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Non-State Providers and Public-Private-Community Partnerships in Education

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Non-State Providers and Public-Private-Community Partnerships in Education – Contributions towards Achieving EFA: A Critical Review of Challenges, Opportunities and Issues

Paper by AKF team

*“Those NGOs make a lot of noise, but really they
just run a few schools here and there.”*

“What have private schools got to do with EFA? They are just for the elite.”

The World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990) emphasized the importance of partnerships “*between government and non-government organisations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups and families*” in ensuring that all children have access to quality educational opportunities. The commitments to creative new partnerships to achieve Education for All (EFA) goals received even stronger emphasis in Dakar (2000). Nevertheless, while there is broad consensus that governments alone cannot achieve EFA, opinions like those quoted above are widespread and, in practice, discussions and efforts to meet EFA goals have focused primarily on government provision.

Interest in non-state provision of education – defined broadly as education services provided by NGOs, faith-based organizations, private for-profit schools, private non-profit schools, community schools and philanthropic schools – has grown as the search for alternative and innovative ways to reach EFA goals becomes more urgent.

The aim of this paper is to probe into some of the myths and realities surrounding non-state provision of education; and to shed some light on both the benefits and the issues associated with this provision. The article also examines a broad range of partnerships between the state and non-state sector; and offers a synthesis of observations and recommendations that may help to determine how best to leverage the contributions of the non-state sector towards reaching EFA goals. Particular attention is given to the contributions of the non-state sector (whether through direct provision or partnerships) to reaching marginalized or excluded groups¹.

It is important to note up front that there are considerable challenges with non-state sector data, not least because of the way in which definitions of “private” or “non-state” differ. The analysis used in this paper draws largely on UIS data (1991-2005) and other available research². UNESCO regards as “private” any educational institute that is controlled and managed by a non-government organization (e.g. religious group, association, enterprise) or if its governing body consists mainly of members not selected

¹ Excluded children include those living in the poorest countries and most deprived communities; children facing discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, disability or membership of an indigenous group; children caught up in armed conflict or affected by HIV/AIDS; and children who lack a formal identity, who suffer child protection abuses or those who are not treated as children (UNICEF, 2006).

² Data used for the analysis is based on UIS statistics from 1991 and 2003, and other government data where UIS data was incomplete

by a public agency (UNESCO, 2005). The assumption is that countries use the UNESCO definition of “private” when they send data on ‘private education’ to UIS. However, the likelihood is that there is considerable variation in definitions from country to country. The terms themselves are used in different ways. “Private” in particular is interpreted in many different ways. “Private” for some conjures a picture of a fee-paying school and likely one that is for profit. In this paper the UNESCO definition is used - private means “non-state” and non-state and private are used interchangeably throughout although we have deliberately used non-state more³.

We begin with an analysis of the size and scope of non-state provision of education.

The Numbers

UIS data from 136 developing countries for which enrolment data is available indicates that there are 69 million more children in primary school now than there were in 1991. More than 23 million of them attend non-state schools, representing one third of the increase.

Over the last 13 years, non-state primary school enrolments increased by 58% (from 39 million to 62 million) while public sector enrolments increased by 10% (from 484 million to 530 million) (UIS, 1991-2004). 44 developing countries have shown substantial (at least 50%) increases in non-state school enrolments since 1991, as compared to 24 countries with similar percentage increases in government school enrolments (UIS, *ibid*). There are more than 113 million children enrolled in non-state schools in developing nations – 62 million of them are in primary school (approximately 11% of total developing country primary enrolments), and another 51 million are in secondary school (approximately 24% of the total). An additional 10 million children attend private pre-primary schools, or 17% of total pre-primary enrolments.

The data on non-state provision (NSP) is not easy to assess. On the one hand, part of the increase that is being seen may be due to better reporting as compared to a few years ago. On the other hand, we know that there is still massive under-reporting. The non-state enrolment figures are significantly higher than they appear, and are likely at least double in some countries as many, and sometimes the majority of, non-state schools are unregistered, and therefore do not get counted in the data.

For example, in **India** alone, the official figures state that more than 23 million children attend non-state primary schools (UIS, 2003). The true figures are likely much higher than these. One sample found that 41% of private schools in the country were unrecognised (Kingdon, 2005), and another sample found that there were considerably more unregistered than registered private schools (Tooley and Dixon, 2005). There is a “mushrooming” of unregistered private schools operating “practically in every locality” (Nambissan 2003 and Aggawal, 2000).

Almost 40% of **Bangladesh's** primary enrolment is in non-state schools. 96% of its secondary school enrolments are non-state. This means that a total of 18 million children

³ We have avoided the term “non-government” except when referring to a non-government organization because if non-government is used that tends to exclude private fee-paying schools (for profit and not for profit) in many people’s minds.

in the country benefit from non-state education opportunities (UIS, 2003). In **Pakistan**, 5.8 million children are enrolled in non-state schools, accounting for 36% of the country's total primary enrolments (UIS, 2004). According to a National Survey of private schools commissioned by the Ministry of Education the percentage is even higher - 42%.

Indeed, **South Asia**, and in particular India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, have the highest numbers of private school enrolments. *Over half of all non-state school enrolments at the primary level -- 35 million children -- are in South Asia.* It is commonly supposed that the vast majority of these schools are in urban areas, but in addition to NGO schools, the signs for private fee-paying schools, often with names like "Little Gems" and "Future Stars", are omnipresent in remote rural areas of Nepal, Pakistan and India. In fact, in **Pakistan**, almost 8,000 new private fee-paying schools have been set up since 1999 alone, of which approximately half are in the rural areas of the country (Andrabi, 2006).

There has also been a strong prevalence of non-state provision in the Caribbean and Latin America for many years. **Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, and Aruba** all have approximately 80 percent of their students enrolled in private schools at the primary level. One in five children in **Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador** attend private schools. More than half the children in Chile also attend non-state schools.

Across **Africa** as a whole, approximately 10% of children are in non-state schools, and there is substantial variation between countries. In **Zimbabwe**, long prior to the current crisis, non-state provision accounted for 9 out of 10 school children. In eleven countries on the continent, private provision accounts for 20% or more of all primary enrolments.

In many countries, we see pockets with very significant non-state sector presence. Often, these pockets of provision are a response to a sheer lack of access. For example, in **Nigeria's Ga District**, 64% of school children attend private unaided schools, while in **Lagos State**, Tooley and Dixon (2005) estimate that 75% of school children are in private schools, with a larger proportion in unregistered private than in government schools (33% compared to 25%).

Free primary education policies in many African countries in the last decade or so have been followed by marked improvements in enrolment rates. The assumption has been that this is due to public school enrolments, but 1 in 5 countries in Africa attribute half or more of the school enrolment increases to non-state schools (UIS data, 1991-2005). In **Mali**, for example, with the abolishment of school fees in 2000, school enrolments in public schools increased by 11% in the first year. In the last five years, primary enrolments have continued to increase in both sectors – public school enrolments saw a 21% increase whereas the growth in non-state provision has more than doubled. Overall, in Africa, between 1991 and 2003, the continent's public sector saw a 53% growth. In the same period, the non-state sector increased by 106%.

In **Francophone Africa** in the past 16 years, the percentage of students enrolled in private provision increased from less than 7% to 18%, serving more than 3.7 million children. In **Chad**, private provision increased from 6% in 1991 to over 33% in 2004. In **Ghana, Gabon, and Togo**, it has more than doubled since 1991.

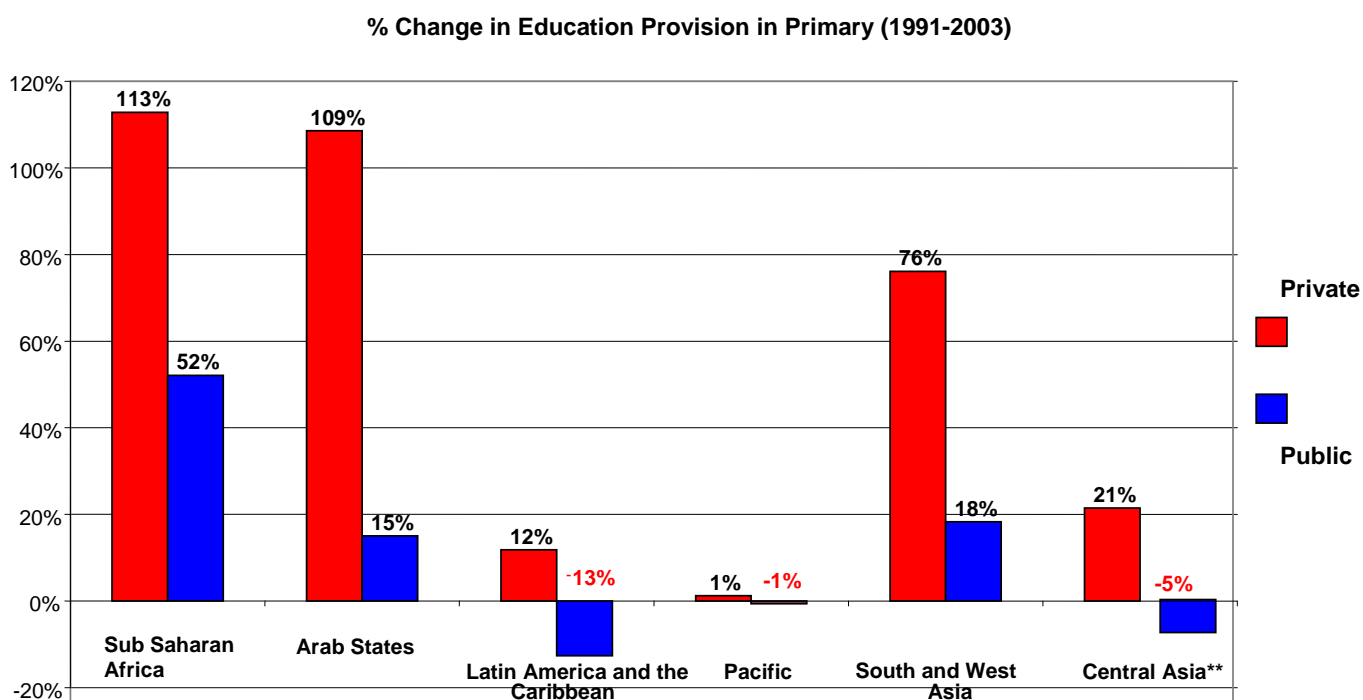
In many regions of the world, private providers are a growing percentage of total provision. In **Nepal**, the government sector has increased school enrolment by 20% in the last thirteen years, whereas the share of private enrolment has increased six-fold. In

South and West Asia, the part of the non-state sector that is registered has seen four and a half times the growth in enrolment compared to that of the state sector in the last 13 years. Kingdon's review of the non-state sector in India (2005) emphasises the critical point that it is not so much the share of private schools in the overall total enrolment that warrants attention. It is the share of private schooling within the total increases in enrolment at different levels that is significant. In **India**, Kingdon's analysis shows that 61% of the increase in primary school enrolments over an 8-year period (1986-1993) was in non-state schools.

Arab states like **Lebanon, UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar** have seen private provision doubling, with more than half of their students now enrolled in private schools at the primary level.

Central Asia has the smallest numbers of students enrolled in private schools – unsurprisingly given the state monopoly under the Soviet Union. The figure, though, has almost doubled in just the last four years. Even in **China**, where the government has historically been the sole education provider, the establishment of private schools are being encouraged in recent years as a way of stimulating the economy. In 2001, according to official figures, 3.1 million students – just under 1.5% of the country's total student population – were enrolled in non-state primary and secondary schools. Five years before, the figure was just 405,000 (Far Eastern Review, 2001).

The following chart shows the substantial growth in enrolments in private and state provision across various regions (See Annex I for additional information).



(** Central Asia data was taken from 2000-2004)

Chart based on UIS statistics from 1991 and 2003, and other government data where UIS data was incomplete

In short, there has been tremendous recent growth of non-state schools around the world. And, while it is possible (even highly likely) that some of the baseline numbers are low due to undercounting or failure to include private sector schools in surveys, the upward trend in non-state provision is unmistakable. This seems to be particularly true for certain levels. Globally, fewer students go on to attend secondary school. Yet, one in six students in the developing world attends a private secondary school. The numbers are greatest in South Asia where approximately 39% of enrolled students attend private schools (UIS, 2003). The countries with the highest private enrolments at secondary level are Bangladesh (96%) and Zimbabwe (71%) (UIS, 2003).

Most importantly, as is discussed below, a large percentage of non-state schools serve low-income families, and are therefore contributing towards the achievement of EFA goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Non-state provision is acknowledged as often being particularly effective in reaching the most disadvantaged groups. As the new Oxfam report (*In the Public Interest*; 2007) puts it, “The services provided by NSPs – both private providers and non-profit organizations – are crucial for millions of people.” This certainty raises serious questions about the lack of international and national attention, both political and scholarly, to non-state education.

Lack of Attention to Non-State Provision

The major EFA reports are largely silent on the issue of non-state education, which is represented by community schools, NGO schools and both for-profit and not-for-profit private schools that cater to all income levels. The closest that many of these reports come to addressing the issue is to include a table or two – often in voluminous appendices. The 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) (UNESCO, 2006) includes columns giving the percent of the total pre-primary, primary and secondary enrolments which are “private”, but there is no disaggregating within this; as such, there is no way of telling which type of non-state provider is delivering the service. Within the primary enrolment data, what is missing is as telling as what is there (e.g. Pakistan reports private enrolment data only very occasionally and there is no UIS data on private enrolments for Kenya). Having said that, reporting data on private providers has improved since 1991 when less than half of the countries reported data on percent provision.

Data for private provision in secondary schools is even more limited in the GMR 2007 report, with 25 fewer countries reporting data for secondary schools than for primary schools. Of the countries that reported, just over 60% provided data on percent of private provision in secondary. As Lewin (2007) says, the lack of robust and consistent data seriously hampers analysis. However, we know from the data that does exist that private provision is extremely significant at secondary level.

Narrative reports at international and national levels are equally limited in their analysis of the non-state education sector and its contribution towards achieving EFA and the MDGs. When mentioned, the role of non-state actors in education tends to be limited to discussions about the use of vouchers, subsidies, and sub-contracting to NGOs, and often muddled in terms of how the non-state sector is defined and understood.

In the next sections of the paper, we analyse why there has been such a lack of interest, the accuracy of the various perceptions that have resulted in this neglect, and why we need to pay attention to the contributions of non-state providers.

Tensions regarding non-state education: Are perceptions accurate and conclusions helpful?

1) Complexity and the difficulty obtaining data

Undoubtedly, much of the lack of attention to non-state provision stems quite simply from the difficulties of defining the sector and in obtaining data (let alone comparable data). “Non-state provision of services is defined as including all providers outside the public sector, whether they operate for profit or for philanthropic purposes” (Moran & Batley, 2004). As Oxfam International states in *In the Public Interest* (2006), “NSPs range from civil society organizations such as NGOs, churches, mosques, and community organizations to profit-making companies, and in size from individual street traders to multinational corporations.” Thus, non-state provision covers a very diverse mix of players, and in many developing countries, a majority of the small private for profit and community schools never get counted. The deficiency of data related to urban and rural breakdowns and the absence of data related to quality complicates matters significantly. It is difficult to gauge how many children are being served, by whom, where, and how well.

Adding to the dilemma, significant numbers of schools in many countries operate across public and private lines, blurring the traditional definitions and categorizations. Where do the schools that have substantial inputs from both government and communities fit and thus get ‘counted’? At what stage does a school that starts to obtain government support (e.g. perhaps first for a roof and textbooks and then for some or all teachers’ salaries) get included as a government school? The answers to such questions vary greatly from one country to another.

Many schools that are “private” receive government support. In Latin America, for example, the Chilean government runs only about half of the country’s schools; the balance are considered private, even though 8 out of 10 these receive some sort of government aid. This trend is prominent in European countries as well; for example, in Belgium, 54% of the education is considered government-aided private provision (OECD WEI indicators, 2003). Even in what appears to be fully public systems, in some countries, schools still rely (sometimes substantially) on household contributions. Such contributions can be of the same order as fees charged by non-state institutions (Bray, 1999; World Bank, 2003).

There are multiple possible arrangements in terms of collaboration and partnership between state and non-state providers, which will be unpacked in later sections. However, philosophical arguments and political views are every bit as important in contributing to the lack of attention to non-state provision.

2) Rights, a Focus on Government Obligations and the “Public Good”

Education is a “public good” with benefits not only to individuals, but also to society at large. It is also a fundamental right as enshrined in various Human Rights Conventions. Nation states are legally bound to ensure rights, as it is they who sign treaties and ratify Conventions. Governments thus have an obligation to ensure that all children have access to education opportunities and that these opportunities help them to develop to their full potential, and prepare them to contribute to their families, to their communities, and to society as a whole. Article 28 in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that these education opportunities should be free at primary level.

To meet their obligations, governments themselves can play a variety of roles, including directly providing education services; regulating services provided by the non-state sector; entering into funding arrangements with the non-state sector; and providing information to parents on choices of education provision available. A number of critics argue that, to date, many developing country governments have focused much of their attention on direct education provision – at the expense of the other roles – but have failed to achieve their objectives in terms of access and quality.

