Journalists Handbook on Education for All

Working Draft

This handbook is designed to give the media a deeper understanding of education issues, particularly those related to the Education for All (EFA) initiative. It provides a list of suggested story ideas and follow-up questions related to specific issues in education to guide the media in their coverage of EFA. It also includes a list of resources – publications, websites and contacts – that can further aid journalists in their work. A list of international days and suggested story ideas is also included along with a glossary of terms and list of acronyms. It is thus hoped that this handbook will strengthen media coverage on education and improve public awareness not just of EFA-related issues but education in general. The main references for this handbook are the EFA Makes News and the working draft of the Guidelines for the Asia and Pacific EFA Mid-Decade Assessment publications.
The Education for All (EFA) initiative

Education is essential for human and national development. It is needed to create a skilled workforce, promote economic growth, protect and preserve cultures, foster civic participation and personal development. Its benefits encompasses the human, social, cultural, political and economics aspects of life. Thus education is recognized as a basic human right in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Recognizing that education must be provided to all children, representatives from 155 countries and 160 governmental, non-governmental and UN agencies met in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990 for the World Conference on Education for All (EFA): Meeting Basic Learning Needs. They adopted the Jomtien Framework for Action, which reaffirmed the notion of education as a fundamental human right and spelled out targets and strategies to meet the basic learning needs of all youth, children and adults by 2000.

The Jomtien targets, however, were not achieved by the 2000 timeline. As a follow-up, more than 1,100 participants from 164 countries, UN and development agencies, NGOs and education stakeholders met in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000 for the World Education Forum. During the forum, the international community set the six EFA goals to be met by 2015 through the Dakar Framework for Action. Notably, the Dakar Framework placed the main responsibility for achieving the EFA goals on countries and encouraged transparent and democratic processes, involving stakeholders, especially peoples' representatives, community leaders, parents, learners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society.

The Education for All 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.
It is important to note that EFA is not just a UNESCO or UN-led initiative, but a global commitment made by 164 countries at the World Education Forum in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Role of the Media

Media practitioners as watchdogs of society have a responsibility to identify, highlight and bring to the attention of governments and the general public the state of the education system, the problems besetting it, and highlight examples of denials of this basic human right. The media has an important role in holding the National Government accountable and ensuring that it fulfill, respect and protect the right to education.

The media can help in raising public awareness about local and national education policies and even play a crucial role in helping shape these policies.

Journalists can also help in monitoring national progress in the country’s education and EFA goals by publicizing results and undertaking independent analysis on the state of education in their country. Journalists also have the opportunity to focus on the impact of education by seeking out, describing and evaluating efforts by the government, NGOs and other organizations to empower children, youth and adults through education.

Media persons reporting on education must understand and report the implications of the denial of educational opportunities to marginalized communities. Journalists can also report on how education can be provided to these groups, or cite examples of projects catering to the basic educational needs of migrant/refugee children and other marginalized groups.

Although education-related stories, in one way or another, play a critical role in the civic, social and the economic well-being and overall development of a country they are often overlooked and not given much attention in the newsroom. But the education sector directly and indirectly affects the entire society. It should be of interest to every family with children of all ages, it is a large employer of teachers and administrators, and it accounts for a sizable percentage of the annual public sector budget.

Journalists can thus make significant contributions to national development and the empowerment of children and adults by regularly publishing and broadcasting in-depth education stories.

This Handbook contains suggested story ideas and follow-up questions related to specific issues in education to guide the media in their coverage of EFA. These story ideas are highlighted throughout the Handbook by this icon:

Overall, journalists can make three categories of stories or a combination of the three:

1. Regular news stories based on, among others, government press releases; education-related events and activities initiated by the government, NGOs and other organizations; highlights of annual international, national and local reports and surveys related to education; etc. For example, journalists can use the annual EFA Global Monitoring Report or annual education statistics yearbooks released by the government to examine the country’s achievements in EFA. They can also link specific education-related stories to the broader national education goals and international education commitments. The important thing to consider is to dig deeper into these stories by analyzing figures, referring to other sources of data and information, or interviewing experts to present a more objective perspective on education in the country.
2. Human interest stories from sob to success stories always interest people and can be used to raise and/or reinforce larger societal issues. There are plenty of human interest stories related to education, which can be used as a starting point to illustrate the national context. Journalists can cite national education statistics and interview education experts to link the experiences of one child or adult to the wider local or national situation.

