

THE EDUCATION FOR ALL PROGRAMME

E DUCATION IS A KEY PARAMETER OF SUSTAINABLE HUMAN development and is essential for achieving international development targets. Development entails change of a societal and individual nature – education and learning of all kinds are key tools in enabling that change to take place, leading to new possibilities, new horizons and new connections. Education is also a fundamental human right and offers the hope that we can fulfil our potential as human beings.

The vision of Education for All (EFA) is to offer to everyone a basic education of quality, enabling children, youth and adults to grasp new opportunities, become more active citizens, and to initiate, manage and sustain positive change. International development targets, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), provide an essential development agenda with which the EFA goals have mutually reinforcing linkages. EFA and the MDGs have the same timeline – 2015 – and both aim to enhance international cooperation in support of the development plans of national governments.

The current Education for All (EFA) movement started in 1990 with a World Conference on Education in Jomtien, involving representatives from Governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies and Civil Society Organizations. The conference was convened by five multilateral agencies of the UN system – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and World Bank). The resulting Jomtien Declaration on EFA entailed a commitment by countries and development partners to achieving universal primary education by 2000. Despite some good progress this goal proved to be unrealistic for many countries in the time period proposed. The five convening partners organized a follow-up World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000, at which progress was reviewed, the EFA vision was renewed

and an integrated set of six EFA goals was agreed by the participating countries and agencies/organisations.

These six Dakar goals represent the most comprehensive and ambitious education goals the international community has ever agreed to pursue. In terms of broader development efforts, the Millennium Declaration and the related MDGs, agreed by Heads of Governments and agencies at the United Nations Millennium summit in September 2000, provide an over-arching international framework. The MDGs include two of the six Dakar goals, namely achieving universal primary education by 2015 and gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005. Progress in EFA has therefore become increasingly intertwined with efforts to achieve the MDGs. This approach more clearly highlights the contribution of education to overall development and reiterates the rationale for investing in education, both as a key driver of development and as a basic human right. Achieving all six EFA goals will play a significant part in reducing poverty and realising the whole of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) agenda.

ON FOCUS

“ Education does not consist merely in adorning the memory and enlightening the understanding. Its main business should be to direct the will. ”

JOSEPH JOUBERT

THE EFA GOALS

- 1 - Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- 2 - Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- 3 - Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- 4 - Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- 5 - Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality

in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;

6 - Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

EDUCATION-RELATED MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS WITH RELATED TARGETS

GOAL 2. ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Target 3: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

6 - Net Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education (UNESCO).

7 - Proportion of Pupils Starting Grade 1 who Reach Grade 5 (UNESCO).

8 - Literacy Rate of 15-24 year-olds (UNESCO).

GOAL 3. PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

9 - Ratio of Girls to Boys in Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Education (UNESCO).

10 - Ratio of Literate Women to Men 15-24 years old (UNESCO).

11 - Share of Women in Wage Employment in the Non-Agricultural Sector (ILO).

12 - Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (IPU).

Since Dakar, the world has witnessed steady progress towards achieving the EFA goals, in particular towards universal primary education and gender parity among the lower-income countries. Nevertheless, progress towards the EFA goals has not been sufficient and fast enough to meet the target dates, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and the Arab States. The gender parity goal for 2005 has already been missed, and over 80 countries are at risk of not achieving gender parity even by 2015. About one-fifth of the world's adult population – an estimated 781 million – remains illiterate. Quality at primary level remains a major issue worldwide, compounded by a serious shortage of trained and qualified teachers, particularly female teachers.

In response, the international community has made concerted efforts by providing technical and financial support to countries in need. In terms of financial support, there was a declining trend in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to education in the 1990s, but the year 2005 saw a positive projection of increased financial aid. While aid to basic education will likely increase in line with overall aid, its share would have to double to reach the estimated US\$ 7 billion a year necessary just to achieve UPE and gender parity.

The reform of the UN system also provides a positive arena for this Plan, which, like the current reform efforts, aims at greater coherence and effectiveness among agencies, while at the same time providing a sectoral framework for implementing the principles of the reform. A similar, mutually reinforcing relationship exists with the aims of the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness and Donor Harmonisation.

In countries where much remains to be accomplished, stronger political will is now visible. In support of this, it is urgent, eight years after the first commitment to the six EFA goals, to infuse new energy into the movement and to ensure that the seven remaining years before 2015 see concerted and complementary efforts. This requires the full engagement of all EFA stakeholders and particularly of the five convening agencies; a clear understanding of their relative roles responsibilities is essential. To respond to this need the Global Action Plan has been launched, building on each agency's comparative advantage and harmonising actions in support of country-led national education sector plans to achieve the EFA goals by 2015.

