Contents

- Introduction
- EFA – the achievable goal
- The price tag
- Education in countries in crisis
- National EFA action plans
- Literacy and non-formal education
- Educating girls and women
- School health (FRESH)
- HIV/AIDS and education
- The role of civil society
This Information Kit on Education for All is an attempt, some eighteen months after the World Education Forum in Dakar, to take stock of the major issues facing the EFA movement, to outline current trends and to identify possible avenues of future action. The kit has been designed as an easy-to-use and up-to-date source of quick reference for all those involved in the EFA endeavour, including ministers of education, planning and international cooperation, along with their technical staff; UN agencies and development partners (bilateral and multilateral); non-governmental organizations active in education and related fields; and educationists, professional bodies, and researchers.

Many of the themes developed in this kit relate directly to the six EFA goals and associated targets which national governments and the international community have committed themselves to attain by 2015 at the latest. Other themes, such as EFA in countries in crisis and the impact of HIV/AIDS on education, are highlighted because they clearly deserve special attention. Without urgent and targeted action, a number of countries will not meet the EFA goals according to the schedule agreed in Dakar.

The key role of partnership in the EFA drive is the common thread running through the entire kit. EFA will not be achieved without the collaboration of all partners at all levels. At the national level, of course, the driving force behind EFA must be the government, working in collaboration with civil society and the private sector, and supported by international partners of several kinds. Good examples of partnership in practice are evident in the flagship initiatives such as the UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), the AIDS, Education and School flagship, and Focussing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH).

Collaboration with civil society is gaining ground. The Dakar Framework for Action specifically calls for greater civil society involvement in national policy making. Today, civil society organizations are making increased efforts to present a coherent voice and to build systematic relationships with governments and international agencies. Through such partnership, we can make common cause in the struggle to achieve basic education for all of sound quality.

I hope you will find this Information Kit informative and thought-provoking.

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Education provides individuals with the power to reflect, make choices and enjoy a better life, stresses the Dakar Framework for Action. Education has powerful synergistic effects on other development objectives: empowerment, protection of the environment, better health and good governance. Education of mothers has a strong impact on health, family welfare and fertility.

According to a recent OECD report, investment in education results in a clear economic pay-off: one extra year of education leads to an increase in an individual’s output per capita of between 4 and 7 per cent (in OECD countries).

Education is important for other reasons too, especially the cultivation of values, attitudes and conduct essential for living together in peace, and for personal growth and fulfilment.

Since the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990), real progress towards EFA targets has been made: 10 million more children attend school each year; adult literacy rates rose to 85 per cent for men and 74 per cent for women; primary school enrolment increased from 599 million in 1990 to 681 million in 1998; the number of out-of-school children fell from 127 million to 113 million.

At the same time, over 100 million children, mostly girls, were still out of school and risked joining the 875 million illiterate adults, nearly two-thirds of them women.

Educational quality often remains low and uneven. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa less than three-quarters of pupils reach Grade 5. Yet research indicates that six years of primary education is needed to reach sustainable levels of literacy and numeracy.

Many individual countries have achieved dramatic progress in expanding enrolments, improving schooling retention and completion rates, and reducing gender disparities. For example, enrolments in Uganda, Malawi and Mauritania have doubled in a matter of five years, approaching 100 per cent gross enrolment ratio. Benin and Guinea-Bissau have steadily expanded primary enrolments.

Some regions are also close to the goal of universal primary education. This is already a reality in developed and transition countries, and East Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean are close to reaching the goal.
Although this expansion of enrolment has outpaced population growth, it still falls short of the pace necessary to meet the goal of universal enrolment in all regions.

Is the goal of universal primary education as difficult as it was in the past decade? For most countries, school enrolment growth of 5 per cent per year over the next 15 years would suffice to achieve EFA goals, though several will need to grow at up to 10 per cent per year.

In developing countries primary schools will need to accommodate about 156 million more children than in 1997, an increase of 27 per cent.

A particular effort will be needed in sub-Saharan Africa, which will have to accommodate more than half of the additional school places required at the global level: roughly a 150 per cent increase from its 1997 enrolment level, almost three times the effort undertaken during the period 1990-97.

Angola, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Liberia, Niger and Somalia will need to increase their efforts ten-fold.

South Asia will have to enrol about 40 million more children – an increase of one third – requiring at least the same pace of effort as in the 1990-1997 period.

The Arab States need twice the previous effort to accommodate some 23 million additional children, representing an increase of 72 per cent.

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.
While the challenge is considerable, there is reason to be optimistic. Many countries, including some very poor ones, have demonstrated that with political leadership and commitment it is possible to attain rapid progress.

Projections show that for almost all of the very low-enrolment countries, once the system stabilizes after an initial surge in enrolments has moved through the system (a period of about 10 years), national resources should be able to sustain efforts.

In the meantime, significant external financing will be required to cover the additional direct costs of enrolling all children in school, improving quality and reducing the direct costs of education. Higher levels of international aid, however, will be related to more effective utilization of resources and increased national effort.