In preparing human interest stories, journalists may wish to consider the following (More story ideas are suggested in the discussion on issues in education):

- What are the tangible impacts of education? Beyond a certificate or diploma, what skills and experiences has education provided to help graduates survive and thrive in society?
- Look for real-life stories that can highlight the successes and shortcomings of the education system. Always back up your story with accurate and authoritative data, if possible.

3. Investigative and in-depth stories that analyze and investigate government plans, policies and laws related to education, the availability of resources, and levels of international assistance to education. These stories can use statistics and other facts to hold the government accountable for the state of the education system. Such stories can also be linked with the bigger picture such as the poverty problem in the country and how this is affecting the education of children.

In preparing investigative stories, you may wish to consider (More story ideas are suggested in the discussion on issues in education):

- The lack of resources has always been a problem of education systems in developing countries. Look at the national budget breakdown and the allocation that goes to education (if possible by level) vis-à-vis other public sector expenditures. It might be also useful to investigate how the government is addressing teacher, textbook and classroom shortages. Is the government developing solutions to new problems? Also look at possible corruption and inconsistencies in policy implementation.
- What are the results of targeted activities? For example, what are the results of a scholarship programme for secondary school girls? Has the programme been managed effectively? Did the intended beneficiaries benefit from the programme? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Examine the impact of HIV/AIDS incidence on the education system, including its cost implications, impact on the performance of the students and teachers, etc. Cite recent statistics and forecasts in the story. The same analysis can be applied to the impact of conflict or a natural disaster and other emergency situations to education and the realization of the EFA goals. For example, examine conflict areas in your country and check whether children cannot go to school because of the conflict and how the government is dealing with this.

**Main issues in education**

Education is a diverse topic and one can do many stories about it. The suggested story ideas and follow-up questions below are grouped into main issues but should not be seen as separate topics, in the same way that the six EFA goals are inter-related. The quality of education, for example, should be considered when doing a story on primary education or early childhood learning.

**Education as a basic human right**

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory...” Article 26, Universal Declaration of
Human Rights, Adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948

Education is not a privilege but a right. Access to basic education is every child’s birthright and is enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights. This implies that governments and its institutions are obligated to respect, protect and fulfill the right to education of all children, youth and adults by ensuring that they have access to education and removing all barriers to education.

After 1948, several other legally-binding international agreements all touching on the Right to Education were agreed on. See the list below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legally-binding instruments defining the Right to Education</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Instruments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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<td>UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education</td>
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<td>International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination</td>
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<td>ILO Convention on the Minimum Age for Employment</td>
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<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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Education as a basic human right also means no child should be left out of school or when in school should not be discriminated against either because they have a disability, speak a different language, or because they cannot afford to pay miscellaneous school fees, which shouldn’t be imposed in the first place.

Yet even as enrolment rates in countries are increasing, there are many sections of the population that are left out of the education system for various reasons, or may be in school but are not learning. A list of traditionally unachieved or excluded children has been drawn based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They include:

- Abandoned children
- Abused children
- Arrested children
- Asylum-seeking children
- Beggars
- Child labourers
- Child mothers
- Child prostitutes
- Children born out of wedlock
- Conscripted children
- Delinquent children
- Detained children
- Disabled children
- Domestic servants
- Drug-using children
- Girls
- HIV-infected children, children affected by HIV/AIDS
- Homeless children
- Illegal alien children
- Illiterate children

- Institutionalized children
- Married children
- Mentally ill children
- Migrant children
- Minority children
- Nomadic children
- Orphans
- Poor children, children of poor parents
- Pregnant girls
- Refugee children
- Rural children
- Sans-papiers, children without identify papers
- Sexually exploited children
- Sold and purchased children
- Stateless children
- Street children
- Trafficked children
- Traveler children
- Unaccompanied refugee, displaced or migrant children
In reporting on these disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, among the points to consider and possible story ideas are:

- **Is the government a signatory to any or all of the international conventions cited above?** If yes, is it following and implementing these international agreements? If no, what were the reasons it didn’t sign the agreements? Check as well the “declarations and reservations” section of the official web pages of these international conventions to find out what concerns the government raised about the specific convention.

