



EFA Plan of Action Maldives

2001

Follow-up to Dakar Framework for Action

EFA Plan of Action, Maldives

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Introduction

This draft EFA Action Plan includes objectives and strategies formulated in light of findings from the national consultation on Vision 2020 and the Sixth National Development Plan (2001 – 2005) of the Maldives. The Vision 2020 of the Maldives, articulated by His Excellency Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the President of the Maldives, on 26 July 1999 states:

Ten years of formal schooling will be the minimum standard throughout the Maldives ... A system for the provision of technical skills needed for achieving and sustaining social economic development will also be established.

The Plan of Action is entirely congruent with the national development priorities because of the inputs incorporated into it from the public consultation on Vision 2020 and the Sixth National Development Plan process. Thus, this EFA Plan of Action is now integral to the Vision 2020 activities, the Sixth National Development Plan and also, the current Education Sector Master Plan (1995 – 2005). As such, this Plan is tied closely to the national poverty reduction strategy in which education and employment-oriented training are considered critical. The strategies included regarding the learning needs of the young people, and the adult and continuing education strategies would assist people to secure suitable employment or venture into self-employment activities.

Relevant EFA goals of the Maldives are presented in the Plan with the strategies to achieve them. The four major EFA goals for the Maldives are:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and development, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children
2. Ensuring that all children, irrespective of gender, ability and location have access to good quality basic education
3. Ensuring equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults

4. Ensuring that young people's learning needs are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes

The four key goals stated above are presented below with the following elements:

1. A brief review of the progress made in achieving the respective goal
2. Description of short-term (3 to 5 years) and long-term (7 to 10 years) strategies to achieve the goal
3. Projected timeline and estimated financial requirements for each strategy

Detailed operational strategy documents will need to be produced for each EFA strategy listed in this Plan. The ECCD National Campaign Document and the Twenty-Four Schools Project Document was illustrated as examples in the sub-regional workshop presentation. Finally, this Plan includes with a brief discussion on financing the Plan and developing a participatory mechanism for implementing monitoring Plan.

Maldives has reached an adult literacy rate of 98.8%, and a 49% enrolment of girls in primary and secondary education. As such the EFA goals of achieving 50% improvement in adult literacy and eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education are not specifically addressed in this Plan. However, gender parity and provision of basic education are two themes that are embedded in all relevant strategies in the Plan.

Goal 1 : Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and development (ECCD), especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Current Situation:

Maldivians attach great importance to starting the education of their children at an early age. Even prior to the introduction of the modern pre-schools, the traditional 'Edhuruge' (a home-based education provided by respected community members) discharged the function of developing basic literacy, numeracy, religious knowledge and awareness in

children. Today, pre-schools co-exist with the ‘Edhuruge’ in most island communities, and together they provide the first (organised) learning opportunities for over 89% of the pre-school aged children. Figure 1 shows the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in pre-school enrolment over the past five years.

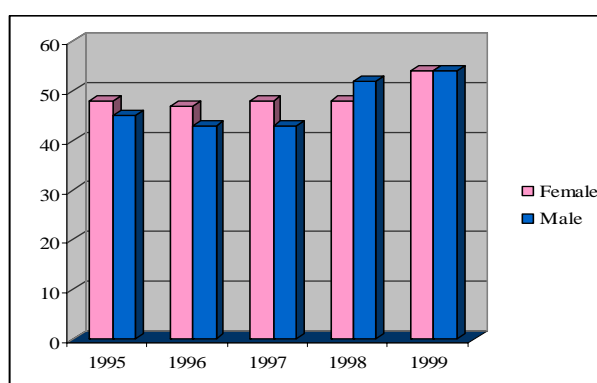


Figure 1 : Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programmes (1995 – 1999)

The EFA goal of expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and development is supported by the current Education Sector Master Plan (1995 – 2005) and in the Fifth National Development Plan. The Sixth National Development Plan to be launched this year is expected to include this important educational objective as well.

The increasing enrolment in pre-school education is the result of a planned effort to expand and strengthen the provision of early childhood care and development (ECCD) activities. The policy on ECCD encourages community initiative and participation in early childhood care and development activities. In this regard, the Ministry of Education (MOE) provides assistance for community initiatives in the provision of ECCD activities. MOE also promotes alternative, non-formal, type of early childhood care and development (ECCD) programmes.

Raising public awareness of how to nurture and care for the physical, developmental and learning needs of infants and toddlers is integral to the efforts to expand ECCD programmes. To this end, a UNICEF funded public awareness campaign on ECCD

would be launched this year. This campaign is geared to raise public awareness of the importance of the first formative years of a child.

