectively requires respect of different roles and competencies and identification of what is needed where but, above all, using the ministries' plans and identified priorities and capacity-building requirements as the starting point and guide.

Since addressing gender and social exclusion are long-term, and sometimes culturally sensitive, issues, attention should be paid to building up relationships of trust, within the framework of the longer-term time commitments that a SWAp makes possible. DPs can support planning for joint reviews to ensure that equity and inclusion issues will be appropriately covered and that the process itself is participatory. This might have implications for roles and the priority given to field visits and/or participation from different levels as well as from a diverse range of education stakeholders.

The sharp differences between the three countries points out the need not to assume a particular role for NGOs within SWAp. There is in fact a need for more nuanced understanding of a wide range of actors in each particular context. It certainly seems clear that there are many actors in education, leading to the need for differentiated forums and mechanisms to allow for different kinds of participation and support.

- *Internal implications for development partner agencies*

There are a range of ways in which individual agencies could improve their own internal ways of working in order to engage more effectively in educational SWAps, and in particular to support progress on gender, equity and social inclusion. First, they might be more clear on their own policies and positions on these issues and ensure that all staff have an understanding of these. Individuals seemingly do not necessarily know, share or promote their agency official policies on gender and equity. In particular, there is a need to continually consider whether policies and approaches being advocated are consistent, particularly with regard to the stance taken on cost-sharing. DPs could also usefully develop stronger mechanisms for ensuring 'institutional memory', not only within each agency but also, at country level, within SWAp DP groups as a whole, as well as for better mapping and use of their respective 'comparative advantage', respecting both generalist and professional education expertise.

7.2.8 Conducive wider policy and institutional environments

- *Focus on educational rights as well as poverty reduction*

While a poverty reduction agenda to some extent ensures attention to social exclusion, this should not be seen as a substitute for more directly addressing the rights of excluded groups. Sri Lanka has demonstrated the importance of creating a sense of educational entitlement whilst in Nepal and Sri Lanka civil society organizations and the media are currently playing an important role in building this sense of entitlement amongst communities who have long seen education as a gift or a privilege.

- *Conducive legislation to support equity in education*

The experience in all three case study countries illustrates the importance to progress in the education sector of conducive legislation, for example on birth registration, political representation of disadvantaged groups, anti-discrimination measures or the rights of migrants and refugees.

- *Bringing basic services closer to the users*

The study did not provide any clear argument for or against decentralization per se, though this is clearly a general trend that is set to continue. What has been learned is that, regardless of the political context, *responsiveness* to local contexts is vital and mechanisms are needed for school and community participation in educational decision making and

monitoring. Where there is decentralization of funding, if equity is to be achieved, there need to be mechanisms for targeting funds according to need and systems to prevent 'elite capture' or increasing the financial burden of poor communities.

- *Public service reform and good governance*

It has long been recognized that SWAPs are more likely to be effective in the context of wider public service reform and efforts to promote good governance, and a number of DPs are engaged in supporting this wider agenda. Whilst this is a general issue, areas that will particularly impact on equity and inclusion include government-wide equal opportunities and non-discrimination policies, overall structures for mainstreaming equity across the social sectors, improved incentive and reward systems, the raising of teacher morale, improved cross-sectoral working and stronger partnerships between governments, civil society organizations and the private sector.

- *Media and civil society action*

Finally, the case studies note the benefits of efforts in education taking place in tandem with wider civil society and media campaigns and actions to highlight discriminatory or exclusive practices, strengthen the voice of excluded groups and catalyse attitudinal change in the wider society and culture.

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Annex

Research Prototype Question Guide

1: Identifying the Main Actors in the SWAp Processes

First we must identify those who have an interest in the outcome of the SWAp processes. For the purposes of the exercise, we have subcategorized them as SWAp partners (those recognized officially as the 'core' participants) and stakeholders (a wider group concerned with and affected by the issues):

SWAp partners

- Who are they? (Which government, donor and other agencies?)
- How do different partners participate? (e.g. funding, technical support)
- What are the formal coordination mechanisms?
- Do any have declared or undeclared special interests/concerns? (e.g. based on the partner's own policies on equity)

Stakeholders in reducing education disparity

- Who are they?
- Those affected by the issues
- Organizations, institutions, others attempting to assist/support (this may include SWAp 'partners')
- Do any of these 'stakeholders' have specific interests? Vested interests?

