

***Regional  
Conference on***

**Quality Education for All**

***October 24 – 26, 2007  
New Delhi  
INDIA***

***CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS***



World Bank



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Access to education is one of the highest priorities on the development agenda and high-profile international commitment to progress – such as the second Millennium Development Goal (MGD) of achieving universal primary education – has helped galvanize policy makers into action. Significant results have already been achieved in school enrollment. Yet, care must be taken that the need for simple, measurable goals does not obscure the fact that, ultimately, it is the degree to which schooling fosters cognitive skills and facilitates the acquisition of professional skills that matters for development. A development-effective education strategy should thus focus not only on sending more children to school, but also on maintaining or enhancing the quality of schooling. Reducing disparities in access to, and in the quality of education are two goals that must be pursued in tandem for any education reform to be successful. Indeed, if parents were to conclude that the quality of schooling would not guarantee a solid economic return for their children - this could reverse the considerable gains made in student enrollment.

In South Asia, the extraordinary progress made in elementary education access and equity has outstripped countries' capacity to maintain and improve quality. Governments from South Asia have acknowledged that education quality should be improved, and welcomed the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other countries with respect to what quality means and how to achieve this in every school in the region. Since education reforms take time to mature and bear fruit, it is critical to engage in such reflection and experimentation.

To this end, the World Bank and UK Department for International Development/India (DFID India) proposed to the Government of India that a Conference on Education Quality be held in Delhi, and this was welcomed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) – the apex institution in the country responsible for education quality. The World Bank and DFID India agreed to jointly finance<sup>1</sup> this event and the South Asia regional conference on “**Quality Education for All**” was held in New Delhi, India, from October 24 – 26, 2007.

The objective of the conference was to contribute to the knowledge base and dialogue on successful approaches to achieve high quality education, in particular for those hard-to-reach segments of the population. The conference aimed to foster a better understanding of those interventions shown to improve quality and provide access to the hard-to-reach; and promote dialogue between policy makers and international experts on the replicability or scaling up of these interventions in the South Asia region. Conference participants discussed and debated the evidence on quality improvement interventions and, most importantly, reflected on what this evidence means for them and their efforts to improve quality in their own countries.

The conference was structured around three thematic sessions: **Day One/Session I: Measuring and enhancing the quality of education; Day Two/Session II: What works to improve quality; and Day Three/Session III: Innovations in improving access to quality education.**

The Conference achieved its objectives in a very positive atmosphere - there was a real buzz created from the first session to the last with attendance not less than 150 on all three days. The participants from the region, who included key government officials and policy makers from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, contributed greatly to the discussions and everyone took away something significant from the event.

---

<sup>1</sup> SASHD wish to acknowledge the generous support of EPDF funding for this conference.

There were many important take-aways from the Conference but the five main messages that emerged were as follows:

- The **first message** is the importance of education quality, as measured in terms of the acquisition of cognitive skills<sup>2</sup>, for long run economic growth, individual earnings and distributional outcomes - new evidence suggests that once economic institutions have been reformed and adjusted, the acquisition of cognitive skills by the population are probably the most important factor in long run economic growth; but impacts on growth take time, 20-30 years, and require sustained political and financial commitment to education reform;
- The **second message** is that access to education, enrolment and attainment do not guarantee quality, even countries like Brazil and Mexico - that have high universal primary and even secondary completion rates – lag far behind the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in terms of the proportion of the population that are functionally literate (i.e., that have acquired cognitive skills). India is even further behind in this regard – much worse than generally pictured on the basis of just enrolment and attainment. The MDG will be achieved and gains sustained only if the emphasis shifts from enrolment to quality. In this regard, the **quality of teachers is vital** to the success of initiatives to improve access to quality education and improved outcomes.
- The **third message** is that while culture and context are obviously important factors, there are eight main ingredients responsible for the success of the great education systems in the world (i.e., those countries which consistently rank the highest in international assessments). These include:
  - Select great people for teaching;
  - Train them well at the outset;
  - Constantly strengthen teachers’ classroom practice;
  - Select great leaders as head teachers and develop them well;
  - Set world class standards;
  - Tackle failure quickly;
  - Fund education equitably and consistently; and
  - Provide universal pre-school.
- The **fourth message** is that more investment is needed for ongoing assessment of learning achievement and regular and rigorous impact evaluations that are context-specific. These systems help clarify what is working and what is not, so that policies and programs can be adjusted accordingly, and failure tackled in a timely manner. Sound data and feedback mechanisms are critical for **continuous program improvement**.
- The **fifth message** is that there are some excellent working models of quality education that have been developed under *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* (SSA) in India, such as Tamil Nadu’s Activity Based Learning (ABL) and Madhya Pradesh’s experience with Learn2Read. Case studies presented in the conference showed how some States in India have achieved better and more motivated teachers, improved instruction, and enhanced learning outcomes – particularly through changing pedagogy from teacher-based approaches to child-centered, activity-based learning techniques.

---

<sup>2</sup> Basic cognitive skills are defined here as principally the reading, writing and math skills, along with vocabulary and background knowledge, problem solving skills and oral communication skills.

A supportive political climate and will is necessary for education reform and a number of key questions emerged during the Conference to guide policy makers from South Asia as they determine strategies to address quality education:

- **How can assessment and evaluation findings be leveraged** to improve education policies and programs? **How can accountability be addressed** and learning outcomes supported and emphasized?
- **How can the system attract and retain quality teachers?** How can teachers be best supported to improve instruction in every classroom and use proved child-centered approaches to ensure learning outcomes?
- **How can parents and communities be effectively organized** to demand learning for all?
- **How can Governments be successfully mobilized** to demand learning for all?

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Objectives**

Access to education is one of the highest priorities on the development agenda and high-profile international commitment to progress – such as the second Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education – has helped galvanize policy makers into action. Significant gains have already been achieved in school enrollment, but major gaps remain, particularly in educational opportunities for girls or children from disadvantaged groups, and in shortfalls in learning outcomes. As policy makers and practitioners consider how to improve education programs globally, it is critical to understand, measure, and figure out ways to address these deficiencies.

In South Asia, the extraordinary progress made in elementary education access and equity has outstripped countries' capacity to maintain and improve quality. Governments from South Asia have acknowledged that education quality should be improved, and welcomed the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other countries with respect to what quality means and how to achieve this in every school in the region.

To this end, the World Bank and the UK Department of International Development/India (DFID India) co-sponsored a South Asia regional conference on “**Quality Education for All**” in New Delhi, India, from October 24-26, 2007. The objective of the conference was to contribute to the knowledge base and dialogue on successful approaches to achieve high quality education, in particular for those hard-to-reach segments of the population.

With more and more children now entering school throughout South Asia, the challenge is shifting towards providing access to quality education, with a specific focus on the hard-to-reach. The conference brought together policy makers and international experts on education policy to discuss and debate outcomes of various interventions designed to achieve quality education for all. The conference focused on presenting sound empirical evidence on what works to improve quality and increase access to those hard-to-reach populations.

### **2. Conference Outcomes**

Key conference outcomes included:

- Better understanding of the interventions that have been shown to work across the world in improving quality and providing access to the hard-to-reach; and
- Improved dialogue between policy makers and international experts on the replicability or scaling up of these interventions in the South Asia region.

### **3. Participants**

Participants included about 150 policy makers, teachers, university professors, education researchers, and development practitioners from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Representatives from key government and multilateral agencies, and non-government organizations attended. Annex A provides a list of conference participants and speakers.

### **4. Structure**

The conference was structured around three thematic sessions as follows:

- **Day One/Session I: Measuring and enhancing the quality of education**  
The plenary session drew on international examples to examine the challenges associated with defining the quality of education; the role of learning assessments in improving quality; and building national capacity in learning assessments.
- **Day Two/Session II: What works to improve quality**  
This session presented experiences from around the world in improving education quality in three parallel sessions:
  - **Session IIa** examined the role of teacher education, professional development, incentives and accountability in improving education quality;
  - **Session IIb** included presentations and discussion on decentralization, quality assurance and school-based management; and
  - **Session IIc** covered issues relating to teaching, learning processes and pedagogy, including multi-grade pedagogy.
- **Day Three/Session III: Innovations in improving access to quality education**  
This session looked at innovative approaches to improve access to quality education. In plenary, speakers presented international evidence on the effectiveness of conditional cash transfers (CCT) and of various forms of public-private partnerships (PPP), followed by two parallel sessions on regional case studies.
  - **Session IIIa** included presentations on regional examples of cash transfers as well as other innovations to reach all children, while
  - **Session IIIb** covered regional examples of public-private partnerships to improve education access and quality.

The conference consisted of panel presentations in plenary and in smaller sessions, followed by questions and discussion time. Lessons-learned and challenges emerging from each day were summarized and shared with conference participants. Annex B provides the conference agenda.

## OPENING REMARKS

**Mr. Praful Patel, Vice President, South Asia Region, World Bank; Ms. Susanna Moorehead, Head of DFID, India; and Mr. AP Sinha, Senior Advisor, Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI)**, inaugurated the conference. These speakers highlighted the progress made towards achieving education for all, and noted the importance of now focusing the dialogue and interventions on how to ensure the quality of the education offered.

**Mr. Praful Patel** began by citing the remarkable education achievements seen in South Asia to date: increased access to education as seen by a rapid rise in primary level enrolment in all countries and progress toward gender parity; innovative partnerships in the delivery of education with the private sector, and non-government organizations (NGOs); demand-side initiatives such as the CCT programs for primary and secondary levels; and dynamic pilot programs to test models for improving quality education.

Mr. Patel stated that despite these achievements, significant challenges remain. He noted that the poor quality of education across the system affected learning outcomes, and pointed out that South Asia has one of the lowest completion rates in the world. He observed that all countries in the region continued to be characterized by weak education institutions, which underpin poor quality and the lack of

accountability towards parents and students alike. Also, access for the poorest, the marginalized, and the girl child continues to be an enormous challenge at all levels.

Mr. Patel acknowledged that the constraints to achieving quality education are not just limited to funding or know-how, but most importantly to political will. He noted that evidence-based public debate can help push this agenda of quality education for all – which is essential for leveraging the “youth advantage” that most countries in South Asia have over other parts of the world. He closed by remarking, “...*that is what is at stake here: today’s quality education for tomorrow’s real advantage.*”

**Ms. Susanna Moorehead** emphasized the need for informing the debate on quality education by drawing on international best practice and evidence from other parts of the region and the world. She praised the great strides made in addressing universal primary education by programs such as *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* (SSA) in India, considered one of the best models in the world. Ms. Moorehead pointed out, however, that despite the impressive gains made in access to primary education, increasing evidence shows that children in school are not learning very much, and that drop out rates remain alarmingly high. Interviews with parents and children suggest that one reason for drop out was that the parents and students found the schooling not of interest or relevant to their needs and realities.

Ms. Moorehead shared her experiences visiting rural schools in India, where she observed that stark conditions do not support learning objectives, and cited teacher absenteeism, hot and dirty children, poor facilities, and lack of text books among other problems. She highlighted the importance of shifting the dialogue on education from “enrolment” to “quality.” She stressed the need for examining different ways to improve quality of education including establishing solid teacher training and support systems, good classroom materials, smaller class sizes, addressing discrimination, and making sure children are well-nourished in school.

She concluded her remarks noting that the mandate for improving quality education is very clear, but the mission is not impossible. She pointed out the importance of political will to achieving better quality, and the Government of India’s commitment to this important objective. She emphasized the need to ensure that energy and resources going into improving access should also focus on quality, and said that the time has come “...*to stop theorizing and just do it.*”

**Mr. AP Sinha** began by noting that the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment for India has decreed free and compulsory education to all children ages 6- 16 years of age as a “fundamental right.” He presented the Government of India’s 11<sup>th</sup> Plan for achieving education expansion in India and supporting this Constitutional Amendment.

Mr. Sinha spoke of the important role of education in enhancing economic efficiency, promoting democratic participation, and improving the overall quality of life for individuals as well as the society. He outlined the Government of India’s 10 year plan to increase public expenditure on education from 3.8% to 6% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in order to leverage the potential demographic dividend as 225 million people (ages 10-19) make the transition into adulthood. He noted that India’s gross enrolment rate (GER) in higher education is only around 12% as compared to 21% in China, 54.6% in developed countries, and the world average of 23.2%.

Mr. Sinha remarked that despite the considerable achievements in addressing universal primary education, significant challenges remain including how to address expansion, inclusion, and improvement in quality throughout the education system. This would entail focusing on factors such as equity and retention in schools, universalizing secondary education, and ensuring that vocational and higher education program meet global standards.

Mr. Sinha closed by saying that the theme of the conference is very relevant for India, and that the time is ripe for moving ahead with this agenda of improving quality in education for all,

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS – Impact of Quality Education on Growth**

**Dr. Eric Hanushek, Stanford University**, delivered the keynote address entitled, **“Schooling Quality and Economic Growth.”** This part of the session was chaired by Mr. Robin Horn, World Bank, and set the stage for the theme for the first day, “Measuring and Enhancing the Quality of Education.”