In light of the current situation described, included below are the specific strategies planned to achieve the EFA goal on ECCD.

EFA Strategies:

1. Raise parental (i.e. caregiver) awareness and understanding of early childhood care and development needs, and including ways of stimulating the healthy development of infants and toddlers. A three year national ECCD campaign will be launched this year.

(Timeline: 2001 – 2003; estimated cost is US \$ 0.3 million)

2. Provide seed funding for community organizations and private parties to initiate ECCD programmes, while encouraging alternative forms of early childhood care and development centres. Identify and target assistance to communities that are least served by ECCD programmes.

(Timeline: 2002 – 2007; estimated cost is US \$ 0.3 million)

3. Develop curricular guidelines and resources, including audio-visual materials, and provide them free to pre-schools and childcare centres.

(Timeline: 2002 – 2004; estimated cost is US \$ 0.1 million)

4. Upgrade and continue to offer teacher-training courses on ECCD. Based on demand, fifty teachers could be trained each year, for five years.

(Timeline: 2002 – 2007; estimated cost is US \$ 0.3 million)

Goal 2 : Ensuring that all children, irrespective of gender, ability and location have access to good quality basic education***Current Situation:***

The past two decades witnessed considerable progress in creating access to educational opportunities at all levels. In particular, the country achieved a recognizable success in opening up opportunities for students to participate in seven years of basic education. However, this increase in access to basic education has not accompanied any significant improvement in the quality of education. In effect, the quest for universalizing even years of schooling had to be achieved, unfortunately, by employing non-trained and semi-trained teachers and ill-equipped schools. For example, even today some schools still remain without adequate drinking water, electricity and teachers. These factors deter the efforts to improve the quality of education. Therefore, uplifting the quality of education is essential while considering the relevance and outcomes of the very structure, content and process of education. While the priority should be given to raise the quality of basic education, quality improvement also needs to be applied to secondary, tertiary and adult education sectors as well.

The measure of the quality of education is both about the magnitude and the quality of learning that takes place during schooling. It is also about knowledge acquisition, skill development and attitude and character formation that result from the educational experience. It is also about providing trained teachers and classroom environments that are conducive to learning. While these factors relate to the quality of education, the degree of success or failure in improving quality is difficult to determine comprehensively without a measure of academic and non-academic achievements.

Recent studies conducted over the past five years have demonstrated that student achievement and learning outcomes remain unsatisfactorily low in the Maldives. The quality of education gap between Malé (the capital) and the rest of the country is considerable, and inter and intra atoll quality gaps have also emerged. Therefore, a focused attention to quality is essential. The poor results across the country in literacy

and numeracy illustrate urgent action. Actions that could be taken to improve quality of education include:

1. Developing an effective mechanism to monitor student achievement across the country.
2. Pre-service and in-service teacher training
3. Developing a decentralized school supervision mechanism
4. Strengthening in-house supervision of schools
5. Increasing the production of relevant curriculum materials
6. Providing adequate educational facilities in each school. Added emphasis needs to be given to schools in the least served areas of the country to ensure that students in all locations are served equally.

The strategies proposed below emerge from the current situation and is designed to collectively provide a holistic thrust towards quality improvement of the entire education system, particularly the primary level education.

EFA Strategies:

1. Provide essential facilities and resources such as adequate desks and chairs, drinking water, a library / reading material facility, and a basic set of equipment for co-curricular activities to all school. Identify the least served schools and target assistance to these schools on a planned basis.

(Timeline: 2002 – 2005; estimated cost is US \$ 2.0 million)

2. Conduct a five-year national programme to train teachers. Such a programme would have to train at least 70 – 100 primary and secondary teachers each year to reduce the heavy reliance on expatriate teachers and to meet the needs of increasing student enrolment. It is assumed that the Faculty of Education of the Maldives College of Higher Education in conjunction with an institution abroad could conduct such a programme jointly. MOE would identify the critical areas of teacher need and coordinate the entire programme.

(Timeline: 2002 – 2007; estimated cost is US \$ 8.0 million)

3. Place sufficient number of trained English and Mathematics teachers in all schools.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2004; estimated cost is US \$ 0.5 million)

4. Ensure that all teachers have access to and participate in either school-based or cluster-based teacher in-service activities. Such a system needs to be developed in collaboration with the Faculty of Education of the Maldives College of Higher Education and MOE.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2007; estimated cost is US \$ 0.5 million)

5. Establish a national student achievement monitoring mechanism. Such a mechanism could be handled by the cluster school system whereby the head of the cluster is charged with the overall responsibility of monitoring and improving student achievement. Results of student achievements would need to be submitted to a national database to monitor progress over time. Teacher training in assessment, and communicating lessons learnt from consecutive national assessment and communication skills, both English and Dhivehi Languages, Numeracy and Life Skills.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2003; estimated cost is US \$ 0.3 million)