Achieving EFA will require better systems of gathering, analysing and disseminating information from individual countries. Specifically, there are urgent needs for:

- Better mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating national plans;
- Better data on the functioning of national education systems;
- Better information on what works;
- Better tracking of educational expenditures; and
- Focus on quality of education and on all six Dakar goals.

Achieving these goals will require sustained, intensive and co-ordinated action on several fronts. Transforming resource inputs into learning outcomes requires not just financial investment but also effective education systems, the right mix of resources (e.g. teachers and learning materials) and an overall national context of sound economic and social policies. Without significant policy changes, existing structural imbalances will hinder the attainment of the Dakar goals.

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Achieving Education for All will require large amounts of new financial resources, a significant proportion of which must come from the individual countries themselves.

According to the World Bank, only 3 per cent of education budgets in developing countries are funded by the international community. Other estimates put this figure at 10 per cent, while in some specific countries it can be as high as 40 per cent. Although countries will continue to fund the lion’s share of their education systems, external funding will be vital to allow them to step up their EFA efforts.

Despite the pledge made by the international community in Jomtien (Thailand, 1990), Official Development Assistance (ODA) and lending declined severely during the mid-1990s although it has recovered somewhat in recent years. As a percentage of GNP of OECD/DAC countries, ODA fell by more than one-fifth in constant dollar terms, with slight recovery in 1999. Given the urgency of reaching the EFA goals, this decline is disturbing.

Even in the least developed countries, the trend has been downward. Sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed the sharpest decline, of roughly one-third. Four major economies – France, Germany, Japan and the United States – recorded the highest reductions in their assistance during the 1990s.

Although it is noteworthy that within this overall drop, education seems to have suffered relatively less, no increase was registered. Basic education, on the other hand, continues to constitute an insignificant proportion of individual countries’ development assistance.

The Dakar Framework for Action calls for external funding on a systematic basis. It states: “We affirm that no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources”. It also calls for a global initiative to formulate the strategies and mobilize the resources needed to provide effective support to national EFA efforts.

The global initiative is based on a common understanding between development partners and countries on the following basic principles:
It is more than a financial mechanism; it is a means of tackling poverty reduction, ensuring sustainable development and creating an enabling environment nationally, primarily through human and institutional capacity-building. Resources are understood as financial, human and material.

It favours a sector-wide approach above the fragmented project support that characterized development co-operation in earlier decades.

It argues that greater predictability rests, on one hand, on the capacity of aid providers to fulfil medium – or long-term commitments, and on the other, on the capacity of aid-receiving countries to absorb and use funding in accordance with nationally defined plans and goals.

It supports the identification of innovative financial schemes that can supplement official development assistance and lending. Debt relief and/or cancellation and debt for development swaps are examples of such mechanisms.

It argues that more effective donor co-ordination could support consistency in goals and strategies by all actors and maximize the impact of international assistance.

The World Bank, UNESCO and other organizations are calculating the likely additional EFA funding needs by countries to achieve universal primary education. Current global estimates vary between OXFAM’s $8 billion a year and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics’ $15 billion.

However, taking the highest estimate of $15 billion a year, the cost of achieving EFA is less than 0.3 per cent of total GNP of the developing countries, 0.06 per cent of that of developed countries and 0.05 per cent of the world’s GNP.

Considering that for the period 1997-98, ODA averaged only $703 million, the resource gap compared with the lowest required figure – $8 billion – is glaring.

Only five countries – Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Luxembourg (in the case of Luxembourg, provisional indications for 2000) actually meet the UN target of 0.7 per cent or more of GNP for international development assistance. All development partners should not only fulfil this commitment but should also increase the proportion they allocate to basic education.

Another proposal is increasing ODA for basic social services from the current 10 to 20 per cent along the lines of the 20:20 Initiative, which recommends that development partners provide 20 per cent of their international assistance to basic social services and recipient countries 20 per cent of their budgets.

Support for education in countries in crisis and emergencies must be addressed now. The EFA partners must jointly find creative ways to sustain these countries, thus demonstrating their collective will to follow through effectively on the Dakar commitment.

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Children and adolescents in refugee, internal displacement or other crisis situations have the right to receive an education and to benefit from the stabilizing and reassuring environment that schools provide. The importance of these rights was recognized by the Dakar Framework, which highlighted “the needs of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability.”

Emergencies, caused by armed conflict, chronic crises or natural disasters are a major constraint upon the achievement of EFA. It is estimated that roughly fifty countries today are in conflict or post-conflict situations or host substantial refugee populations. Unless support to these countries is reinforced considerably, a sizeable number of them will be unable to meet their Dakar pledge.

Although education is increasingly viewed as the “fourth pillar” of humanitarian response alongside those of food, shelter and health, some donor agencies do not yet see education as a vital component in situations of emergency and crisis.

In the 1990s, as much as 1 per cent of the world’s population was displaced by conflict or other disasters. In many displaced populations, children under 18 make up half of the population. At the beginning of 2001, the number of people of concern to UNHCR was almost 22 million. This figures includes refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and internally displaced persons. In Africa alone, more than 120,000 boys and girls under 18 years of age are currently participating in armed conflicts. Some of these children are no more than 7 or 8 years old. Roughly 300,000 under-18-year-olds are today enrolled in armies in Afghanistan, Somalia, Congo, Sierra Leone, Colombia, Sri Lanka and other countries.