Dr. Hanushek underlined the role and importance of education in building human capital, particularly in the context of South Asia. He noted that though traditional emphasis has been on school attainment and increasing access, new evidence shows quality of skills to be of primary importance. Dr. Hanushek presented a variety of data showing the relationships between education quality (measured by cognitive skills – reading, writing, analytical thinking) and economic growth, individual earnings and distributional outcomes. He discussed implications for policy actions and reforms (resource policies, supply-side incentives, and demand-side incentives) and emphasized the importance of information and feedback systems to make the necessary changes to achieve quality education.

Dr. Hanushek presented findings from international assessments (the Program for International Student Assessment/PISA and the Third International Math and Science Survey/TIMSS) to measure student performance in terms of knowledge, and showed how this information can increase the understanding on why some nations grow faster than others, and the role of investing in human capital in influencing this dynamic. He emphasized that the evidence shows a powerful, consistent and quantitatively strong relationship between quality of education, as measured by performance on the tests, and economic growth.

Dr. Hanushek pointed out that in an open economy there is a rapid, initial growth (as seen in the region) as economic institutions become more efficient. He stressed, however, the importance of wisely investing in human capital in order to support nation-wide, long-term, sustained economic growth. Dr. Hanushek also presented data showing the effects of cognitive skills on increased individual earnings, and distribution of income, and clarified how these relationships are not apparent when simply looking at school enrollment and attainment data.

He noted how families, peers, community/neighborhood and schools all influence cognitive skills development and discussed the role of policy on improving school systems. He presented data showing how increased funding alone does not lead to better quality, and discussed how teacher quality appears to have a powerful impact on improving learning outcomes.

Dr. Hanushek talked about supply-side incentives to enhance school performance by improving teacher quality, and discussed a range of proven institutional reforms including establishing centralized exams, systems of accountability, school autonomy/decentralization, school choice, and direct performance incentives.

He also discussed demand-side incentives aimed at improving access, attainment, quality, and motivating children to stay in school. Examples include conditional cash transfers, fee reduction incentives, and food and nutrition supplements. Evidence suggests that these incentives are successful in encouraging school attendance and linking rewards to performance. Dr. Hanushek cautioned that incentive programs be carefully structured to ensure that the goals are correct and do not assume other outcomes, adding that **“...access is often seen as equity, but low quality schools are not equal to equity.”**

Dr. Hanushek emphasized the need for sound information and feedback mechanisms to inform national efforts to improve education quality. He made note of limitations with international tests and the poor quality of many national assessments. He stressed that program evaluation requires better information systems that adequately test and assess students, and added that developing countries need to administer tests that provide meaningful data and analyses to effectively compete in the global economy.

In conclusion, Dr. Hanushek acknowledged the complexities of changing school quality. He pointed out that incentives can be effective, but need to be carefully structured in order to achieve desired program outcomes; and finally, there was need for better information on student outcomes to improve the performance of education programs.

The **question and answer session** raised a concern about limiting the measurement of quality to only student cognitive outcomes-- what about the importance of non-cognitive outcomes and the cognitive development of the teachers? Another question focused on the long time frame needed to realize the true gains from improved educational quality.

Dr. Hanushek concurred that education affects a variety of non-cognitive aspects of individuals such as their ability to get along, be gainfully employed, and so forth, but noted the difficulty in measuring these outcomes. He stated that based on the evidence, countries can justify an aggressive program to improve quality in terms of cognitive skills. He also noted that there was evidence showing that non-cognitive skills improved with cognitive skills.

With regards to teacher quality, data indicate a positive impact between the cognitive skills of teachers and the growth and skills of the student. But, assessing a quality teacher implies more than just measuring the specific skills set of teachers. Yes, they need to know their subject, but that is not enough. It is also important to observe the teachers' performance in the classroom.

Dr. Hanushek agreed that the benefits of improved quality do take time to manifest and imply strong political will to change the institutions. He acknowledged the barriers, but stressed that current institutions will have to change in order to achieve improved student outcomes. Public recognition of the importance of quality has to be clearly stated to build political will.

## **DAY ONE -- SESSION I: Measuring and Enhancing the Quality of Education**

Next, a panel of speakers addressed how to improve and measure quality education, chaired by Dr. Eric Hanushek of Stanford University, and Mr. Robin Horn, World Bank.

**Dr. Krishna Kumar, National Council of Education Research and Training/NCERT**, spoke about the issues involved in defining, monitoring, and measuring quality. **Sir Michael Barber, McKinsey Consultants**, presented what some of the best-performing school systems have in common; **Dr. Abhijit Banerjee, Massachusetts Institute of Technology/MIT**, shared international evidence on the relative impacts of various policies/interventions on education quality outcomes; and **Mr. John Ainley, American Council for Educational Research/ACER**, examined the role of international assessments in improving education quality, and experiences in building national capacity in learning assessments. **Mr. Luis Benveniste, World Bank**, talked about experiences from East Asia in enhancing and measuring quality and **Mr. Eduardo Velez, World Bank**, shared similar experiences from Latin America; and **Mr. Syed Kamal-Ud-Din, Ministry of Education Pakistan/MOE**, discussed the role of national education assessments in Pakistan and how they feedback into the education system.

**Dr. Krishna Kumar, speaking on “Defining Quality, and how Countries Measure and Monitor Quality,”** framed the concept of quality within a larger construct of systemic efficiency and accountability related to improved educational outcomes. He observed that the notion of “quality” should be inherent to education and noted how this was supported by the Indian constitution which recognizes education as a “fundamental right.”

He argued that attempts to address education quality have largely focused on outputs such as number of classrooms, bathrooms, drinking water, and so on. These are seen as aspects of quality, when in fact they are necessary conditions for any education to take place. He pointed out that “access” and “quality” belong together, and that the false separation of these concepts has driven the policy agenda, leading to a situation where access has been provided – not to education – but to a building and increased enrolment.

Therefore, the NCERT frames the concept of quality as *“the urge to reform within the system”* and stipulates that, *“quality is the measure of the extent to which the goals of the system have been articulated.”* This definition would include different characteristics of the system that serve the goals of education, including quality of teachers, curricula, milieu, which affect how well a child learns.

Dr. Kumar eschewed the current tendency to narrowly define and measure quality in terms of student achievement test scores, and simply view it as a service that contributes to economic growth. He affirmed that the social, political, and cultural realities of today’s world (environmental issues, terrorism, civil conflict, etc.) validate the need for a broader concept of quality education. He discussed NCERT plans to use a systemic quality index (SQI) to provide a more complete analysis of quality, including aspects such as test scores as well as other indicators, to ensure that the specific local context is factored into assessment and evaluation systems.

In the **question and answer session** that followed, issues were raised about the specific SQI indicators and how they might be measured. A comment was made about the need for decentralizing assessment tools in order to make the information relevant to the local context, and the difficulty in achieving this. Dr. Kumar agreed that in order to adequately address quality, a “pull factor” from the grassroots is important. In terms of the SQI linking children’s scores to larger issues, he noted that the current systems for monitoring quality are not working and in fact, are seen to contribute to teachers leaving the system, reflected in the UNESCO journal editorial, “Where Have All the Teachers Gone?”

**In his presentation on “The Challenge of Achieving World-Class Performance: Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” Sir Michael Barber** posed the question, “what makes the world’s top performing systems more effective than the rest?” He agreed that education is linked with economic growth, individual well-being and earning potential, but emphasized that it should also address larger human issues of poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and so forth. He specified that every young person needs to be educated to be a global citizen and contributor to the global economy, stating that, *“...literacy is not enough – young people should be prepared for work, college, and citizenship.”*

Sir Michael noted that school access and funding is not enough to guarantee achievement, and referred to the fact that every year, 100 million children leave the system worldwide without receiving quality education. This is clearly a burgeoning crisis.

He pointed out that the *“quality of the education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers,”* and the need for systems to support good teachers to become great teachers, through careful selection, recruitment and training mechanisms. Sir Michael further added that the only way to improve learning outcomes is to improve the instruction, focusing on improving classroom practice that is based on a continuous improvement model – leading to “informed professionalism.” He also stressed that great

systems require and expect every child to succeed – teachers need to question what works, what does not, and why.

Sir Michael summarized the eight key ingredients to successful education systems:

- Select great people for teaching;
- Train them well at the outset;
- Constantly strengthen teachers' classroom practice;
- Select great leaders as head teachers and develop them well;
- Set world class standards;
- Tackle failure quickly;
- Fund education equitably and consistently; and
- Provide universal pre-school.

In the **question and answer session** participants raised issues around the process of selecting and developing good teachers/leaders especially where inherited systems are in place. Questions also focused on how to scale-up, given the reality of limited resources in the region. A question was asked about the role of parents and communities to support these efforts – how is success defined?

Sir Michael responded that to achieve this would entail changing teacher recruitment and training practices to consider how to attract the right candidates to the profession. The improvement can be incremental and planned over time. The data show that pay is only part of the equation to get the best candidates – other important factors include making teaching a desirable profession, recognizing their societal contribution, and establishing good working conditions. In fact, the payback from an improved education system can be seen in as little as 5-10 years. Examples from other countries indicate that political will and aligned systems can support scale up. Clearly, community and parental involvement is also needed to support the school. He noted that every system has an uneven playing field, and the value of supporting the best teachers to stay in the system. He underscored the expectation that every student should succeed and to, “... *set high minimum standards and no ceiling.*” He concluded by re-stating that it is not enough to be literate, that success is defined by young people leaving school prepared for “work, college, and citizenship.”

**Dr. Abhijit Banerjee on “Improving the Quality of Education”** presented a conceptual model for looking at how to measure and optimize quality. He discussed the complexity of measuring quality education inputs and expected outputs as opposed to sectors like industry, and noted that these difficulties result from the long time frame needed to see the impact, and the subjective nature of the schooling experience. The challenge for education is how to produce quality (what inputs) and how to assess whether quality is being optimally produced (desired outcomes, and efficiencies in the system).

Dr. Banerjee presented data from large-scale randomized evaluations which looked at the effects of specific educational interventions (to determine if quality is being optimally produced). Some examples of quality improvements that had their intended effect include remedial teaching, reading coaching, computer-assisted learning, scholarships for girls, tracking students, and teacher incentives. Examples of inputs that did appear to significantly improve learning include textbooks, flipcharts, and decreased class size. He clarified that because the study goes from evaluating whole schools to whole inputs, that further disaggregation is needed to fully interpret results.

He pointed out that the cost varied greatly by type of input, and suggested that if the objective is to maximize quality, there is a need to get the same return for each component. Various strategies produce different efficiencies and this has implications for budget constraints namely, shifting resources from

those inputs with low returns to those with high returns. Similarly, some inputs cost a lot more and produce the same educational outcomes.

In the **question and answer session**, discussion focused on the analysis needed to determine *why* some inputs do not work, since there are a host of other factors that might cause this. Another participant cautioned against generalizing the findings from one experiment to other countries, pointing out that this methodology tells us what matters, and how much, but does not present “how” it matters. Dr. Banerjee concurred, but noted the importance of investing limited resources where they have the highest potential pay-off in terms of outcomes.

**Dr. John Ainley on “Measuring Learning and Improving Education Quality: International Experiences in Assessment”** reviewed the major issues associated with using learning assessments to inform policies and practices concerned with improving education quality.

He noted that as the debate on education shifts from provision (access) to outcome (learning), there is a re-emergence of large scale assessment programs to monitor and map variations, and contextualize national patterns. He described how these assessments (international to sub-national) can generate information at various levels (system, school, classroom, parent, student), and indicate what is valued (impact teaching and learning, and drive change in policy and practice).

Dr. Ainley pointed out that when planning national and international assessments, it is important to reflect on the choice and definition of assessment domains (ensuring appropriate coverage of those domains); the definition and sampling (if any) of the populations of students to be assessed; the ways in which student data are analyzed and reported (to policy makers, teachers, and parents), and how the extent of learning can be inferred from differences in measured achievement; how measures for student learning can be related to education policy and practice; and how to use the data to monitor trends over time.

Dr. Ainley shared examples of assessments from Latin America and Africa, and urged that developing countries identify models to find out the variation suitable to their context, and resolve what is needed to build capacity for conducting and analyzing these tests. He ended by discussing how assessment data can be used to share information with the public; direct resources and interventions; define learning progress; evaluate programs, and determine research needs.

During the **question and answer session**, a number of issues emerged around how to build capacity in developing countries to conduct national assessments or participate in international assessments, and the mechanics for implementing and evaluating this process. Dr. Ainley suggested that teachers can use some of the annotated maps and frameworks to examine the progress of their students. He also outlined ways in which developing countries might participate in the international assessment process, including linking it with national assessments and data. On capacity building, he noted that programs do exist to develop these skills, and that the very act of participating in an international assessment can be part of this process.

**Mr. Luis Benveniste on the “East Asian Experience with Measuring Quality and Enhancing Learning”** presented data from Vietnam and Cambodia to examine the relationships between student learning and teaching performance, and illustrated how assessments were used to influence policy and programs. He emphasized that student assessment results should be used to *promote educational quality* (monitor student learning; inform teaching; determine national standards; and define performance expectations); *inform education policy* and programs (identify learning variables; evaluate impact of policies/interventions); and *support educational change* (to develop/improve policies and programs).

