1. Opening / Adoption of agenda (Sheldon Shaeffer)

Sheldon Shaeffer opened the meeting with a welcome to all. Participants in turn introduced themselves and their organization (see attached participant list). A special welcome was directed to presenters from Viet Nam and all participants travelling in from the region.

Sheldon introduced the agenda and called for comments and amendments.

2. Report back from the South East Asian Ministerial Forum and SEAMEO-UNESCO Education Congress (Sheldon Shaeffer, Jerry Huguet)

Sheldon provided a brief report on recent collaborative activities between SEAMEO, UNICEF and UNESCO. On 26 May 2004, a South East Asian Ministerial Forum was held on Quality Education. This was followed directly by the SEAMEO-UNESCO Education Congress and Expo (27-29 May), which drew over 900 participants to Bangkok for plenary and parallel discussions on the theme of 'Adapting to Changing Times and Needs'. Select documents are available online.

Jerry Huguet participated in the Ministerial Forum as an UN observer and reported back to the TWG with highlights and a summary from the day (this brief is available on-line). He noted that the Forum was well attended by national representatives from the sub-region, UN agencies and NGOs. Both the Forum and Congress received positive press coverage, and an article from the Bangkok Post was distributed for all participants.

Three panel discussions on inclusive education, gender-responsive education, and healthy and protective learning environments took place in a fairly informal setting, resulting in a positive discussion and exchange.

Overall, governments are showing flexibility in providing education to the needs of the students and contexts in which they are learning. Importance is being placed on collaborative planning and management of education in local contexts. Teachers play a key role in education and therefore require special and additional training. Range and flexibility of education initiatives were positive and seen as a good step forward. The concept of quality education is being met with expanded vision by all stakeholders.

Sheldon noted that the Bangkok Declaration was easily signed, but Singapore and Brunei had asked in advance that all references to EFA and Dakar be removed (as neither country participated in the World Education Forum). However, Declarations do not guarantee commitment to action, and therefore the strategy will be to follow up the Declaration at upcoming meetings and sub-regional fora.

Bill Brohier thanked both SEAMEO and UNESCO for incorporating several sessions on disabilities. This allowed the disabilities contingent a platform to give meaningful input.
Kimmo Kosonen reported that his presentation during the Congress on the importance of mother tongue education resulted in a positive response by Lao PDR and the Philippines. He has taken steps to engage in further discussions.

Sheldon noted that the dissemination of major papers is the next step forward. Presentations and documentation from the forum will be collected and distributed electronically (via CD or internet).

3. Open discussion of current and planned EFA activities within SEAMEO member states (open)

Penny Price announced that as the TWG DC meets next week, there is no news to report since February. However, clarification is needed on the working group for the flagship. Further discussions will need to take place.

Aiko Akiyama participated in the Regional Seminar on Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in March 2004. In 2005, efforts will be made to further include disabilities issues in CLC activities. She has been in discussions with Kiichi Oyasu in this regard.

Chu Shiu-Kee noted that the number of CLCs in Viet Nam has grown from 80 to over 3000 in three years. Despite a very good basic education system, the government realizes that there are many groups outside the basic system who need and are interested in further training and opportunity. CLCs have been introduced to meet this need.

Sheldon noted that with CLCs now established throughout the region, the next challenge is expanding the content. Hameed A. Hakeem raised the question of catalytic input to ‘empower’ communities to take ownership of CLCs and content.

Bill proposed that Community Base Rehabilitation (CBR) and CLC approach be merged. CBR has successfully focused on addressing the needs of communities; however, it has not been involved in broader community development. Technical support can be considered in development of national plans.

Community based approaches are also effective in responding to the needs of AIDS affected people. It is important to build into the CLCs an ability to take action in areas of localized needs.

Binh Thanh Vu noted that in Viet Nam, the national government has support from UNESCO in setting up and providing CLCs (and access to non-formal education). However, nothing has been mentioned regarding agreements with the government to develop national guidelines and commitments extending beyond donor support. We must look with long-term perspective to ensure that action and follow up are taken.

Sheldon noted that the Bangkok Declaration possibly provides a mechanism to hold governments responsible for inclusive and quality education. Further to this, it is necessary to include CLCs into EFA National Action Plans and be incorporated into policy.