- **Does the Government officially recognize unreached and disadvantaged groups in the country?** For example, the government may be politically sensitive when discussing the plight of migrant children or refugees. Are there concrete policies at the national and local level to ensure that these groups have access to education? For example, has anti-discrimination legislation been passed to protect the rights of persons with disabilities? Do a story that will show the public how these vulnerable groups are being disadvantaged. For example, do children belonging to ethnic minority groups have equal access to education? Do they have the option to learn in their own language?

- **Does the government gather specific data focusing on these groups?** Does the government have a policy to encourage research to ensure the inclusion of these disadvantaged groups, particularly their access to education? For example, has the government done a study or survey on out-of-school children, including their profiles? These studies and reports will be good sources of stories but always verify the figures cited in such studies and talk to experts. Check NGOs and development agencies which may also collect data related to disadvantaged groups.

- **Write human interest stories on these disadvantaged groups.** Do they feel the government’s efforts are making a difference in their lives? Be careful in the choice of words and terms when writing about disadvantaged groups to ensure you don’t further promote stereotyping.

- **Check the official data on how many children with disabilities are in the country and how many are not in school.** What is the official definition of “disability”? Examine the status (legal and social) of children with disabilities in the country? Are there laws that protect them? What about cultural considerations and the general attitudes of parents and society, do they think children with disabilities should be sent to special schools? Visit a school that has children with disabilities as students. Are the facilities considerate of children with disabilities? Are teachers trained to handle children with disabilities? Are they aware that children have different learning difficulties and that there are different classifications of disabilities?

- **Investigate the child labour situation in your country.** Are children being kept out of school because they have to work? What are the reasons why they have to work? Do they have to help support their families? Could this be related to the overall poverty in the country? What is the government doing to help child labourers? Is it making an impact? Use government and ILO statistics on this. Also check with other NGOs and organizations that focus on child labourers. Interview real street children and vendors.

- **For countries where there is an armed conflict, or has been recently hit by a natural disaster and other emergencies, investigate how this is affecting school-age children?** Do children have to stop going to school for a prolonged period because of the conflict or natural disaster? Can they go back to school after the conflict or natural disaster? Interview internally
displaced children and their parents. Back up your story with figures. Find out what the government doing. Are there other organizations involved?

In reviewing whether there is equal access to education, one can also examine the education system based on the general categories below, although the situation may vary from country to country.

- **Gender:**
  - Is there equal access to organized learning for both boys and girls, or are there more boys in school than girls relative to the population for each sex? Which gender tends to drop out of school more? What are the reasons for this? See section on promoting gender equality for more story ideas and checklists.

- **Geographic** and administrative unit breakdowns such as provinces, districts, sub-national regions; urban/rural; less developed/more developed geographical units
  - Is enrolment higher in urban areas compared to rural areas? How does the provision of education differ in remote areas of the country? Do children in remote areas have to walk for hours to get to school? Is the quality of education better in urban areas than in rural areas?

- **Social stratifications** such as caste system, occupation, socio-economic status, legal status (including birth registration, citizenship)
  - Are there groups in society that have differing rights to education of good quality such as those belonging to different caste systems?
  - Do children without birth registration or legal citizenship documents have access to basic education or are they prevented from attending school because they don’t have legal status? Do children of refugees and migrant workers have equal access to education?

- **Ethnicity**, religious affiliations, language minorities
  - Do ethnic minorities have the legal right to education? Do they have equal access to learning in their own language or a language of their choice, or do they have to use the official language?