Direct service provision by the state usually takes the form of public schools that are funded, run and managed by the government. There are a number of reasons why governments may choose to provide education services themselves, rather than rely on non-state providers. These may include the reasonable assumption that for-profit providers will put profits ahead of quality and access; the fact that certain types of provision are capital intensive and that therefore, there may be very few organizations in the non-state sector willing to make the required investment; and that impoverished communities, may not be able to afford to organize education for their children (World Bank 2002). The difficulties with direct service provision by the state often have to do with the bureaucratic and centralized nature of school systems, which may result in public schools themselves being unable to reach the most marginalized, respond to the needs of communities, be accountable and transparent, or provide a good quality of education.

Wariness around non-state provision remains, and stems fundamentally from the fear that “too much” private involvement, whether supported through civil society or business, will result in the state abrogating its responsibilities to the public, and abandoning any attempt to reach the poorest of the poor. “Community ownership” can result in government being “let off the hook”. The perceived risk is that the non-state sector could counter the efforts that international agencies and in-country civil society groups have made in advocating for greater attention to and finances for public education. Another fear is that if key stakeholders are not “invested” in the system, then quality deteriorates. As one report states, “Targeting essential services at poor people in place of universal public provision, while it might seem cheaper in the short term, often results in wealthier groups withdrawing financial and political support for public services where they see no benefit to themselves” (Oxfam International, 2006, p.81).

Government support and investment to ensure access to decent quality schooling for all children is critical. No child should be denied this right because of an inability to pay. It is important, however, not to confuse the State meeting its obligations with government running the whole show on its own. What is needed are schools that work for children and the diverse circumstances in which they live. Successful education systems vary

widely. Some are centralized, and others are decentralized. Some have almost exclusively public schools, while others have large numbers of non-state schools, and others include significant government support for non-state providers. This last approach is not a panacea for all ills but neither is it the “ideological Trojan horse that would destroy public schooling” (World Bank, 2003, p.127). Equity, quality and efficiency are not always better or worse when government is dominant, nor when the non-state sector has a significant role. Reality is more subtle.

Many different approaches have been able to demonstrate success. Highly centralized systems tightly controlled by government can indeed provide excellent learning opportunities for children; Cuba is a prime example of a country whose children outshine those of much richer LAC countries in Spanish and maths at Grade 3, and which produces highly skilled doctors who serve in numerous developing countries. The Netherlands has one of Europe’s most successful education systems and takes a very different approach. Even a very small group of parents has the right to set up a private school and receive government funding. 73% of the country’s children attend such schools (World Bank, 2003).

The key point, therefore, may be government commitment to education, rather than government necessarily doing it all. In other words: it is possible for governments to meet their public obligations (sometimes more effectively) by supporting a system of education provision that engages with a diversity of actors on the ground. Success for all children could be a result of governments providing adequate finance and appropriate policies, enabling regulation, and ensuring oversight and accountability by all involved. Non-state provision need not denote government abrogation of responsibility. Rather it is the logical “all hands on deck” response to the education crisis that is an ongoing reality in many countries. A pluralist system, which includes, in addition to government schools, non-state, demand-responsive schools and agencies that deliver quality education could provide significant added value in reaching EFA and MDG targets.

A reality check may be useful here. The countries that are lagging behind in their progress towards EFA goals are characterized by either extreme poverty or lack of political will. In many extremely impoverished countries, poverty levels make the requisite government investments in education a complete impossibility without massive investments from the international community. At present these are nowhere near the levels required to ensure decent learning opportunities for all children, nor will they be in the foreseeable future without a complete turn around in minority/majority world relations (Global Education Campaign, 2005). There is also a group of governments which have more interest in maintaining high levels of military spending than in investing in education. Civil society and the private sector offer resources (both human and financial) above and beyond what can be made available through government resources and aid.

3) Perceptions of who non-state or “private” provision serves

Where there has been analysis of non-state roles in education, it has often been characterized as centring around two very different types of provision: (a) NGOs ensuring education for under-served groups who may be missed by the state system; and (b) elite, high quality private institutions for those who can afford them. While these are indeed two ends of the spectrum, the situation is far more complex.

Private sector provision. One of the most rapidly expanding and contentious sectors across developing countries is the private, for-profit school for poor children. Recognition that low-cost private education is serving large numbers of low-income families in developing countries is very recent. In many instances, it is assumed that non-state provision has arisen in response to state failure to provide services – and is thus the only option for those who cannot get access to public provision. This is often true, particularly in the case of community and NGO schools. However, sometimes families – even poor families – actively choose private schooling. The mushrooming numbers of poor people who have access to public services but who vote with their feet and make use of neighbouring non-state services is testament to this. Families may choose non-state provision as a response to the lack of adequate quality in state services or because they prefer something that is believed to be more responsive and accountable, or is a better fit with the family's interests or values (e.g., in the case of faith-based schools). In a six-country comparative study on the costs of sending children to school, Boyle et al. (2002, p.1) found that, "Despite their poverty, the poorest households are acutely concerned about the quality and relevance of education services. Both the economic and non-economic judgements they make about schooling their children are strongly affected by their perceptions of the quality of services offered. There is a notable willingness amongst the poorest to pay, or make sacrifices for, what they perceive to be good quality education". Lall's more qualitative study (2000) of 10 small private schools catering to low to middle income groups in 'disadvantaged' areas of Jaipur reinforce this. She found that parents felt the schools offered better academic opportunities (especially with English instruction), were nearer to their homes and had teachers who spent more time with and were more concerned with their children and their progress than teachers in government schools. Parents linked this to increased accountability even though many struggled to pay the fees.

The cost of schooling is a real burden on poor families. There are significant costs associated with public and private education alike. Recent household surveys in sub-Saharan Africa shed some light. For primary school, household contributions range from 2% of per capita GDP in Malawi to 14% in Nigeria and Sierra Leone. For secondary school, the contributions jump significantly, ranging from 27% of per capita GDP in Malawi to 83% in Uganda (AED, 2006). Tooley's research in low income private schools in India found that fees were between 4 and 5.5% of the monthly minimum wage. How affordable this is depends on the number of children being sent to school. Some 18% of the places were provided free or at concessionary rates.

In addition to a more generalized discomfort around the charging of fees, the necessity to pay has made many assume that private schools simply cannot reach the poor. Basic economic realities such as high dependency rates (ratio of income-earning adults to dependent children and elders); income distribution; labour market rates to hire teachers; and the necessity for families to use scarce resources to fulfil basic needs, means that if providers depend solely on revenues from households for education provision they may not reach the very poor (Lewin, 2007).

However, as we have seen above, many low-cost private schools are actually reaching disadvantaged groups. As one Oxfam Education Report says, " ...the notion that private schools are servicing the needs of a small minority of wealthy parents is misplaced...a lower cost private sector has emerged to meet the demands of poor households" (Watkins, 2000). Many families, including very poor families, are opting out of public schools and choosing alternatives -- especially when there are costs associated with

participating in the public system. Given the often significant household costs to public schooling – even when public schooling is theoretically ‘free’ – private schools may be perceived by parents as providing a better quality of education at a similar cost. However the actual scale of this in each country is very difficult to ascertain given the limitations of existing data.

In addition to the private sector, many civil society organisations have been able to develop models that can be very effective in reaching extremely disadvantaged groups. As Dollar and Pritchett report in *Assessing aid – what works, what doesn’t and why* (1998) “Governments in developing countries usually play a major role in the allocation and management of educational resources. This...approach has supported many achievements in education, but it has not always reached groups that have traditionally had low levels of education (the poor and girls, for instance)” (p. 108). It notes that a study in Bangladesh reviewing the NGO-run schools showed that 71% of the children are from families in the bottom two socio-economic quintiles compared to only 34% of children in government schools.

Misgivings remain in some quarters that this sort of NGO provision, which often responds to failures of the state system to reach the most marginalized children, risks diverting attention away from efforts to make the formal system more inclusive and therefore encourages complacency. This paper argues that in order to ensure disadvantaged children’s rights now, rather than in some distant future when the public sector reaches all children, a two-pronged strategy used by many NGOs may be most appropriate. This involves NGOs continuing with direct provision for extremely disadvantaged groups, while also working with government schools for mainstreaming.

Bodh Shiksha Samiti and Doctor Reddy’s Foundation (DRF) operating in India both illustrate the potential impact of collaborative partnerships between Government and NGOs. Each has established and continues to operate ‘alternative’ schools for marginalised children (urban slum dwellers, rural and working children) who traditionally have been excluded from ‘mainstream’ education. Initially the aim was to offer relevant, quality education for their respective target children – through bodhshalas or community schools (Bodh) or through short bridge courses (DRF). Over time both NGOs identified avenues to ensure that these children could enter/re-enter the formal government system. Both also began to work directly with government schools - Bodh in over 1,000 rural and urban schools of Rajasthan and DRF in around 100 schools of selected slum areas of Hyderabad. In the case of DRF this was critical for keeping the hundreds of ‘mainstreamed’ former working children in school – where they previously felt unwelcome if not pushed out. In the case of Bodh, the success of the bodhshalas led to a request by Government to expand and replicate their work in traditional government schools in urban and rural areas. Both Bodh and DRF have formal MOUs with State Governments. (Mid-term Review Mission: the Programme for Enrichment of School Level Education. May 2006)

4) Concerns about quality

There is a widespread assumption in some quarters that non-state schools provide a level of quality which is worse than state schools. This is particularly the case where teachers in non-state schools receive limited pre-service training, and are paid less than those teaching in government schools. However, this doesn’t always translate into poorer student achievement as evidenced in Bangladesh and other countries. Private fee-paying schools serving disadvantaged families have often been dismissed by

international agency decision-makers as either irrelevant or a disservice to the poor because they are somehow being duped into paying for low-quality services which they are ill-able to afford. Indeed, in very poor areas, families may prefer government schools over community schools because they perceive them as being better resourced and more affordable (Coulibaly et al., 2007).

On the other hand, the low quality of government schools is cited as the main reason for the mushrooming of private schools (Rose, 2002). Parents cite teacher absenteeism in public schools as their main reason for choosing private ones (UNDP, 2003). In a cost of schooling study conducted by Boyle et al. (2002), quality concerns for parents revolved primarily around the availability, competencies, and responsiveness of teachers. A UNICEF survey across 8 states in India (Mehrota, 2006) also highlights these issues as well as the fact that the number of working days in government schools were much lower than in private unaided schools and that other factors such as the availability of toilets for teachers and for girls was better in non-aided private schools. The researchers concluded that the various factors led to better functioning schools despite the fact that teachers in these private schools were paid less, often had temporary contracts and were usually untrained. Tooley and Dixon (2005) argue that fee-paying schools have an inherent accountability mechanism, which state schools do not have as government teachers are paid irrespective of their performance or even whether or not they show up. In other words, there is less incentive for parents to monitor teachers and for teachers to be responsive compared to when parents are paying teachers salaries.

To complicate matters, there is indication that movement towards universal primary education (UPE) has led to deteriorating quality in public schools. In Uganda, for example, in tests administered to a random sample of third graders, the number of students who achieved a satisfactory score declined from 48% in 1996 to 31% in 1999 in maths, and from 92% to 56% in English oral tests, after the introduction of free primary education (WB, 2002 and Rose, 2006). Tooley and Dixon's research (2005) in the low income areas of India, Ghana and Nigeria found that low-cost "budget" private schools serving disadvantaged families are providing better quality than government schools. Tooley's findings have not been well-received in many quarters. They are not a comfortable fit with donors' overwhelming concentration on public provision. However, his study and a handful of others point to the significance of the role of private, unaided schools in providing education opportunities to disadvantaged children. More such studies are needed - to establish both the scale and quality of such provision.

There is evidence that the decisions of families around which school to use, or whether to send their children at all, relate to interlinked factors, including perceived relevance of the curriculum and fit with their value systems (Tawhil, 2006; Coulibaly, et al 2007). In East Africa, for instance, the Madrasa Preschool Programme was initiated in the mid-1980s to address local Muslim leaders and parents' desire to ensure their children had access to quality preschools, which also integrated aspects related to Islam and local Swahili culture (Bartlett, 2003). In response to parental demand, the programme has grown to over 200 preschools in 3 countries, despite the fact that it depends heavily on community inputs and fees. Some of the madrasa preschools in Uganda have in recent years added on primary schools that allow for the continuation of an 'integrated' curriculum.

There is, in fact, insufficient robust data comparing the relative quality of public and private provision for the poor, but it is likely that the range of what is on offer in these low-cost private fee-paying schools goes from the remarkable to the horrifying – just as in public or NGO systems.

Research undertaken in India in 1999 (Mehrota, 2006) suggested there was no firm evidence of better learning achievement in private schools, elsewhere various other studies indicate superior quality in some non-state provision. Rose (2002) finds mixed results across different countries: the PROBE Report in India suggests higher quality of education in private schools. However, in Tanzania, studies by Al-Samarrai (2001) and Lassibille and Tan (1999) all found lower student performance in private schools (along with equity issues).

Others have found more promising and positive results. A recent comparison of different types of schools across the remote Northern Areas of Pakistan found that significantly more children in the Aga Khan Education Services schools complete primary school: 76% of students as compared to 44% in government schools (Gowani and Arnold, 2006). Many of these schools are located in remote areas, and serve populations – especially girls – that government schools do not yet reach.. Primary drop-out is also much lower in AKES schools compared to government schools. However, interestingly in other private schools (which have mushroomed in recent years and are often of very poor quality) drop-out rates are far higher than those in government schools. This is a clear indication of parents' concern with quality. They enrol children in private schools in their desire to offer their children a quality education. They only keep their children in these schools if they are satisfied with the opportunities provided.

In the EQUIP2 studies by De Stefano et al (2006), nine cases were “examined to see how effectively it provides access for the populations it targets, how well it ensures completion of primary school for the children that do enrol, and, where data permit, whether students demonstrate levels of learning at least commensurate with those achieved in government schools” (p.3). Almost across the board, all programmes seem to have had a significant impact on access goals. Learning data was harder to obtain, but where it existed, it showed that these programmes are producing comparable or better results than regular government schools – despite the fact that they are staffed by teachers who are less qualified than their government counterparts, and are targeting children that are more disadvantaged than public school students (parental education, socio-economic indicators, exclusion from the formal system).

In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala and Mali, “the complementary education programmes achieve completion rates that surpass those of the formal public school system in each country” (ibid, p.4). The tools used to compare learning outcomes differed from case to case. In Bangladesh, Egypt and Mali the primary end of cycle competency exam/ pass rates on the primary certification examination were used. In Ghana, data came from a minimum competency test and data compared to national CRT pass rates for public schools. In Zambia, community school and public school student learning was measured by a single minimum competency exam that all students take.

Ignoring the current and potential future contribution of non-state provision to the EFA goal because of perceptions of quality may be a disservice to poor families. Instead, there should be renewed efforts to compare quality across systems, and the call for

systems that ensure education is of an acceptable standard is one that must be heeded and created – for private and public schools alike.

5) Relations between State/Non-State

The extent to which government takes on roles aside from direct provision depends to some degree on its comfort level and relationship with the non-state sector, particularly with NGOs and private for-profit providers. This of course depends on the quality of the non-state players – to what extent are they acting in the public interest? It also depends on the government itself. Bately (2005) points out that there is often incongruence between government policies, which may be supportive of the non-state sector and advocate public-private partnerships, and practice, which may in fact exhibit ambivalence, mistrust, resistance to change, or outright antagonism. This may be particularly the case with NGOs, whose often-troubled relationships with government in general may determine how regulations in the education sector are actually applied.

In many cases, relationships between governments and Civil Society Organisations are characterized by tension and distrust, with each party having conflicting views of each other's "legitimate role, rights, capacity, and motivation" (AED, 2003). Government hesitation when confronted with the plethora of non-state players is indeed understandable. Governments and donor partners are concerned about the possible "destructive interference" between public and private systems through, for instance, battles over students or qualified teachers (Lewin, 2007), strongly held beliefs about who knows what is best for students, or competition over the same funding streams (e.g. international donor monies). This may result in governments being reluctant to involve non-state actors in official education plans or programmes or to count them in national statistics.

The lack of evidence of impact from some non-state providers does not help matters. Governments and donors have a hard time justifying the allocation of scarce resources without clear documentation of effectiveness. Taking monitoring and evaluation and research more seriously will help to improve the credibility of non-state institutions, and ensure that they make meaningful contributions when provided with opportunities to influence policy or practice.

Parents and communities may be frustrated with the government sector because it fails to deliver on commitments (e.g. when budgeted funds fail to reach schools, resulting in teachers not being paid, insufficient textbooks for children, or other quality-related challenges). Sometimes the non-state sector plays a watchdog role in helping communities point out failures in government systems and strengthening accountability to students and communities rather than simply up the formal system. In the Ugandan case (see box below) this was embraced by government and directly resulted in positive benefits for schools. Certainly, tensions between the state and non-state actors would be worsened in cases where governments are not receptive to civil society organisations playing such a role.

