EFA Mid-Decade Assessment and Mid-Term Review

The Message in this document
This document is a summary of the preparations for the national and regional EFA Mid-Decade Assessment (2006-2007) and Mid-Term Review (2007-2008) for the Asia-Pacific region. The theme of the assessment is “reaching the unreached”, focusing on quality and equality in access and participation in achieving each of the six goals of EFA. The current lead coordinating agencies are UNESCO and UNICEF. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNDP, UNFPA, ILO and other agencies, especially the bilaterals and NGOs who are active supporters of education-sector development, are very welcome, indeed acutely needed, to join this concerted assistance to national assessments.

Background
Education for All (EFA) is a basic human right at the heart of development. EFA was recognized by Article 26 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations and then over 40 years later at a world conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand. Participants from 155 countries and representatives of 160 governmental and non-governmental agencies adopted a World Declaration on EFA, reaffirming the notion of education as a fundamental human right and urging nations of the world to intensify their efforts to address the basic learning needs of all. The Jomtien Framework for Action to Meet the Basic Learning Needs spelled out targets and strategies for reaching the EFA goal by the year 2000. The key points and principles included universal access to learning; a focus on equity; emphasis on learning outcomes; broadening the means and the scope of basic education; enhancing the environment for learning; and strengthening partnerships.

In 1998-1999, participating countries were expected to assess their progress toward the EFA goals, and UN EFA convening agencies were meant to assist in this endeavor (EFA 2000 Assessment), in anticipation of the end-of-decade review. In April 2000, the World Education Forum was held in Dakar, Senegal. The Forum provided the opportunity to respond to the assessment of the achievements, lessons and failures of the ten-year period since the Jomtien Declaration. There were more than 1,100 participants from 164 countries ranging from teachers to prime ministers, academics to policy makers, political activists to the heads of major political organizations. It included national assessments of the progress achieved since Jomtien in 183 countries, the problems encountered and recommendations for future action. In some parts of the world, the assessment showed that although the barriers to achieving EFA are formidable, progress had been achieved in proving that EFA is a realistic and achievable goal. However, in other parts of the world there was very little progress and, in some cases, even reversals.

EFA 1990 - 2000: Weak or no national capacity for systematic assessment
The Jomtien Declaration had foreseen the need for national monitoring of progress toward the attainment of the EFA goals. It was assumed that, along with the education reforms to fulfill their commitments to the EFA goals, Governments, as a matter of good governance, would monitor the implementation and assess the outcomes of their policies. However, it became clear that there was a lack of follow-through with investment in the long-term process of national capacity-building of this monitoring function. A mid-decade review of the original EFA goals was undertaken in 1995, in Amman, Jordan – a review for which most countries had received little help to prepare a status report. The need for disaggregated data (to better identify disparities) was clearly highlighted, especially by UNICEF.

1 With the new broader and more complex set of EFA goals set at the 2000 World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal), these limitations were further exacerbated. The six goals of EFA pertain to early childhood care and education (ECCE), primary/basic education, life skills, literacy, gender equality and quality of education.
Nine years went by and less than a year before the Dakar Conference, countries were invited to submit the end-of-decade “EFA 2000 Assessment Report.” The lesson learnt from this assessment and the mid-term review in 1995 was that at least two years are required to conduct proper and relevant nationwide data collection and analysis in developing countries where the necessary infrastructure is absent or inadequate. Many countries submitted reports written by agency-sponsored foreign consultants who had to rely upon poor and out-dated data.

In almost all cases, relying largely on school-administrative data aggregated at the national level, the reports for the EFA 2000 Assessment left many areas in the dark, especially those areas not covered by the formal primary education – early childhood care and education (ECCE), life skills, literacy, non-formal education, quality – and sub-national variations in the impact of the education reforms since the Jomtien Declaration. Who constitute the unreached target groups? To whom and how shall EFA address its educational reforms? Who have been left out of the Education for All?

Preparations for EFA Mid-Decade Assessment and Mid-Term Policy Review

Following the Dakar Conference, Strategy 11 of the “International Strategy to put the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All into Operation” (UNESCO 2002) refers to “Systematically monitor progress towards EFA goals and strategies at the national, regional and international levels.” Further, to improve EFA monitoring, partners will cooperate to:

- Improve the quality of data collected in each country
- Build national capacity for data collection and analysis
- Improve the analysis of EFA progress
- Develop measures for the performance of international agencies, bilateral agencies, and NGOs and their partnerships with countries
- Facilitate the exchange of information and data collection methods between countries.

