MINUTES

List of participants

1. Mr. Sheldon Shaeffer, UNESCO Bangkok
2. Mr. Paul Giacomini, SIL International
3. Ms. Susan Malone, SIL International
4. Mr. Dennis Malone, SIL International
5. Ms. San Yuenwah, ESCAP
6. Ms. Achariya Kohtbantan, World Bank
7. Ms. Junko Miyahara, UNICEF EAPRO
8. Ms. Jamnan Panpatama, UNDCP
9. Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Bangkok
10. Ms. Hiroko Tanaka, ESCAP
11. Mr. Riku Warjovaara, UNESCO Bangkok

1. Opening

Mr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Director, UNESCO Bangkok, opened the meeting.

2. Report on the Fourth National EFA Coordinators' meeting 7-10 October 2002

Mr. Shaeffer reported to the participants on the Fourth National EFA Coordinators’ meeting which was held 7-10 October in Bangkok (please see the attached report for further information). Mr. Shaeffer noted that some of the countries such as Cambodia and Vietnam are well advanced in their EFA planning process, Indonesia, Lao PDR have a good start, Myanmar has a systematic process now in place and the Philippines, under the new Secretary of Education, seems now prepared to re-start the process. He also mentioned that the process of the meeting, which was much more focused on group work and interactive discussions, had been good. The draft report of the meeting has been distributed by e-mail to the SRF/TWG members.

3. Report on the FRESH meeting

Mr. Shaeffer informed the meeting that there are two new Flagship Programmes: Education and Disability and Rural Education.

The Flagship programme of FRESH (Focusing Resources for Effective School Health) is co-sponsored by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, WHO and WFP. Its focus is on the psychosocial and physical health of schools and their students. A recent meeting in Chiang Mai, which was attended by governments’ and UN agency representatives of the Mekong region, focused on how to introduce the FRESH into the EFA framework.
4. Information on the upcoming rural education meeting

Mr. Shaeffer informed the meeting of the upcoming workshop “Education for Rural Development and Food Security in Asia” which will be held in Bangkok 5-7 November 2002 and is jointly organized UNESCO and FAO, and is part of the EFA Flagship Initiative on rural education. The participants will be representatives from Ministries of Education and Agriculture and NGO representatives. The objectives of the meeting are to discuss the findings of an UNESCO/FAO study on education for rural development and food security, share good practices, improve intersectoral cooperation and design follow-up activities.

More information will be provided by Mr. Malcolm Hazelman (FAO, Bangkok) or Mr. A.H. Hakeem (UNESCO Bangkok). The agenda and background note on the meeting were distributed.

5. Information on the upcoming HIV/AIDS meetings (e.g. next ESCAP Commission session on HIV/AIDS) and Inter-Agency Task Team on AIDS

On the EFA Flagship programme on HIV/AIDS, Mr. Shaeffer informed the meeting that the Inter-Agency Task Team on AIDS is focusing on the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on education systems. In this region the impact can be seen clearly e.g. in Thailand and Cambodia. Therefore, models on how to respond to this impact have to be developed. Some examples will be brought from Africa and the Regional HIV/AIDS Coordinator at UNESCO Bangkok is conducting interviews at Ministries of Education in the region. Additionally, UNESCO has developed an advocacy kit on HIV/AIDS.

Ms. Susan Malone from SIL informed the meeting that they are conducting radio soap operas in local language on HIV/AIDS with special focus on girls and women.

Mr. Shaeffer said that the UNESCO Bangkok Culture Unit has a project on HIV/AIDS prevention in the form of soap operas and is applying for more funds from ADB together with SEAMEO to expand the programme.

Ms. San Yuenwah from ESCAP briefed the Meeting on the HIV/AIDS focus of the 59th annual Commission session. Delegations from the 61-government ESCAP membership were expected to attend. Three publications were under preparation, i.e., an analytical theme study, an action guide directed at policy makers and aimed at promoting the expansion of multiministerial responses to HIV/AIDS, as well as a compendium of civil society good practices. In addition, an exhibition on the theme of fighting stigma and discrimination would be mounted. The session would also feature special presentations and panel discussions.

Mr. Shaeffer offered the assistance of the SRF/TWG on the preparations of the Commission session.