Enhancing the Accountability of Public Service Delivery

Civil society is playing an increasingly effective role in the review of education budgets, and demonstrating the importance of tapping communities in continuous monitoring of public expenditures for proper service delivery. In Uganda, a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey revealed that only 13 percent of the per-student capitation grants made it to the schools in 1991–95. For every dollar spent on non-wage education items by the central government, only about 20 cents reached the schools, with the local government capturing most of the funding. Most poor schools received nothing. To respond to the problems in Uganda, the central government began publishing data on monthly transfers of grants to districts (using newspapers and radio). It also required primary schools and district administrations to post notices on inflows of funds. The information campaign represents a new approach to public accountability, questioning the one-sided approach of the government to monitor itself. Local civil society organizations often worked with poor communities to assist them claim their entitlement from district officials. Client empowerment through such an information campaign significantly strengthens the accountability relationship between providers and users. The results of a follow-up survey in Uganda showed that the campaign helped decrease education funding leakage from 80% in 1995 to 20% in 2001. Additionally, schools and parents now have access to information needed to understand and monitor grants to schools.

Source: Adapted from World Bank, 2003. World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62–63.

There may also be more political reasons for governments' failure to recognize or value non-state provision. These may be related to fears that i) recognition of the non-state system might be seen as an admission of government failure to meet its obligations; ii) donor funding might go to NGOs; and iii) the teachers' union, an important voting bloc would withdraw support from the government – e.g., if they recognise 'para-professional' teachers. The latter is a particularly thorny issue. It can be seen as simply turf protection or as undermining the basis of education. Jagannathan (2001) and Mehrotra (2006) point to the current trend in India to save money by hiring under-qualified "para-teachers" (in both non-state and government sponsored education schemes) who earn a fraction of what formal schoolteachers earn. Is it a way to reach more children which responds to the urgent need to expand schooling using low-cost methods or is it an indication of government forsaking their fiscal responsibility for education - diluting funding for schools which target those students and communities who need the most support? (Jagannathan, 2001)

Finally, there may be capacity limitations on beleaguered governments, who sometimes have a hard enough time dealing with reforming the state education system, never mind finding the human and financial resources to register and regulate non-state providers and collaborate in specific 'partnerships'. More often than not, turning a blind eye towards non-state providers may seem like the only rational alternative for overwhelmed systems.

Non-state Provision and State/Non-state Partnerships

In education systems that are over-taxed, under-resourced, and producing unacceptable results, we must be serious about doing much more to create environments that foster entrepreneurial thinking and innovation, in order to ensure opportunities for children. The emergence and growth of the non-state sector is a significant trend. In this section, we provide a brief overview of the non-state sector and discuss the value added by non-government entities in achieving universal access to quality education.

It is important to reiterate that the non-state sector is in and of itself very diverse, comprised of myriad entities. In addition, as noted above, private and NGO-run schools span the quality spectrum. While some have demonstrated valuable gains in student achievement and learning, others lag far behind. Discussion of the role of non-state providers, therefore, requires teasing through and engaging with the complexities – despite our tendencies to simplify the discourse into dichotomies (public vs. private, local vs. national, state vs. market, etc.), or to make judgements based on our personal experiences or political persuasions. Additionally, it requires a nuanced understanding of the often blurred boundaries between state and non-state roles covering financing, ownership, management, and regulation.

Type and scope of NSPs

The chart on the following page – adapted from Moran and Bately (2004) and Rose (2006) – and the following discussion provides a brief synopsis of some of the players.

Non-state education activities can be divided into two areas: (1) not-for-profit provision and (2) for-profit provision.

Not-for-profit provision

Community schools

Community schools are ones that are created and managed by communities, often in response to a lack of other service provision. In these schools, communities may have various responsibilities with respect to construction, financing and management. There may be different models of cost-sharing among communities, supporting organisations, and the state. In some cases, communities partner with others for the provision of key educational inputs such as textbooks, curricula, teacher training, classroom equipment and materials (Rose, 2002; World Bank, 2003). Some schools are established and supported by communities themselves, while others are community-driven, but financially backed by NGOs, donors or faith-based organisations. Still others, such as the Harambee schools in Kenya, started out as community schools, but have been absorbed partially or fully into the state system. It is clear from the pattern of community schools established across many regions that, where no other providers exist – especially in areas of conflict or in hard-to-reach regions – communities manage to set up schools, find teachers and pay them (Payne and Fraser in Rose, 2006, p.16).

NSP type	Definition	Access	Funding	Government Recognition and Regulation	Examples
NON-PROFIT					
<i>Community</i>	Schools created and managed by communities, often with support from NGOs and donors Communities may be involved in construction, financing and/or oversight of schools	Demand-driven provision, often in rural areas	Community NGOs Donors	Often undergo a process of registration to gain government support	Mali community schools, supported by Save the Children, World Education and others AKES-initiated community schools in Sindh, Pakistan
<i>NGO</i>	Local, national or international NGOs providing both formal and non-formal education, often using alternative service delivery models and innovative approaches	Focus is usually on reaching marginalised groups	Donors Charities Individual or corporate sponsorship	May or may not be explicitly recognised in government policy. Registration may be with ministries other than MoE, e.g. in Bangladesh, NGOs register with the NGO Affairs Bureau or the Directorate of Social Welfare.	BRAC, Bangladesh Save the Children
<i>Faith-based</i>	Schools established by international private voluntary organisations and foundations; local faith-based NGOs and benevolent associations; and individual religious institutions. Some combine secular and religious education, while others focus only on religious education.	Responsive to differentiated demand and may include moral obligation to cater for the poor	Religious associations or missionaries Individual, congregation, or corporate sponsorship	Some registered (particularly if grant-aided) and recognised in government policy Others choose to avoid government intervention	Madrasas/Quranic schools Church-owned schools
<i>Philanthropic</i>	Schools established and/or supported by philanthropic individuals or associations	Focus on poorest	Individual or corporate sponsorship	Often seek government recognition	Indian family and corporate trusts
<i>Private, not-for-profit fee paying schools</i>	Private schools that serve low-income areas. Fees range from low to high	Access for poor students dependent on availability of scholarships	Plus corporate or individual sponsorship Tuition Fees	Some registered, others without formal recognition	AKES schools in rural areas of Pakistan and India
FOR-PROFIT					
<i>Higher cost, private</i>	Established for the small proportion of the population that can afford their fees. Also includes schools created by international bodies to provide education with internationally recognised qualifications for expatriate children	Targeted at those among the population who are able to afford the fees and children of expatriates	Individual or corporate ownership Tuition Fees	Some registered, others without formal recognition	
<i>“Budget” non-state, private</i>	Private schools that serve low-income areas and populations	Demand-driven provision that caters for particular groups of the population e.g. urban poor; remote rural populations and nomadic groups.	Individual or corporate ownership Tuition Fees	Some registered, others without formal recognition	Independent private schools such as in Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Nigeria, Ghana

NGO schools

NGOs have boosted efforts to increase access to education through the provision of formal and non-formal education in many countries. Where NGOs work in educational provision, they commonly bring resources with them, and they typically use both non-formal and formal approaches. For example, NGOs might supply capital investments like tin roofs, pay teachers' salaries, or take over the running of a school. Their focus is often on filling urgent gaps in provision, especially for children who are excluded from the formal system, including working children, children from the poorest households, ethnic minorities, nomadic groups, girls, etc. In fragile states, NGO provision may be the only provision, and these efforts are often supported by UN agencies and other international donor agencies. In such cases, states may not be functioning or may not have the will or capacity to provide schooling (e.g. during/after conflict as in Sudan and Rwanda, or after disasters such as the Tsunami or the earthquakes in Kashmir), or donor partners may be hesitant to allocate funds directly to the State (e.g. in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule) (Rose, 2006). Indeed, there are networks of NGOs and development partners who specifically work in emergency situations and/or conflict zones (e.g. Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, see www.ineesite.org).

Faith-based schools

Religion has always played "major and multiple roles in education and schooling, as provider, legitimiser and policy-broker, influencing national educational policies, curriculum and finance" (Tietjen, 2000). In most of the world, religious institutions are significant providers of primary education – and often, they cater especially to the poor. In many cases, parents who would otherwise withhold children from school may choose to send them to a religious school that is seen to be culturally relevant, and aligned with their values and beliefs. Islamic schools or *madrasas* are omnipresent throughout the Muslim world and Christian mission schools are major providers of both primary and secondary education in Africa and Latin America. The large number of faith-based schools in parts of Africa, many of which were absorbed into the state system post-colonization, had their start with Christian missionaries or other religious groups. In Malawi, for instance, churches were the primary providers of education from the early 19th century until independence in 1964 and the church continues to own 71% of primary schools (Moran and Bately 2004).

While *madrasas* are a long-standing traditional education system, these look different across various countries and cultures. For example, some traditional madrasa systems run in parallel with the government system (e.g., Pakistan). Some only provide religious instruction. Others operate in a manner more complementary to government provision, integrating national curriculum and traditional Islamic teaching (e.g. as in northern Nigeria and the *medersas* of Mali). It is hard to gauge how many faith-based schools actually exist. For instance, in India, attempts to register *madrasas* by the government have had limited effects – in Uttar Pradesh alone, only 120 out of approximately 20,000 *madrasas* have registered, due to fears of excessive government control (Thakore, 2002, cited in Nair, 2004; cited in Rose, 2006). In some countries, like Bangladesh, the number of children enrolled in *madrasas* is growing (Abdalla et al., 2004); in others, like Pakistan, most of the shift to private education is to non-religious schools (World Bank, 2003).

Philanthropic

Philanthropic schools are institutions funded by individuals, families, family trusts, or corporate/private trusts. These schools often have long histories, and are founded on principles and values of giving; many are expressions of faith, and are the result of religious traditions such as *zakat*, *waqf* or *tithing*. They are normally focused on the poorest or most vulnerable members of society, or in some cases are developed for targeted communities. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of schools such as these, which are supported by family trusts or other indigenous philanthropy. While there is an extensive tradition of philanthropy in some countries (e.g. India and Pakistan), there is very limited evidence of this type of provision in sub-Saharan Africa. One hypothesis, which needs more exploration, is that sub-Saharan Africa may lack a sizeable middle class or elite for such type of work (Rose, 2006).

Private, not-for-profit fee-paying schools

There are many private, not-for-profit fee-paying schools catering to different socio-economic levels. The Aga Khan Education Services for example operates more than 300 schools in seven countries, serving nearly 60,000 students. While these schools were originally established to provide education to African and Asian children who were unable to attend segregated colonial schools in East Africa, they continue to fill a major gap in girls' education in South Asia. The system ranges from two-room primary schools in remote rural valleys to well-resourced high schools in urban areas.

For-profit provision

High cost, private schools

In most countries, these heavily-resourced private schools serve a very small proportion of the population who can afford the high fees. They generally offer extraordinary quality and provide internationally recognised standards, curricula, and extra-curricular programming. These schools employ well-trained and experienced teachers, and often have modern facilities, such as well stocked classrooms and libraries, gymnasiums and sports facilities, science laboratories, computers with internet access, performance and visual arts facilities, etc. While a number of these schools may offer merit and needs-based scholarships, for the most part, they tend to serve the local elite and expatriates.

Beaconhouse, is an example of a large private provider in Pakistan, managing over 80 schools in 26 cities across the country (Beaconhouse, 2007). It operates schools from pre-school to post-graduate level and places great emphasis on the *quality* of teaching and learning in its schools.

"Budget" non-state, private schools

As discussed earlier, budget, non-state, private schools are in many cases a response to the increasing demand for education as a result of EFA. As previously noted, it has often been assumed that private, 'for-profit' schools only serve the elite. This is clearly not the case in many places, where such schools are serving poor communities. Tooley and Dixon (2003) describe these schools as 'budget' private schools. Provision of this kind, which is often informal (unregistered and unregulated), appears to have mushroomed, particularly in countries where primary school fees have been abolished, resulting in a

massive increase in the demand for schooling, and with implications for access to and the quality of education provided in state systems. The growth of budget private schools has mainly occurred through the initiatives of “edupreneurs” in urban areas who are capturing parental dissatisfaction with the apparent deterioration in quality of state schooling.

What do we know about what’s working and what’s not in non-state provision?

This section will provide a brief assessment of a number of key areas: (1) Access and reaching the marginalized; (2) Quality; (3) Innovation and testing strategies; (4) Understanding of local contexts and strengthening of civil society; (5) Engagement of parents and communities; and (6) Cost-efficiency. Some of these areas were discussed in previous sections and so are treated briefly here.

1) Access and reaching the marginalized. Many non-state initiatives serve populations that have limited or no access to government schools (see Annex II and other examples highlighted throughout). Reaching the poorest and most marginalized children -- requires specific strategies and targeted actions whether this is done under government or non-government auspices (Burns, et al, Grameen Bank, 2003). Because they are often locally situated, the non-state sector is positioned to respond appropriately based on local realities. By design, many of their programmes aim to reach marginalized children, through innovative strategies that help to overcome the many constraints these groups face. The following are well-known strategies.

- ensuring that centres/classrooms are located closer to homes (especially important for younger children and girls);
- offering flexibility in the timing of the school day and year (adjusting to agricultural seasons or to complement religious education offerings);
- setting up ‘bridge courses’ or ‘camps’ that allow for ‘catch-up’ for out-of-school children who have missed schooling (e.g. working children) and provide intensive learning in shorter time frames;
- creating pathways into (or back into) formal schooling through developing equivalency learning assessments, ensuring children can take official exams that will enable their being mainstreamed (back) into formal schooling;
- developing curriculum attuned to local realities and drawing upon local culture and resources (e.g. using ‘Mother Teachers’ in preschool classrooms so children see familiar faces and local culture and language is brought into the classroom);
- recruiting teachers locally (who speak the same language as the student, can serve as role models and are likely to stay for longer periods of time) as well as providing relevant information, training and support to teachers who will be working in communities which they might not be sensitive towards (because of language, religious or cultural differences);
- building trust and positive relationships with and amongst local community members – in order to create strong support – and locally relevant strategies -- across families for education of all children;

However, some argue that some non-state providers, such as community schools, can create inequity in service provision – attracting girls and other marginalized students (while boys and other privileged students attend the “better” schools). Mehrotra (2006) suggests that private fee paying schooling can be gender-biased (against girls) and not

help lower caste children in India given existing social and economic factors – even given what appears to be growing demand by poorer families.

2) *Improved quality.* As was emphasized previously, the quality in state and non-state schools covers an enormous range – even within a relatively small geographic area. Also noted above (see pages 18-19) some studies do show that the learning outcomes of students in private or community schools are equal to or better than those of public school students despite the fact that the carriage may be different (e.g. bridge schools, short courses, etc.). Tooley (2005) found lower absenteeism and more teachers actually teaching when the researchers called unannounced in “budget” private schools as compared to the government schools. The budget schools also provided superior inputs in terms of basics like water, toilets, lighting, chairs, and libraries. Moreover, students in these schools outperformed their state-school counterparts in key curriculum subjects even after controlling for background variables.

Where non-state (NGO run or low-budget private) schools exist alongside or near to government schools – there is some evidence that they may encourage improvements in government schools’ functioning and accountability (e.g. teachers showing up more regularly) (World Bank, 2003). This is separate from the long-standing role that many NGOs have played in monitoring the effectiveness and quality of state services with the aim of holding governments accountable. Much more research is needed to understand the various dynamics in different contexts. All families, regardless of their socio-economic status, should have an opportunity to choose a school that works for their children. Having an array of viable options which proactively ensures equitable education opportunities for the poor and marginalised can help to meet broader public needs.

3) *Innovation and testing strategies.* Schools tend to be anti-change, often by nature of the bureaucracies in which they are located and the history and culture of public education systems. “Although governments may say that they would experiment if they had the resources, the fact is that political and systemic realities are formidable obstacles to innovation.” (AED, 2003) Since they are not working at scale (at least not in the same way that national governments are), as “social entrepreneurs” many private sector and civil society agents are able to bring to the table outside lenses, and can provide stimuli for innovation and change at macro levels. Often, non-state actors take the best lessons learned from the private sector (e.g. focusing on impact, measuring success, seeking efficient solutions), and from civil society (e.g. being beneficiary driven, ensuring local empowerment, demanding transparency), and apply them to the social change and education agenda.

4) *Understanding of local contexts and strengthening civil society.* Through their projects and programmes, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) often have a grassroots reach that helps them to understand local contexts – what citizens want for their children; what the obstacles to education access, participation, and quality are; and how local institutions can be strengthened and decentralization processes supported – often better than national governments and donors do. These insights are then communicated to both local and national governments in order to advocate for pro-poor policies and reform. At the same time, CSOs also build the capacity of citizens to demand the services that they are entitled to, as well as build the capacity of local institutions to respond to these demands and be accountable to their constituents. In these ways, CSOs serve an

important function in supporting and strengthening civil society in the countries where they work.

5) *Engagement of parents and communities.* This is an area in which NGOs have long been recognized as bringing clear “added value”. Research from Europe and the USA has consistently shown that when parents are involved in their children’s education, children do better and schools improve. Parent involvement has demonstrated positive effects on student attendance, learning, teacher motivation etc, and active engagement results in families and communities holding schools accountable to a much greater degree (Shaeffer, 1992; World Bank, 2004).