As a partner in this process and learning from the lessons of the past experience, the Office of the Regional Advisor for the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) has been assisting countries for the past three years in the development of national capacity to conduct their own evidence-based policy management, including the capacity to formulate, monitor, evaluate and assess their own policies. To assist countries, UNESCO Bangkok and the UIS Office of the Regional Advisor established the Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring, and Statistics (AIMS) Unit. This programme initiated a workshop on Capacity-Building for Monitoring and Evaluation of Education Development Plans, held in Bangkok from 24 to 29 November 2003. It was the first of a series of capacity-building activities undertaken in anticipation and preparation for the upcoming mid-decade EFA assessment and in relation to the imperative need for sound and reliable data and data analysis for national decision-making related to education development plans.

Orientation and Planning National Assessments

In October 2005, the AIMS Unit in cooperation with the APPEAL Unit of UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO Headquarters and the UNICEF Regional Office, organized a regional planning meeting for the assessment. The meeting brought together national EFA coordinators, education planners and statisticians and ECCE focal points from 21 countries from South, South-East and East Asia, together with subject specialists, including linguists, child development specialists, special-needs education specialists and special interest NGOs, to discuss the direction forward for national and regional assessment.

Working in sub-regional groups, the participants identified the major issues to be assessed and drafted work plans for national assessment with regard to each of the six EFA goals. The statisticians received an additional three days of training in the measurement and analysis of disparities and the use of a common database (DevInfo) for the production of indicators and
reports, including sub-national analytical breakdowns. A similar workshop was held in November for the Pacific Island States.

The EFA High Level Meeting in Beijing, from 28 to 30 November 2005, and the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) meeting on 1 and 2 December 2005, gave opportunity for a side meeting of the UNICEF Headquarters and field office education programme officers from all regions of the world, during which the Asia-Pacific plans and strategies for the EFA mid-decade assessment were discussed. It was agreed that UNESCO and UNICEF would join forces to assist and facilitate countries to carry out the assessment exercise; and to encourage other agencies, both multilateral and bilateral, as well as NGOs to join.

The Regional Thematic Working Group on EFA, consisting of UN partner agencies and relevant international NGOs and civil society organizations, agreed in early 2006 to provide coordinating and advisory services to participating countries in the region. The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education will work jointly with regional counterparts from UNICEF on this activity.

The planning and mobilization of funds at the national level should be undertaken by the responsible ministry with support and cooperation from the local UNESCO and UNICEF offices, the United Nations Country Team and multilateral and bilateral donors. Regional mechanisms will provide assistance through coordination and capacity-building towards the preparation and development of national assessment reports.

**Analysis of disparities in the levels of quality education**

The previous assessment focused on quantitative achievements in terms of enrolment rates, such as gross and net enrolment rates. This allows the monitoring of percentage increase or decrease, but ignores those who are not yet enrolled and those who have dropped out or have been pushed out of school. For the attainment of the national goals and targets of EFA, the minorities who have been largely left out or left behind need to be included in mainstream education. For example, as stated in “In their Own Language...Education for All (Education Notes, the World Bank, June 2003),” 50 per cent of the world’s out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving EFA: a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of dropout and repetition. In these circumstances, an increase in resources, although necessary, would not be sufficient to produce universal completion of a good-quality primary school program.

Across the region, quality education is unevenly distributed across sub-national target groups. It is necessary to focus the upcoming assessment on reaching the un-reached. Using methods and tools for the analysis of sub-national disparities with regard to various unattained goals and unreached target groups, participating countries in the region will be encouraged to undertake activities to identify disparities and inequalities within national education systems.