2: Understanding the Consultation Mechanisms and their Effectiveness

Now let us examine the forms and extent of consultation used to acquire information and support for the SWAp, both during formulation and ongoing.

Here we are examining how information and perspectives from all key stakeholders is used or might be used in SWAp decisions. (A few specific consultation aspects are covered under subsequent headings.)

- Who has been consulted? (e.g. political/admin. structures, at what levels, CSOs, users and potential users of education services, M/F)
- Do key stakeholders have a means to express their views?
- How are consultations carried out? (i.e. truly participatory or is it a rubber-stamping exercise?)
- What disparity issues are included in the consultation? (e.g. access, barriers, gender, vulnerability)
- Is there evidence that information from consultations feeds into education policy, plans, strategies?
- Are there enforcement mechanisms that facilitate action?

3: Reviewing the SWAp Design Process

Obviously, the design of the SWAp itself plays a key role in setting the SWAp agenda. Are equity issues sufficiently incorporated into the design:

- How was the design done – objectives, priorities, strategies?
- By whom?
- Was it SWAp-specific or was the structure of another program utilized?
- What is the decision making structure? Who makes decisions? Who influences decisions?
- What information/evidence was used? How current was it?
- Who was included in the design process?

4: The Equity Analysis

The presence or absence of an adequate equity analysis will certainly affect the ability of the SWAp process to address disparity. Some areas to consider:

- Has some form of an equity analysis been done? (e.g. gender and social parity analysis, gender/disparity analysis for action plans)
- Done regularly (e.g. for reviews) or only once-off (e.g. for SWAp formulation)?
- How is this done/by whom?
- What disparities have been identified?
- Is there clear evidence that information from the equity analysis has influenced the SWAp implementation?

5: Assessing Costing and Budgeting Mechanisms

A major underlying assumption of the SWAp – and indeed an expectation of both governments and donors – is that more coordinated and accountable financing mechanisms will emerge. But can these mechanisms also play a part in reducing disparities? Key areas to explore:

- How were they designed and by whom?
- Is the mechanism structured to address requirements of donors? If so, how?
- Are funds targeted to equity issues? If so, what was the process used to identify/decide about allocation? How are they accessed?
- Are there provisions in the budget for unexpected/unplanned costs? (e.g. arising from emergencies, for groups/situations not identified/included, to pilot new initiatives)
- Does the budget include/reflect the full costs of free education? (e.g. requirements of matching funds, parent/community contributions)
- Conditionality – are any of these equity-focused? Do any have negative or potentially negative impacts on addressing equity issues?

6: Capacity Building and Organizational Development Components

Another intention of the SWAp is to improve the government's ability, at all levels, to deliver quality education services; thus, some support is allocated for the necessary capacity building and organizational development. Some aspects of this to explore include:

- Are capacity building and organizational development goals and objectives clearly stated? How are they identified and agreed? By whom?
- Has any capacity building supported by the SWAp addressed equity?
- What individuals/institutions are targeted?
- Give examples of relevant training or institutional reform.

- Are institutional structures sufficiently reformed (or created) at different levels to address equity issues? (e.g. special units/assignments, gender focal points)
- Are these institutional structures and their personnel sufficiently empowered?
- Is there clarity regarding roles and responsibilities?
- Is there strategic selection and use of technical assistance (TA)? Who/what influences decisions on TA?

7: SWAp Review and Monitoring Mechanisms

The SWAp review and monitoring is a massive task which attempts to regularly assess quantitative and qualitative achievements. For the purposes of this study, we wish to explore these aspects:

- What sources of documented information are used for reviews? (e.g. results from existing studies, studies conducted during preparatory activities)
- What does the review exercise include? (e.g. document review, high level meetings, field visits, broader consultations)
- What disparity evidence/indices are used in reviews/monitoring?
- Where do they come from? Any links to equity analysis or other relevant evidence?
- Who is involved in the review, monitoring exercises? Is there an opportunity or mechanism for the experience/views of all key stakeholders to feed into these reviews?
- How does information from the review feed into policies, plans, strategies?
- How does the SWAp provide feedback and accountability to the partners and stakeholders?

8: Analysing SWAp Impact (to Date) on Disparity

Is there any evidence of impact or outcomes that demonstrate or indicate a reduction of disparity linked to the SWAp?

- Is there any evidence of progress on achieving identified milestones?
- Is there any evidence of changes in policy, plans, strategies?



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