Henderson and Berla (1994), who summarized a large number of studies on parents’ involvement conclude “When parents are involved in their children’s education at home, their children do better in school. When parents are involved at school, their children go further in school, and the schools they go to are better.” A study from Nepal (Bartlett, et al. 2004) examined the impact of Save the Children’s work with communities and local government schools on excluded dalit (untouchable) children. Dalit enrolment increases in the project “child-friendly” schools was more than double that in the control schools, drop-out rates were significantly lower and pass rates significantly higher. The most dramatic results of all were found amongst the children who had participated in the community-based ECD centres initiated by the NGO and managed by the community. Over a 5 year period less than 2% of the dalit children who had participated in the ECD programme dropped out of school as opposed to an average of 18% in all the schools in the study. The programme has had an important influence on dalit parents and communities. As the authors put it -- “It is not simply a matter of developing the confidence to tackle authority. The aspirations of these parents has changed” (ibid.). The Madrasa pre-school programme in East Africa (Brown, et al, 1999) and the *bodhshalas* in Rajasthan (Aga Khan Foundation India, 2006) have similar observations. Arjun Appadurai (2006) discusses the “capacity to aspire” as a skill that is sharpened with practice. He points out that the poor and marginalized are of necessity too taken up with the thorny calculations of daily survival to give much attention to the longer term. Involvement in ECD and other community education programmes provides the opportunities to reassess the short term realities, and to experience first hand the capabilities in their children, and indeed in themselves.

In East Timor, teachers often had to walk a long distance to the school from their homes, diminishing the instruction time in class and contributing towards absenteeism. Communities identified two solutions: (a) lobby the ministry to build a teacher’s house (villagers knew this would not work); or (b) use self-help to build a simple house for the teacher, on the understanding that the teacher would live there and put in the requisite hours. They chose the latter because of likelihood of success. Source: Richard Holloway, personal communication, 2007

6) *Cost-efficiency.* Because many non-state institutions have limited access to traditional revenue streams and capital, they are quite skilled at mobilizing resources, and doing a lot with a little. However, as Rose (2006) points out, whether non-state schools are indeed more efficient remains to be seen. A handful of studies show that many community and NGO providers operate at lower costs than their government counterparts, while achieving the same or better results (in terms of learning outcomes and completion rates). For example, the Educational Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2) study applied a method for comparing cost-effectiveness of complementary

models to the cost effectiveness of government schools: “The costs of access, completion, and learning are calculated and evaluated with respect to the outcomes achieved.⁴ The analysis was meant to indicate within each country the cost-effectiveness of both regular public and complementary education programmes. What the analysis showed fairly consistently is that the complementary education models studied are effective at reaching underserved populations and are more cost-effective in terms of the amounts of completion and learning achieved for the resources spent” (DeStefano et al., 2006). Tooley’s research (2001) in Hyderabad, India found that low-cost, private sector provision also offers better quality at lower costs than state schools and attributes much of the difference to private fee-paying schools’ direct accountability to parents.

Regulation of Non-State Sector

As Rose (2002) points out there is a tension between lighter government regulation to enable the non-state sector to operate easily and tighter regulation to avoid an explosion of low quality private education and to ensure quality standards are met.

Current regulation focuses on assessing quality and competence when registering, leaving much to be desired in terms of monitoring ongoing quality of output (Rose, 2005; Bately, 2005). Entrance regulations, many of which focus on criteria such as land ownership, building size, qualifications of teachers, etc., can be double-edged swords: on the one hand, they can ensure that non-state providers have the potential to meet acceptable quality standards; on the other hand, they can force non-state provision to resemble government provision, which may defeat the purpose of improving access or quality through innovative and flexible approaches – often a result of a “lack of interference” from government.

Processes of compliance are extremely bureaucratic in many countries (e.g., Malawi, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria) – focused on ensuring mechanical adherence to rules and regulations and on control, rather than on creating an enabling or supportive environment (Bately, 2005). There are also often significant costs, both official and unofficial (Rose, 2005). All of this can discourage registration on the part of providers, particularly small providers, who may have no wish to be registered or controlled. They may also simply be unable to comply with the requisite criteria, particularly if land is expensive or sufficiently qualified teachers are hard to find, and may instead opt to become informal or illicit providers.

Effective regulation also presumes that governments have the capacity – human and financial – to monitor and report on compliance, which in many countries is not the case. It also presumes “broader institutional conditions” such as stable political and economic conditions, political neutrality, judicial independence, and an aware civil society, which allow regulatory systems to work as they should (Moran and Bately, 2005, p. 5). There

⁴ Total recurrent costs for both complementary and government schools were divided by the respective numbers of students to obtain a per-pupil cost of access. Development costs associated with the start up of a complementary education project or programme were also included. Capital costs for construction were excluded from both government and complementary programme cost calculations. Based on unit recurrent costs, a cost per student completing a given number of years is estimated by multiplying the unit cost by the number of years and dividing by the completion rate. When measures of learning were available, the cost per learning outcome was calculated by dividing the cost per completer by the percentage of students achieving the desired outcome.

is also the issue of neutrality – to what extent does the state draft and apply regulations focusing solely on what is in the best interests of the students, rather than in a way that sees non-state provision as ‘the competition’?

How governments should go about regulation and provision of oversight is a contentious issue. There is a perceived need to make sure that regulatory efforts do not overburden institutions with cumbersome bureaucratic processes that could cripple, instead of facilitate, progress. Lall (2000) in her study of small private schools in Jaipur (India), notes that in 1995, the Government of Rajasthan issued a circular that made recognition by the government for primary schools optional thereby removing most if not all restrictions on the opening of pre- and primary schools.

Alternatives have been suggested as a way of overcoming some of the administrative hurdles and, at the same time, reassuring clients and government regarding standards. These include self-regulation through professional bodies (e.g., associations); private accreditation (e.g., through externally vetted voluntary regulation); and the formation of independent bodies (with broad participation from the Ministry of Education, umbrella organizations of NGOs, not-for-profit and for-profit providers) (Bately, 2005).

Suggestions have also been made that governments should link the provision of incentives (e.g., access to subsidies, credit, training and other resources) to the non-state sector in exchange for compliance to regulations – although this strategy can only be as effective as the quality of the regulations themselves. For example, if regulations do not call for continuous monitoring of outputs, better compliance to regulations will not help to achieve quality goals).

When establishing regulations, we need to keep the best interests of children in mind. In addition to focusing on registration of new schools into the education market, there must also be a focus on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in **all** schools – community, government, private, and other. Finally, it is important to note that many schools (probably the majority) will not be able to meet prescribed standards initially. As such, states will likely have to think carefully about what to do with these schools (e.g. close the school down, offer a “probationary” period where schools are provided with supports to meet the requirements, provide direct inputs to improve school capacities).

Partnerships

Government funding for the non-state sector

Governments do not only seek to regulate non-state schools. They also finance many of them. Significant numbers of non-state schools in many countries receive government funds and some schools obtain very substantial inputs from government even though they are owned and managed by non-state providers and considered private. For instance, in Indonesia, private, for-profit schools receive 70% of their funding from the State (King, 1997 in Moran and Batley, 2004). Government-aided schools are non-state schools (whether for profit or not-for-profit), which receive support in the form of subsidies, teachers’ salaries, and/or other key inputs such as curriculum, examinations and teacher training from the state. In general, government support comes with expectations and conditions – sometimes linked to ensuring places for disadvantaged students and meeting government standards. The South African government’s approach

to increase preschool enrolment is a good example of the state partnering with private schools and local NGOs running early childhood services - offering subsidies and monitoring quality against national standards and providing a support system to ensure schools are able to meet the standards. However, the extent to which the state attempts to control these subsidized education institutions through their regulation varies enormously (Rose, 2002).

States may enter into these arrangements for various reasons. Subsidizing non-state education is an avenue for states to: facilitate education provision – expanding access at lower costs than would be incurred for establishing new government schools (Moran and Batley, 2004); ensure parents have a choice of schools (e.g., faith-based); improve access for excluded groups (e.g., for girls or street children); increase efficiency (e.g., by sub-contracting services to those organizations specializing in the job); and improve quality by engendering competition among providers (e.g. schools must attract students in order to access subsidies). There are some who argue for more caution around aid to private fee-paying schools stating that such support can favour families who can pay rather than being directed to the poorest students (Mehrotra, 2006). However, as already noted, many of these non-state schools actually do reach disadvantaged students – some in large numbers.

There are a number of different mechanisms through which states can enter into funding arrangements with the non-state sector. These include:

- **Subsidies:** Funds sent directly to the education provider for teacher salaries or purchase of textbooks, for example;
- **Vouchers, grants and scholarships:** Assistance to students to enable them to purchase education services from a choice of providers or have support for living costs. The discussion of vouchers for use in private schools is heavily debated. Some well-designed programmes have shown increases in student enrolment and retention over time. In Chile, more than 1000 private schools entered the market, and the private enrolment rate increased by 20% (Hiseh and Urquiola, 2003). Researchers also found positive effects of voucher school enrolment on test scores (Gallego, 2002).
- **Student loans;**
- **Tax subsidies or incentives;**
- **Contracts for private management of public schools:** these are often for specific agreed timeframes and with agreed quality standards;
- **Contracting out various services:** Governments may take advantage of the efficiencies in the private sector for services such as the development and printing of textbooks, canteen services, construction and maintenance of school buildings, etc. In other cases the state may take advantage of an NGO or academic institution's core competency, as in the case of a university offering in-service training for teachers or continuing education for school managers.
- **Contracting private schools to provide education for low-income students.** Colombia developed the Concession School Programme which does just this through a contract between a group of private schools and the public education system. Research in Bogota's Concession schools suggests that dropout rates are lower in these schools than in similar public schools. Other public schools nearby the concession schools have lower dropout rates in comparison with public schools outside the area, and test scores from concession schools are higher than scores in similar public schools (Osorio, 2006).

There are sometimes issues around the way these mechanisms operate – there may be trade-offs between ease of administration (through supply side financing to institutions, universal vouchers etc.) and more equitable, responsive and accountable mechanisms (through demand side financing targeted to those most in need) (World Bank, 2002).

Public/ Private Partnerships for Classroom Construction in Burkina Faso

An example of using public subsidies to attract additional private sector counterpart resources to the education sector is found in Burkina Faso. A PPP project financed the construction of 200 additional classrooms at existing private schools under a “matching” scheme, whereby each classroom constructed and equipped by private schools themselves would be matched by one additional classroom financed by the project. Only those private schools that demonstrated efforts to improve the quality of education were supported by government through this scheme. The scheme took into account the experience of a similar post-primary project in Burkina Faso (Maman and Scobie, n.d.) where a lack of interest of private school proprietors made it necessary to review the demands, which included repayment for the government-provided classroom (the operator would pay back the cost over 5 years, free of interest), and the requirement that the private proprietors build their classroom prior to the government building the matching classroom. The first condition was dropped (i.e., no repayment), and the latter one was changed to require the provider to build a classroom within one year of the one constructed by government. Source: World Bank (2001) in van Uythem and Verspoor, 2005 (Box 12.1, p.303).

Much has been written about the various public funding arrangements for the non-state sector (World Bank, 2002; Belfield and Levin 2002; Latham 2002; Moran and Bately, 2004; Patrinos, 2005; LaRocque 2005; Mora 2005); however, Patrinos (2005) has concluded that most of the information is concentrated on examples in the United States rather than in developing or transition countries – many of which have interesting examples worth investigating. He also recommends that further research should not only analyze “what works, but rather why it works or not, how and under what circumstances” (p.14).

More complex collaborations and partnerships

Stephen Moseley, President of the Academy for Educational Development (AED), writes in the preface to *The Untapped Opportunity*, “education is not the exclusive territory of any single sector, and can best be advanced through the collaborative efforts of governments, business, and civil society” (AED, 2006, p.1). Partnerships between state and non-state which are sustainable over the long-term can strengthen government’s efforts to realize universal education. What does partnership look like when it is most effective? How can we create spaces that spur and engender collaborations that work for all children? And how can we ensure that this is a dynamic process rather than one where roles are fixed and not expected to change? In a biological ecosystem, diverse and mutually interdependent organisms interact as a single unit and create the ecological and evolutionary processes that keep them adapting over time. There may be a useful analogy here as we develop successful education systems.

Partnership is a powerful means of achieving collective goals, but only when there is a good strategic fit between collaborators, and when the benefits of partnership outweigh

individual action. Social science researchers have concluded that there are three essential elements to effective partnership: vision, intimacy and impact (Ruggie and Barrett, 2003, and AED, 2006). *Vision* refers to the goals and structure: identifying collective objectives, agreeing on targets, clarifying roles and responsibilities of each partner, acknowledging core competencies, and developing strategies. *Intimacy* refers to the fact that successful partnerships depend upon trust and open communication, the presence of champions of partnership within each organization, transparency regarding risks and challenges, inclusiveness, sharing of best practices, and mutual accountability. *Impact* signifies the importance of being results-oriented. Partners might use existing frameworks (international and national) as a base, give attention to ensuring inclusion of key local issues and indicators, monitor and assess performance, and encourage analysis and institutional learning.

The above represents an ideal in which governments, the private sector, and civil society work together seamlessly. Real-life partnerships are by definition less than ideal. Successful partnerships take time to develop and can be undermined by premature expectations of results, incompatible organizational cultures, competition between collaborating agencies, or uncommitted leadership. Organizations partner for a variety of reasons, including the desire to increase scope and scale, mobilize resources, improve quality, or build capacity (Ruggie and Barrett, 2003: p.18). However, what is interesting is that there are increasing numbers of more complex partnerships in the education arena in which attention is given to (1) a shared vision; (2) recognition of the importance of complementary roles; and (3) creation of a culture of collaboration and joint ownership. In such partnerships, the strengths of all parties are leveraged, creating better opportunities and results for children than if either party worked alone.

Working in partnership with public schools and the state system to improve available education opportunities:

Much of this paper is focused on non-state provision. An increasing number of NGOs (and the majority of international NGOs) do not operate schools at all and have no intention of ever doing so. Rather, they work in deliberate partnerships with government in order to strengthen and support state systems. Many NGOs (see Bodh Shiksha Samiti example, p10 and in Annex III) start from a core of their own schools and then start to see the opportunities for wider-scale impact offered by working in partnership with state schools. Sometimes this shift in interest comes as a result of the challenges in integrating children who have been in non-formal schools into the formal system.

Their purpose is to build capacity, draw out lessons from both successes and failures, and influence practice and policy. Their activities may take the form of working with schools to become more inclusive; introducing innovative strategies to bring children into school; providing in-service teacher training often combined with in-school, hands-on mentoring; improving school management and accountability; strengthening community engagement with schools (both in terms of supporting the school and holding it to account); strengthening local data collection and its practical use; providing supports to District and Provincial/State education offices; facilitating research studies; and advocating for better, more equitable policies. In these cases, the non-state sector acts as a catalyst to improve the effectiveness of the government system.

In short, many NGOs focus their efforts on helping to ensure that innovations, many of which have emanated from the non-state sector, are taken up by the state system so that these can go to scale. Their purpose is systemic change. Some of the approaches, once considered “radical” which are now found within regular government plans include innovations that specifically address access issues for marginalized children. Examples include: ensuring that centres are located closer to homes; offering flexibility in the timing of the school day and year; bridge courses; training of para-professional teachers and recruiting teachers locally so that they speak the same language as the students. Others are focused on the quality of the learning opportunities being made available to children: child-centred teaching and learning processes, decentralized training, and in-class mentoring and support. Yet others have been concerned with school management and leadership, financial integrity, school-community partnerships and increased parental engagement with schools. Such public private partnerships can serve as a vehicle for building a stronger ‘performance culture’ into public sector institutions.

Experienced-based Policy Development: State and Non-State Collaboration

Many NGOs (both international and national) focus part of their efforts on broader policy influence. Lessons from NGOs’ work – particularly those based on careful monitoring and research combined with steady and regular interactions with government colleagues have contributed to changes in national policies. The Pakistan NGO Teachers’ Resource Centre (TRC) is a good example. Their work from the early 1990s with children in the unrecognised kachi classes (for children 3-6 years old) based in most government primary schools highlighted a series of problems related to their quality. Working with teachers, parents, head teachers and other government officials, TRC developed and piloted training programmes and a locally relevant curriculum framework for the kachi teachers. Dialogue with government officials over time as well as arranging visits for a range of officials to the kachi classes built up interest and momentum and led to the organisation of a national level seminar on early childhood education in Pakistan in 1999. The key results from the seminar and discussions was the adaptation of TRC’s curriculum into one that was approved by the Ministry of Education nationally and the recognition by the MoE of TRC as a national resource base for their efforts in early childhood education. Source: Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, 2003. Coordinators Notebook, no 27, p35-40).

The Madrasa Early Childhood Programme in East Africa has similarly worked with the Governments of Uganda, Kenya and Zanzibar as they have developed policies for young children. Impact research and 20 years of experience of work with over 200 communities across the region have been critical in the programme’s ability to influence and engage in policy discussions. In addition to the broader framing of policy, staff have been able to bring forward practical challenges faced by community preschools to the government officials which have, for example, resulted in small but critical changes that clarified the registration process and made it more transparent. Source: Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, 2003. Coordinators Notebook, no 27,, p41-45).

Save the Children Alliance’s (SC) work across regions also illustrates that engagement with governments based on efforts across communities, regions or nationally can lead to important changes in policies and programmes. In 2006, as a result of SC’s advocacy efforts – often undertaken with other local partners: i) The Bangladesh Government included pre-school in the Primary Education Development Programme II (the single biggest development program in the country); ii) In Ethiopia, the Somali Region Education Bureau and Oromia Region Borana Zone Education desk incorporated the SC-developed Alternative Basic Education as their approach to reach pastoralist children; iii) In Nicaragua, Save the Children Alliance drafted and advocated for

the new education law. At the local level, better coordination between cluster coordinators and community leaders have led to community censuses, home visits, and advocating for more teaching positions and schools; and iv) in Vietnam: The Ministry of Education and Training incorporated “Reading for Children”, developed by SC, into the national Vietnamese language promoting programme for ethnic minority children (personal communication to AKF, 23 March 2007).