On the other hand, only 1 million children and young people are recorded as beneficiaries of education services, provided either in refugee camps or in special programmes, of whom 40 per cent are girls.

Refugee camps cited as providing model education programmes are those in Nepal for Bhutanese refugees, in Pakistan for Afghans, and in Guinea and Uganda for multiple refugee populations. In countries of continuing, long-term crisis, such as Somalia, Angola
and Sierra Leone, UNESCO, UNICEF, the European Union and NGOs are working to provide educational services in these unstable situations.

Key messages relevant to new and stressful situations are disseminated, such as HIV/AIDS prevention, landmine and environmental awareness and peace and citizenship education. Gender-sensitive materials are also increasingly available as are new and more targeted programmes for children with disabilities and ex-combatants, and for training of refugee teachers, youth leaders, community school committees and local education authorities.

The challenges are many and diverse as implementing agencies strive to improve quality, coverage and management.

One mechanism created to meet these challenges through collaborative efforts is the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Network is under the leadership of UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, CARE and the Norwegian Refugee Council, and it has a staffed Secretariat within UNESCO’s Unit for Support to Countries in Crisis and Reconstruction.

INEE is working to develop learning materials, as well as policy guidelines and standards. Four specialized international task teams have also been established to develop teaching and learning resources, monitoring and evaluation instruments, guidance notes for formal and non-formal post-primary education, and tools for information sharing. INEE has a growing membership roster of agencies, including Ministries of Education, bi- and multi-lateral donors, and NGOs.

Agencies, donors and implementing partners have developed phased strategies to respond to new crises. The dominant emphasis is now upon education for repatriation.

Much of the work is implemented by UN agencies and bilaterals, many in partnership with international and local NGOs:
- UNICEF provides a rapid educational response and child-centred methods and materials.
- The World Food Programme contributes food for students and teachers.
- UNHCR supports education in refugee primary and secondary schools.
- UNESCO undertakes emergency education efforts in East and Central Africa, and provides technical support in other regions.
- Emergency education is the core activity of several major NGOs, many of which provide basic education to children, adolescents and even adults.

Areas to be addressed are defining strategies, within the framework of reconstruction programmes, to re-establish peace and sustainable development in post-conflict situations, and the serious shortage of funding.

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National EFA action plans are the very foundations of the Education for All drive. The Dakar Framework for Action stipulates that all States should develop or strengthen national plans of action. It also suggests that they:

- be integrated into a wider poverty reduction and development framework;
- be developed through transparent and democratic processes, involving stakeholders, especially peoples’ representatives, community leaders, parents, learners, non-governmental organizations and civil society;
- address budget priorities that reflect a commitment to achieving EFA goals and targets;
- set out clear strategies for overcoming the problems facing those currently excluded from educational opportunities, with a clear commitment to girls’ education and gender equity.

They should be completed by 2002 at the latest.

They are essential for planning and introducing reforms as well as for assessment and monitoring purposes. They allow for a sharpening of focus and prioritizing in areas of need and are a precondition for resource mobilization nationally and internationally.

Much discussion has centred around what constitutes a credible action plan. Their quality is fundamental to establishing their credibility with development partners. The recommendations of the Dakar Framework for Action coupled with the views of EFA partners suggest that the following dimensions are essential:

- The plans should be comprehensive, addressing all six EFA goals and the issues covered by the flagship programmes; they should relate directly to national plans for poverty reduction; and be feasible in light of the foreseeable financial and institutional environment, and available human resources.
- They should include indicators, targets and measures of good quality for each EFA goal.
- To ensure ownership of the reform process, they should be fully participatory. In other words, major civil society organizations with a stake in education should be included in the planning process.
To gain public support on a scale commensurate with the EFA challenge, constant high-level advocacy, and persuasive public relations and communications work should be undertaken.

Meeting the EFA goals is a management challenge of a high order. They are achievable if they become a national priority.

Countries are at various stages in the preparation of national action plans. Of the sixty-six countries responding to UNESCO’s survey on the status of EFA plans, in May 2001, forty-one reported already having a plan.

The quality of the existing national plans varies widely. A major concern is that many education development plans do not conform to the basic principles laid out in the Dakar Framework for Action, such as, for instance, the involvement of all stakeholders (parents, teachers, NGOs etc.) in the planning process.

It is clear that most countries need to revisit their existing plans or develop them in accordance with the EFA criteria. The plans should embody the national consensus on EFA. The process is as important as the final document.

Where governments have set up parallel forums for formulation of EFA plans, this has resulted in certain cases in two separate plans.

Where countries already have existing plans, the idea is to integrate EFA goals into these rather than create new ones.

Governments now need help in preparing their EFA plans and are awaiting the support promised in the Dakar Framework for Action. Fifty-five countries responding to UNESCO’s survey indicated they would require methodological and technical support for the preparation of EFA plans or strengthening of existing ones. Only seven said that no support was needed.

The onus is on the international community to support these efforts so that credible EFA action plans are on the table by the 2002 deadline.

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