National assessment aims to identify problems, issues, policies and strategies of education reform in various regions of the world in order to better formulate appropriate policies for attaining EFA by the year 2015. Where relevant data are available, statistical analysis will focus on the disparities in access to various levels of quality of education across various strata and groups in the society:

- Religious, linguistic, racial and ethnic groups
- Castes, classes and other social stratifications
- Gender
- Persons with disabilities
- Residents of remote areas/border regions
- Undocumented people, non-citizens, non-registered residents
• Migrants, refugees and their children
• The extremely poor

Policy analysis will examine the implementation of education policies and reforms for expanding provision of education across various strata and groups in the society. For each of the six goals, the policy analysis will examine how the groups are treated in various stages and levels of education provision:

1) Policy formulation and legislation
2) Budgetary policy measures
3) Administration and implementation
4) Admissions by education provider institutions
5) Teacher education for teaching the target groups

The assessment will further consider the following factors:
• Comparisons of quality and curriculum in minority/majority schools
• Comparisons of attitudes, aspirations and expectations of pupils, parents and community members in minority/majority districts
• Education provided by organizations and agencies outside the ministry (NGOs, Government agencies, community organizations, etc.)
• Education statistics on the target groups

Many different sources of data, policy information, evaluation reports and case studies will be utilized. Please note the following:
• In addition to the usual school-based statistics, participating countries will be encouraged to use existing data collections, such as the population and housing censuses, various household surveys, labour force surveys, household income and expenditure surveys, etc.
• National inclusive education policies on minorities, disabled, and the extremely poor will be considered.
• As the source of UIS data is national statistics, the national assessment exercise will motivate and accelerate national data collection and reporting.
• The exercise will generate materials that may be of use to the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR).
• Case studies will be undertaken, especially in areas where standard statistics are not available and inadequate.
• The structure and process of implementation will be examined carefully to identify how the policies were differently implemented with regard to the different target groups.

The current plan aims at mobilizing national and regional organizations and resources and producing a first draft of national working reports with raw data\(^2\) by the end of 2006, which would enable the GMR unit to consider any useful materials from the global reporting point of view.

Subsequently, the country teams will continue to work on the analysis and policy-anchoring of the reports to be ready before the end of 2007. The Sub-regional Synthesis of the assessment should be available for a 2008 Regional Policy Review for setting the agenda for the remaining period up to 2015.

\(^2\) Caveat: Please note that the “raw data” utilized by the countries for their internal analysis are often not ISCED standardized and UIS quality-controlled and therefore may not be appropriate for comparison across countries with different education structures. For comparative purposes, you may refer to the data set published by UIS (www.uis.unesco.org). ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education.
National, regional and global monitoring and assessment

Above all, it is the prime responsibility of the Government, which is accountable for its own policies, to implement, monitor and assess the education reform processes and outcomes in their own countries. The main expected outputs of the EFA Mid-Decade Assessment are national assessment reports from participating countries in the region.

An output at the regional level will be a Regional Synthesis Report, summarizing the major issues and patterns of achievements and remaining disparities drafted by a group selected by the country teams of the respective sub-regions. The policy implications for the remaining period up to 2015 will be the themes of the subsequent regional policy review.

Predictably and rightfully so, the resultant national reports on internal disparities in the achievement of quality education will be largely for internal use as part of their own national development plans and strategies. The sub-regional and regional synthesis reports can also be used by the sub-regional, regional and international bodies concerned with education and other development goals.

All the above does not exclude or replace the need for an “independent” GMR. Instead, as the national assessments are largely inward-looking and somewhat parochial in details, the unique role of the GMR, with a focus on global themes and strategies, is enhanced. Only the GMR can take a global perspective, further strengthened by the availability of the details at country levels.

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**Calendar of Mid-Decade Assessment Activities in the Asia and Pacific Region**

**2006**
- First Quarter: prepare and distribute general guidelines and background concept paper; regional strategy meeting and launch of national assessment
- Second Quarter: distribution of technical guidelines and proposed national report outline; advisory and technical assistance missions and national workshops
- Third Quarter: sub-regional capacity building workshops and peer review of draft policy reports and data compilation and analysis workshop
- Fourth Quarter: draft national data and policy analysis reports

**2007**
- First Quarter: penultimate draft national reports (technical working document) and initial draft of regional synthesis report
- Second Quarter: final national reports approved and released by governments
- Third Quarter: sub-regional peer review of draft sub-regional synthesis reports
- Fourth Quarter: regional synthesis report

**2008**
- Mid-term regional policy review