In Vietnam, a 2001 reading and math assessment of Grade 5 students and teachers showed overall high achievement levels (with better skills in math than reading). There was a significant inequity, however, in

the distribution of knowledge with teacher subject knowledge being the greatest predictor of student achievement. Interestingly, some pupils performed better than their teachers – in reading comprehension, the top 12% of students scored better than the bottom 30% of the teachers. Not surprisingly, low performing teachers were more likely to come from isolated areas and ethnic minority groups. Mr. Benveniste discussed how the assessment resulted in policy changes in the 2003 Education for All Plan, in terms of plans for improved capacity development and ongoing support to teachers; enhanced curricula, textbooks, and teaching guides; establishment of a system to continuously assess the program; and better compensation for teachers.

In contrast, the 2006 math and reading assessment data for Grade 3 students in Cambodia showed overall low academic performance. Students did better in math when teachers had strong pedagogical content knowledge. Findings showed the teaching style to be didactic, focused on rote learning with little interaction from the students; lesson planning rare, and teacher absenteeism to be a problem, correlated with lower student attendance. Also, the education system had weak formal accountability systems, and limited parent-teacher contact and social accountability mechanisms. Mr. Benveniste discussed how the policy response to these findings included development of a “teacher standards” framework, which outlined the desired competencies, behaviors, and actions to improve student learning. He noted how the study has also influenced medium term goals of the government to improve the quality of teacher training, as well as support and supervisory functions at the school, district, provincial and central levels.

Mr. Benveniste discussed the benefits and risks of “low-stakes” assessment systems (where the onus is on the government to use the information, and a potential lost opportunity to reflect on student achievement) and “high-stakes” systems (where stronger accountability could motivate changes in the school and classroom, but pose a risk of “teaching to the test”). He summed up saying that there are many advantages of student assessment systems – they can direct attention towards education goals; help establish measurable standards and skills for students; provide clear benchmarks for performance improvement; and examine school-related variables and the role of teacher performance in promoting learning. He remarked that “... *a good assessment system is one which is technically sound, defines educational goals, highlights challenge, and provides a framework to map change.*”

The **question and answer session** which followed raised the issue of local capacity to implement such assessment systems, and asked if findings were used to improve teacher capacity. Participants also asked if data were disaggregated to look at public versus private schools. Mr. Benveniste noted that both countries are currently examining how to institutionalize the assessment function, and that the analysis did not consider the implications for the classroom level. He added that both countries have very small private school systems, so they were not included in the study.

**Mr. Eduardo Velez presented the “Latin American Experience with Enhancing Quality and Measuring Quality”** and noted that most Latin American countries have measurement systems at the national or sub-national levels, and have participated in an international test at some point in time. He observed that this region has the capacity, and resources to implement assessments. In terms of accountability, Mr. Velez described how report cards (produced by parents and different stakeholders) focus on outcomes, and seek to promote improvement and accountability in the system.

Mr. Velez pointed out that results from the assessments show lower scores than expected, with huge differences observed between rural/urban, public/private schools, poor/non-poor, and indigenous/non-indigenous populations. He also noted that there were no significant differences between the achievement scores of boys and girls. He described how the assessment systems help to identify those essential inputs which promote improved outcomes and those which hamper learning.

He discussed the main regional challenges to achieve quality education, noting that it takes longer for a child to learn to read in the Latin American school system, that the current system is not very effective, and that this had huge implications for wasting precious and limited resources. Mr. Velez presented data from Uruguay and Mexico to look at how assessment can affect school accountability and autonomy; and showed how increased accountability and autonomy is linked to better test scores and school quality.

He concluded by summarizing key lessons learned in the Latin American context including, being focused on improving teacher performance; timeliness in reporting and use of data; and separating the findings and recommendations from political interests. He emphasized that **autonomous** schools can implement appropriate education policies; that **accountability** implies more engagement by teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to improve outcomes; that **assessment** means a continuous improvement process; and that participating in international benchmarking exercises can improve cost-effectiveness.

A **question and answer session** raised the challenge of how to link assessment systems, strategies, and processes to national policy and reform. An observation was made that it is important to interpret results in a contextually-sensitive way. Mr. Velez pointed out that in order to influence policy, the national education program must have a clear vision and good management; he emphasized that strong political will is essential to its success. This presents a particular challenge for the Latin America region, given the frequent change in education ministers in some countries.

**Mr. Syed Kamal-Ud-Din on “National Education Assessments in Pakistan and its Feedback into the Education System”** described how Pakistan adopted the National Education Assessment System (NEAS) to monitor and inform policy and meet the desired learning outcomes. He provided an overview of the national level assessments done at grades 4 and 8, and highlighted the large differences in average performances among provinces and students from varied backgrounds. He emphasized that the focus was on evaluating the extent to which student acquired reading, writing, problem solving, and critical thinking skills, as opposed to rote learning from textbooks.

Mr. Kamal-Ud-Din described the development of the assessment instruments and the methodology used to assess student achievement. The data showed that except for math, urban student performance was better for all subjects as compared to rural students; and showed better achievement scores for girls than boys in most subjects.

He emphasized the critical need for strong links between the assessment function (in this case, of the NEAS) and the overall national educational planning process. He noted that the NEAS provides valuable data to the government about the actual conditions in schools and the possible impact of policy actions on student achievement. He pointed out that education planners should be involved in the assessments, and remarked that in Pakistan, they could enhance the NEAS’ function by proposing topics for data gathering and suggesting where relationships can be further analyzed. He heralded the fact that the Government of Pakistan had institutionalized the NEAS as part of the MOE, and outlined future plans to cover higher grades, include private schools, and explore ways to link with the upcoming TIMSS international assessment.

During the **question and answer** session, a query was raised about why math scores were higher in rural areas and the policy implications of the assessment findings. Mr. Kamal-Ud-Din responded that family-related differences probably accounted for the differences in math scores. He also noted that the NEAS has a diagnostic role and provides data to policymakers. He clarified that research institutions will determine implications for future research; and that the policymakers will mandate any curriculum changes.

## V. SESSION I – Key Lessons Learned and Challenges

### Key Lessons

- Quality education measured by cognitive skills leads to huge gains in social and economic development.
- Cognitive skills are part of the wider set of skills and knowledge, and evidence suggests a strong association between cognitive and non-cognitive skills.
- Access does not necessarily guarantee good quality of education.
- A quality education system requires every child to learn to a minimum standard – “high minimum standards but no ceiling.”
- Improved teacher quality and classroom instruction are key elements to good outcomes.
- It is important to know what works and how (in other words, to assess and evaluate).
- Assessment is a vital part of quality education systems and needs to feedback and inform teacher education, classroom practice and accountability of the school system to the stakeholders.
- Participation in international assessments can strengthen local capacity, and countries (e.g. Vietnam, China, and Chile) have linked their national assessments to international studies making it relevant to their national goals.

### Challenges

- How to sustain financial and policy commitments to education reform in contexts where there are frequent government changes?
- How can political will be garnered and sustained to ensure continuous improvement in educational quality?
- How do countries in the region attract and retain quality teachers?
- How to link findings from assessments and evaluations to improved policies, programs, and interventions?
- How can countries in the region derive more benefits from international assessments?
- How to increase access and improve quality concurrently?

## VI. DAY TWO -- SESSION II: What Works To Improve Quality?

The second day of the conference began with a plenary review of the first day’s proceedings and then examined global experiences from across the world in improving education quality in three parallel sessions.

- **Session IIa** on the role of teacher education, professional development, incentives and accountability in improving education quality;
- **Session IIb** on decentralization, quality assurance and school-based management; and
- **Session IIc** on issues relating to teaching, learning processes and pedagogy, including multi-grade pedagogy.

### Plenary Session – Summing Up Day One and Linking to Day Two

The Plenary Session was chaired by Dr. Hanushek and Mr. Robin Horn. Dr. Hanushek began by quoting Dr. Krishna Kumar, “*how can you have education without quality?*” and went on to describe the major themes and questions emerging from the previous day of the conference.

Dr. Hanushek summed up the key themes as including the importance of evaluation; requirements for effective decision-making; measurement issues; “flying blind”; political issues; and resource constraints, and discussed the key implications for each one.

On **evaluation**, he noted that “*plausible things do not always work*” – pointing out that those ideas that work in one place do not always work in another place and context. The challenge is judging what works at the local level, and making it work. He noted that improvement comes from making best guesses and then monitoring results -- to keep the good ideas, and discard the bad ones.

On **effective decision-making**, Dr. Hanushek stated that national and state levels should share responsibility for defining research and evaluation needs, that there are economies of scale in research, and a need to develop expertise in assessment techniques. He noted the importance of determining accountability systems at the national and state levels, so that state and local-level decision making is made with sound information and addresses performance issues – not allowing failure to just sit there. He affirmed that local capacity varies in implementation and skills, and highlighted the need to encourage autonomy with information and feedback systems for building accountability.

Dr. Hanushek recapped the **measurement** issues including the value of linking student outcome data to dynamic decision making for improving schools, programs, and teachers. He reviewed the questions raised around standardized testing (open-ended, higher order skills) and other measures (non-cognitive, behavioral skills). He emphasized the need to develop better measures for non-cognitive skills, though he noted that cognitive skills are highly correlated to non-cognitive skills. He cautioned that bad information can misdirect programs, and stressed the need, therefore, to collect the right data, and ask the right questions.

“**Flying blind**” refers to operating without adequate outcome information and regular evaluation. Dr. Hanushek underscored the need for sound data and feedback mechanisms to inform **continuous program improvement**. He pointed out that assessments do come at a cost, but added that the investment is small relative to other school expenditures, and much smaller if you put them in the context of not doing a good job. A good assessment process can therefore make a system more efficient by addressing mistakes early on, and allowing for the necessary program adjustments to achieve success.

A supportive **political climate and will** is critical to education reform. Dr. Hanushek stressed the value of a stable government in this regard. He summed up by saying that change takes time, and that radical changes have implications for teacher contracts, and teacher turn-over is slow. This reality has to be considered in the big picture. He underlined the importance of keeping performance information separate from political choices – especially where important data might be suppressed because it is seen as being critical of the government.

In terms of **resources**, Dr. Hanushek reiterated that money alone is unlikely to yield large results, but clarified the fact that most reforms will require additional resources. He said that costs should not be ignored, because budgets are always limited – “*if you have a dollar to spend, where should you put it?*” The logical conclusion would be to invest where there is the highest immediate gain per dollar. He recommended that small, incremental, realistic improvements that focused on doing a little bit better on average over time (e.g., getting slightly better teachers every year) would eventually yield big improvements.

Dr. Hanushek concluded with a final comment on India and China. He noted that improving economic institutions by opening up trade, property rights, labor mobility and so forth, results in large, rapid gains in economic growth. This is currently underway in India. At some point, however, this growth will plateau – thus the need to invest in the education and human capital of a nation. Long-term innovations in

growth result from a skilled population, so that national productivity, creativity, and well-being is sustained. When India and China are compared in this regard, China has a big advantage because it has built up a much larger stock of human capital. That is the challenge on the table for India today – after the immediate economic gains are realized, how can India ensure that it has sufficient human capital to continue the growth trends?

Following this thematic review session, Mr. Robin Horn summarized the key lessons learned and challenges emerging from the first day (refer to Section V above). The conference then broke into three parallel sessions to discuss various examples of how to improve the quality of education.

### **PARALLEL SESSION IIA: Teacher Professional Development, Incentives and Accountability.**

This session examined the role of teacher education, professional development, incentives and accountability on improving education quality. The panel included **Dr. Peter Dolton, University of London**, who focused on international trends in teacher supply, education, and development and its impact on quality. **Dr. Robert Floden, Michigan State University**, discussed lessons from the US to improve teacher education; **Dr. Richard Kraft, University of Colorado**, focused on the impact of teacher development and pedagogy on student learning; **Dr. Karthik Murlidharan, Harvard University**, looked at the impact of teacher incentives on education quality. **Dr. Wilfred Pereira, National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka**, discussed the Sri Lankan experience regarding the impact of school-based teacher development/pedagogy on student outcomes; and **Ms. Deepa Sankar, World Bank**, presented examples from India on the effect of teaching time on task. This session was chaired by **Dr. Hena Mukherjee, World Bank**.

**Dr. Peter Dolton spoke on “Recruitment and Retention of High Quality Teachers: Some International Evidence.”** Dr. Dolton’s presentation addressed various aspects including supply of teachers, recruitment and retention of quality teachers, teachers’ performance related pay, and teacher’s training. From a market perspective, Dr. Dolton clarified that it could be assumed that government budgets were constrained, and demographically-determined inelastic demand was relevant in the case of teachers. This meant that a country could have a large number of teachers at a relatively lower wage or fewer teachers at a higher pay.

Dr. Dolton provided a profile of teachers across different countries including the UK. He pointed out that the difference in structures of academic days and years across countries made comparisons quite difficult. The overall position included demographic age distribution, variation of pupil-teacher ratios, and variation in teacher hours worked across regions and countries and within countries. On the subject of teacher supply, Dr. Dolton spoke of current supply, potential supply, teachers in service, retirement and unused pools of teachers. He also noted that it was difficult to hire qualified teachers for certain subjects and remote locations.