✓ INFO SOURCE: «EFA Global Action Plan.»

GLOBAL ACTION PLAN MONITORING REPORT 2008

The report conveys the principal developments and achievements since Dakar of the EFA six goals.

1 - EXPANDING AND IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Early childhood care and education programmes improve children's health, nutrition, well-being and cognitive development. They offset disadvantage and inequality and lead to better achievement in primary school. The comprehensive care and education of children

below age 3 remains a neglected area. Although child mortality rates have dropped, a majority of countries are not taking the necessary policy measures to provide care and education to children below age 3.

The provision of pre-primary education for children aged 3 and above has improved but remains scarce across sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States. Early childhood care and education programmes generally do not reach the poorest and most disadvantaged children, who stand to gain the most from them in terms of health, nutrition and cognitive development.

2 - ENSURING ACCESS TO FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION

Access to and participation in primary education have sharply increased since Dakar, and the number of out-of-school children dropped from 96 million to 72 million between 1999 and 2005.

Twenty-three countries that lacked legal provisions for compulsory education in 2000 have since established



them. Compulsory education laws now exist in 95% of 203 countries and territories.

The global net enrolment ratio rose from 83% to 87% between 1999 and 2005, faster than from 1991 to 1999. Participation levels increased most rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa (23%), and South and West Asia (11%). The number of out-of-school children dropped by 24 million to 72 million between 1999 and 2005. Thirty-five fragile states account for 37% of all out-of-school children.

Despite overall enrolment increases, subnational disparities in school participation persist between regions, provinces or states and between urban and rural areas. Children from poor, indigenous and disabled populations are also at a systematic disadvantage, as are those living in slums. On current trends, 58 out of 86 countries that have not yet reached universal primary enrolment will not achieve it by 2015.

3 - ENSURING THE LEARNING NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

This goal has been particularly neglected, in part because of the difficulty of defining, documenting and monitoring it. Many young people and adults acquire skills through informal means, or through a great variety of non-formal literacy, equivalency, life-skills and livelihood programmes.

Household surveys show that non-formal education is the main route to learning for many disadvantaged youth and adults in some of the world's poorest countries. Yet non-formal education programmes remain neglected in terms of public funding, although some governments have recently developed national frameworks for sustained provision.

4 - ACHIEVING A 50 PER CENT IMPROVEMENT IN ADULT LITERACY

Adult literacy remains a serious global issue. Worldwide, 774 million adults still lack basic literacy skills. Some 64% of them are women, a share virtually unchanged since the early 1990s. Three regions (East Asia, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa) concentrate the vast majority of the one in five adults around the world still denied the right to literacy. Except in China, there has been little progress during the past decade in reducing the large number of illiterate adults.

The adult literacy rate in developing countries increased from 68% to 77% between the periods 1985–1994 and 1995–2004. Of the 101 countries still far from achieving 'universal literacy', 72 will not succeed in halving their adult illiteracy rates by 2015.



5 - ELIMINATING GENDER DISPARITIES

Only 59 countries with data had achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005; 75% of countries with data are at parity or close to it at primary level, while 47% are close to reaching the goal in secondary education. Boys' underparticipation and underachievement are of growing concern in secondary education.

Only 18 out of 113 countries that missed the gender parity goal at primary and secondary level in 2005 stand a chance of achieving it by 2015. Gender equality remains elusive: sexual violence, insecure school environments and inadequate sanitation disproportionately affect girls' self-esteem, participation and retention. Textbooks, curricula and teacher attitudes continue to reinforce stereotypes on gender roles in society.

6 - IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Survival rates to the last grade of primary school improved between 1999 and 2004 in most countries with data but remained low in sub-Saharan Africa (median rate of 63%) and in South and West Asia (79%). Relatively low and unequal learning achievement in language and mathematics characterize many countries worldwide.

Crowded and dilapidated classrooms, too few textbooks and insufficient instructional time are widespread in many developing countries and fragile states. Pupil/teacher ratios have increased in sub-Saharan Africa and in South and West Asia since 1999. Eighteen million new primary school teachers are needed worldwide to reach universal primary education by 2015.

Many governments are hiring contract teachers to save costs and rapidly increase the teaching force, but where such teachers lack adequate training and service conditions, this practice could have a negative impact on quality in the future. ■

✓ INFO SOURCE: «EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.»

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*Considerate la vostra semenza:
Fatti non foste a viver come bruti,
ma a seguir virtute e conoscenza.*

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*Consider your origin:
you were not made to live as brutes,
but to pursue virtue and knowledge.*

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *La Divina Commedia*, Inferno, xxvi: 118-120.
[English translation: Charles S. Singleton, Princeton, Bollingen, 1989, p. 279.]

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