- **Vulnerable groups**: orphans, working children, children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, children affected by conflict (IDPs), very poor children, migrants
  - Do children affected by conflict have access to education?
  - What about child labourers? How many children are engaged in child labour and do not get a chance to go to school? Does the government have specific programmes and laws to combat child labour? The annual International Labour Organization (ILO) report on child labour can be a good source of reference for this.

- **Disabilities**
  - Are there social stigmas which prevent persons with disabilities from participation in education?
  - Are children with disabilities enrolled in regular schools or provided education in special schools? Are teachers in normal or regular schools trained to handle children with disabilities in their classes?

- **Education Source**, including private/public/faith based; formal/non-formal/community based schools
  - How are non-government schools managed? Does the government regulate and monitor the quality and content of education in private schools, faith-based institutions or community-based schools?
  - What, if any, alternatives are available outside of formal schooling, especially for out-of-school youth and adults?
When analyzing the education system, it is important to, as much as possible, examine the categories above to get a clear picture if inequalities exist. For instance, in addition to analyzing the net enrolment ratio (NER) at the national level and by sex, it can also be broken down by region or other geographical divisions. For example, enrolment in more developed provinces may come out higher than in more remote provinces. You can also look at areas where there is higher concentration of ethnic groups and compare the enrolment figures.

**Sample stories and topics**

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education criticizes Malaysia’s education system saying indigenous and other minority groups did not have adequate access to schools and universities (Published on Bangkok Post, February 14, 2007)

Special registration allows stateless children in northern Thailand to get national IDs and a chance to go to school (Published Bangkok Post, April 11, 2006)

More ethnic children in five of Vietnam’s provinces attend school and fewer drop out following introduction of bilingual education (source: World Bank’s International Development Assistance project report)

Thailand’s sea gypsies finally get Thai citizenship and better access to formal education for their children after their plight was highlighted by the December 2004 tsunami. But they are worried that the Thai education system does not accommodate their language and culture (Published Bangkok Post, December 6, 2006)

**Laying the groundwork for early learning**

_all young children must be nurtured in safe and caring environments that allow them to become healthy, alert and secure and be able to learn. The past decade has provided more evidence that good quality early childhood care and education, both in families and in more structured programmes, have a positive impact on the survival, growth, development and learning potential of children. Such programmes should be comprehensive, focusing on all of the child’s needs and encompassing health, nutrition and hygiene as well as cognitive and psycho-social development. They should be provided in the child’s mother tongue and help to identify and enrich the care and education of children with special needs. Partnerships between governments, NGOs, communities and families can help ensure the provision of good care and education for children, especially for those most disadvantaged, through activities centered on the child, focused on the family, based within the community and supported by national, multisectoral policies and adequate resources._ – _Dakar Framework for Action Extended Text on ECCE_

**Story ideas:**

- Examine the progress and expansion of ECCE in the country. Have there been significant increases in ECCE enrolment over the years? Are more early childhood care centres now available in the country? Are the numbers and the quality of the service the same in urban and rural areas? Enrolment in ECCE programmes is measured by gross and net enrolment ratios in ECCE. Focus as well on those who are not enrolled in ECCE. The figure can be derived by subtracting NER from 100 per cent.

- Many developing countries have low ECCE enrolment rates as parents do not see the necessity of sending their children to early learning centres. What is the general public attitude to ECCE in the country? Do most parents feel ECCE is not an important aspect of education?
• Interview key education officials to learn more about the government's policy on ECCE. Does the government have a national, multi-sectoral early childhood policy? What is the definition of early childhood and ECCE in the country? What ages does it cover? Does the government provide early childhood learning facilities? Are there alternative systems in place to provide care and education for young children? How much is the government spending for ECCE programmes vis-à-vis the total public expenditure on education? Most OECD countries provide at least two years of free pre-primary education.

• Are there enough trained teachers and caregivers for ECCE? How does the quality of government-run early childhood centres compare with the privately-run ones, including the availability of trained teachers? What about the costs?