He specified that pay itself was a major factor in teacher hiring and retention, and the international scenario was quite varied. While in certain cases the pay at the entry point was quite reasonable, the pay across a lifetime showed relative decline. With regard to performance-related and incentives, Dr. Dolton underscored the problem areas and stressed the need for efficient administrative systems and follow-up. By default, in most cases, teachers end up being responsible for their own training due to the inability of training methods to keep up with technological change and weak training institutions. Further, it is difficult to systematize on-the-job and practical training methods. To sum up, he found the education policy to be a battlefield in which teachers were not really treated as professionals.

On the issue of teacher quality, Dr. Dolton concurred that improving the teacher quality implied certain costs, and noted that developing countries would have to consider how to address this issue. He referred

to studies from India which examined aspects such as teacher truancy, relative earnings, training needs, and the fast-growing private sector. He concluded that more research was needed to examine the costs of improving teaching quality; and to look at the interactions between teacher unions and teacher quality, and the relationship between accountability and teacher quality.

During the **question and answer** session, concerns were raised about other occupations attracting good students away from the teaching profession. It was suggested that teachers might benefit more from professional associations rather than unions. It was also pointed out that developing countries need a clear direction from the experience of other countries and much more data on what worked in the context of employing and retaining good teachers.

**Dr. Robert Floden presented “Paths to Improving Teacher Education in the US: Promising Ideas and Supporting Evidence.”** He highlighted how the decentralized system of education in the United States has led to a varied “system” of teacher education, where each state sets its own policy for teacher training and teacher certification. Over the years, a shift had occurred from a focus on general teaching methods and subject knowledge toward subject-specific teaching techniques, and methods for teaching reading and non-native speakers of English. Also important was the teacher’s ability to differentiate and adjust teaching to suit each student’s level.

Dr. Floden discussed how the shortage of math and science teachers in the US has encouraged the application of innovative ways to attract bright students to the teaching profession – for example, combining aggressive recruitment and focused selection with compressed training. For difficult-to-staff schools, special incentives and schemes like Teach for America were used, and included a two-year commitment from students selected, and offered a gamut of incentives like fellowships, and reduction in post-graduate tuition fees. He added that in the US, weak Federal intervention allowed states to experiment and search for innovative solutions.

Dr. Floden described a number of popular reform ideas such as improving subject matter preparation in ways that improve teaching practice, reducing the amount of preparation required before full-time teaching, strengthening teacher education offered during the first years on the job, induction and mentoring, and adding preparation for working with students with special needs. He acknowledged that strategies for promoting reform also differ, including national accreditation systems, blue-ribbon commissions, and government mandates. Dr. Floden concluded that the decentralized system in the US has resulted in a great variation in the adoption and implementation of reform paths. He pointed out that arguments in support of reforms draw more on logic and professional judgment than on systematic empirical studies, though recent studies had begun to suggest the strengths and weaknesses of some reform directions.

During the **question and answer session** the situation in South Asia was highlighted and it was noted that in India (in Andhra Pradesh), non-government English medium schools had a huge short fall of teachers, though there was a surplus of teachers in government schools. It was agreed that above all, working conditions and a sense of community shared values were important factors in the induction and ultimate retention of quality teachers.

**Dr. Richard J. Kraft on “Teachers, Pedagogy and Student Achievement”** referred to an important 1998 study (Schiefelbein, Wolf, Schiefelbein) which highlighted a list of 40 low cost policy prescriptions that universally affected student achievement. Dr. Kraft pointed out those relevant to primary schools including: assign best teachers to first grade; do not switch teachers during the school year; enforce policies for school year; revise math and science programs, and develop classroom libraries.

Drawing upon a study by Fuller and Clarke, 1994, the speaker emphasized several factors that affected student achievement. With regard to teacher and pedagogical attributes, Dr. Kraft concluded that in-service training was more vital than pre-service training in the developing country context. In many cases, particularly at the primary level, female teachers performed far better than their male counterparts. The requirements of teacher and pedagogy attributes at primary and secondary levels were diverse. Other important observations included that smaller groups do make a difference particularly at the primary level, and that parental and community support and involvement were vital to learning outcomes.

Regarding the links between teacher quality and student achievement, Dr. Kraft presented international data including information on an “exemplary” pre-school and kindergarten program which was tried out in many different countries. Key elements which under-pinned the success of these initiatives included community involvement and shared decision making; empowered teacher authors and trainers, continuous assessment; individualized and small group instruction; cultural sensitivity; and active learning and teachers as facilitators. Dr. Kraft added that student achievement was also influenced by school inputs such as class size, text books, school library, nutrition and feeding, parental support and science laboratories. He summed up with the remark that though the government might set curriculum standards, text book writing was best done by senior teachers themselves rather than the supposed content specialists like senior professors.

The **question and answer session** brought out other factors affecting student performance and an example was given of a low-cost private system in Pakistan. The importance of mobilizing parents and communities particularly in the developing country context was highlighted. For teacher quality the education level of teachers, continuous training, in service professional development, continuous assessment and peer interaction that affected behavior were highlighted as the important points.

**Dr. Karthik Murlidharan presented a paper on “Teacher Incentives in Andhra Pradesh (AP)”** in which he described an ongoing long-term randomized study in Andhra Pradesh. He stressed that the overall necessity to have inclusive growth implies the need to focus on human capital which is a critical enabler. Dr. Murlidharan pointed out that despite large budgetary increases to the education sector, returns have not been satisfactory. In this context, the study considered basic questions including: Do teacher incentives improve test scores? What are the negative consequences? Should incentives be at the school or teacher level? What is the impact of measurement and feedback? How does teachers’ behavior change? How cost-effective is the incentive program?

Dr. Murlidharan pointed out that the State of AP is close to all-India averages on many indicators of human development. The incentive program was designed to make teachers eligible for bonus payments tied to student performance (Rs. 500/- for every 1% increase in average tests scores of students). Baseline tests were conducted in 500 samples school between June and July 2005. Stratified random allocation of 100 schools to each treatment was carried out in August 2005. Teachers were interviewed before the outcomes were announced. It was noted that 75% of the teachers found that the program increased their motivation; 85% of teachers had a favorable idea of bonus payments tied to performance; 68% of teachers agreed that government should try to scale up the program to all schools; and 75% were willing to accept a performance- based system.

The speaker concluded that a performance pay system was likely to be a cost-effective policy for improving learning outcomes. This system could combine elements of both group and individual-level performance pay and could also be largely cost/budget neutral when implemented in the context of across-the-board salary increases. Dr. Murlidharan noted a broader need for creating a career ladder so that the professional trajectories for teachers depended on their performance. He mentioned that Andhra Pradesh’s long-term action research will continue until 2011 in order to systematically study the effect of the most promising policy options to improve education in India.

**Dr. Wilfred Pereira discussed “Teacher Professional Development/Integration with School Quality through the School-Based Approach: The Sri Lankan Experience.”**

Dr. Pereira described how education systems in Sri Lanka, as in many South Asian nations, are characterized by administrative and academic bureaucracies. He remarked that it was even assumed at one point of time that teachers could not contribute meaningfully to education policy. International and local experts and donors have since partnered with the Ministry of Education and National Institute of Education to implement several noteworthy interventions to involve teachers and schools in the process of education reform.

Dr. Pereira described a special intervention introduced in several schools which entailed school-based staff development. The movement acknowledges that schools need to engage in self-development activities based on locally-relevant needs. He presented two initiatives that revitalized the school-based staff development movement: the School Autonomy Movement; and the Education Sector Development Framework (a World Bank initiative). This movement brought teachers together so that they could jointly reflect on their own behavior and work habits and involve themselves fully in the school-development planning process. The movement encouraged teachers to be curriculum leaders and to discover and test innovative ways to improve learning through new classroom practices. In the case of small schools, this allowed an interchange of ideas and experiences that reduced the feeling of isolation. The aim of school-based staff development is to help teachers realize their full potential to enhance learning outcomes; and to respond to the individual needs of each child.

Dr. Pereira acknowledged the huge challenges inherent in changing school culture since it involved changing the mindsets of personnel at different layers, which is particularly difficult in the government context. He emphasized that change would take time but advised that it should not become “a national movement imprisoned in circulars.” He recommended that a pool of trainers be created and given optimal support to advance this process. He cautioned that when reviewing scientific evidence on the impact of these interventions, that often the indirect impact was stronger than the direct impact.

The **question and answer** session brought out concerns of participants regarding the level of autonomy that was ideal in a given situation. It was felt that financial and even academic autonomy could at times be counter-productive and needed even stronger monitoring mechanisms. The achievement of the Sri Lankan experiment was lauded and it was felt that governments in progressive countries of the region should draw on these experiences to allow at least some time for schools to conduct independent school-based programming.

**Ms. Deepa Sankar talked on “Teacher’s Time on Task: Quantity and Nature of Tasks”** and presented highlights of a major study conducted in three Indian states by the Human Resource Development Ministry and the World Bank.

The study covered 360 schools and sought to assess if teacher presence alone (without an improvement in the quantity and quality of interaction with students) would improve learning outcomes. The study involved teacher interviews, classroom observations, snapshots in math and languages, and focus group discussions.

One interesting finding was that on an average only 192 days or less (of the average school calendar of 229 days) were spent on academic activities in school. Reasons for the gap between the academic calendar and teacher presence included school holidays, personal leave, outside training/meetings apart from non-academic responsibilities (administrative work). The study found that 56% of the time was spent on teaching, with only 22% on quality inputs. Not surprisingly, the teaching style in most schools was predominantly didactic in nature.

Ms. Sankar pointed out that the conceptual model for understanding students' learning achievement included examining factors at three levels, the **school, classroom, and student**. Key findings showed that mono-grade systems provide teachers a chance to better focus on student learning while multi-grade systems diffused their attention. The socio-economic background of students largely determined learning outcomes in classrooms; and a supportive home environment was essential to improved academic work. Not surprisingly, first-generation learners were always at a disadvantage in the formal school system.

Ms. Sankar concluded that the professional training of teachers, not their academic qualifications, was linked to better learning outcomes for students. It also seems that school management and location impacts performance, and that better infrastructure is positively related to learning. Other factors impacting learning outcomes include student attendance and classroom participation; use of student-centered approaches to learning; and addressing household diversity and deprivation at the classroom level.

### **PARALLEL SESSION IIB: Decentralization, Quality Assurance and School-Based Management:**

In this session, a panel of speakers addressed how to build quality through decentralization, quality assurance and school-based management approaches, chaired by Mr. Robin Horn, World Bank.

**Ms. Di Gropello, World Bank**, shared experiences in school-based management programs; **Dr. David Hopkins, University of London**, discussed the UK experience to strengthen educational quality by school development and leadership; **Dr. Martyn Roebuck, Glasgow University**, focused on the role of school inspection in quality assurance; **Stuti Khemani and Priyanka Pandey, World Bank**, spoke on how information campaigns can build community participation and improve school management; **Mr. Chandamouli, State Project Director, SSA, GOI**, shared experiences from Andhra Pradesh in building quality through participatory education processes; and **Mr. Gajendra Man Shrestha**, consultant, described the role of community management in improving schools in Nepal.

**Emanuela di Gropello on “School-Based Management (SBM) in East Asia and Latin America”** said it was difficult to define the notion of “school-based management” because it takes many different forms. All SBM programs entail a transfer of responsibility to the school. However, the level and type of responsibilities vary, as do the relative roles and responsibilities of various school actors for different SBM models.

Ms. di Gropello presented the goals of SBM programs around first- and second-order effects. First order effects including increasing school autonomy, increasing community and parental participation, and building the local capacity in SBM. The intent is to ultimately improve the quality, efficiency and coverage of schools (the second-order effects). She noted that the decentralization theory behind SBM programs seeks to empower local decision makers and improve school accountability and flexibility of the system. She said that limited evidence on SBM indicates that these programs do lead to greater efficiency, but the mechanisms through which these occur are not always clear.

Ms. di Gropello presented SBM data showing improved teacher learning and outcomes, and increased autonomy of the schools in decision making with community participation has positively affected teacher absenteeism, instructional time and test scores. She recognized that challenges remain including high drop-out rates, very small classes, unskilled teachers, boring teaching models, and lack of institutional integration and sustainability.

She concluded that SBM can result in higher efficiencies and quality, but the impact depends on the functional area and local context. The level of impact depends on the school decision making actors and parental involvement. She stressed the need for strong accountability lines and community participation,

but noted the important role played by the central government in the accountability cycle. She observed that for more complex schooling processes, SBM needs to be paired with effective capacity building. Future research should focus on more context-specific country studies to better understand the causality chain between the first- and second-order results; as well as impact evaluations for primary and secondary education.

In the **question and answer session**, a query was raised about the best way to sequence the decentralization process for SBM. Other issues were raised regarding pedagogy and teacher autonomy and how to plan this process. Ms. di Gropelo responded that the literature does not exist on sequencing the SBM process, but said that local capacity and accountability mechanisms are important aspects. She noted that apparently academic decisions were easier to decentralize than teacher management,

**In the “School Effectiveness and School Improvement: the UK Experience,” Dr. David Hopkins** discussed how national policy in educational reform has proven inadequate to the challenge of delivering systems that enable every student to reach their potential and for every school to be great. Evidence from a number of educational systems suggests that this may now be possible. Dr. Hopkins supported this contention by identifying personalized learning, professionalized teaching, intelligent accountability, networking and collaboration, governance and segmentation, and system leadership as the six key drivers of change that, when molded to context by leadership, underpin system transformation.