More recently an even more important trend may be governments’ interest in leveraging the non-state sector (both not-for-profit and for-profit) to expand its own goals, for example through a range of contracts and MOUs.

In India over the last decade or more the Government of India (and many of the states) has enabled NGO involvement in education, particularly in terms of their participation in community mobilisation, local level planning and capacity building and development of innovative curricula. The central government has been adopting and scaling a number of NGO experiments focusing on alternative and ‘second chance’ education (Rifkin et al., 2001). More recently, the framework document of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), the national Education for All effort, encourages partnership with NGOs, the private sector and civil society organizations. SSA places special emphasis on girls and children from minority communities. Over 4,000 NGOs are currently participating in the SSA programme for enhancing educational levels for girls, urban children, children with special needs and flexible/alternate learning systems.

Three case examples that illustrate the growing array of ‘complex’ partnership approaches being tested and scaled-up across a number of countries follow below. Annex III provides further examples from India (Bodh Shiksha Samiti which works in over 1000 government schools with the Rajasthan State government), Pakistan (Society which has had long standing joint efforts with Balochistan Provincial government) and Afghanistan (the International Rescue Committee which has established home-based schools to increase access, especially for girls). Many more exist and more information and analysis of these different forms of collaboration and partnership as well as the range of benefits (e.g. student outcomes, especially for marginalised groups) is needed.

Pratham - India

Pratham started with a few balwadis (pre-school centres) in urban areas for marginalized children. By 2001, the organization had grown to run nearly 3000 balwadis in Mumbai, catering to more than half of the city’s preschool aged children. Since its inception, Pratham’s goal has been “every child is in school... and is learning well.” It uses a number of vehicles to achieve this goal including: preschools, bridge schools, outreach, education centres, in-school mentoring, computer literacy. In nine years, Pratham has reached over one million children in 14 states. In an effort to prevent dropout and improve learning, Pratham is currently promoting an accelerated learning methodology to teach reading and basic maths to non-reading children within three weeks. The programme involves intense in-school support for children whose teachers have identified them as in need of help. Since 2002, the organization has helped 160,000 children in state schools to become literate. The organization has become a resource to government and to civil society, actively participates in policy discussions and leads advocacy efforts.

Pratham’s success is pinned on a triangular partnership between government, the private sector, and citizens. Using its first experiences with corporate partnership with the development bank ICICI, Pratham now has a well-developed model for collaborating with the private sector towards social ends. In each of the 14 states where Pratham is present, the private sector has led the

way. Corporations have sponsored the involvement of their best talent and human resources to work with the Pratham cause.

Aga Khan Education Services, Pakistan and government education in the Northern Areas of Pakistan

The Aga Khan Education Services, Pakistan is one of the largest private, non-profit education organizations in Pakistan. It operates 186 schools, supports 200 community-based schools and 75 government schools. When AKES, P first started to work in the remote North of Pakistan, many decades ago, there was a dearth of any schools open to girls. The challenge then was to get them into primary school and AKES,P opened up these opportunities by establishing schools. As time went on more government and other schools started up - the majority at primary level. The critical gap in many areas is middle and high school. AKES, P responded to the demand from the girls and communities themselves by focusing attention on providing opportunities at middle and high school level – 60% of the 96 girls' high schools in the Northern Areas are AKES, P supported institutions. In addition, AKES,P collaborates closely with the Northern Areas government at different levels:

a) School level: Both AKES,P and the locally situated Professional Development Centre of the Aga Khan University's Institute for Educational Development provide training for government teachers and work intensively with selected government schools. In addition AKES,P uses underutilized government school facilities to run secondary classes in communities where students, especially girls, don't have access to middle and high schools. Girls from the community are encouraged to teach, and AKES,P offers extensive teacher training and mentoring. In many areas the schools are government schools in the morning and in the afternoon community-based middle and high school sections for girls run with AKES and community supports - a cost-efficient use of facilities. This use of government schools and teachers by the community-based schools builds strong links with government increasing the likelihood of government eventually contributing towards salaries, providing free textbooks etc. Government has already provided some teachers, contributed towards the matching grant meant to help ensure long-term sustainability, provided funds for boundary walls, equipment etc.

b) Other levels of the System: AKES,P supports the government's district education officials with training, improvements to its EMIS etc. Most significant is the MOU with government specifically to assist in the development of an overall Education Strategy for the Northern Areas. This demonstrates the high regard in which AKES,P is held and provides tremendous opportunities for the development of a strategy that genuinely brings together all the different players (vital in an area where government accounts for approx. 50% of enrolment) and capitalizes on the contributions of all.

Kenya School Improvement Project (KENSIP)

The goal of the Aga Khan Development Network's Kenya School Improvement Project (KENSIP) is to make quality primary education more accessible to children in Coast Province by improving the effectiveness of primary education in public schools in a number of districts. The government seconded a team of Project Officers (generally head teachers or local education officers) to the Project. But their involvement was minimal initially. That changed overnight with the sudden declaration of free primary education (FPE) in 2003 by a newly elected government. Enrolments skyrocketed, resulting in an increased strain on schools and teachers. KENSIP was deluged by requests from non-partner schools in the intervention area to extend the programme.

After much consideration, the programme shifted to a cluster system approach which would draw upon the subject-specialist Key Resource Teachers (KRTs), who had been distance-trained by the Government's national School-based Teacher Development programme as teacher mentors and who were already present in every school. Using the KRTs meant that KENSIP's interventions and approaches became embedded into existing government systems and structures, particularly at the district level. The new approach created Cluster Resource Teams – consisting of KRTs, head teachers, representatives of school management committees, and local

education officers. These teams led the planning and implementation of quality improvement interventions across each cluster, and KENSIP's role changed from implementer to facilitator.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology was very supportive of the changes since they had put significant effort into training the KRTs but they had been unable to undertake their assigned task of peer mentoring due to the lack of a responsive local support system. KENSIP's cluster system began to fill this gap. It also enabled stakeholders – including district level government education offices – to analyze and plan jointly around local needs, thus assisting the process of decentralization. The Ministry's In-service Education and Training Unit became involved in the planning and implementation of the cluster system, as did the district and municipal education offices. Local education officers also saw benefits: KENSIP helped them respond to the multiple requests for help in dealing with the fallout of FPE at the school level and the cluster system began to engender a new enthusiasm among education stakeholders to 'take charge' and address problems at the school level.

The KENSIP cluster approach, has attracted considerable interest from the Government. In 2005, AKF and KENSIP, at the invitation of the Ministry, became participants in the development and gradual rollout of the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP). What had been a partnership on paper evolved into a dynamic and enthusiastic collaboration based on active participation, and joint planning and implementation.

Sector-wide Approaches, Budget support and Civil Society

Unfortunately the increased enthusiasm of governments to work in partnership with non-state partners in the types of arrangements described above has only, in rare cases, translated into any sort of meaningful engagement with these same partners when it comes to Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) and other poverty reduction measures. International funding for education and other sectors is increasingly coordinated through SWAs and budget support. This means that all significant funding supports a single sector policy and expenditure programme, under government leadership. Governments disburse and account for all funding. The way in which SWAs are currently implemented encourages governments to take leadership for the education agenda in their country and build their own capacity, both of which are vital. However, it doesn't necessarily encourage them to work in partnership with other actors or build their capacity to do so. SWAs have been seen as being an important way of promoting local ownership and strengthening aid harmonization and effectiveness. However, "local ownership" has often translated in practice into "government ownership".

Sector development plans are most often plans about what government will achieve and rarely take into account all of the actors and assets (financial, human, intellectual) that exist in a country and that could contribute to achieving Education for All (EFA) goals. There has been at times a reliance on blueprints, templates and prescribed solutions that has been detrimental to a commitment to partnership, has been inconsistent with the capacities of partners, and has sometimes limited the relevance of programmes.

NGOs are often viewed by donors as competent partners who are able to reach places or groups which government is unable to, or as important stakeholders representing the interests of civil society at large and holding governments accountable. Yet, as international funding for education and other social services is increasingly coordinated through SWAs, non-state actors are marginalised; and funds are diverted away from

smaller-scale NGO projects, often translating into fewer opportunities for projects that encourage local innovation (ADEA, 2005). Empirical studies on PRSP processes and SWAps have found that civil society participation is often an afterthought, and sometimes blocked or restricted by government (Tomlinson and Foster, 2004; Gould and Ojanen, 2003; and Brock et al 2002; in Mundy et al, 2006). As one study warns: “There is a tendency for dialogue surrounding the development, implementation and assessment of large-scale programmes of support to basic education to be conducted on a narrow basis, without effective participation by civil society organizations and key stakeholder groups such as teachers. This has the effect of alienating key groups necessary to the success of programmes and may undermine the level of political support and community commitment available to sustain the programme” (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2003). Consultative fora should not be seen as simply occasions for the sharing of information or government plans but also as occasions for policy input and formulation.

Good governance is fragile or simply non-existent in many countries. While it is vital to invest in these processes and build the capacity of the public sector to be accountable to its citizens, the need to also invest in strong civil society institutions – such as mass media, research and policy institutions, non-governmental and community-based organizations and institutions, professional associations, cultural organizations, and institutions of higher learning – cannot be overstated. Their contributions are needed to achieve the substance of EFA goals. These actors are important not only for their ability to advocate, build capacity and deliver services, but also for the part the best of these can play in contributing to good governance and pluralistic values. A dense network of strong civil society institutions can act as a bulwark against unconcerned governments, and provide a safety net when governments malfunction. In this sense, improving governance in developing countries – which has become an important priority for many donor countries – is about far more than improving government.

As His Highness, the Aga Khan said, “...Our plans begin with the realization that governments alone cannot meet the educational challenges of the 21st century. Nor can private institutions which are constrained by the necessity to earn a profit. The answer lies in the expanding role of civil society – in voluntary institutions which are not governmental but which are nonetheless dedicated to community values and the public good.” (Speech at the foundation stone-laying ceremony of the Aga Khan Academy Hyderabad, India, September 2006)

Recommendations

The 2007 EFA Report estimates that 77 million children of primary school age are out-of-school. Most of them are from rural areas or the poorest households. The progress towards reaching *Education for All*, is clearly not enough. We do not have the luxury of time or preferences. To ensure that every child has access to quality educational opportunities requires action on the part of a multitude of actors – state, private enterprise, civil society – all operating within a clear enabling environment to make it happen. The following are key points for all stakeholders

- 1) Use a different operating framework.

First and foremost, keep the provision of learning opportunities for children, ALL children, at the centre of discussions regarding the roles of state and non-state in

ensuring EFA. This means getting clarity regarding public school enrolments, non-state enrolments and numbers of out-of-school children. It also means working together to develop plans for how they can be reached and how other EFA goals (regarding quality, etc) can be achieved.

- 2) Recognize the complex web of public/private/community supports for education in almost all countries and create an enabling regulatory environment.

Acknowledge the non-state sector's role in contributing towards meeting EFA goals. Place non-state efforts clearly within country plans with a negotiated role for each type of provider based on what makes sense in the country context. This is critical so that all parties are clear and plans take into consideration all of the actors and the human, financial, and knowledge assets that they bring to the table. Value the contributions that all different players offer and capitalize on their relative strengths, rather than getting stuck in debates around the merits of public or private provision seen as a dichotomy. Integrate non-state providers into delivery systems to complement public provision. Address inefficiencies in both government and non-state systems.

Update policies and legislation regarding the non-state sector taking into account the range of institutions and organizations involved. Clarify guidelines and registration laws and institute transparent practices which are clear, manageable and inclusive. Ensure that guidelines, oversight and support systems reach schools serving marginalized groups, and allow time and resources for registration, improvements etc. Harmonize systems (such as equivalency agreements), so that children have the opportunity to continue up the ladder of education, regardless of which system they start out in.

- 3) Review non-state contributions considering both the short and the long-term.

Keep in mind that situations are dynamic and take this into account in planning effective solutions. For example, some NGO interventions may be the most effective entry points to reach particular marginalized groups and it may be possible (even highly desirable) to subsequently mainstream these children into public schools when students and/or the system can do so. Other non-state initiatives are of a long-standing nature – making important contributions to ensuring a broad pluralist education system.

- 4) Improve processes and mechanisms within SWAps, FTIs, and other national planning processes to facilitate broader collaborative partnerships between the non-state sector and government.

Use consultative forums as vehicles of partnership and co-ordinating mechanisms focused on planning, analysis and monitoring of progress towards goals. Encourage developing country governments and donors to evaluate all actors – for profit and non-profit – and their collective assets and think critically about how and where each can add value in the particular country context. Ensure that the appropriate actors are included in the design and implementation of sector plans. Use SWAp and other key fora to explore the full range of simple and more complex state / non-state partnerships in order to plan for the most effective ways to reach all. This should include scaling up or mainstreaming of well-tested NSS approaches, using the broader collaborative partnerships outlined in the paper (see p. 24-28 and Annex II) and ensuring support (including financial support) for parts of the non-state sector. Where public finances are

made available to private fee-paying institutions this should be linked to specific requirements for actively targeting and including disadvantaged children (at no cost at primary level or affordable costs at secondary). Such support might best be separate from general aid to private schools.

5) Integrate data on non-state provision within national EMIS and improve data collection and analysis for both state and non-state sectors.

Delineate non-state data by type of provider (at minimum not-for-profit and for profit) so that fuller information is available. Map non-state provision and state/non-state partnerships to provide a fuller picture of who is doing what, where, and for whom. Update regularly, in coordination with NSS actors. It is especially important to understand which schools are reaching disadvantaged groups (and how), and, most importantly, where there continue to be gaps in terms of provision.

6) Strengthen research as a solid basis for decision-making

Conduct additional research which will allow i) assessment of the contributions of the non-state sector to meeting education goals and particularly the extent to which they reach marginalized children, and ii) comparison of quality, reach, cost-effectiveness etc. of state and non-state schools. Build capacity in this critical area. Develop case studies that review regulatory systems and identify helpful approaches for establishing an enabling environment with a focus on equity and marginalised populations.

Learn from successful examples and from failures - both simple and more complex state/non-state collaboration. Undertake critical analysis and documentation of the range of existing efforts. Analyze the implications of investment in different parts of the overall system and plan for expansion and improvements accordingly (Examples might be tapping into not-for-profit private schools to address particular quality issues or using NGOs to reach particular excluded groups or as social auditors).

7) Acknowledge that reaching the most disadvantaged children requires specific strategies - regardless of whether the educational opportunities are being provided through state or non-state channels. There needs to be acknowledgement that some children will be much more difficult to get into and keep in school – and thus may have higher associated ‘costs’. How this is best done - by state systems, by non-state provision or through a combination of providers needs serious attention and reflection.

8) Empower communities to hold service providers accountable (state and non-state) and have their voice heard.

Ensure the availability of transparent information on local schools to help parents either make choices regarding schooling or advocate for changes and improvements in schools where their children are enrolled. Build community capacity to generate and use data and information at local level. NGOs must continue to play a social auditor role and must work with government officials at grassroots levels to inspire and catalyse change in schools - both State and Non-State.

Conclusion

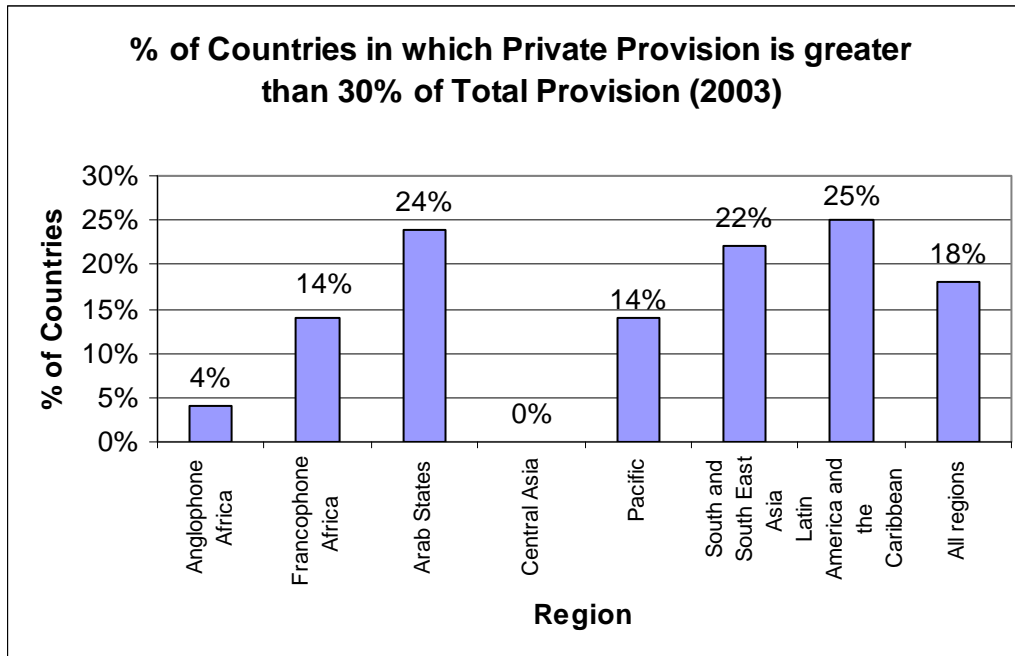
Non-state education covers many different possibilities - ranging from “first choice” (those catering to the elite) to “only chance” (the many millions not reached by public provision for whom the services of non-state providers are crucial). The spectrum in between is complex, with increasing numbers of families, including large numbers of disadvantaged families, opting for non-state schools even where public provision is available. Moreover, in many places the demarcation between state and non-state institutions is becoming less clear with significant inputs from both and deliberate partnerships developing.