Kiichi Oyasu described an evolution in terms of CLCs at UNESCO. A move has taken place from concrete instruction and programming to mechanisms for community empowerment, rights to education, HIV/AIDS and nutrition. UNESCO is trying to encourage the government to take a different role: from direct implementer.
to a role of capacity building, support and central level coordination. CLCs are to focus on life long learning (and all that could entail), not only literacy.

Dominique Altner raised the following question to participants from Viet Nam: There seems to be a contradiction between priorities in strengthening communities while consistently insisting on bureaucracy (focal points, memorandums of understanding, etc.) How is this best reconciled?

Chu: This is neither a dichotomy nor a contradiction. Planning must involve government commitment sending clear messages of priority. However, when this is localized, there is an opportunity for inputs at the provincial and district level. Ownership in Viet Nam is not a problem. Provincial government expects lower levels to contribute. It is a combination, not a contradiction.

Binh: In the case of Viet Nam, lower levels will not take action without endorsement from higher levels. However, once policy has been endorsed, innovation takes place at lower levels. Central government must provide a framework for activities, but micro-management should be avoided. Decision-making should then take place from the bottom up, setting priorities to meet local needs.

4. Input from the TWG in the 6th National Coordinators Meeting (Sheldon Shaeffer, Jon Kapp)

Sheldon and Jon Kapp presented the terms of reference for the 2004 meeting of sub-regional National EFA Coordinators to be held in Bangkok over the week of 18-22 October. EFA coordinators are in the long process of implementing action plans. To support this process the meeting will look at challenges of implementation. Ownership is critical. The draft terms of reference are open for input by members of the TWG. Comments are welcomed.

Bill suggested that the EFA coordinators could be encouraged to interface and coordinate closely with counterparts at local UN agencies and relevant NGOs. In implementing programmes, a counterpart is crucial to ensure commitment.

Dominique Altner provided an update on the EFA planning process in Lao PDR. To date, a draft plan has been submitted to donor agencies and supporting governments. MOE had committed itself to finish by April/May. The plan will be presented at the national education congress in July. This will be followed by a one-day donor meeting to analyze the plan. After a late start, there were many points for input, though the plan remains weak in several areas. No agreement has been reached on priorities (including teacher salaries and access to lower secondary education). There may be another chance to improve the plan through a sector development plan (SDP) of all major donors. There is a target to develop this SDP by the end of 2004. Activating donor support is necessary. A sector wide simulation model is being developed.

Penny noted that the inclusive education programme in Lao PDR has expanded, but it seems to be taken separately and quite outside the national action plan. The lack of comprehensive planning is an issue.

10:15-10:30 Coffee Break

Sheldon introduced the special focus on Viet Nam for the 13th meeting. This focus is in keeping with the 2004 strategy of focused presentations and discussion from...
countries within the sub-region. Chu Shiu-Kee, UNESCO Hanoi, and Binh Thanh Vu, World Bank, Viet Nam were introduced.

5. Country Presentation: Viet Nam
   
a. FTI Targeted Budget Support
   (Binh Thanh Vu, World Bank, Vietnam)

Binh presented on the Fast Track Initiative Target Budget Support programme in Viet Nam. The powerpoint slides from this presentation are available on line.

Binh identified the following as challenges of FTI targeted budget support:
- Coordination within Government and between agencies at all levels;
- Monitoring mechanisms for implementation; and
- Harmonization between government-donors and among donors

Needs assessment is addressed each year through a district audit. Three sets of questionnaires will be distributed to identify existing situations. Fundamental school quality levels will be used as a benchmark. Capacity building will be included to strengthen the identification of needs and priorities, which must be based on school development plans. School and district plans will be updated yearly.

Sheldon noted that this project focused on input of resources at localized levels which avoided ‘leakage’ of funds.

Kimmo noted that in prioritizing funding, most countries claim that language barriers are the biggest challenge. With this in mind, have donors thought of supporting bilingual education as a solution?

Binh: education law in Viet Nam prioritizes mother tongue teaching; however, funds are limited and thus instruction for all 53 minority languages proves to be very difficult due to a lack of minority language scripts, for example. However, WB encourages local government to introduce mother tongue teaching.

