



Statement from the Government of Bhutan

Delivered by Aum Sangay Zam, Secretary, Ministry of Education

Bhutan has made good progress in both the EFA and MDG goals for education. Since the EFA Assessment and the signing of the MDGs in 2000, Bhutan's Gross Primary Enrolment Ratio has increased from 72% to 120% and the Net Primary Enrolment Ratio from 53% to 95% today. 100% completion rate for primary school has been achieved and the survival rate to grades 5 and 7 have increased to 97% and 93% respectively.

All this has been made possible mainly because of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB)'s commitment to education and the generous support of our development partners.

For example, in areas where the World Food Programme has withdrawn its support from schools, the Royal Government of Bhutan has stepped in with its scarce resources, in order to ensure that those children can continue to attend school.

Today, while we are on track towards achieving the target of 100% Net Enrolment Ratio, many new challenges still remain.

The Ministry of Education now has the difficult task of enrolling and retaining the remaining few children who are presently out of school for various reasons. This task will be harder as these are the children in the hardest to reach areas such as the nomadic communities, and children with special needs.

Despite the difficulties and costs involved in getting these children into school, the RGoB is committed to put in place various interventions to ensure access to inclusive education for all.

Additionally to make the education provided meaningful to the beneficiaries, we will strive to provide quality education in all parts of the country.

It is in this regard that we pledge to increase the net enrolment ratio to 100% and to further enhance the quality of education so that there is a marked improvement in the learning outcomes of children in core subjects i.e English, Maths and Science (from 40%-55% in 2009 to 60-70% by 2013) and to raise the teacher satisfaction level (from 24% in 2009 to 70% by 2013). Towards the achievement of these goals Bhutan pledges to implement the National Education Policy and its subsidiary policies which will ensure access to quality basic education for all children, irrespective of gender, social status or ability.

The subsidiary policies such as the Special Educational Needs Policy, the ECCD Policy and the Teacher HR Policy will support our efforts to provide equal access to a quality education. An education system that is responsive to all children with special needs, and that which will provide quality early childhood care and development interventions, and addresses the need to enhance teacher quality through the development of a proper teacher deployment system, teacher career tracks, a comprehensive professional development and performance system for teachers.

In addition to fulfilling the obligation enshrined under Article 9 of our Constitution to provide free basic education to all, the RGoB stands by our commitment to meet the goals and obligations of the MDGs, EFA, CEDAW and the CRC.

Bhutan is at a critical juncture where it is in the process of transitioning into a fully fledged democratic society, and the role of education in empowering our citizens into literate voters and decision makers cannot be overstated.

Despite our achievements, the sustainability of our successes in the education sector is a matter of concern with the imminent withdrawal of traditional donor partners like WFP and DANIDA from the upcoming plan period (starting July 2013).

Therefore, in order to help us maintain the momentum gained thus far in terms of achieving the goals for education in our country, and to also help us build further upon our achievements, we appeal to the international community to continue being our partners in this important journey that we have embarked upon.

Thank you and TashiDelek.