We may think about a public-private spectrum of service delivery, with an increasing number of schools being a mix at different positions along a continuum. This mix is not static, but rather dynamic, and the relative input from public and private may change from time to time. We should value both ends of the spectrum (fully public and fully private) and the partnerships of government, communities, civil society organizations, and private enterprise in between. A plurality of partnerships and strategies are needed. Critical within this is the need to ensure inclusion of marginalized children - key to the attainment of EFA and Millennium Development Goals. Opportunities for quality learning must not be based on the ability to pay.

The task of government policy-makers is to find the best balance of roles to achieve national education objectives in an inclusive, rational and efficient manner, utilizing all of the resources available, regardless of whether the actual provision of education services is mostly delivered by the state or not. This balance will vary among countries, and planning must be based on the specific country context. Standards need to be met in state and non-state schools alike. At the heart of it is the accountability of all stakeholders and the creation of a culture in which all parties are committed to make a difference and identify solutions that work for education systems, families and, most importantly, all children.

Annex I

Private provision is taking a larger share of student enrolments that just 15 years ago. The following table shows the % of countries in a region where private provision at the primary level is greater than 30% of total provision.



Annex II

Marginalised group	Strategies adopted by non-state providers to increase marginalised groups' access to education	Programme Examples
Girls	<p>Creation of safe and girl-friendly school environments e.g. construction of separate school latrines for girls</p> <p>Scholarship schemes</p> <p>Awareness-raising on early marriage and its implications</p> <p>Enabling re-entry of young mothers into schools</p>	<p>AKES scholarships for girls in the Northern Areas of Pakistan</p> <p>In Kenya, the Forum on African Women's Education (FAWE) held workshops with Masai leaders to sensitize them on challenges faced by girls and to promote reconciliation for families where girls had rebelled against early marriage.</p>
Working children	<p>Introducing flexibility in the timing of the school day and year</p> <p>Development of short bridge courses that provide intensive shorter programmes for ex-working children that helps them to catch up and re-enter formal mainstream schools</p> <p>Partnering with local communities and the police to identify working children and work with them, their parents and employers to ensure children go to school and bridge courses</p>	<p>Doctor Reddy's Foundation operating in Hyderabad</p> <p>Bodh Shiksha Samiti</p>
Nomadic and migrant children	<p>Creation of mobile schools which move with communities</p> <p>Identification and training of teachers from nomadic/migrant communities</p>	<p>Oxfam's cross-border pastoralist education programme in West Africa (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso). The programme works with "animatrices" or female community mobilisers to promote girls' education, in a way that is sensitive to the needs of nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists (Oxfam, 2007)</p>
Children impacted by HIV/AIDS	<p>Psycho-social support for orphans and vulnerable children</p>	<p>The rapid growth of community schools in Zambia has been attributed to its</p>

	Teacher training on HIV/AIDS	HIV/AIDS epidemic. Orphans account for almost a third of community school enrolment, while only 13% of public school enrolment (DeStefano et al, 2006)
Children in conflict and post-conflict situations	Home-based schooling Promoting negotiation, conflict resolution, pluralism through curriculum and teacher training	In Afghanistan, several NGOs such as the International Rescue Committee, have established home-based schools especially for girls. These programmes aim to mainstream children into the formal government system, where it has the capacity to absorb students.
Children from ethnic/religious minority groups and Indigenous children	Community sensitisation and mobilisation on the importance of education for all children Ensuring school timetable is complementary to that of faith-based Development of curriculum to maintain and strengthen indigenous culture Instruction in mother tongue/home language schools training teachers in inter-community dynamics and engaging with religious leaders to support mainstream education as complementary to other separate religious instruction, identifying community members to visit homes of out-of-school children and encourage parents to send their children to school, involving community women in school as 'Mother Teachers'.	India's Programme for Enrichment of School Level Education (PESLE), implemented by a team of non-state providers, and supported by AKF, operates specific initiatives targeted at minority and marginalised children (Muslims, scheduled castes and tribes, working children, etc). In Mali, community school programmes ensure that initial instruction is in children's native language (Bambara) rather than French, to ease children's transition into school and facilitate learning. In Guatemala, programmes that target indigenous Mayan children from pre-school upwards through bilingual education and community engagement
Children with disabilities	Inclusive education initiatives'	Save the Children operates inclusive education programmes in a number of countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, aimed at facilitating participation of disabled children in mainstream schools.

Annex III Additional Case Studies of Non-State Partnerships

Bodh Shiksha Samiti's partnership with the State Education department in Rajasthan

Beginning in the slums of Jaipur, Bodh Shiksha Samiti started community primary schools in Rajasthan and developed a model for ensuring that the most disadvantaged of the urban poor receive access to relevant, quality education opportunities. After demonstrating initial success with its non-formal model (which includes intensive teacher training and community engagement), Bodh worked with government to test a "Mainstream Intervention Programme" in 10 Municipal Schools. In this first 'partnership' with government, Bodh provided resource teachers to support government teachers in the classroom. The government schools, in turn, provided teachers and training aids as required, and maintained a class size of 30 students. Classroom learning environments changed dramatically with teachers interaction with students becoming more positive, engaging children actively in the learning process: Drop out rates fell from 60% to less than 20% in partner Municipal Schools, tests of student abilities in Grade 3 provided evidence of significant gains in children's learning and strong links were established between communities and their schools.

Using this success as a base, Bodh has moved onto a series of larger and more complex joint ventures with the State Government. In the joint UN Agencies Initiative it provided technical support while also replicating its model of community schools. Bodh also served as coordinator of the National Core Group for the education of the urban poor, and a member of an NCERT Taskforce for the development of new teaching and learning materials for the early years. Under AKF's school improvement programme in India, Bodh has responded to requests by the Government to further adapt its work to rural and urban areas - including work with other nonformal schools and large numbers of government schools (1100+). Bodh works in the most disadvantaged areas where government schools (if they exist) barely function. In both rural and urban areas 95% are under Gol poverty line or from marginalised, minority groups.

The current MOU with the Government is significantly different than the more contractual agreement when Bodh first worked with government schools. Under the present MOU Bodh now plans the work jointly with Block and District level administrative units – identifying government schools to be strengthened into resource schools as demonstration sites for nearby government schools, organising teacher and other stakeholder training (including locally elected Panchayat members).

The Society for Community Support for Primary Education in Balochistan (SCSPEB) has a longstanding history with the Balochistan government in delivering better quality education to some of the most remote and rural areas of the province. The relationship began in the early 1990s – when SCSPEB demonstrated success in a community support programme, promoting girls' education in the rural areas of Balochistan. The experience demystified some of the community's notions about female education, and the government also recognized the NGO's work in promoting their own agenda for girls' education.

Nonetheless, there was hesitancy on the part of Education Field Officials (EFOs) and the Teachers' Union towards SCSPEB. However, SCSPEB joined a steering committee created by the state Ministry for the planning and implementation of education activities in Balochistan. Since public and private partners were part of this steering committee all were gradually better able to understand each other's intentions. SCSPEB developed a working relationship with each group and helped alleviate fears, while building trust with government officials. Eventually, there was mutual recognition of the competencies of each group.

A measure of success for the NGO was when it was asked by the government to set up a Parent Teacher School Management Committee Model for the existing government schools. This was one of the first examples of a true public-private-community partnership for Balochistan, and its success paved the way for other opportunities of collaboration. Continued work with a community middle school programme and an early childhood education programme (RCC) allowed the NGO to devise additional innovative models where the communities, the state and non-state sectors worked collaboratively.

International Rescue Committee -- Afghanistan

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan has experienced a tumultuous post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building period. This has included major efforts to rebuild and revitalize a broken education system. Several NGOs have been instrumental in improving educational access, especially for girls, through the establishment of community-based and home-based schools, and the subsequent mainstreaming of non-formal students into the formal government system (where it exists and is functioning). In 2004, some 1.3 million girls were enrolled in government primary schools, a major accomplishment given that the number was recorded as zero in 2001.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) works in five provinces in Afghanistan to operate home-based classrooms. Classes are located in teacher's homes or community spaces such as mosques, and run for 3.25 hours per day, six days a week. Teachers are selected and compensated (often in-kind) by communities, and are trained by IRC. IRC also provides the school with teaching and learning materials and ongoing supervision support. The home-based school approach has been successful for a number of reasons including: short travel time and half-day program allows children to continue supporting their families; recruitment of local teachers, often women, and the short distance to school helps to attract girls from conservative families; secure and comfortable learning environment; and low student to teacher ratios. The program has been vital also, in restoring hope and optimism to war-torn communities, promoting the re-establishment of formal schools, fostering physical and psychosocial well being, and ensuring that children have genuine opportunities to learn. IRC's goal is to ensure that students are absorbed into government schools once the Ministry has the capacity to take them in, and the organization actively advocates for the establishment of public schools in areas where there are multiple functioning home-based schools.

The Aga Khan Development Network

The authors for this paper work in different offices of the Aga Khan Foundation. The team has drawn substantially on the work and experience of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). This is a group of private, international, non-denominational agencies that collaborate towards common development goals in specific regions. A number of AKDN agencies and institutions support activities in the field of education: Aga Khan Foundation; Aga Khan Education Services; Aga Khan University in Pakistan and East Africa; Aga Khan Trust for Culture; and, more recently, the Academies and the University of Central Asia in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. AKDN implements through its own agencies; works with partners (civil society, governments and academic institutions); undertakes research; disseminates lessons; and speaks out for policy reforms. AKDN's education efforts are characterized by the following which, when taken together, makes AKDN somewhat unique:

- 1) A long-standing emphasis on **quality, purpose and relevance** as central to all that it does. Whether it is a Madrasa pre-school, a two room primary school at the end of an isolated mountain valley, an urban AKES school, a state-of-the-art Academy or an international University, attention to quality is at the heart of the endeavour. As the Aga Khan has observed, "pluralist societies are not accidents of history. They are a product of enlightened education."
- 2) **Support to all levels of education.** AKDN is committed to investing in secondary and tertiary education as well as early childhood and primary. AKDN contends that the continuum of development leads from meeting basic needs to creating the conditions for an improved quality of life and civil society, including sustainable prosperity, broad-based political participation, superior standards of leadership, social equity, and individual opportunity and choice. AKDN's education efforts therefore are conceptualized as **a ladder of learning opportunity** – starting with young children in homes and communities before they enter school through to primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education – to provide the means for societies to acquire the skilled and professional human resource base and the social and economic base for true national development.
- 3) **Value of non-state and private actors and public-private-community partnerships.** Unlike many international agencies working in the area of education in developing countries, AKDN is committed to the support of both state and non-state provision. AKDN believes that private demand-responsive institutions that provide affordable services at high quality and at scale, acting within government policy frameworks, should be viewed as providing important added value to national development. Private service delivery can reinforce services delivered by the public sector, particularly through partnerships to enhance choice, efficiency and quality. AKES schools, the upcoming Academies and Universities are as such key contributors – particularly because they ensure that able students who are cannot afford the fees are awarded places in these educational institutions.
- 4) **Long-term commitment and presence.** AKDN's work is characterized by its long-term commitment and presence in many areas. For example the first Aga Khan schools were established in 19XX in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. AKF has worked in close collaboration with the government's Institute of Professional development in Khorog, Tajikistan for almost 14 years. The capacity-building and achievements that are possible under such long-term partnerships are of a different order of what can be done within the apparently ever-shortening 1-3 year "project" arrangements

AKF has a broad range of partnerships with governments and civil society including supports for NGOs and private providers to work with the public system to improve quality. This is increasingly is at substantial scale. AKU, through its Institutes of Educational Development (in Karachi and Dar-es-Salam) and Professional Development Centres, strengthens the public and non-state sectors through provision of professional development and technical assistance for capacity building to different tiers of governmental systems and other education actors.

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ANNEX 1

Non-State Providers and Public-Private-Community Partnerships in Education – Contributions towards Achieving EFA: Critical Review of Challenges, Opportunities and Issues

BANGLADESH DESK REVIEW

In Bangladesh, education provision is truly a pluralistic endeavour. At the primary level alone, there are 8 different categories of providers, ranging from government, NGO, private for-profit, non-government madrasa, government madrasa, private registered schools, private non-registered schools, and community schools.¹ (Annex A outlines the various providers at each level of schooling.)

ACCESS

While this mix of education provision has led to impressive gains in access and gender parity in enrolment in the recent past, at least at primary level, retention and completion rates tell an all-too-familiar story. As of 2003, the Net Enrolment Ratio for primary schooling was over 87%, with 49.3% of those enrolled being girls. However, nearly 3 million children – largely marginalized and hard-to-reach – still remain out of school and of those who do enrol, 46% will drop out before completing the full five-year primary cycle.

At the secondary level, access still remains a problem; the NER at this level stands at 45%, with girls making up 53.2% of all enrolments. The majority of students (60%) drop out before grade 10, and only 20% of students enrolled actually complete the full seven year secondary cycle. (All statistics from BANBEIS).

At the pre-primary level, only approximately 21% of eligible children are served (EFA GMR 2006), even though access has expanded fairly rapidly in the last few years.

State vs. Non-State Provision

Generally, approximately 61% of children enrolled in primary schools are served by the public system; private registered and non-registered primary schools serve a further 18.4%; 7.1% of children go to non-formal schools run by NGOs; private for-profit schools provide services to 2.1%; 2.7% attend community and satellite schools; and 5.3% attend madrasas (including government recognized and non-government) (CAMPE 2001)². Working under a dichotomy of 'state' and 'non-state' provision is virtually impossible at this level; not only are the

¹ Although some sources cite 11 different streams, categorizing government, registered non-government, community, Ebtedai madrasas attached to high madrasas, kindergartens, primary sections attached to high school, Ebtedai madrasas, private non-government, NGO, satellite and experimental (Chowdury et al. 2004; UNESCO nd).

² The figures do not add up to 100% because other categories, such as 'kindergarten' and 'secondary attached' have not been included in CAMPE's summary figures.

categories different depending on who is collecting the data (BANBEIS, for example, differentiates between 'government' and 'non-government and other primary'; whereas CAMPE differentiates among all the categories listed above), but 'private' education benefits from considerable subsidies from the state in the forms of textbook provision, teacher subventions, public examinations, stipend programs, etc., thereby 'blurring the boundaries'.

At the secondary level, the overwhelming majority of service provision, about 97%, is through non-government schools (BANBEIS 2003/4), although, according to a survey conducted by CAMPE in 2005, approximately 84% of all secondary teachers received government salary subventions.

At the pre-primary level, services are delivered primarily by NGOs to poor children and by private non-profit providers to children of relatively affluent families. Government agencies, primarily the Bangladesh Shishu Academy and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board and City Corporation, also have a 'model centre' in each of the districts and run a number of pre-schools in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Generally, NGO pre-schools are located in close to or on the premises of government primary schools so as to ensure maximum intake into the public system in class 1.

EQUITY

It is generally accepted that non-state provision of education in Bangladesh, particularly NGO provision at the primary level, has been a direct response to gaps in state provision, particularly for marginalized children. While the Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1993 guarantees free primary education in all government schools and free education for girls in rural areas to grade 8, government schools are often too far or their quality is not perceived by parents as being worth the direct cash costs or opportunity costs of sending children to school. Children from rural areas, urban periphery areas, ethnic minorities, children of the extreme poor; and urban slum/working children are those often unable to access the formal education system (Kabeer in Ardt et al, 2005). NGOs in Bangladesh have developed specific characteristics or models of non-formal service delivery that allow them to be more flexible and responsive to the needs of marginalized children than the formal system (see the section on quality below). They also reach a substantial number of children who have either never enrolled in or dropped out of the formal education system. Approximately 700 NGOs across the country are registered with CAMPE, a national education umbrella organization, and are involved in literacy and education programming, reaching an estimated 1.3-1.7 million children (CAMPE 2004; World Bank 2004b).

The enrolment rate for the urban poor in Bangladesh is in some cases lower than rural populations; for example, it has been estimated that only 9.4% of urban slums have primary schools within their reach (Sharafuddin in Ardt et al, 2005).

At the secondary level, net enrolment in urban slums was found to be only 18%, compared to the national average of 45% (CAMPE 2003/4). This is an area that both state and non-state provision have failed to address adequately.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs), which are home to a number of ethnic minorities, are also particularly disadvantaged. While the rest of the country has seen increased non-formal education provision by NGOs to fill some of the gaps in government service delivery, the CHTs are behind the national average in educational efficiency indicators, mainly due to civil strife and armed conflict in the area. One study found primary net enrolment rates of between 7.7% to 53.2% for boys and between 2.7% and 52.9% for girls – compared to a reported national average of 77% at the time – with large disparities even among ethnic groups in the region (Nath, 2001 in Chowdhury et al 2001).