Drawing on experiences from England, Dr. Hopkins outlined a framework for considering system-wide reform efforts, and illustrated how this could clarify the central policy problem of balancing national prescription with schools leading reform. He argued that school improvement strategies need to not only address the growth state of the school but also contribute to building capacity within the system as a whole. Dr. Hopkins provided evidence on a range of school improvement initiatives in England, including the National Literacy Strategy in Primary Schools and recent efforts to transform secondary schooling.

Dr. Hopkins presented a comprehensive approach to **differential school improvement** and described how different strategies can be tailored to suit the needs of each school – help failing schools to become moderately effective; assist moderately effective schools to become effective; and help effective schools to remain so. He concluded by suggesting a model for coherent system reform that moves towards ***informed professionalism***, based on the premise that ***“every school is a great school”*** and where schools provide the leadership needed for education reform.

He summed up that effective and responsible system leadership requires leadership at three levels: **at the school level** (where school principals are also concerned with the success of other schools); **at the local/urban level** (sharing practical principles and using them for local alignment and developing specific programs for each school, especially for those groups most at-risk); and **at the system level** (with social justice, moral purpose and commitment to the success of every learner providing the focus for transformation).

In the **question and answer session**, it was asked how leadership emerged and was supported at the school level. Other queries dealt with the how the six drivers of change could support failing schools. Dr. Hopkins responded that building leadership was not emphasized at the start, but as they learned to do large scale reform more effectively, they focused more on this aspect and developed a network of teacher leaders. He acknowledged that the framework of the six drivers is a sophisticated approach, so failing schools would benefit from a narrower agenda, where lower skills are developed first. He also highlighted the importance of modifying the drivers to suit the local context. He said that ***“...good teaching strategy is a good learning strategy and is itself a powerful driver of change.”***

**Dr. Martyn Roebuck on “The Relationship between Inspection and School Improvement: Scotland and Uganda”** gave examples of how Uganda drew on lessons learned from Scotland to improve upon its own inspection system. Dr. Roebuck noted that the Scottish inspection system strongly emphasized improved education quality and discussed how lessons learned are relevant to approaches in developing countries.

Dr. Roebuck discussed the criteria for an effective inspectorate system in Uganda (and other developing nations) which include: clarity of function; supportive philosophy (not punitive); validity (clear criteria and follow-up actions); capability of inspectorate (manpower, finance, status); and capacity of system (accountability, support and follow-up). Given the resource and capacity constraints in many countries, Dr. Roebuck described key lessons learned for developing and improving inspectorate systems, and stressed the need to work within existing resources, prioritize functions; tailor activities/processes on what is do-able; **focus on evaluation of quality and quality improvement**; develop specific inspection criteria; build partnerships that share purposes, criteria and procedures; incorporate capacity building; and address accountability at all levels.

He concluded that the Uganda experience provides an example of how models from a different culture and financial context can be modified to suit local realities in South Asia. He noted that the partnership in school improvement at the district level was set up by focusing on the key relationship between external inspection, and district and school planning – not expecting school self-evaluation to develop overnight and without a shared model of support.

Dr. Roebuck emphasized that a successful inspectorate system is one that promotes continuous school development, and complements school self-evaluation processes **to meet common objectives of quality**. An inspection system can be effective if it starts with clear standards of what quality schools should look like in the local context; the objective would be to support schools in achieving those standards. He also recommended separating the inspection function from the implementing agency in order to provide more objective advice to schools and information to the system.

The **question and answer** discussion focused on the development and analysis of the inspection indicators. One query inquired about autonomy of the inspectorate and its implications at the local level; and another on the resources and sustainability of this initiative. Dr. Roebuck clarified that there are 33 indicators that focus on achievement, but one could select those that are relevant. He stressed that the data are school-specific, so scores are not aggregated. Within the district system, the inspection responsibility falls on local authorities and in Uganda; they started with a small number of schools and gradually extended throughout the district. Dr. Roebuck affirmed that Scotland provided initial technical input to Uganda, and that the Uganda inspectorate system continues to function.

**Ms. Stuti Khemani and Ms. Priyanka Pandey presented two papers on “Information Campaigns to Strengthen Participation and Improve Public Schools” and “Information Campaigns in Two Indian States, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.”**

For the first paper, Ms. Khemani described the randomized study done in Jaunpur District, Uttar Pradesh (UP), to examine the impact of information on participation and performance of public schools.

She gave details about the Village Education Committee (VEC), and its role in monitoring, planning, and implementation of the school system. She described the base- and end-line surveys to evaluate participation which collected data on learning outcomes, community participation and local governance, and school resources and school-functioning; and presented and discussed the key findings. In summary, key findings indicate that reading classes held by local youth volunteers have significantly improved reading levels. There was no discernable impact on activity within public schools or by VECs, and no

anecdotal evidence of VECs or school teachers supporting these volunteer-led reading classes. There is evidence to that participation can improve learning outcomes, but outside the public school system.

Ms. Pandey presented findings from a study conducted in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh (MP) to assess if information campaigns raised awareness about public schools and services, and improved school accountability. She described the information campaign that was aimed at reaching parents, members of the VEC, parent-teacher associations (PTA), and teachers. Results showed that teacher attendance increased in UP, and teacher engagement went up in MP. Students received more benefits in both states (uniform, scholarships). There was, however, no observed impact on learning. Finally, the increase in community participation varied across the states (VEC participation up in UP; parental participation improved in MP).

She noted that the variation of impact seen in the two states was probably due to external factors like local elections, change in PTA selection rules, and so forth. The information campaign appeared to have an impact on behavior and process variables. It was not surprising that learning remained unchanged, because the final survey took place soon after the baseline. She also clarified that community participation takes time to build. She stressed the need to carefully plan information campaigns, decide what and how to communicate, and ensure a uniform approach.

The **question and answer session** raised an observation on the importance of social inclusion and structure in India, and asked if the participation data were differentiated by caste, gender, etc. Ms. Pandey clarified that further analysis is taking place to investigate what other social barriers might be hampering fuller participation by community members.

**Mr. Chandramouli presented “What Worked to Improve Quality – Experiences from the Andhra Pradesh CLIP/CLAPS Approach”** and described efforts to improve quality in the school system after abysmal findings which showed that despite high enrolment rates, nearly 50% of the children in schools lacked basic competencies in reading, writing, and math.

He outlined the Children’s Language Improvement Program (CLIP) for primary levels, which focused on building competencies in reading, writing, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Schools and teachers are categorized based on how well the children learn. He provided a list of the specific school-level interventions to support the learning objective, and described the monitoring systems at the district and state levels. Mr. Chandramouli showed data illustrating the increase in competencies over a six-month period. He discussed ways to improve the quality of the education system including developing accountability criteria for teachers, sound training and ongoing support, public recognition of teacher and student achievement; and decentralized monitoring and supervision.

He also described the Children’s Learning Acceleration Program for Sustainability (CLAPS) for upper primary levels which built on lessons learned from CLIP. The CLAPS program focuses on building competency in Telegu, Hindi, English, math, social studies, and science. Again, the focus is on promoting participatory processes to improve learning, and he discussed various innovative teaching and learning techniques being used in the classroom. He highlighted the fact that about 1500 private schools have closed since the CLIP/CLAPS initiative, since parents now choose public schools over the private.

Mr. Chandramouli concluded that these programs owe their success to better and more motivated teachers and improved instruction, as well as innovative classroom techniques to promote reading, writing and analytical reasoning. In particular, it depended on changing a system from one that is didactic and teacher-based, towards one that focuses on promoting and using child-centered, activity-based learning techniques. He summed it up by saying that the philosophy behind these approaches ensures that

*“...learning is not providing information but facilitation for active participation, self-learning, and peer-learning.”*

**Mr. Gajendra Man Shrestha** discussed “**Community-Managed Schools in Nepal: Glimpses of Transformation.**” He spoke on Nepal’s experiences implementing a community management framework to improve the quality of schools. This involved setting up School Management Committees (SMC) which were accountable to parents and defining clear roles and responsibilities for the government and community in managing and supporting the schools. Mr. Shrestha discussed how nationalization of schools in Nepal had compromised education quality as well as affected community support for the schools, and noted that this was why Nepal was promoting community involvement in schools.

He presented findings from the Community School Support Project (CSSP) which provided a support package to schools including grants, student scholarships, and strategies to build community management and monitoring and evaluation systems. He pointed out how an evaluation of 34 community-managed schools showed improvement in management, involvement of parents, and generation of community-based resources. He noted that physical facilities were upgraded, along with an enhancement in the instruction given to students. Mr. Shrestha added that new partnerships and alliances have emerged to support these initiatives. CSSP has influenced the national Education for All initiative, which is now shifting more school management to the communities.

He concluded that CSSP demonstrated that community management can help improve quality, improve accountability, and raise non-government resources. He stressed the need for strong political will, particularly to build teacher support of these programs, and said that community management can help trigger systemic reform.

In the **question and answer session**, it was asked if learning outcomes had improved, and the impact of community management on equity and social inclusion. Mr. Shrestha noted this is being studied and results should be ready in a year. He surmised that community management appears to increase the participation of marginalized segments into the school system.

### **PARALLEL SESSION IIC: Teaching, Learning Processes and Pedagogy**

Session IIC reviewed a range of issues related to teaching and pedagogy and its relationship to quality education. Panelists included **Dr. Angela Little, University of London**, who provided an introduction to the concepts of multi-grade pedagogy, instruction and assessment; **Mr. Eduardo Velez, World Bank**, followed up with a case study of a successful multi-grade intervention in Latin America, the innovative *Escuela Nueva* (New School); **Mr. Vijay Kumar, SSA State Director**, shared key features and the scaling up model of Activity Based Learning in Tamil Nadu; **Dr. Amitabha Mukherjee, Centre of Science Education and Communication, Delhi University**, presented the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Program, which sought to make middle school science instruction more experiential; **Mr. Madhav Chavan, Pratham**, introduced three inter-related initiatives, Learning to Read, the Annual Status of Education Report and Read India; and **Ms. Stuti Khemani, World Bank**, shared findings from an experimental study that examined the effect of the Read India tool on reading outcomes. **Dr. Michael Ward, DFID**, chaired the panel.

**Dr. Angela Little** presented “**Multi-Grade Pedagogy and Assessment.**” Dr. Little’s presentation focused on “*making the invisible visible.*” She noted that in 2005-2006, approximately 76 percent of India’s primary schools had 3 or less teachers. Since primary schooling is typically 5 years, this illustrates the need for multi-grade teaching pedagogy. Similarly, in Peru, in 1998, 78 percent of all public primary schools were multi-grade. Even in the United Kingdom, at least 25 percent of primary classes are multi-grade. Dr. Little’s own calculations estimate that globally 192 million (of a total 647 million) are in de

facto multi-grade classrooms. Yet, multi-grade teachers continue to operate at the margins of the school system. In most cases, these teachers have little power and practically no voice.

Multi-grade pedagogy that arises from necessity was contrasted with that which arises through choice. Dr. Little used examples from several countries including Greece, India, and Colombia to point to three broad strategies adopted by teachers – avoidance, quasi mono-grade, and differentiation. Within this, there is an important role for curriculum re-organization and continuous classroom assessment to support positive multi-grade pedagogies.

Dr. Little stressed the need for increased awareness around multi-grade teaching and of the varied strategies used by these teachers in the classrooms. She recommended that international organizations such as UNESCO collect timely and reliable data on the numbers of multi-grade teachers. These figures would help program and policy makers develop curricular frameworks that acknowledge and appreciate the multi-dimensional nature of the teaching and learning experience; to develop learning materials that support this reality; to encourage teacher training in multi-grade settings; and to ensure that assessment is built into curriculum on a regular and frequent basis.

The **question and answer session** focused on the “shame” surrounding multi-grade teaching. Dr. Little encouraged policy makers to seek out research studies that suggest achievement scores from multi-grade settings appear to be no different from their mono-grade counterparts. She also pointed towards a growing body of evidence that indicates positive non-cognitive outcomes from multi-grade settings including better self esteem, greater peer to peer cooperation, and the encouragement of independent learning.

**Mr. Eduardo Velez discussed “Multi-grade Teaching: The Latin America Experience.”** Mr. Velez’ presentation added depth to Dr. Little’s discussion through a rich case study of the Latin American context. He provided a brief overview of the educational landscape, including poor learning outcomes, a focus on expository teaching, a lack of community and parental involvement, and weak teacher training. Mr. Velez introduced *Escuela Nueva* (the New School) as one of the most innovative solutions to address the above challenges, and a powerful example of differentiated learning. Developed by a group of Latin American ministers of education as a strategy to improve rural education, *Escuela Nueva* has spread from Colombia to Mexico, Brazil, and Guatemala among other Latin American countries.

Mr. Velez described the principle of self-organized learning that underpins the philosophy of *Escuela Nueva* -- it is a child-centered, active, and participative learning process. The teacher’s role is to facilitate learning rather than to merely transmit information. In *Escuela Nueva*, students are provided a primary education in this multi-grade setting where 1 to 3 teachers handle several grades simultaneously. What emerges is a completely different interpretation of the three-way relationship between the teacher, student, and learning materials.