• Verify whether vulnerable and disadvantaged children have access to ECCE. Does the government recognize these vulnerable groups? Is there a comprehensive birth registration process with special measures to ensure the registration of children with disabilities?

• Check the under-five mortality rate to see how many children aged 0-5 die for every 1,000 births. This indicator shows whether a significant proportion of children are not receiving adequate care or are not living in appropriate environments. Also examine other indicators related to the health and survival of young children, such as proportion of infants with low birth weight, Vitamin A supplementation coverage, etc.

• Studies show that children with ECCE experience perform better in Grade 1 than those who do not. Check the percentage of new entrants to primary Grade 1 who has attended some form of organized ECCE programme. Interview teachers to find out whether those who have ECCE experience are doing better in school. Check as well if there are specific reports and studies in relation to this.

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**Sample stories and topics**

Lao PDR and Cambodia have the lowest pre-school enrolment in the region (Source: 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report)

Only 4 out of 10 children in East Asia have ECCE experience compared to almost universal in most industrialized nations (Source: 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report)

Study in the Philippines shows children with experience in ECCE perform better in Grade 1, prompting government to implement a bridge programme (Source: Philippine EFA Mid-Decade Assessment preliminary report)

Survey shows Thai children’s IQ average low; nursery and kindergarten teachers trained to boost intellectual development of children (Source: The Nation, July 19, 2006)

NGOs training volunteers for family and home-based early childhood care and learning in Myanmar (Source: Preliminary Myanmar EFA Mid-Decade Assessment Report)

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**Key indicators and possible data sources**

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<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Rationale/ Interpretation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in ECCE Programmes</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE, Household surveys from the NSO</td>
<td>GER in ECCE measures the general level of participation of young children in ECCE programmes. It also indicates a country's capacity to prepare young children for primary education.</td>
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Public Expenditure on ECCE Programmes as Percentage of Total Public Expenditure on Education

National budget reports from the Ministry of Finance or the Budget Ministry

This reflects the government’s priority and emphasis given to ECCE programmes vis-à-vis other education sectors.

Under-five mortality; Percentage of Under-Fives Suffering from Stunting; and other health-related indicators

National census or Household surveys from the NSO or Ministry of Health

These indicators reflect the level of maternal health and nutrition, quality care, etc. and its implications on the child’s performance in pre- and primary school.

Percentage of New Entrants to Primary Grade 1 who have Attended Some Form of Organized ECCE Programme

School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE

It shows how many of the new Grade 1 students have received some preparation for primary schooling through ECCE programmes. It should be noted that this indicator refers to both formal pre-schools and non-formal community based centres.

**Achieving universal primary/basic education of good quality**

Education systems should be accessible to ALL children and should provide quality education. This includes children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities who constitute a significant proportion of the unreached groups. The Dakar Framework for Action also notes that “education systems must be inclusive, actively seeking out children who are not enrolled, and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners.”

**Story ideas:**

- Examine how close the country is to meeting the target of universal primary education by 2015. Clarify whether the government is aiming for universal primary education (usually from Grades 1 to 6 or 7) or basic education (primary grades up to lower secondary)? What is the timeline for achieving this, 2015 or earlier? Investigate what the obstacles are to achieving target. Do children have access and choice to go to any, or all, of the following: state-run schools, specialized schools, private schools, long distance learning/correspondence, home schooling, faith-based schools, and/or community schools? Cite figures and back-up with examples of the situation in schools and classrooms.

- If the government has declared primary education as “free”, investigate whether public schools still charge any form of fees, including miscellaneous fees like uniform fees, examination fees, food costs, etc. Do these fees lead to children not enrolling in school or dropping out of school because their parents cannot afford the fees? The Dakar Framework clearly states that “For the millions of children living in poverty, who suffer multiple disadvantages, there must be an unequivocal commitment that education be free of tuition and other fees, and that everything possible be done to reduce or eliminate costs such as those for learning materials, uniforms, school meals and transport.” Check as well if there are any legislation/policies at the national and local level declaring basic education free and/or compulsory? What international conventions in respect to children and education is the country a signatory to?
• If education is compulsory, is there monitoring of attendance in schools? Are there enforcement procedures in relation to the compulsory requirement? If there are enforcement procedures - are these enforced? By whom? How does the government make sure that all primary school age children are in school?

