

## Future Policy Choices for the Education Sector in Asia

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### Summary

#### Introduction

Although considerable progress has been made in recent years towards educational goals in Asia, much remains to be achieved. This paper draws on case studies from Bangladesh, India and Nepal to both illustrate current conditions and suggest ways of improving those conditions.

#### Main findings

Significant variations exist both between and within countries but in no case has the goal of Universal Primary Education been achieved, despite substantial increases in enrolment. And insufficient attention has been paid to retention, to educational quality and to sound financing. Expenditure on education remains at below 16 per cent of national outlay throughout the region, suggesting that continued substantial inputs from international donor agencies will remain essential.

What is also apparent is that scaling up from successful local initiatives to a larger arena is hampered by a dearth of knowledge about the constraints imposed by financial and quality requirements.

#### Key findings

- Significant progress has been made towards attaining educational goals in Asia
- The goal of Universal Primary Education has not been achieved anywhere in the region
- Insufficient attention has been paid to retention, quality and financing
- National expenditure on education remains low
- Multi-partner engagements will play a key role in educational progress.

#### Conclusions and policy implications

Emerging multi-partner engagements between governments, non-governmental non-profit organisations, local communities and international donor agencies must be fostered in order to shift focus away from enrolment and towards a more systematic consideration of the schooling system, particularly with regard to retention and motivation. These partnerships can also identify the weakest areas of provision and suggest innovative ways to address difficult areas in educational provision. Their success will depend on the commitment of national governments, the continued participation of the non-governmental non-profit sector and greater and more directed support from international donor agencies.

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