Kimmo stressed that it takes very little time (about one day\(^1\) according to Professor Loi, a Vietnamese expert on language development) to develop a new writing system for a Vietnamese minority language. Sheldon pointed to Papua New Guinea where education is provided in 300 languages, defying the arguments made by more developed countries (i.e. Viet Nam, Thailand). In order to stress the importance of mother tongue education, there must be a coordinated response from donors and agencies. We cannot simply buy into arguments.

b. EFA Planning and the Roll out to the Provinces
   (Chu Shiu-Kee, UNESCO Hanoi)

Chu followed with a presentation of the EFA planning process and the current actions taken to roll out the plan to the provinces. The presentation complemented the presentation on targeted budget support, stepping back to look at the EFA planning process and current activities to implement the plan. The powerpoint slides from this presentation are available on line.

\(^1\) The reason that may take such a short time there is that most Vietnamese languages have already been studied (and linguists have a wealth of data on about 100 languages spoken there) and a specialist such as Prof. Loi, who knows the details of these languages, knows how the Vietnamese script works, and has already developed writing systems for several languages. In other contexts it may take longer, but professional linguists can do this in months even in more difficult contexts.
Apichai Sunchindah noted that in both presentations, donor coordination was identified as a key challenge, though mechanisms are in place to facilitate this harmonization. What are the shortcomings and what steps have been taken to overcome this?

Chu: An education sector group has been formed, including donors, NGOs and MoET. This will enhance dialogue and understanding of priorities.

Sheldon noted that a similar group had been established in Lao PDR (modelled on Cambodia).

6. Flagship Briefings (flagship members)

Sheldon announced that the UNESCO Bangkok toolkit, ‘Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments’ has been piloted and will be available soon in electronic form and in a series of booklets. TWG members are encouraged to request copies of the toolkit via email to gender@unescobkk.org.

Kiichi announced that a resource team has been established to support the Literacy Decade; a non-formal education seminar will be organised with JICA in September. At this occasion or the EFA Coordinators meeting, further discussions will take place regarding literacy initiatives.

Hakeem reported back on the FAO-UNESCO workshop on Rural Education. Conclusions from the workshop are not all positive: in rural settings, poverty remains an issue, and food challenges are serious. Education needs are still unmet and unserved groups still exist. Cost matters and the unit costs for education are much higher in the rural areas. There is good news, however. There is generally less marginalisation in rural contexts. Better coordination exists between education and agriculture ministries, and there has been a recognition of comparative advantages of rural schools. A workshop report is available on line.

Miyongji Parks provided a brief update on regional UNGEI activities. She is currently collecting information from all countries in the region to assess the situation for girls’ education. To date, 14 responses from nine countries have been received. The questionnaire will be redistributed and responses will be compiled and analysed in about two weeks.

At the end of July in Paris, an annual meeting of the high level EFA working group (including 50-60 participants from governments and NGOs) will look at FTI, data and statistics, looking at linkages. China and Viet Nam will be represented from the region. Reports from the working group will be distributed to the TWG membership.

The annual Global Monitoring Report on EFA will be circulated by the end of the year. The text should be nearly finalised now for publication by November. More information will follow from UNESCO Bangkok in this regard.

The Taskforce on EFA within the TWGDC will look at its terms of reference and discuss how this could be integrated into the regional flagship. Recommendations out of Kampala were for a regional flagship with UNESCO serving as chair. Clarification will be sought and information shared.
7. Announcements, upcoming events/workshops (open)

Sheldon introduced a proposal towards the development of the Association for the Development of Education in the Asia-Pacific region (ADEAP), drafted and submitted by Ko-Chih Tung. This proposal was based on experiences in Africa, proposing a mechanism for stronger coordination at the regional level. This proposal attempts to layout mechanisms for implementation. This current draft should be seen as information only. Comments are welcome. After further discussions, future drafts will be disseminated.

The TWGDC will meet 15-16 June. On the 15th, individual taskforces (including the TF on EFA) will meet.

On 11-14 July 2004, the Faculty of Education at Chulalongkorn University will host an International Conference on Managing Teacher Education for Excellence. More information is available online through at www.edu.chula.ac.th/interconference_july. This could prove to be an important platform for interventions on Quality Inclusive Education.

Apichai announced the launch of the Thai MDG report on 23 June. On 24 June, Jeffery Sachs will present a lecture on MDGs. This will be held at the UNCC.

In mid-July, Bangkok will host an International HIV/AIDS Congress. UNDP plans to launch a special report on HIV/AIDS in Thailand.

UNDP will release the annual global human development report in July. A local launch is tentatively scheduled for the end of July. This year, the theme of the report is cultural liberties in a diverse world.

Sheldon closed the meeting, thanking all representatives for their participation.