Unlike many other developing countries, which have seen a massive increase in private for-profit ‘budget’ schools, commercial service provision in Bangladesh is still largely geared for an elite segment of the population that can afford to send their children to English-medium schools, mostly in urban areas. Generally, commercial education provision, including private tutoring as a way to augment the dismal quality of education in schools, is beyond the reach of poor parents, and has negative consequences on equity and accountability for the education system. A CAMPE Education Watch survey conducted in 2003/4 found that 43% of children (across all types of providers) had private tutors, paying an average of Tk.152 per month for eight months a year; children who needed the most extra help with their studies (first generation learners) could afford it the least (CAMPE 2004).

At the secondary level, provision is overwhelmingly non-government, but even within this non-government provision, inequities are prevalent: “Secondary education...is less a vehicle for social mobility than a means of reinforcing existing social divisions. Poorly performing madrasas serving mostly the poor and proprietary English medium schools serving the elites are potent symbols of the divisive system.” (CAMPE 2005, p.xi) The small number of government secondary schools are primarily located in urban areas and are relatively better-resourced than non-government schools (except English-medium schools). Students enrolled in government secondary schools had parental backgrounds (education and economic status) that were better than students in other types of schools, indicating that government schools on the whole serve the less poor (Nath, nd). Ahmed et al. (2006) speculate that one reason for the popularity of dakhil and alim madrasas at this level may be because they offer room and board to students and charge smaller fees than other types of secondary schools, and hence are likely to serve poorer students.

The gender gap in enrolment in Bangladesh has disappeared. In fact, at the secondary level, girls’ net enrolment is ahead of boys’ by nearly 6%, and by 1% at the primary level. The special efforts of both government – through female

stipend programs – and NGOs to enrol girls has been recognized (see the section below on financing for a discussion on stipend programs). Girls' enrolment in madrasas has also grown substantially in the recent past, going from 7.7% of all madrasa enrolments in 1990 to almost 40% in 2000.

QUALITY

Quality at the pre-primary level is difficult to judge, and varies depending on the specific provider as well as the type of provision. Generally, some of the larger NGOs have programs of fair quality, but with ample room for improvement; a number of smaller organizations have recently jumped on the ECD bandwagon, and the quality of their provision is uncertain. While one would expect for-profit provision to be best, one study reported that “private [for-profit] kindergarten classes are expensive and are purely academic in orientation. Furthermore, they are conducted in the least child-friendly environments observed.” (Lusk et al. 2004, p.3) Reports on mosque-based *maktabs* vary: one report found them rigid and overly harsh in terms of discipline (Jahan 2005), while another found them “well attended and enthusiastically participated [in] by children of both genders.” (Lusk et al. 2004, p.3)

At the primary level, NGO schools are widely considered to be more effective than either government, other non-government, or madrasa schools. A study conducted by CAMPE in 1999 showed that children in non-formal or NGO primary schools had the highest levels of basic learning competency, followed by non-government primary and government primary (see Table 1 below). Children in madrasa schools performed the worst. It should be noted that girls' performance was poorer than that of boys, irregardless of type of school. It has also been pointed out that, generally, performance across the board for children in all school types is dismal, with less than 30% of children achieving basic learning competencies before leaving primary school.

Table 1: Proportion of children aged 11-12 years achieving basic learning competency by type of school

Type of School	Girls	Boys	Total
Gov't Primary	18.9	24.2	21.5
Non-Gov't Primary	19.9	27.1	23.5
Non-formal	34.5	44.0	38.3
Ebtedai Madrasas	12.1	18.1	15.2
All School Types	27.9	31.3	29.6

Source: Education Watch 1999 data in Chowdhury et al. 2001, p.9.

The greater effectiveness of NGO schools – particularly given that they generally serve a poorer segment of the population – has been attributed to a number of innovations, many that respond to the specific needs of marginalized children, including: good school facilities; location in villages; flexibility of school timings;

small class sizes; a supplemented curriculum; regular teacher training and close supervision; a more child-friendly teaching style; focus on enrolling girls; involving parents and the community; and various incentives such as extracurricular activities, food, and health care services. Chowdury et al. (2004) also point out that while BRAC, whose programs have been well monitored and evaluated, accounts for 60% of all NGO provision, there is likely variation in performance among NGOs (including those smaller ones that BRAC in turn supports through its Education Support Program) which has not been investigated. There have also been concerns regarding the length of some NGO programs (20% have programs that are two years duration or less – Chowdury et al. 2004), and whether literacy/numeracy gains can be sustained in this limited time unless students continue their education by transferring to formal systems (as over 90% of BRAC graduates are reported to do – Chowdury et al. 2004).

On the other hand, government primary schools are seen to suffer from a number of ills, most stemming from a highly centralized, overly bureaucratic and corruption-ridden system that is wasteful and not accountable to the public it is supposed to serve. Registered and non-registered non-government primary schools, primarily established and managed by communities or private organizations, are perceived to suffer poor management and teachers, generally as a result of local politics and patronage, lack of resources, and lack of expertise. CAMPE 2004 points out that the number of government primary schools have essentially remained the same over a number of years, while the share of total enrolment in registered non-private primary schools has been rising, which may also be leading to deteriorating quality in these schools.

The quality of madrasa schools is harder to gauge (with the exception of the students' poor performance in achieving basic competencies as noted above). While Ebtedai madrasa students are required to take an in-school examination at the end of class five, Abdalla et al. (2004) report that no information is available on the achievement levels of students at this level. Generally, Abdalla et al. felt that there was a strong emphasis on Quranic memorization in some Ebtedai madrasas. They also mention problems of "poverty, corruption, and political instability" in the system (p.26). However, it has been noted that these institutions are increasingly moving in the direction of modernization; many are enthusiastic about improving quality and need support to do so.

At the secondary level, high dropout and failure rates in the public examinations are an indication of serious quality problems across school types. At this level, government schools perform best, followed by non-government schools, then madrasas.³ Nath's (nd) reconstructed cohort analysis of secondary students from class 6 to 10 by school type indicates:

³ On the other hand, Abdalla et al. (2004), show that madrasa students at both the dakhil and alim level outperformed students in other types of schools in public examinations between 1997 to 2002. However, they also state that this could be because public exams are different in the madrasa system (considered by the government to be equivalent), and may be due to corruption in the examination process in the madrasa system.

- survival rate to class 10 of 73.8% in government schools, 51.3% in non-government schools, and 37.6% in dakhil madrasas;
- completion rates of 50% in government schools, 18.8% in non-government schools, and 14.7% in dakhil madrasas; and
- exam pass rates of 73.8% in government schools, 40.6% in non-government schools, and 27.3% in dakhil madrasas.

In terms of the number of pupil years invested to produce a single class 10 graduate, government schools fared the best at 10.9 years, non-government schools at 23.7 years, and dakhil madrasas at 26.5 years, with an overall average of 23.2 years. This indicates that, on average, it takes about four-and-a-half times higher than the normal duration of the cycle for a student to graduate from class 10 (Nath nd). Nath also found a link between how well resourced the schools were and their efficiency.

While girls are ahead of boys in terms of secondary school enrolment, it is apparent that school systems at this level still do not work as well for them as for boys. In Nath's study, girls' completion rates were 10 percentage points lower than boys', with madrasas having the greatest gap. The co-efficient of efficiency for girls was also lower than that of boys (20.2% for girls and 32.9% for boys), with the largest gap again being in the madrasas (dakhil madrasas were the least efficient for girls, with a co-efficient of 15.8%). Considering the increasing enrolment of girls in madrasas mentioned above, this lack of efficiency is worrisome.

FINANCING

The Government of Bangladesh's expenditure on education is the lowest in South Asia at 2.3% of Gross National Product (GNP) compared to a regional average of 3.5% (Ardt et al. 2005), although the government has committed to reaching 2.8% by 2009 (World Bank 2004a). Approximately 14% of total government spending (development and non-development budgets) goes into education (Kabir nd), with approximately 32.5% allocated to primary and mass education and 42.3% to secondary education (calculated from BANBEIS 2004). More than 90% of the primary education revenue expenditure is spent on teacher salaries and benefits, leaving little for other quality improvement initiatives (Tietjen 2003). The system as a whole has been referred to as "low-cost, low-yield" (Ahmed et al. 2005, p.23).

As mentioned previously, even what is generally classified as 'non-government' provision is financed or supported in part by government funding through a number of different mechanisms, including teacher subventions, provision of free textbooks, and provision of stipends to students. A CAMPE Education Watch survey (2001) showed that private primary schools reported receiving over half of their income during a 9-month period from a government grant; Ebtedai

madrasas received nearly three-quarters from government; and non-formal schools close to none. At the secondary level, non-government schools received 60.5% of their revenue from government sources (with a wide gap between urban and rural schools), and dakhil madrasas 70.4% (Ahmed et al. 2005). Table 2 shows that government spending on a student in a recognized non-government school (not including Ebtedai madrasas) is equal to 38% of what it spends on a student in a government school at the primary level, and 24% at the secondary level (not including dakhil and alim madrasas).

Table 2: Revenue Budget Spending Per Student (2003/4)

Type of School	Tk.
Primary Govt	1,238
Primary Non-Govt	470
Secondary Govt	4,938
Secondary Non-Govt	1,174

Source: BANBEIS 2004 in UNESCO (nd).

Subventions

Teacher salary subventions were first instituted in 1980, recognizing the fact that educational institutions in rural areas could only be sustainable if their recurrent costs were shared by the government; also, there was a recognition that it would be hard for these schools to attract and retain quality teachers without a continuous salary being assured. The rate of subsidy has gradually increased from 50% to the current 90% for all teachers and employees of non-government schools, colleges and madrasas, costing the government a total of Tk.26 billion in fiscal year 2004-5; of this amount, Tk.5 billion was spent at the primary level and Tk.21 billion at the secondary and higher level (Kabir nd). Only those non-government institutions registered by the government (e.g., registered non-government primary schools, community schools, satellite schools, Alia madrasas) are eligible.

However, despite the subventions to help with recurrent costs, many schools still pass on their operating costs to students through various types of fees (e.g., examination, admission or textbook, even though these are theoretically provided free by the government); 'donations or subscriptions' (e.g., for festivals or 'under the table') or through poor teaching that forces students to pay for private tuition (in some cases to the same teacher who teaches him/her during school hours).

Stipends

At the primary level, the government funds a Primary Education Stipend Program, which aims to increase enrolment and attendance and reduce dropouts among 5.5 million students of poor families in government primary schools, registered non-government primary schools, community schools, government-approved full-grade NGO schools, and Ebtedai madrasas. 40% of the poorest students' families in the school are identified by the School Management

Committee and approved by the Upazila Education Officer to receive Tk.100 per month (or Tk.125 for families with more than one child enrolled). Students must meet the conditions for receiving stipends, including 85% attendance, 40% marks, etc. Schools must also meet eligibility criteria, which includes having 10% of students appearing in the scholarship examinations; holding exams in an orderly manner; ensuring at least 60% of students are in attendance during school inspections; and a minimum of 100 students enrolled in the case of madrasa schools. Funds are paid directly into a bank account opened in the name of the mother, or father/legal guardian where necessary. (For more information and an excellent analysis, see Tietjen 2003.)

Despite the noble intent of the stipend program, there have been some concerns around whether the administration of the program has enough checks and balances built in. Experience with other stipend programs in Bangladesh indicate that various problems will likely arise, including the problem of ghost students, mis-targeting of students (deliberate or unconscious), and opportunities for rent-seeking by school management committee members and local education officers. Since the program in its present form only began officially in 2003, there is insufficient information about how these problems may actually be affecting the program, but there is concern about the monitoring system being “fragile and probably under-resourced” (Tietjen 2003, p.34). There are also questions whether the conditions around student performance in the program design put all of the burden of quality improvement on children and parents, rather than on schools and teachers.

There is also the wider debate around whether a stipend program such as this one is the best use of scarce government resources. One side argues that the major constraint to participation in education is poverty, and that by providing a stipend to poor families, the program will help them to deal with the direct and opportunity costs of sending their children to school. Another side argues that the major constraint to participation in education is the poor quality of education, and that improving quality will automatically attract larger numbers of children to school, in addition to improving learning outcomes for the 87% of students already enrolled. CAMPE and others have cited the success of NGO models as proof that “offering quality schooling at the right time and place and in the right way without a direct cost burden on families for unofficial fees” can bring marginalized children into schools and keep them there (Ahmed et al. 2005, p.24).

At the secondary level, government and donors have funded a female secondary school stipend program since 1982, when it began as an experiment in one upazila. Since then, the program has been implemented through a number of successive and simultaneously running projects, funded by the government and various donors (including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and NORAD). According to Ahmed et al. (2005), girls’ stipends represented 57% of the government’s development allocation for secondary education and 19% of

total revenue and development expenditures for all secondary education institutions in 2003/4. The aim of the original program was primarily to bridge the gap in enrolment between girls and boys; a secondary goal was to prevent early marriage among girls. Second generation programs funded by donors put increased emphasis on improving the quality of schooling and on improved targeting of marginalized girls, whereas those funded by government continue to emphasize increasing access. The present stipend system provides free tuition and stipends to all eligible female secondary schools enrolled in recognized institutions (government and non-government) outside metropolitan areas. To be eligible, a girl must attend meet minimum attendance and achievement criteria, as well as remain unmarried. Monthly stipend and tuition amounts vary according to grade (between Tk.25-60) and type of institution (government vs. non-government, with those in non-government receiving proportionately more; the range is between Tk.10-20); a book allowance of Tk. 250 is provided in class 9 and SSC exam fees of Tk.500 in class 10. Funds are deposited directly into a bank account in the name of the student. (Mahmud, 2003)

Similar debates to those around the primary stipend program seem to polarize discussions around the female secondary stipend program, with the government emphasizing access through demand-side financing, and donors and CAMPE more inclined to improve supply-side factors. In terms of outcomes, the secondary stipend program has contributed to significantly improved enrolment and attendance at lower secondary, absolutely and relative to boys; however, retention continues to be poor and performance has actually declined over the years. At the higher secondary level, both enrolment and performance at higher secondary have also been lower. Mahmoud (2003) concludes:

Trends suggest that the program has been able to mitigate the direct money costs of sending girls to school, as well as some non-money costs, but that the improvement in education quality is not sufficient to mitigate the costs of keeping girls in school or providing an alternative to early marriage. The program has also not been able to meet other costs, such as the costs of private tutoring needed to pass examinations... These trends also point to the need for situating the stipend program within a broad set of interventions that address quality issues and indirect costs of girls' secondary schooling. (p.9)

Private Household Expenditures

The financing of education in Bangladesh is also characterized by significant private household expenditures, which belie notions of free primary education and equity in the system. The costs vary by type of school and grade level; the variation by type of school likely reflects the economic status of the clientele the school attracts (although the Ebtedai madrasas, which are generally seen to cater to poor children, seem to be an anomaly).

At the primary level, CAMPE's Education Watch survey found that, over a 9-month period, average household contributions to children's education was highest in Ebtedai madrasas (Tk.655), followed by government schools (Tk.614), private schools (Tk.484), community/satellite schools (Tk.328) and non-formal schools (Tk.290). Across all school types, the amount increased as the child moved up the grades. The least variation between the lowest and highest grade was found in the non-formal schools; the highest variation was found in the Ebtedai madrasas. Across all school types, the highest percentage of these private household expenditures (over 40%) were put towards stationary. The second highest percentage was for private tutors (28% in government schools; 22% in private schools; 16.5% in community/satellite schools; and 15% in non-formal schools), with the exception of Ebtedai madrasas (6.7%).

At the secondary level, a similar Education Watch (Ahmed et al. 2005i) survey found that households contribute at least three times more than the government towards their children's schooling. Annual household costs per pupil were highest in government schools (Tk.12,063), followed by non-government schools (Tk. 6,373), alim madrasas (Tk. 5,541) and dakhil madrasas (Tk. 4,502).

In a country where 53% of primary students are from poor households (World Bank 2004), the need for private expenditures to education poses a heavy burden on families, irregardless of the type of school attended by the student. At the secondary level, the private costs of education are prohibitive for many households, even with the government's female stipend program. As Ahmed et al. (2005) point out, "It is remarkable that even the poor families are investing substantial resources for their children's education, although the learning outputs and outcomes from these investments are far from assured." (p.xxviii).

POLICIES

Government

Regulation of non-state education provision in Bangladesh, as in many other developing countries, seems to focus on 'entry' into the sector in the case of 'recognized' non-government schools (i.e., registered non-government primary schools, non-government secondary schools, and Alia madrasa schools), and on maintaining control in the case of NGO non-formal schools, rather than on regulating the quality of provision or improving access for the underserved.

For recognized non-government schools, going through the process of official registration results in a number of benefits, mostly financial support of the school and students, as seen above; however, in order to reap these benefits, the schools must meet stringent approval criteria (e.g., land ownership, number and qualifications of teachers, number of classrooms, minimum number of students, existence and composition of school management committee, etc.), as well as comply to the procedures for the administration of subsidies and subventions.

Many of these criteria, in theory, should ensure that the intent behind establishing the school is fairly serious, and that quality meets a minimum standard. However, the lack of ongoing supervision or quality assurance, coupled with a highly decentralized system (where untrained and highly politicized school management committees have an enormous amount of power and authority), results in a quality of provision that is very often sub-standard. Also, historically, no effort was made to ensure that the location of these non-government schools coincided with areas that were underserved, or to avoid duplication with other existing schools in the area (although there does seem to be a provision now that no registered non-government primary school, for example, will be located within 2 kilometres of a government primary school).