He summarized how the school identifies different objectives for its stakeholders including the students, teachers, administrators, and community. He emphasized two assumptions: (1) changes at the student level are impossible without innovations in teacher training, in the administrative structure of the school, and its relationship with the community; (2) the design must allow for going to scale and include mechanisms for replication that are decentralized and financially, politically, and technically feasible. In these multi-grade classrooms, studies find evidence of improved student achievement, lower drop-out rates, and other outcomes such as the development of democratic ideals.

In the **question and answer** session, a concern was expressed about how to increase community involvement when most parents might be illiterate. Mr. Velez responded by stressing that illiteracy does not necessarily preclude involvement. Even if parents are unable to help with homework, their involvement makes schools more relevant for their children.

**Mr. Vijay Kumar spoke on “Tamil Nadu’s Activity-Based Learning”** program. He provided a brief introduction highlighting the state of education in Tamil Nadu, where government primary schools have gross enrollment rates of over 100 percent and drop-outs are consistently close to zero, yet achievement levels remain comparatively low. Mr. Kumar then showed a film documentary to highlight the innovative Activity-Based Learning program (ABL). This program was initially implemented in 50 Chennai corporation schools, and is currently being expanded to 37,000 additional schools state-wide.

Mr. Kumar described how ABL schools were started to provide schooling for large numbers of children freed from bonded labor. The intervention was developed by a group of over 100 teachers who were trained in the Rishi Valley pedagogy which was then adapted for the local context. Much like *Escuela Nueva*, the focus is on empowering the learner through a set of colorful, interactive, and meticulously-developed learning materials. Students are taught using a variety of textbook-based exercises which are then supplemented by a number of activities attached to each chapter. A typical day could involve puppetry, group story telling or games. The classroom is full of teaching tools and students are provided their own blackboard space to share their work with the class.

Though the teacher carefully monitors student progress, the children self-evaluate their mastery in a system of differentiated learning and acceptance of diversity. Mastery of skills then becomes an individual and not a group exercise. Mr. Kumar’s film showed classrooms where children take their own attendance, discipline themselves, and have low drop out and high attendance rates.

He pointed out that the program’s success relied on the competence of teachers and their supervisors. An initial group that was trained at Rishi Valley was responsible for adapting the materials and then training the others. Mr. Kumar also noted the importance of encouraging a dynamic interchange of personnel, materials and curricula. He stressed that the relative success of ABL is predicated on system-wide reform where activity-based, child-centered and differentiated models of teaching and learning are fostered and sustained. He emphasized that it is not the children, parents, or teachers that are lacking, but rather the system that needs to be strengthened to meet the needs of multi-level classrooms.

The **question and answer session** which followed raised the issue of evidence-based evaluation of the program and Mr. Kumar noted that while internal evaluations point to positive outcomes including indicators of achievement and social and emotional development, the ABL team was in the process of looking for external evaluation.

**Dr. Amitabha Mukherjee discussed “The Hoshangabad Science Teaching Program (HSTP).”** Dr. Mukherjee described how HSTP started as a pilot program in 1972 in 16 middle schools in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh with a simple question, “...can science be taught better in an ordinary school? The program expanded in 1978 to all middle schools in Hoshangabad and by the mid-1980’s had grown to include about 1000 schools in 15 districts.

He outlined key features of HSTP including developing classroom processes based on experimentation, providing intensive and ongoing teacher training, the development of new learning materials, providing classrooms with basic tools, and finally its own examination.

He said that though the program unexpectedly ended in 2002, it offers some interesting lessons. Firstly, no program innovation can succeed unless teachers are convinced of need for change and work actively to bring it. Teachers are very isolated especially in the rural context and it is important to work in a systematic manner to break this down. Next, innovations in curricula and pedagogy may face roadblocks due to school system functionality. If schools are non-functional to begin with, no amount of curricular or pedagogic renewal will help. Classroom interventions cannot offer solutions for inadequate infrastructure, teacher absenteeism and lack of accountability in a school system. Finally, community

involvement is essential to the long term viability of a program. This was lacking at HSTP and although efforts were made at the time of closure it was too late.

**Mr. Madhav Chavan, Pratham, spoke on “The Annual Status of Education Report and The Read India Campaign.”** His presentation covered three inter-related activities initiated and sponsored by Pratham, a large NGO operating in India: Learning to Read (L2R), Read India, and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER). Mr. Chavan remarked that all have contributed to promote an outcome-oriented policy environment.

**L2R** is an accelerated intervention that emphasizes reading as separate from language acquisition skills. It provides a non-sequential, multiple stimulus method where children are read to from the first day. The emphasis with L2R is on scale; Mr. Chavan said that though the focus remains clearly on the goal of getting children to read, teaching strategies are not specified. L2R also stresses the importance of teaching the alphabet using the traditional phonetic chart along with a great deal of supplementary information and cards. There is a simple tool to test student progress which involves testing the child at five levels of reading fluency: story, paragraph, word, alphabet, and nothing. A similar tool and method is employed to teach mathematics. The tools provide a quick and simple way to test the reading and math levels of entire villages in less than one day without the added burden of extensive training, and because reading is the most visible form of learning, testing becomes demystified. Mr. Chavan added, *“the shock to a top policy maker and the village head has same voltage because the message is so simple.”*

**ASER**, on the other hand, is one of the largest household surveys conducted in terms of its sheer scale and size: it is based on a sample of 1.2 million individuals belonging to 318,000 households in over 15,000 villages. The data and its results, which are free to the public, find that 38.4 percent of students in Grade 1 are unable to recognize letters while 53.8 percent are unable to recognize numbers. According to Mr. Chavan, it is these very students that need immediate targeting.

Mr. Chavan described the **Read India** Initiative as a “people’s initiative” to directly respond to these startling numbers. The goals are simple: reduce the percentage of children who do not recognize alphabets to near zero in Grade 1; by Grade 3, close to 100 percent of students should be reading paragraphs; and by Grade 5 all children should be able to read at the story level. This would be achieved through an intensive summer campaign that focuses on children entering Grade 1 and are followed through the year to monitor progress using the L2R tool described above. The children are provided graded supplementary reading materials, are read to every day, and encouraged to read.

He observed that in Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, children are showing significant improvements in reading. In Madhya Pradesh, the percentage of children who can read letters, words or more has increased from 57.3 percent in 2005 to 89.2 percent in 2006. According to Mr. Chavan, this success demonstrates that improving quality must be seen as a step-wise process. In his words, *“...holistic change is necessary, but it cannot happen at once.”* This focus on outcomes has provided an opportunity for several states to assess their own achievement levels, stress the importance of outcomes in their own curricula, as well implement their own basic skill learning. Andhra Pradesh’s *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* program, for example, is working directly with local district teacher training institutes to conduct ASER surveys.

Some of the discussion in the **question and answer session** was tied to the dramatic improvements seen in reading after just one year, especially since another survey undertaken by the World Bank in the same area during the same time period, did not show these results. Mr. Chavan noted that though the reason for the discrepancy was being further investigated, the Read India findings were further confirmed by Abhiviyakti, an NGO that checked effects in the schools.

**Ms. Stuti Khemani presented on “Community Participation and “Read India”: Experimental Evidence from a Pilot in Uttar Pradesh”** and described findings from a randomized experiment to assess if providing Pratham’s Read India tool to communities in a participatory fashion affects learning outcomes. In 2005, Ms. Khemani’s team randomly assigned villages in Jaunpur district, Uttar Pradesh, a variation of three interventions through a series of participatory meetings: (1) information about the roles and responsibilities of Village Education Committees (VEC), local governing bodies consisting of an elected village head, 1 senior school teacher, and 3 parents; (2) the L2R testing tool, described in Mr. Chavan’s presentation, in addition the information about VECs; and (3) Everything described in (1) and (2) in addition to the Read India tool.

A total of 65 villages each received the 3 interventions between September and December 2005 and results found that the impact on learning was driven by local village youth volunteers who held reading classes. Children in these classes made significant improvements in reading within a few months. There was, however, no discernible impact on activity in the public schools or by the VECs; and no anecdotal evidence on VECs, or school teachers supporting these volunteer-led reading classes. The findings underscore the importance of student and teacher commitment and involvement in determining the relative success of a program. The study found that a bottom-up participatory approach does not necessarily have an impact on teaching and learning; the impact is limited to the extent of voluntary community involvement.

The **question and answer session** included a question about the relatively low impact of the Read India tool on reading (7 %). Ms. Khemani’s response was that this was not an evaluation of the Read India tool itself but an experiment to look at the impact of public information sharing on learning. The study was designed to test the assumption that simply giving information was not enough, but providing people with a tool to change their reality may have an effect.

## **SESSION II – Key Lessons Learned and Challenges**

At the end of the second day of the conference, Mr. Robin Horn, Dr. Hena Mukherjee and Dr. Michael Ward summarized Session II, laying out the key lessons learned and challenges that emerged from the presentations.

### **Session II-A: Teacher Professional Development, Incentives and Accountability**

- Getting good teachers involves:
  - Aggressive recruitment, focused selection, and compressed preparation
  - Supporting new teachers in a systematic fashion
  - Tailoring teacher training curriculum to subject specific pedagogy and school context.
- Beyond teacher absenteeism, what matters is the quality and quantity of instructional time with students.
- On-going teacher support is essential, especially induction and mentoring for new teachers.
- Incentive payments for teachers linked to student learning outcomes can improve performance.
- As opposed to implementation, a key role of government is to set and monitor standards for program accreditation and teacher certification.

### **Session II-B: Decentralization, Quality Assurance and School-Based Management**

- There is no one model for school-based management and it depends very much on functions, country context, and capacity.

- In order to provide more objective advice to schools and information to the system, the inspection function needs to be separated from the implementing agency.
- An inspection system can be effective if it starts with clear standards of what quality schools should look like in the local context; the objective is to support schools in achieving those standards.

### **Session II-C: Teaching, Learning Processes and Pedagogy**

- Multi-grade settings are a reality even in the developed world, and curricula and instructional frameworks need to support that.
- Successful multi-grade programs involve a child-centered philosophy of active learning and imply a cultural shift from a teacher-based to child-centered approach.
- The school/classroom should be a fundamental unit of change that promotes a child-centered, active and participative learning process.
- For teachers to change their behavior it is not enough to train them, they need to see working models of what quality looks like.
- Providing regular information on student learning and communicating them in a manner that all stakeholders can understand contributes to increased public demand for quality improvements.
- Simple teaching tools focused on basic literacy goals can bring quick results if teachers and communities can be mobilized around them.
- Design your interventions based on available evidence and integrate feedback loops to assure continuous improvement.

### **Challenges**

- How to develop situation-specific solutions given constraints on local capacity and time and the need for piloting, evaluation and adjustment?
- How to build more accountability for student learning?
- How do you effectively mobilize parents and communities to contribute to monitoring the quality of learning?
- How to effectively scale up from successful models for your specific local context?

### **DAY THREE -- SESSION III: Innovations in Improving Access to Quality Education**

The final day of the conference began with a plenary review that provided an overview of international evidence on demand-side interventions to improve quality of education, followed by two parallel sessions which presented regional examples of the effectiveness of conditional cash transfer programs, and various public-private partnerships to build quality education.

- **Session IIIa:** regional case studies on equal access to quality education; and
- **Session IIIb:** regional case studies on public/private partnerships to improve access and quality.

### **PLENARY SESSIONS – International Evidence on Demand-Side Interventions and Public-Private Partnerships to Improve Access and Quality**

Two plenary sessions set the stage for the subsequent regional case-studies of how to improve access and quality in education. **Mr. Ariel Fiszbein, World Bank**, discussed a number of demand-side interventions, and **Mr. Harry Patrinos, World Bank**, presented international evidence on public-private partnerships to improve access and quality of education. **Mr. Shekhar Shah, World Bank**, chaired the plenary session.

**Mr. Ariel Fiszbein spoke on “Helping Reduce Poverty in the Short- and Long-Term: The experience of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT).”** He began by discussing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty which implies a multi-pronged solution. For education, this means that to improve outcomes of poor children, programs need to consider actions on both the supply- and demand-side of the equation. CCTs are one action of this multi-pronged solution to poverty to address demand for services, transferring cash to poor households and demand in return, that recipients invest in educating their children. He noted that today, most countries in the Latin America/Caribbean region have some form of CCT, originally inspired by programs in Mexico; also these types of programs are growing in Asia and Africa.

Mr. Fiszbein outlined the conceptual basis for CCTs and explained why *cash, conditions, and transfers* are essential elements of these incentive programs. He presented data which showed when CCTs have been well-targeted, disincentive effects have been small, and they have reduced consumption poverty. Additionally, there are some unintended medium-term benefits such as families having higher access to credit, or productive assets. He observed that CCTs have had significant effects on school enrolment and attendance in many countries, particularly in those with lower baseline enrolment; in transition grades with high dropout rates, and among poorer households. He added that CCTs also augment school attainment among adults, and improve wages.