• Who are the ethnic minorities in the country? What records are kept of the children belonging to ethnic minorities? How could children belonging to ethnic minorities be located? What types of education or specialized classes, if any, are available for children belonging to ethnic minorities? Are incentives and/or special support programmes available for them? Are there primary schools offering mother-tongue instruction, and what is the proportion to the total number of primary schools?

• Are schools physically accessible to children, including children with disabilities or do they have to travel long distances to get to school? Visit a remote area and do story about the hardships children have to undergo just to get to school.

• Does national policy support a system that allows children with disabilities to attend their local primary school? Does the policy allow for the provision of education to children with disabilities by NGO and private agencies? Is there a policy to ensure that all school buildings are accessible to children with disabilities? Is it implemented and enforced? Is action taken to raise public awareness and to inform families of children with disabilities, schools and local communities, of the right of children and youth with disabilities to participate in education at all levels? What action is taken to find out-of-school children with disabilities and to ensure their enrolment in school?

• How much is the government spending for primary/basic education vis-à-vis the total public expenditure on education? This reflects government’s priority given to education.

• Governments usually focus on enrolment rates. Compare government data with other sources such as NGO reports on education, or UNESCO Institute for Statistics official data. Attention should also be given to school-age children who are not in school. To get the data for this, subtract NER from 100 per cent. Interview parents and children and find out why these children are not in school.

• Compare the enrolment rates with participation and/or attendance rates. Enrolment rates (GER and NER) are often used to measure achievement of universal primary/basic education. However, these indicators hide the fact that many students drop out of school during the course of the school year. GER and NER should be considered together with other indicators to understand more clearly the achievement of this goal.

• How high is the incidence of dropouts and repetitions, and what are the reasons for these? (Note that in some cases, low repetition rates merely reflect policies or practices of automatic promotion.) Do majority of students at the primary level move up to secondary education? High levels of repetition and dropouts indicate low levels of efficiency of the education system and poor quality education. This is costly for an education system and erodes progress towards EFA. The annual EFA Global Monitoring Report has country data on repetition, survival and dropout rates.

• What is the age-range of children that should attend primary education? Are there any limits on the ages of children who can receive primary education? What is the official entry age for Grade 1 (often 6 years of age)? Is it being followed or do more children start going to school at a later age? Find out the reasons for this. You can compare the gross and net enrolment ratios to measure the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment. In some countries, many children enrol in Grade 1 starting at 7 or 8 years of age. This often leads to a GER of over 100 per cent, which means that the number of over-aged children in schools is high relative to children of the official age for the level. A GER value approaching or exceeding 100 per cent indicates a country is, in principle, able to accommodate all of its primary school-age population. It does not, however, measure the proportion of that population actually enrolled. A GER of 100 per cent is therefore a necessary but not sufficient condition for universal primary education. The NER gives a more precise measurement of the extent of participation in primary education of children belonging to the official primary school age.
What is definition of good quality primary education in the country? How is quality of primary education measured? Factors that affect access to schooling, the teaching and learning process and its outcomes, as well as the efficiency of the primary education system should also be examined, including the number of students per class, the number of textbooks per students, etc. How does the quality of each school-type differ and compare to each other? Find out the reasons for the difference in quality. What proportion of the primary-school age population is enrolled either in public or private schools?

