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Financing Basic Education in Bangladesh

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Summary

This paper presents education finance trends for Bangladesh since 2000. It shows that while government spending on education as a proportion of national income has stagnated, it has increased in real terms. Real increases in education spending have resulted in substantial increases in per student spending in basic education. At primary, enrolment declines have reinforced these trends and in 2005 per student spending in government primary schools was 30% higher, in real terms than in 2001. Despite these increases, per student spending on education in Bangladesh remains low compared to other countries in the region and countries at similar levels of development. Levels of government funding also vary enormously across different providers of basic education although these differences do not appear to have a significant impact on education outcomes at the primary level. At secondary, there appears to be a closer correlation between levels of public funding and outcomes although the socio-economic status of student intakes also appears to play an important role. To achieve equitable access to basic education, it is important to narrow these public funding differences. However, given the comparatively low levels of funding across the basic education system it is perhaps more important to increase overall levels of funding if the quality and overall efficiency of the system is to be improved.

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