6. Strengthen the supervision and management capacity of school clusters. MOE would need to continue its central role in leading and providing support for clusters in supervision activities. This amounts to decentralization of the supervision and management of schools whereby the cluster heads play a direct role in improving the quality of schools within their respective clusters. A key strategic step would be further training of cluster heads and school heads.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2007; estimated cost is US \$ 0.4 million)

7. Ensure that supervisory staff in every school completes a comprehensive supervision course. Such a course, divided into three levels, is currently in place. This strategy will ensure that every school consists of a supervisor who has achieved the final level (Level 3) of the supervision course.
(Timeline: 2001 – 2003; estimated cost is US \$ 0.2 million)

8. Ensure that at least one computer is available for every 20 – 30 students in each school. Make computer literacy a component of basic education curriculum.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2005)

9. Revise the primary curriculum, produce revised curricula resources including textbooks, and distribute these resources to all schools, placing emphasis to ensure that atoll schools have sufficient curricula resources. Conducting teacher in-service workshops on curriculum is also part of this strategy.
(Timeline: 2001 – 2003; estimated cost is US \$ 0.3 million)

10. Complete a needs assessment of special needs students, and provide in-service training for teachers to mainstream these students where possible. Provide specialized instructions for special needs students who are unable to cope in mainstream situations. Teacher in-service training and creating a special needs cell within the supervision section of MOE are essential.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2005; estimated cost is US \$ 0.7 million)

11. Conduct a national campaign to raise awareness of children’s nutritional needs, particularly on the importance of providing a good breakfast for students.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2003; estimated cost is US \$ 0.2 million)

12. Develop a national educational management information system. Such a system is essential for decentralization of school supervision and management. Current development in IT can be utilized in the development of this system.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2003; estimated cost is US \$ 0.2 million)

Goal 3 : Ensuring equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults

Current situation:

The Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC) provides educational opportunities for youth and adults. Among the programmes offered, the Condensed Education Programme (CEP) of the NFEC provides a fast-paced learning opportunity for those who miss out on completing primary or secondary schooling. Today a revitalized programme, named “Second Chance”, is also underway to address the needs of those who fail to obtain ten years of schooling. Furthermore, NFEC offers language courses, short-courses in skill development, teacher training in early childhood care and development and a programme to raise awareness of population issues.

The future of Non-Formal Education Centre needs to be carefully crafted to address the issues raised in the Dakar Declaration, by diversifying educational opportunities for youth and adults to participate in skill building and employment oriented programmes. NFEC would attempt to create continuous learning environments, turning island communities into learning societies. Information Technology options should be explored in delivering adult education courses to island communities. This, of course, requires considerable planning, resources, and training of educators.

EFA Strategies:

1. Conduct a national youth skills training programme through NFEC. This programme will focus on employability skills for the youth. This programme will be a nation-wide programme that will place emphasis on providing such training in the atolls.

(Timeline: 2002 – 2004; estimated cost is US \$ 0.2 million)

2. Upgrade and continue the current English Language courses for adults to enable those who are already employed to perform in their jobs more effectively, and for those seeking employment to get employed more easily.

(Timeline: 2002 – 2007; estimated cost is US \$ 0.6 million)

3. Design the delivery of adult education and continuing education opportunities based on learner needs, employment market needs and projected skill requirements. A systematic programme and curriculum development mechanism needs to be in place. Within such a mechanism, the delivery of continuing education opportunities needs to be expanded to include outer islands as well. Distance education options need to be considered, experimented and further enhanced. An adult education facilitator or coordinator needs to be placed in each island community. This person should be trained to promote and facilitate courses offered through distance mode.

(Timeline: 2002 – 2007; estimated cost is US \$ 0.2 million)

Goal 4 : Ensuring that young people’s learning needs are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes

Current Situation:

An educated youth population will prove to be the most valuable economic and social asset of the Maldives. Indeed it is the ability of the youth population of the country that determines whether the Maldives will be pushed forward or back by the competitive knowledge-based economy of the world. At a more personal level, a young person’s quality of life will increasingly depend on his or her educational attainment and life-skills development. Therefore, improving the educational attainment of young people is critical for both national and individual reasons. In this regard, increasing access to ten years of formal schooling for young people is seen as a strategic step in meeting learning needs of the young people. Ten years of schooling is necessary to develop the technological literacy and know-how and personal attributes to thrive in an age of knowledge and technology. The Vision 2020 captured this important need by stating the ten years of schooling would have to be universalized by 2020.