Sample stories and topics:


Government needs to build more schools in rural areas where 50% of the population live (Source: Preliminary Philippine EFA Mid-Decade Assessment Report)

Schools urgently needed in eastern Bangkok; 10,000 secondary students may not be accommodated due to lack of classrooms (Published in The Nation and the Bangkok Post, April 3, 2007)

World falling behind on 2015 education goal, says study (Published in the Bangkok Post, February 20, 2007)

Key indicators and possible data sources

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<th>Indicators</th>
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<th>Rationale/ Interpretation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) in Primary Education</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE; Household surveys from NSO</td>
<td>The GER shows the overall coverage of an education system in relation to the school-age population. It also reflects the capacity of the primary education system. It is used in place of the NER when data on enrolment by single years of age are not available. It can also be used together with NER to measure the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repetition Rates (RR) by Grade in Primary Education; Percentage of Repeaters</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE; School registers/records</td>
<td>A high repetition rate implies high wastage. It blocks access of other children to education since the school space is occupied by repeaters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dropout Rate</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE; School registers/records</td>
<td>This rate shows the extent to which students abandon school. High dropout rates indicate internal and external problems in the education system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition Rate to Secondary Education</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE; Household surveys from NSO</td>
<td>High Transition Rates indicate high access from one level of education to the next. It also reflects the intake capacity of the next level of education. Inversely,</td>
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Providing life skills and lifelong learning

“All young people and adults must be given the opportunity to gain the knowledge and develop the values, attitudes and skills that will enable them to develop their capacities to work, to participate fully in their society, to take control of their own lives and to continue learning... All young people should be given the opportunity for ongoing education. For those who drop out of school or complete school without acquiring the literacy, numeracy and life skills they need, there must be a range of options for continuing their learning.”  - Dakar Framework for Action Extended Text on Life Long Learning and Life Skills

Countries, however, have different definitions of life skills, but generally, it is agreed that education, whether formal or non-formal should develop the following skills: basic skills (literacy, writing, numeracy, etc.), psycho-social skills (decision-making, critical thinking, personal and interpersonal skills including problem solving, communication, team work, etc.) and practical/functional skills (manual skills relating to specific vocations or for a specific behaviour such as health).

Story ideas:

- Examine the overall government policy concerning life skills and lifelong learning. What is the national definition of life skills, if any? What kind of life skills programmes are offered in the country? How are they integrated into the formal and non-formal education systems? Are these programmes accessible to all sectors of the population, particularly the disadvantaged groups?
- Focus on specific efforts by government, NGOs and civil society to create lifelong learning societies.

Education for employment

- Does the education system equip students with the necessary skills to find employment? Check the national unemployment rate, in particular the youth unemployment rate. Interview some unemployed people and find out their educational background and the reasons they could not find a job. What is the government doing to address this problem?
- Does the government have a national Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme? Does the TVET policy cover the needs of youth and adults with disabilities? What is the proportion of vocational schools compared to higher education institutions? What
is the enrolment rate in vocational schools vis-à-vis higher education institutions? Do graduates of these vocational schools easily find jobs, thereby encouraging young people to opt for vocational education? (The lack or availability of life skills programmes in the country can also be related to the youth unemployment rate.) What is the proportion of young people and adults who are currently enrolled in non-formal education programmes aimed at teaching life skills and work skills?

- What other life skills programmes are offered by the government, either through the Education Ministry, Labour Ministry or other agencies? Look at special trainings offered for out-of-school children, or special income generating or livelihood training programmes organized by the government or the private sector. Assess the impact of these programmes. Have they contributed to an improvement of a specific individual’s life and to society in general?

- Examine the country situation: are universities and colleges more popular than vocational colleges? What is the effect on this on the economy of the country in terms of availability of the needed skilled work force?

- Has the government undertaken a survey or study assessing the skills needed by the country, and are the TVET programmes designed to meet this need? Is the government actively seeking out and supporting disadvantaged young people’s participation in TVET programmes?

- Is the ability to obtain equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes provided through legislation or guidelines and procedures?

**Skills for life**

- Does the primary/secondary curriculum include teaching health-promoting knowledge and skills? Does the curriculum encourage the development of skills such as decision-making, critical thinking and personal and interpersonal skills?

- Is sex education and/or HIV/AIDS education included in the curriculum? At what level/grade? (This can be related to the HIV prevalence rate in the country, especially among young people). Are teachers trained to incorporate skills development in the curricula?