Regulation of NGO provision is reflective of the government's wider stance towards NGOs in general. The relationship is characterized by distrust and suspicion on the part of government, as well as by a desire to maintain control and oversight over their activities and, more importantly, over the enormous amount of foreign donor funding NGOs attract. All NGOs receiving foreign funding must register with the NGO Affairs Bureau, which must also approve all individual projects before funding can be accessed. The NGO Affairs Bureau is also responsible for auditing and monitoring performance of the programmes; however, in reality, the Bureau does not have the capacity to undertake these functions (Chowdury et al. 2004). Those NGOs that do not receive foreign funding are generally registered with the Directorate of Social Welfare. In both cases, the Ministry of Education has little involvement with the programs that are undertaken and, hence, no real knowledge of the actual number of children being provided for or the standard of provision. There has been some speculation that the state's weak capacity to regulate education provision is one reason for the relative success of NGO provision in Bangladesh (Chowdury et al. 2004).

In both cases, government oversight of the education provider is overly bureaucratic and rigid, focusing on paperwork and mechanistic adherence to rules and regulations. While the government has ample leverage over non-state education provision through the various financing mechanisms it administers, this leverage and the concomitant opportunity to shape and oversee provision in the sector as a whole – and to link this provision to clear goals of increasing access for the marginalized and improving quality across the board – is squandered because of weak capacity to regulate and supervise, endemic corruption, and the intrusion of partisan politics into educational management (Ahmed 2000). Thus, the same state characteristics that are responsible for the dismal quality of state-provided education are also having a negative impact on non-state provision, with the exception of NGO-provided non-formal education.

Donors and INGOs

Donors and international NGOs exert a significant amount of influence over education policies in Bangladesh by virtue of the magnitude of their funding. Donors fund up to one-third of the government's education development budget (Ahmed 2005), and have been successful, for example, in ensuring that the second phase of the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP II) is a coordinated sub-sector wide approach rather than a host of projects; in the second phase of the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Program (SESIP II), donors have succeeded in convincing the government to establish a Non-Government Teachers Registration and Certification Authority, an autonomous body whose primary role is to ensure that non-government secondary schools, colleges and madrasas recruit teachers from a pool of registered teachers "who have been tested through a rigorous competitive examination conducted by the NTRCA" (Kabir nd, p.4). Both the primary and secondary sub-sector wide programs also push government towards realizing education decentralization, a process that it has thus far been extremely resistant to undertaking.

Despite their influence, however, donors have been less successful at convincing the government to change its policy of "ambivalence" (Ahmed 2000) towards NGOs. For example, donors ultimately could not convince the government to include non-formal provision within PEDP II and, although the government was subsequently persuaded to co-fund and implement a Reaching Out-of-School Children program, the role of NGOs within this program is obscure,⁴ and the emphasis seems to be on helping the government to improve its own capacity to deliver and manage non-formal education services, rather than on working in partnership with NGOs.

At the same time as they are trying to improve government capacity to deliver and manage education services through sector reform, donors also continue to fund the 'complementary' education programs of NGOs directly, in recognition of the fact that the government alone will not be able to meet its EFA targets. Funding to the larger NGOs – such as BRAC – is through direct pooled funding, which mimics the program-based approaches used with government. Ahmed (2000) has pointed out that this approach has a tendency to increase the sense of competition for funds between government and NGOs, even though the sources for funding to NGOs versus the government may be from two entirely separate envelopes. As with government, donors also exert constant pressure on NGOs to find ways to form linkages and partnerships with the state system, a policy that is often frustrating for NGOs when government refuses to engage; at the same time, however, this pressure may have been the driving force behind some of the tentative, informal partnerships that have recently developed

⁴ The ROSC program develops demand-side interventions through education allowances and funding to community-managed 'learning centres'. Learning centre management committees can select organizations, including NGOs, to provide educational technical services as 'Education Service Providers', in accordance with agreed terms, conditions and criteria (World Bank 2004b).

between the two parties, particularly between BRAC and government (see the section on partnerships below).

PARTNERSHIPS

Historically, government-NGO partnerships were generally limited to 'sub-contracting' relationships, fraught with difficulty on the part of the NGO, who had to wrangle with government bureaucracy, corruption, and perceptions of NGO inferiority, problems which made it difficult for them to achieve the results they desired as well as to continue wanting to work with government. These types of relationships still abound, and the example below on the Hard-to-Reach Children underscores some of the challenges involved.

However, the last five years have seen some interesting examples of partnership develop between government and NGOs in Bangladesh. Previously, while partnerships did exist, they were generally limited to specific niches where it was 'acceptable' for NGOs to operate (for example, on schools for children working in garment factories or those considered hard-to-reach). However, recently, NGO-government partnerships have ventured into areas generally considered to be under government purview – although these are also not without their challenges.

It should be noted that there is very little information available regarding partnerships between government and forms of private provision other than those involving NGOs (e.g., the commercial private sector, the madrasa system, etc.).

FIVDB Hard-to-Reach Children

Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) is a fairly large NGO that operates mainly in the northeastern part of the country (Sylhet), and participates in a project aimed at getting working children, primarily in urban slums, into non-formal learning centres. The project is funded by UNICEF, who also provides all of the curriculum material for the education project. The government's Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BFNE) is responsible for channelling the funds to implementing NGO partners, and for monitoring the project. A total of 20 implementing partner NGOs are responsible for providing training and organizing learning centres for the children. There is a formal memorandum of understanding between implementing partners and the BFNE.

One of the challenges of the project has been the historical problems experienced by BFNE. This government agency, formerly known as the Directorate of Non-Formal Education, suffered from high levels of corruption and was shut down five years after it was originally created. It was re-instated a couple of years later as the BFNE; however, it continues to suffer from corruption and weak capacity, making it difficult for NGO partners to work with. The BFNE's perception that NGOs are merely sub-contractors, rather than 'genuine' partners,

serves to exacerbate the problem. Genuine partnerships imply open dialogue and debate, willingness to see the other partners as equals bringing something valuable to the table, and an agreement to disagree at times. FIVDB also cites the problem of government officials working in education not necessarily being part of an education cadre with technical expertise but, at the same time, having a 'we know best' attitude. While FIVDB says that it is happy to have government involved in the project, the organization finds it difficult to work within the constraints of the government system.

Pre-Primary Sub-Sector

The pre-primary sub-sector provides perhaps one of the best examples of state and non-state providers in Bangladesh working together towards a common objective. Pre-primary is still a fairly recent phenomenon in Bangladesh, even though the National Plan of Action for EFA and the PEDP for the last decade have called for intensive Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions in the formal and non-formal sectors. There are a number of NGOs, funded by international NGOs and donors, who have pioneered pre-primary interventions in Bangladesh and done much to raise awareness; the number of NGO providers has skyrocketed in the last couple of years. At the same time, the government, through the Bangladesh Shishu Academy, a public institution, has also partnered with a number of NGOs and other public institutions to undertake a national awareness raising campaign and set up model pre-schools in each district of the country, as well support ECD centres in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

In 2005, the Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), consisting of government and non-government organizations involved in ECD, was formed as an umbrella organization. While officials at every level of government seem to be convinced of the value of pre-school education, the government has been unable to fund large scale formal sector activity in ECD, and plans to include ECD in PEDP II were subsequently discarded. However, recently, the government has realized the necessity for providing a national policy framework in ECD, and has tasked BEN to provide technical assistance to do so (thereby recognizing that the expertise lies in the NGO sector).

The task has not been easy, as the responsibility for children below 5 years of age lies with the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, while those above 5 years of age (and thus of pre-primary school age) lies with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME), and BEN has had to play the role of coordinator and facilitator between the two. (It was subsequently decided that two policy frameworks would be developed, one for pre-primary for 5-6 year olds and one for ECD for children under the age of 5 years.) The fact that government representation has changed since the task of developing a policy was launched has meant that the BEN Secretariat has also been faced with having to re-orient the new representative, as well as face delays because the personal commitment of the new representative to ECD issues does not seem to be as strong as that of the previous representative.

BRAC's Government Partnership Program

The government's enthusiasm for pre-primary schooling – and its recognition that NGOs will continue to be the main providers in the short-term – has also provided an entry point for NGOs such as BRAC to link up with the formal primary system. BRAC's 20,000 pre-primary schools offer a one-year course, either on the premises of a government primary school or within its catchment area, which feeds children directly into grade 1 in the government primary school. This increases the number of children entering primary school at the right age (and thereby decreases the number of overage children later needing to enter a BRAC non-formal school); it also prepares children for grade 1 (and therefore reduces the number who drop out in early primary school). The pre-schools also give BRAC a chance to engage with lower primary teachers and head teachers in the government schools, explaining the child-friendly methods used in the pre-primary schools and why these are important. The teachers and head teacher are able to see the results of these methods in the children entering grade 1, and become more open to using these methods themselves. This linkage has been formalized, through an agreement with MOPME, at BRAC's request (although this happened only after BRAC had been operating the pre-primary schools informally in or near government primary schools as a pilot project for a couple of years, relying on local level government support for the idea to gain entry). The initiative is donor-funded through BRAC's Education Program, thereby avoiding any problems with direct funding through government or sub-contracting rules.

The collaboration in pre-primary classes was successful enough and forged enough relationships with government functionaries, particularly at the local level, to allow BRAC to venture into providing technical assistance to build the professional and management capacity of teachers and school management committees in government primary schools. Such an idea, even five years previously, would have been unthinkable, with government strongly resistant to any notions of learning anything from an NGO. Now, there is a formal agreement with the government, giving BRAC permission to implement this program in all upazilas in 4 districts, and some upazilas in 3 districts. BRAC provides management training to head teachers and foundation training to untrained government teachers. It also provides subject-based training in English and mathematics, as well as refresher courses. Workshops with school management committees increase their understanding of their role and responsibilities, and meetings with the wider community ensure that parents, particularly of marginalized and disadvantaged children, are included in the education process. The training courses are designed by BRAC in cooperation with the government training division.

BRAC has also had success in getting permission from the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education to train secondary-level teachers throughout the country in English, mathematics and science, as well as conduct school management training, as part of the post-primary basic education component of

their education program. Perhaps because secondary schools are generally non-government, community-run institutions, the Directorate was initially more open to the idea of partnership with BRAC than government at the primary level.

One long-standing initiative that has perhaps been less successful in partnership terms are the BRAC community schools. In 1998, the government asked various organizations, including BRAC, to take over a number of dysfunctional government-established community schools. This invitation marked the first time the government publicly recognized that it had confidence in NGOs to run effective schools. BRAC took over the running of 44 of these schools, applying its principles of teacher training, community participation, and child-friendly teaching methods in order to make the schools functional. While BRAC's contract with the government stated that if the schools ran successfully for two years, the government would pay the salaries of the teachers and provide textbooks, the government eventually reneged on its promise, and BRAC continues to pay the teacher salaries. BRAC has not handed back the schools to the government, fearing that without its support, the schools will revert back to their original state. When the government asked BRAC to take over an additional 56 dysfunctional schools, BRAC declined on the grounds that while it could make the schools functional again, it could not be responsible for permanently supporting them.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the paper makes a number of general observations on state/non-state provision of education in Bangladesh, as well as a number of tentative recommendations. It is likely that none of these observations and recommendations are new; in fact, many have been advanced repeatedly over a number of years by various proponents.

Quality

1. It is necessary to note that while NGOs at the primary level have developed relatively better quality programs than public or other private providers, the quality of provision across school types continues to be dismal – meaning that all providers, irregardless of whether they are public or private, have to work harder at improving quality and to take advantage of any synergies and cross-learning where possible.
2. Umbrella organizations in Bangladesh (CAMPE and ECDN) have done much in an effort to increase the quality of their members' services and to encourage partnership and policy dialogue among various actors in the education sector (although it may also be useful for these organizations to venture into the area of self-regulation). It may be valuable to have similar bodies for private non-profit and madrasa providers, focusing primarily on quality improvement and self-regulation (rather than on political or 'union' type issues).

Policies

3. With nearly one-third of all primary education provision and the overwhelming majority of secondary provision supplied by non-state actors, education sector plans and programs must necessarily include non-state actors, and utilize all of the experience and resources that they bring to realizing Bangladesh's EFA goals. Data on all providers must be systematically collected and reported.
4. The government's attempts at supporting 'recognized' private primary schools, while laudable, have in general not worked to provide children with a reasonable quality of education. Unlike the highly centralized system of management in government primary schools, these schools are highly decentralized, but are also victim to the same type of mismanagement that the public system suffers. What, then, is the alternative between the two poles of highly centralized and highly decentralized management systems, neither of which seems to work? The key, if lessons from NGOs are to be learned, is a system that is decentralized, but is simultaneously well supervised – with equal attention given to minimum standards of inputs *and* monitoring and evaluation; a management system where all are held accountable; and an ideological 'drive' to make a difference and improve, which is notably absent in other systems. Until such a time as sector reform processes are successful in establishing a functional management system in the public sector, NGO 'facilitation' may be the most viable option for quality improvement in these schools (BRAC's turnaround of dysfunctional community schools are an example of how this could work, but only if government continues to take responsibility for teacher salaries and other costs to the NGO). Since BRAC, for example, has already committed to rationalizing the number of its own non-formal primary schools, rather than opening new non-formal schools (except in places that are still significantly underserved), NGOs could gradually take on a reform and facilitation role for existing 'recognized' private schools rather than a larger provision role.
5. While there is a rich pool of data around various types of provision in Bangladesh, the problem of a lack of consistent definition of school types, used by all data collection agencies and organizations, continues to hamper efforts at determining the scope of coverage and efforts at comparison.
6. The Education Watch surveys conducted by CAMPE are a unique and invaluable source of data on the 'state of education' in Bangladesh, particularly at the grassroots level. They have been effective at analyzing where the gaps and inefficiencies are and at making policy recommendations for improving these. While the findings have not always been accepted by government, they continue to be important advocacy tools and sources of information on the sector. This type of role for umbrella groups in education may be one to consider in other countries.
7. All education service providers, whether public or private non-profit, should have a clear rationale for the establishment of new schools, based on a national school mapping exercise and database, as well as a local needs

analysis (for example, it may be worth starting a temporary non-formal school in an area where there is a government school, but where there are many out-of-school children who are overage or engaged in an economic activity). The assumption is that the market would determine the location of private for-profit schools (which are mainly geared towards the urban elite in Bangladesh).

8. This rationalization should be clearly rooted in an overarching national policy – encompassing all providers – for the expansion of services, prioritizing provision for the underserved and marginalized. Which type of provision should be expanding and why? A cost-benefit analyses of where in the existing system money could be invested to gain maximum benefit should be undertaken. For example, would it be worth it to invest in improving the quality of education in the existing madrasa or registered/non-registered non-government system through additional support or linkages with NGO systems for them to learn how to manage the schools better or for teacher training? Would NGOs (perhaps only those select NGOs whose ability to deliver services of a reasonable quality has been evaluated) be willing and able to increase provision, with funding from donors and maybe government, in a push to reach the last 15%, where they obviously have a comparative advantage? Would this be more cost efficient than putting money towards primary school stipends to attract poor students and girls to school? These are choices and decisions that can be made, but only if everyone is invited to the table, leaving their egos behind, the proper information is provided to make informed choices, with the common overarching goal of providing the best quality of education to the greatest number of students with a reasonable amount of available resources. Only government can take the lead in establishing the policy and leading such an exercise.
9. There is still a need for harmonization across systems and providers, so that children have the best opportunity to continue up a ladder of education, irregardless of which system they start out in. Chowdury et al (2004) report that the government is addressing the issue of student transfer by establishing a set of core competencies regardless of the type of education a child follows; it is not clear how far this endeavour has progressed.
10. A workable solution to the thorny problem of regulation of education service providers has yet to be found. While some have speculated that NGO innovation and responsiveness have flourished due to the lack of government 'interference', the other systems all seem to need a different, more rigorous, non-political, 'quality-focused' form of oversight than is currently the case. The present focus on 'entry' of education service providers, whether NGO, madrasa or registered non-government, fails to provide adequate on-going monitoring and mitigation measures to ensure that students are provided with a minimum standard of education at all levels – and that the significant private costs of education to parents are not wasted. Again, it is government that needs to take the lead in this matter, in a participatory and consultative process.

11. Generally, government needs to better balance its role as “facilitator, regulator and promoter of equity, efficiency and accountability versus its role as a service provider” (Ahmed 2000, p.283).

Partnerships

12. There have been recent examples of more collaborative partnerships between NGOs and the government, specifically in the pre-primary sub-sector and between BRAC and the government. There is some evidence that sidestepping a funding relationship (and hence the bureaucracy of ‘sub-contracting’) by funding the NGO directly (or perhaps through an intermediary umbrella organization?) can help to mitigate some of the challenges of partnership. There is also evidence that starting informally at the local level by ‘showing results’ and avoiding more politicized and bureaucratic national level environments may be useful entry points into partnerships (although this may result in other problems of investing in partnerships that are based on individual goodwill rather than official policy, and that are therefore tenuous). However, perhaps the single-most important point may be in getting the government to publicly acknowledge the important contribution that NGOs in Bangladesh make to the education sector, and thereby to set the stage for genuine dialogue and partnership.

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