6. Information and discussion on the Regional UNGEI

Mr. Shaeffer explained that regarding girls’ education and two related Dakar Framework for Action Goals, the first goal is about the girls’ right to have equal access by 2005 and the second goal is to ensure gender equality in education systems by 2015.
Ms. Jensen from UNESCO Bangkok explained that the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) is one of the Flagship programmes as well and is at the global level coordinated by UNICEF. Thirteen other UN agencies are currently involved. She further noted that progress has been made in terms of access over the past ten years but gender gaps still exist both in access and opportunities in schools. She informed the meeting that UNICEF EAPRO invited agencies based in Bangkok to a Regional UNGEI meeting in May 2002 and the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Regional UNGEI were disseminated. The TOR focuses primarily on advocacy and networking.

She further noted that UNGEI country level initiatives have not been very successful so far and that the discussions on how to take UNGEI to national level are going on.

Ms. Jensen explained that in EFA Action Plans in the region, some countries are including girls’ education but many of the countries pay little attention to the issue. In this region there is a need for looking at equality in the school system rather than access and this will need qualitative studies. The next meeting of the Regional UNGEI on November will focus on advocacy issues and concrete activities.

Mr. Shaeffer informed the meeting that one of the UNESCO Bangkok activities is to facilitate the networking among Gender Focal Points in the Ministries of Education in Asia.

Mr. Shaeffer concluded that the Regional UNGEI will report regularly to the SRF/TWG on EFA activities.

7. Discussion on the terms of reference of the SRF and TWG

Mr. Shaeffer explained the roles of the SRF and TWG to the meeting:

The Regional Co-ordination Meeting held in Bangkok on 25 April 2000 decided to constitute a Thematic Working Groups (TWG) as a regional co-ordination mechanism to promote collaborative activities such as follow-up to global conferences. UNESCO Bangkok requested a separate TWG on EFA in early 2001. The UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (previously UNESCO PROAP) is the Chair and acts as a Secretariat of the TWG. UNICEF-EAPRO and ESCAP serve as Co-Chairs. The TWG works very closely with the Sub-Regional EFA Forum (SRF) for East and Southeast Asia, and subsequently it was agreed that the TWG and the SRF would have joint meetings due to the fact that the membership of the bodies is more or less the same. Also, the similarities of the broad objectives of the two working groups are evident. The difference between the TWG and the SRF is that the TWG is a sub-regional support mechanism for countries to follow up the recommendations of the Dakar Framework for Action. The SRF focuses mainly on country level activities regarding the National EFA Forum, the preparation of National EFA Plans, data collection and analysis, and capacity building, whereas the main purpose of the TWG is promotion of UN Interagency collaboration in the areas related to the EFA and programme actions within the Dakar Framework for Action.

The membership of the SRF includes all those involved in the World Education Forum, including country representatives of Member States. The TWG membership is basically UN agencies but is open to other organizations such as government representatives and NGOs.

So far, the priority of the two groups has been to finalise the EFA Action Plans. However, since the Action Plans are due by 2002, the terms of reference of the groups should be
reviewed, possibly with separate TORs for both. The TWG on EFA could take a more prominent role in inter-donor cooperation and have concrete, collaborative, inter-agency activities in the framework of Flagship programmes whereas SRF would focus more on monitoring the EFA Action Plan implementation, fund-raising and capacity building and work at the country level to ensure the implementation of the EFA Action Plans.

UNESCO Bangkok, together with Co-Chairs (UNICEF and ESCAP), will draft separate TORs for two groups and present them for discussion at the next meeting.

8. AOB

Susan Malone from SIL informed the meeting about the upcoming meeting on language development, language revitalization and multilingual education in Asia which is sponsored by the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development (Mahidol University-Salaya), SIL International, and UNESCO. Please see the attached First Announcement for further information.

She mentioned that one of the objectives of the meeting is to invite those Ministers of Education who can testify to their peers that the language development, revitalization and multilingual education particularly among minorities can be done and is possible to implement.

Further to Ms Malone’s request for information on new developments that facilitated language development and the education of ethnic minority groups, Ms. San Yuenwah mentioned the relevance of DAISY (Digital Audio Information System). DAISY had originally been developed to meet the communication needs of people with disabilities, but was also very useful for helping non-disabled persons in learning new languages and in strengthening their literacy skills.

Ms. Jamnan Panpatama from UNDCP explained that UNDCP is also very interested in languages at the grass-root level and among the minorities and has developed radio-programmes in Lisu language in southern China, Thailand and Myanmar among minorities on drug use and abuse.

Mr. Shaeffer noted that in Thailand UNESCO has tried to introduce non-formal education programmes in mother-tongue but has faced political resistance.

9. Next meeting and closing

The next meeting will be held late January - early February, subject to further discussion.