In terms of CCT program design, Mr. Fiszbein emphasized that it is best to target poor households with human capital shortfalls, and large returns for the investments. He noted that conditions are very important, because they do increase enrollment above and beyond the income effect; and that the transfer size provides positive but diminishing marginal returns (related to amount of transfer). He provided data on the links between CCTs and the supply-side issues, and noted that the quality of schools does affect program outcomes (the better the schools, the higher the impact of CCT on enrolment and attendance). He stressed, however, that CCT programs by themselves do not lead to improved learning outcomes, and need to be integrated with other program initiatives aimed at poverty reduction. Poor human capital outcomes are not just about low income and low use of services – at the household level, other factors related to information or parenting practices may be more important; and at the provider level, insufficient incentives to focus on quality. Here, conditional grants might be used to change provider behaviors.

Mr. Fiszbein concluded that CCT programs should be directed to correct a market distortion that results in sub-optimal investment in education (both quantity and quality); they should complement actions on the supply-side; and that CCT programs have positive externalities on the quality of public policies (they force cross-sector coordination to make the program work).

In his paper entitled, “**International Evidence on Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) to Improve Access and Quality in Education,**” **Mr. Harry Patrinos** shared experiences of how innovative partnership models can improve educational outcomes. He noted the difficulty in narrowly defining “public-private partnerships” because models vary based on the goals of the program. He emphasized the common elements including formal arrangement with contracts; involving public and private sectors; defining specific expected outcomes from the partnerships; sharing risks/rewards between the two sectors; and recognizing the complementary role of these sectors.

Mr. Patrinos provided a conceptual framework to compare and contrast the roles and financing of the public and private sectors, and noted that PPPs mostly imply public financing with private provision. Benefits of PPPs include increased efficiency (improved performance incentives and increased competitive pressure); improved quality of service delivery; acquisition of specialized skills that may not be available in government agencies; overcoming public service operating restrictions; and ensuring quicker response and flexibility to changing demands.

He also noted that PPPs benefit from economies of scale, regardless of the size of the government entity. They allow the government agency to focus on functions where it has a comparative advantage; they increase access, especially for marginalized groups; and they enhance the transparency of government spending by making the cost of services more visible. Mr. Patrinos provided examples of education PPPs, including government contracting with private schools, private management of public schools, infrastructure PPPs, vouchers/subsidies; public/private sector affiliation arrangements; private sector regulation; and innovation and research PPPs. He mentioned that there is limited rigorous evidence on impact; that there is debate over the impact of vouchers in Chile and the USA; and that though studies do exist on the impact of charter schools, few are randomized trials.

He presented impact data on various forms of PPPs in education including voucher and concessions schools in Chile and Colombia, and discussed their positive effects on enrollment, drop out rates, and test scores. He stipulated the importance of monitoring and evaluation to improve implementation of these models, piloting before expansion, and the need for clear contracting guidelines and principles to ensure a successful partnership.

During the **question and answer session** it was asked why CCTs do not encourage in-kind contributions; and why they do not lead to improved learning outcomes. Mr. Fiszbein responded that a CCT could be considered as a fee-waiver (negative fee); they also have a double objective: educational and redistributing income – and this is why it is better done through cash than in-kind. He noted that CCTs are demand-side incentives mainly to increase enrolment of those marginalized children and agreed that it was a challenge to improve learning outcomes, particularly when lower income people might be less-prepared to learn. On the supply-side, incentives like CCTs can be used to improve learning outcomes. Clearly, schools need to plan on how to best address increased demand for services.

A question was asked about whether PPPs improve the performance of government systems. Mr. Patrinos responded that evidence from Chile showed how the voucher program changed the market and the way in which education was financed and provided. He suggested that the larger debate should focus on what the private sector can actually contribute to the national goals for education, especially in elementary education.

### **PARALLEL SESSION IIIA: Regional Case Studies On Equal Access To Quality Education**

This session examined regional examples of cash transfers and other country-specific innovations to improve equal access to quality education. Panel presenters included **Ms. Neelam Rao**, who discussed India's *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* program and **Ms. Susan Wardak, Ministry of Education/MOE, Government of Afghanistan**, who focused on the achievements and challenges of the Afghani government to provide access to education. **Mr. Nazmul Chaudhry and Mr. Dilip Parajuli, World Bank** discussed their impact evaluation of the Punjab Female Stipend program; and **Mr. Niaz Asadullah, Reading University**, discussed issues around the access and quality of madrasa education in Bangladesh. The panel was chaired by **Mr. Shekhar Shah, World Bank**.

**Ms. Neelam Rao on “Innovations in Providing Equitable Access to Education”** began by providing preliminary background information on the educational landscape in India, including the tremendous gains made in increasing access to education. Next, she described the goals, achievements and challenges of the *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* (SSA) program, launched by the government in 2001.

SSA seeks to improve quality outcomes while continuing to target access for minority or otherwise disadvantaged children. There is a concerted push to identify and focus on what Ms. Rao termed “Special Districts” or “Educationally Backward Blocks”, where there may be low female literacy or high numbers of children out of school. Due in part to these efforts, the share of girls’ enrollment, for instance, has

increased from 42.9 percent in 2000-01 to 46.4 percent in 2004-05. To target out-of-school children, there was a push to increase remedial education programs. Supplementary learning materials and age-appropriate bridge course materials were developed. In this way, an additional 3.4 million children have been mainstreamed. Similarly, SSA has reduced the share of Muslim out of school children from 9.9 to 6.2 percent through targeted provisioning in 88 special focus districts where there are high numbers of Muslim children. Specific interventions include developing Urdu textbooks, providing free textbooks to Muslim girls, providing additional support to Urdu medium schools and bringing formal curriculum to children attending *madrasas* and *maktabs*.

She specified that a key to the success of SSA approach is the autonomy and decentralized decision making given to states and within that to schools and local communities. Basic provisioning was decentralized, and there was a strong focus on improving school infrastructure and teacher learning equipment. Funding was devolved to school development bodies -- more than 50 percent of the funds go directly to the VECs for school provision which contributes directly to strengthen community involvement.

It was also important to expand and decentralize teacher training institutions, and to this end SSA created 70,000 clusters to provide academic support and monitoring. Each state is then able to tailor their learning interventions to their unique needs and local context: Clip/Clap in Andhra Pradesh (discussed in Session II (b)), Activity Based Learning in Tamil Nadu (See Session II (c)), or multi-lingual education in Orissa.

Ms. Rao also emphasized the importance of ensuring flexibility in the system – in this case, it empowered the states to decide what kind of remedial and alternative programs they need -- be it a residential bridge course, night shelters, linkages with open schools, seasonal hostels in those migratory pockets where parents move for harvesting season or construction work. In Jammu and Kashmir, for instance, mobile teachers were provided for the mobile *Gujjar* population.

Ms. Rao identified several challenges that SSA continues to work on, including: expanding coverage for older children (11-14 yrs age group); continuing to work with hard to reach children; increasing attendance and retention, and improving school performance.

In the **question and answer session**, Ms. Rao clarified that SSA is a partnership not only with the states but moreover with the local community; it is designed to have a bottom up approach. The States make plans on the basis of district elementary education plans. This is taken over to the project approval body in a very consultative and outcome-oriented process.

**Ms. Susan Wardak spoke on “Providing Access to Education Opportunities in Afghanistan.”** She began by laying out the formidable challenges facing the MOE in Afghanistan. Though there had been a 500 percent increase in school enrollment since 2002 (from 900,000 to over 6.4 million students), more than half of the school-age children remain out of school, the majority of them girls. Of the 9,000 schools in the country, only about forty percent of the schools have buildings. And approximately 22 percent of the 143,000 teachers have the minimum qualification of grade fourteen. Ms. Wardak also mentioned many additional challenges including public insecurity, high illiteracy, and in some cases fear of death. Despite this, she stressed that the Ministry remains committed to continuous improvements in both access and quality of education.

She described the 5-year National Educational Strategy Plan, endorsed by key Afghani stakeholders, currently being implemented with the vision to “provide equal access to quality education for all.” The plan has 8 priority areas including the provision of general education, development of a quality national curriculum, improved teacher education and training, development of a broad-based Islamic education

system, provision of technical and vocational education, development of a long term literacy and non-formal education program, improved infrastructure, and administrative reform. Work is underway in all these areas and there are early signs of success. For instance, there has been construction of 11 new teacher training colleges that have already recruited well over 9000 teachers. Schools in rural areas are being built through community contracting, strengthening community mobilization, creating a sense of ownership, and increasing accountability and transparency.

Ms. Wardak indicated that a priority for the MOE is to promote girls' education and increase the numbers of trained female teachers and principals as part of this effort. Interventions include a prioritization of girls' schools; social mobilization efforts to motivate and encourage local communities to send girls to school; female representation in the establishment of School Management Committees and PTAs; and an emphasis on recruitment and training of female teachers.

Due largely to these interventions, program data show that of the students enrolled in 2007, 45 percent are girls and that 35 percent of teachers in IDA program provinces (12 of 34 provinces) are female (in 2003, the number was 13 percent).

In the **question and answer session**, Ms. Wardak responded to a query on student assessment and noted that the issue of continuous assessment has not yet been dealt with on a systemic level although its importance has been well-established. The focus has thus far been on providing on-going support to teachers and students.

**Mr. Nazmul Chaudhry and Mr. Dilip Parajuli on “Pakistan: Impact of the Female Stipend Program (FSP)”** described the Female Stipend Program in Punjab as part of a larger government effort, the Punjab Education Sector Reform, which is a World Bank financed program. Initiated in 2004, the program provides a conditional cash transfer in the form of a stipend to all middle school girls in selected districts in Punjab. Girl students with an attendance rate of 80 percent or higher are provided directly with a money order of Rs. 200.

Because eligibility in the Stipend Program was randomly assigned to both control and treatment groups, it is one of the few interventions in the region that has met with a randomized impact evaluation. Using school census and household survey data, Mr. Chaudhry and Mr. Parajuli evaluated the program's impact on enrollments and changes in school participation. Findings indicate a modest but statistically significant impact on enrollments. In fact, even their most conservative estimates showed a 10 percent increase in girls' enrollment in stipend schools. Further, evidence from the national household survey data indicates that the stipends help poor children (male and female) attend schools. They are in the process of analyzing the links between the stipend program and quality using test score data.

In the **question and answer session**, Mr. Chaudhry and Mr. Parajuli were asked about the policy implications of these findings. They commented that though there was a 10 percent impact on enrollment, the future of the program is still unclear – should it be scaled-up, or is supply an issue? They questioned the rationale of stipends for girls if they are unable to reach their schools. In such cases, would scarce resources be better spent in other areas (e.g., transport, infrastructure)?

**Mr. Niaz Asadullah on the topic “Madrasa Education in Bangladesh”** presented issues around the access and quality in the madrasa education system. In particular, the focus was on whether the quality of their learning differs significantly from students in secular public schools and whether students from madrasas have a significantly different world view as compared to students in secular public schools.

He noted that in addition to its secular schooling system, Bangladesh has the largest traditionally-recognized madrasa system in the world (along with a smaller but still substantial unrecognized system).

Both secular and recognized madrasa schools have a uniform curriculum fully regulated by government. Interestingly, the madrasa system is largely co-educational (88 percent of rural madrasas are co-educational compared with 79.8 percent of secular schools). The system also comprises of a large number of converts (formerly unrecognized madrasas).

Mr. Asadullah highlighted two important government initiatives to explain these features: since 1980, registered madrasas are eligible for teacher salary aid, whereby 90 percent of teacher salary is paid by the state; and registered secondary schools and madrasas admitting girls are eligible for developmental funds as part of the “Female Stipend” scheme.

Perhaps largely as a result of these financial incentives, Mr. Asadullah finds no significant difference between the quality of formal secondary schools and registered madrasas. Additionally, differences in attitudes of madrasa graduates regarding family size, investment in female education, and Islamic rule are all greatly reduced by exposure to female teachers. His session pointed to the need to demystify religious schools in South Asia, much like religiously affiliated schools in the rest of the world.

During the **question and answer** session, a query was raised regarding the employability and future education prospects of madrasa graduates. Mr. Asadullah noted that while graduates of unrecognized madrasas are not even eligible to run a mosque, graduates from government registered madrasas are open to employment in any sector, be it civil, military, private, or public.

### **PARALLEL SESSION IIIB: Regional Case Studies On Public/Private Partnerships To Improve Access And Quality**

This session examined policy interventions in Bangladesh, the Punjab and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan and India that aimed to improve access and quality in education through public- private partnership (PPP).

Speakers included Mr. **Mohammed Ashraful Moqbul, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh**, who shared experiences with PPP programs in secondary schooling; **Mr. Shahid Kardar, Punjab Education Foundation, Pakistan**, focused on the impact of Foundation Assisted Schools, and Education Voucher Schemes on education quality; **Mr Ahad Khan, MD, Balochistan Foundation, Pakistan**, spoke on the impact of rural community schools and the urban/peri-urban private school programs in improving access with quality; and **Dr. Geeta Kingdon, Oxford University**, looked at the impact of the private-aided schools in improving access with quality in India. **Mr. Venkatesh Sundararaman, World Bank**, chaired the panel.

In his presentation, “**Public-Private Partnerships to Improve Access and Quality of Secondary Education in Bangladesh**,” **Mr. Ashraful Moqbul** detailed the country’s experiments with PPP at the secondary school level. Interestingly, the private sector provides 98% of the secondary education but the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) gives a 95% subsidy to this sector. He noted that the effort is community-initiated and owned and has potential for country wide scale up. The stress is on improving governance and overcoming systemic challenges to ensure more equitable allocation of resources and enhance quality and access.