Today, the NER in secondary schooling (i.e. Grades 8 – 10) is just about 36 and this is too low. A target needs to be set to lift secondary school NER to 80 by 2010. To achieve this target, new classrooms would need to be constructed and secondary teacher

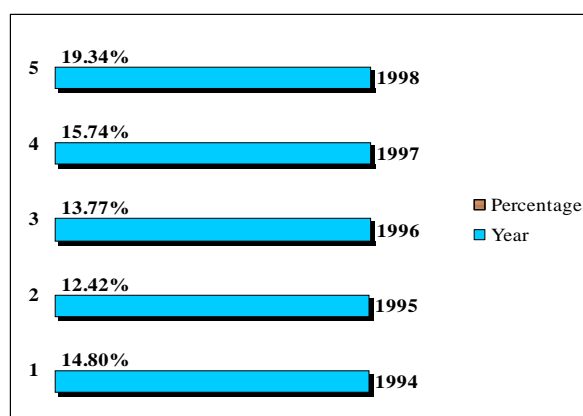
training should become a national priority. Today, over 75% of the secondary school teachers are expatriates, placing a heavy economic and quality impediment on the education system. In addition, focused attention is required towards improving the relevance and quality of education. The curriculum needs to be diversified so that those who are less academically inclined have access to skill-based or employment-based training. The learning needs of girls and socially disadvantaged young people need to be identified and addressed.

EFA Strategies:

1. Provide necessary infrastructure to raise NER in secondary (Grades 8 – 10) schooling from 36 to 80 within the next 10 years. To achieve this objective, it is estimated that 800 additional classrooms would need to be incorporated with relevant educational facilities over this period. Furthermore, close to a thousand secondary teachers would have to be trained over the next 10 years to meet the local teacher shortage.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2010; estimated cost is US \$ 10 – 12 million)
2. Provide a ‘diversified’ secondary curriculum that is student-centred, culturally relevant and one that provides diverse learning opportunities, particularly for less academically inclined students. Such a curriculum should include vocational and technical training and employment-based training.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2007; estimated cost is US \$ 1.5 – 3.0 million)
3. Encourage the private sector to offer college level (diploma and certificate level) training programmes to meet the learning needs of the young people. MOE, through the Maldives Accreditation Board, would assist such private sector institutions in developing quality assurance mechanisms.
(Timeline: 2002 – 2010)
4. Complete the ongoing survey in the remaining 15 atolls to identify children and youth above age ten who are not attending school, and assist them to complete the basic education cycle.
(Timeline: 2001 – 2003; estimated cost is US \$ 0.2 million)

Financing, Implementing and Monitoring the EFA Plan of Action

In terms of educational financing, the Government of Maldives takes responsibility for all the recurrent and capital costs of all government schools, as well as heavily subsidizes community and private schools. The government also undertakes the upgrading of physical infrastructure of all community and private schools. On top of such regular baseline funding by the government, the strategies outline in this plan would require substantial additional funds. The commitment of the government to financing education is expected to remain high, as it has been so over the past two decades. The unit cost per student is relatively high in the Maldives because of the diseconomies of scale resulting from the dispersion of the student population and the high reliance on expatriate teachers. However, investment in education is an important priority which becomes evident when expenditure on education is shown as a percentage of the total government expenditure. Over the past five years, expenditure on education has clearly increased in terms of absolute amount and as a percentage of national expenditure (see figure).



Note: Expenditure includes spending on all sectors of education and all sources of financing, including grant aid and loan assistance from donor countries and financing agencies.

Figure 2: Sources - Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Speeches on Budget of 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000; Ministry of Planning and National Development

If the economy continues to grow, the government expenditure on education will likely remain within 15% – 20% of the national expenditure. However, to implement the

planned EFA strategies, substantial new funding would have to be secured from elsewhere as suggested earlier. To implement all the strategies listed above, it is estimated that between US \$ 3 – 4 million per year would have to be sought from donor countries, international agencies and private sector partners within the Maldives.

The key role of implementing the EFA Plan will be undertaken by MOE with the guidance of a renewed EFA National Committee. The existing EFA Committee will soon be upgraded to a multi-sectoral committee by inviting members from all stakeholder groups, reflecting the participatory spirit of the EFA process. Relevant government ministries, Maldives College of Higher Education, Parent Teacher Associations, School

Boards, NGOs, one representative from each donor agency, and the private sector will be invited to participate in the Committee. This Committee would both assist in the implementation of the EFA strategies and monitoring the progress of the planned strategies. Yearly progress reports and planning exercises will be conducted by this EFA Committee.

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