He described efforts by the central ministry to catalyze community initiatives to establish new schools or expand to under-served areas. While evaluation for recognition and subvention has been given to independent agencies, measures have been taken to recognize and reward better performance both at the school and student levels. Poor performing schools under the system are warned and the grants suspended in worst cases.

Mr. Moqbul discussed a stipend program for girls' education which is available country-wide and noted the emphasis on disadvantaged and marginalized communities. The newly set up National Council for Teacher Education is coordinating and defining standards for teacher education. With regards to assessment and monitoring of performance, the GOB has geared its system to better data collection and analysis. Students at grade 6 and grade 8 and at terminal levels of 10 and 12 have been assessed. Students have also been bench-marked against international standards like TIMSS to help planning and policy formulation.

Dr. Moqbul concluded that though it is too early to evaluate the impact of these interventions, preliminary evidence indicates increased accountability in the education system. He noted that a number of schools have shown significant improvement in their performance, and that 57 new schools have since been established in disadvantaged areas. Those schools not up-to-par have been identified and disciplinary action taken. The pass rates for secondary and high schools have increased, along with a notable decline in teacher absenteeism. There has also been a more transparent teacher recruitment process, reducing political interference and nepotism. More funds also appear to be targeted to poor areas, and findings also indicate an increase in in-service training for teachers, a decline in cheating on exams, and competitive bids being tendered for textbook production and publication.

During the **question and answer session**, participants raised questions about assessing teacher performance in the context of varying baseline standards of students, government supervision of private institutions and the problems during the transition from a state-dominated system to the new model of PPP. In response, Mr. Moqbul said that grants were tied to school performance keeping in mind their initial standards. Education boards had school inspectors working with the school committees for supervision and ensuring accountability. He noted that it was always a tough decision to penalize schools or close them down even as a last resort. During the transition period, the GOB did not transfer public schools to private management, but allowed private schools to grow. This period was supplemented by inspection, recognition and formal support.

**Mr. Shahid Kardar spoke on “Promoting Quality Education through Public/Private Partnerships.”** This public-private partnership (PPP) effort in Punjab, Pakistan, provides technical and financial support to private institutions to promote better-quality educational opportunities at affordable cost to the poor. Established in 1991, the Punjab Education Fund (PEF) is an autonomous organization funded entirely by the Government of Punjab (Rs. 3.8 billion for 2007-08). Under PEF, public-private partnership initiatives include: Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS), continuous professional development for teachers, school leadership development program, teaching in clusters by subject specialists, and the education voucher scheme (EVS).

Mr. Kardar described how PEF programs reach urban and rural areas, including slums; and comprises male, female and co-educational institutions at all three levels -- primary, middle and high school. He noted how the Foundation-Assisted Schools, which provide Rs. 300 per child enrolled on the basis of merit, have triggered an encouraging trend. Schools now concentrate on the provision of education, as opposed to fee collection, and are improving their infrastructure to accommodate more students. A forty percent enrolment increase was noted in less than six months; the gender ratio of 52:48 with negligible dropout was also very encouraging. He said that the FAS scheme showed how better quality education can be provided at a fraction of what it costs the public sector.

Mr. Kardar described how the FAS plan has promoted and provided regular quality assurance tests for partner schools (every six months), and offered incentives to teachers and schools linked to improved performance. The PEF has also ensured continuous professional development of teachers with the help of forty lead NGOs and elite teacher training institutions with a focus on improving subject content and pedagogical skills. The speaker noted that a third-party evaluation of the program has begun.

The EVS started as a pilot project for students from slum areas aged 5 to 13 years. A voucher of Rs 300/- per enrolled child is assured with parents free to top up. Choice of school is limited to accredited schools within 2 km radius from the slum colony/cluster. No drop out has been reported and the project is already competing with the FAS scheme. Mr. Kardar noted that both EVS and FAS are competing instruments, and the evaluation of these tools is underway. He remarked that political will for these programs is very strong and has helped promote these initiatives to reach out to disadvantaged groups. For example, they promote co-educational schools (contrary to present government policy). He concluded that the components of financial assistance, along with quality assurance mechanisms, ongoing capacity building of teachers and administrators, leadership development, and curricula improvement make a difference in providing quality education to disadvantaged communities.

The **question and answer session** brought up concerns on equal access of poor students, low learning outcomes, evaluation of trainers and curriculum issues. Mr. Kardar clarified that the mechanism was encouraging those schools which were targeting poor households and under-served areas, but that testing was the only way to assess learning outcomes. The system was not yet perfect. Trained teachers undergoing certification were also evaluated after a workshop and inputs were being taken from senior teachers to improve the standards of evaluation workshops. The program was careful about governance issues but the political support to the effort had been really strong.

**Mr. Ahad Khan presented, “Balochistan: Rural Community and Urban Private School Programs.”** He described how the Balochistan Education Fund (BEF) program promotes public-private partnerships in primary-level education, particularly for girls. The BEF was set up in 1994 and was made an autonomous body in 2004. It works through implementing partners like NGOs, private school operators, and technical institutions. The intervention is directed to 30 districts of the province and seeks to tackle problems of low enrolment and literacy rate, poor quality education large gender disparities, weak institutional capacity and poor community and private sector involvement.

Mr. Khan spoke about how the project has developed key indicators to track progress. It has introduced assessments for children especially in math and language, made free textbooks available on time and enabled monitoring by a local parent-education committee (PEC) and NGOs. Teachers are trained through a 45-day module (in phases) to improve subject matter knowledge, techniques of multi-grade teaching, use of low cost material, and classroom management, and basic health and nutrition of young children. For the first time, PECs have been empowered to hire and fire teachers, manage school affairs and monitor the teacher development program. This has already had an impact on student and teacher attendance and improved enrollment, particularly of girl students.

The **question and answer session** asked more about the powers and nature of PECs and effect of training of teachers for 45 days on school itself. It was clarified that all PEC members (seven members from community) had to have a child in the school and they could appoint local teachers or fire them for non-performance. Local recruitment had an impact on absenteeism. In every PEC meeting, 75 percent of community representatives had to be present. With regards to training, this was being done in phases of 15 days each and coincided mainly with school vacations. The program was based on district-level clusters.

**Dr. Geeta Kingdon’s presentation “India – Aided Schools and the Proposed Public-Private Partnership”** described a study done in Uttar Pradesh (UP) to look at the history of aided-schools, impact on enrolment, incentive structures, and the challenges in assessing cost-effectiveness vis-à-vis government and private unaided schools. She considered these issues, and also discussed the efficacy of the new form of public-private partnership in education proposed in the Indian Draft Right to Education Bill 2005.

She remarked that private schools exacerbate social inequities and observed that PPPs and incentives could shift this to provide quality schooling to disadvantaged children. Dr. Kingdon noted that two types of PPP can be observed: private operations with government funding as block grants; and education vouchers where government support is being provided to schools through vouchers to families. She added that voucher design varied and it could easily offset the equity advantage. She pointed out that a large number of private-unaided schools continue to operate without recognition simply because of demand.

Dr Kingdon recalled historical factors that created the diversity of institutions within the state and how public pressure influenced government policy. Block grants in the PPP model studied were based on the number of teachers posts sanctioned and not on enrolment. Relatively speaking, the aided-schools had done reasonably well in terms of growth and delivery of results, but scope for improvement remained. She stressed that the PPP by itself was not a panacea, and the need to look carefully at the contracts, interventions and the accountability chain. Dr. Kingdon concluded that PPP was not a matter of popular public debate in the education sector and many pilot projects were needed before scaling up. She expressed hope that the new 2005 Right to Education bill would examine the interests of the disadvantaged populations specifically and improve quality and access both in total terms.

The **question and answer session** raised issues related to privatization of education and monitoring of quality. The sheer diversity in private enterprise -- from small teaching shops to brand institutions was huge. It was pointed out that in the block grant system, the grant was not tied to student achievement or enrollment levels and thus served a limited purpose. With regard to religious and linguistic minority schools, the mandate appeared to be to attract specific populations through a variety of concessions, and thus limited the choice of schools for students.

Next, participants reconvened in plenary where Mr. Shekhar Shah and Mr. Venkatesh Sundararaman summarized key lessons learned and recommendations emerging from the various sessions (see Section IX below).

### **SESSION III – Key Lessons Learned and Challenges**

#### **Key Lessons**

- CCTs alone do not lead to improved learning outcomes, but they can be complemented by interventions on the supply-side to improve learning outcomes and should be integrated with other initiatives aimed at reducing poverty.
- Very few programs get scaled-up overnight; thus new programs (CCT, PPP or other initiatives to reach the hard to reach) can provide the basis for rigorous evaluation to inform continuous program improvement and/or expansion to other areas.
- PPPs hold a lot of promise, but are not a panacea. It is important to carefully review and establish clear contractual guidelines and principles, set goals and interventions, and establish clear accountability systems to ensure a successful partnership.
- PPPs allow the Government to focus on functions where they have a comparative advantage – regulation, monitoring and quality assurance and financing, enabling greater outreach through provision by the private sector.

## Challenges

- Several of our countries are in post-conflict, in conflict, or have pockets of conflict where special responses have to be developed in order to deliver a quality education.
- The challenge with designing CCTs is ensure that efficiency and equity are maximized by setting appropriate levels of benefits, and targeting to populations with a lower baseline enrollment, in transition grades where there is high drop out, and among poorer households, while still minimizing administrative costs.
- Given the dearth of well-evaluated models particularly for PPPs, the challenge is to pilot and test initiatives and include a strong monitoring and evaluation component to provide feedback for design, before expanding.

## FINAL PANEL: Improving Quality - the Perspective from Policymakers

The final panel was made up of policy makers from the region including **Mr. Ashraful Moqbul, Additional Secretary, Government of Bangladesh; Mr. Karma Yeshey, Ministry of Education, Bhutan; Mr. Champak Chatterjee, Secretary, Government of India; Mr. Janardhan, Director General Education, Nepal; Mr. Khalid Gillani, Secretary, Government of Punjab, Pakistan; and Mr. Mohammed Thamby, Chief Commissioner, Sri Lanka.** The panelists noted that the conference shared many lessons, and raised many questions on how to move forward on the agenda for access to quality education.

They commented that the discussions would inform the ongoing debate on educational quality in their respective countries. Mr. Chatterjee noted the important intersection between health, education, and nutrition, and stressed the crucial links between nutrition and quality education, particularly with regards to marginalized groups and poor households. Mr. Gillani emphasized that assessments are valuable only if they inform and stimulate the necessary policy adjustments. Mr. Thamby said that Sri Lanka was moving ahead with education reform and called attention to the negative impact conflict and civil unrest have on achieving quality education; and Mr. Yeshey emphasized the need for quality teachers, child-centered pedagogy, and assessments to ensuring this process. Mr. Janardhan noted that the systemic changes occurring in Nepal resulted from strong community inputs and political will; and Mr. Moqbul underlined that there was no panacea or universal formula – that lessons from one country can be studied but need to be adapted to suit the needs of another context.

A number of key questions emerged to guide policy makers as they determine strategies to address quality education:

- **How can assessment and evaluation findings be leveraged** to improve education policies and programs? **How can accountability be addressed** and learning outcomes supported and emphasized?
- **How can the system attract and retain quality teachers?** How can teachers be best supported to improve instruction in every classroom and use proven child-centered approaches to ensure quality?
- **How can parents and communities be effectively organized** to demand learning for all?
- **How can Governments be successfully mobilized** to demand learning for all?

## WRAP UP—MAIN MESSAGES

The conference ended with a summary by **Ms. Michelle Riboud, World Bank**, and **Dr. Michael Ward, DFID**, who reiterated that quality education is critical to sustaining long-run gains in social and economic development at national levels. They re-capped the following important **conclusions** which emerged:

- **Cannot “fly blind”** – without good outcome information, regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation, sound data analysis and feedback processes, and communication to all stakeholders, there is no hope for significant improvements. These systems help clarify what is working and what is not, so that adjustments can be made and problems addressed in a timely manner.
- **The quality of teachers is vital** to the success of initiatives to improve access to quality education and improved outcomes. Recruit good teachers and provide adequate training and support to offer **quality child-centered instruction**.
- Education reforms have to **focus on changes in the classroom** that improve learning outcomes; and
- **Many models exist for leveraging supply-side and demand-side programs** for education quality, such as conditional cash transfers and public-private partnerships, and they can be examined and adjusted to suit specific country contexts.

Dr Ward expressed the hope that as the event closed all the participants would go back to their countries and their institutions with renewed enthusiasm for and better understanding of how to ensure that all the children in South Asia have an opportunity to learn. He also encouraged the participants to stay in touch with each other and to make visits to sites where quality had been improved successfully, such as Tamil Nadu.

Dr Ward encouraged the Development Partners and MHRD in India to build on the Conference and to go further in future events into the question of how to do successful large scale reform in elementary and secondary education – he confirmed DFID India’s willingness to support these future events.

Ms. Riboud and Dr. Ward offered their appreciation to all the participants who attended the conference and contributed their valuable time and ideas, and gave special thanks to the organizers who made this event possible.