- Media stories also contribute to life-long learning when readers use this as reference to update their knowledge on all aspects of their work, health and lifestyle.

### Sample stories and topics:


- Small workshop in Thailand’s Ubon Ratchathani District giving disabled people chance to earn a living (Human interest story published in the Bangkok Post, April 3, 2007)

### Key indicators and possible data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Data Source(s)</th>
<th>Rationale/ Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation rate of young people and adults in accredited NFE programmes</td>
<td>Department Adult Education/ MoE Nongovernmental Organizations NFE-MIS</td>
<td>A high participation rate indicates that lifelong learning is both available and valued in the country. As a result of NFE programmes, greater numbers of young people and adults will be literate and numerate, with developed life skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Enrolment Ratio in</td>
<td>Household surveys from the NSO</td>
<td>A high and growing, TVET GER indicates that more young people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Technical, and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Population census from the NSO Ministry of Labour data

are increasingly availing of this form of post-secondary education. But TVET programmes are not the only form of life skills which could also cover special programmes for out-of-school children or livelihood trainings for adults.

### Knowledge of HIV prevention practice among young people and adults; Estimated HIV prevalence rate

Demographic Health Surveys from NSO/Ministry of Health

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) from UNICEF

The first indicator assesses progress towards universal knowledge of the essential facts about HIV transmission. The second shows the proportion of the population infected by HIV/AIDS.

### Youth Literacy Rates

Population censuses

Household surveys

Literacy surveys

This indicator indicates the effectiveness of the primary education system over the previous 10 years or so. It is often seen as a proxy measure of social progress and economic achievement since it shows the effectiveness of the primary and secondary education systems. Inadequate levels of reading constitute a serious obstacle for the successful participation of young people and adults in society.

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## Improving basic and functional literacy

“All adults have a right to basic education, beginning with literacy, which allows them to engage actively in, and to transform, the world in which they live... Adult and continuing education must be greatly expanded and diversified, and integrated into the mainstream of national education and poverty reduction strategies.” - Dakar Framework for Action Extended Text on literacy:

There is no agreed international definition of literacy and often countries have varying definitions. However, the UNESCO General Conference in 1958 defined a literate person as someone “who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his [or her] everyday life.”

In 1978, recognizing the importance of literacy in national development, UNESCO defined a functionally literate person as someone “who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his [or her] group and community and also for enabling him [or her] to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his [or her] own and the community’s development.” Emphasis is also given to the language or languages in which literacy is learned and practiced.

### Story ideas:

- Examine whether the government measures both literacy and functional literacy rates. It is important to distinguish between basic literacy – which refers to basic reading, writing and
arithmetic skills – and literacy for livelihood, one that allows a farmer to read instructions in fertilizers packs, or a sick person to understand medical prescriptions, or count small change in the market. It should also be noted that the ultimate goal is not only to ensure that all people including young adults become literate, but that they also have opportunity to reach higher levels of proficiency in literacy to improve the quality of their life.

- Actual testing measures literacy accurately, compared to self-declared tests where respondents are just asked whether they are literate or not. Check how literacy is measured and in what language(s)? Is it possible to be declared literate in more than one language? What is the official definition of literacy, if any? Who are legally defined as youth and adults in the country? Are there laws, decrees stipulating literacy as a basic human right?
- What kind of literacy programmes are offered by the government and the private sector? Can non-citizens of the country but currently living in the country, i.e. refugees, expatriates, immigrant workers, illegal immigrants participate in the literacy programmes?
- Examine how literacy rates have expanded in the country. Check whether the adult literacy rate has been increasing over the years? (Adult literacy covers the literate proportion of the population aged 15 years and above. It indicates effectiveness of the formal and non-formal education system in educating the population). What is the youth literacy rate? Has it been improving over time? Compare the literacy rates across provinces, rural and urban areas, areas with high concentration of ethnic minorities, etc. What is the government doing to improve rates in areas with low literacy levels?
- Are non-formal literacy courses offered in local languages, and are there instructional materials in these languages? Visit Community Learning Centres (CLCs) or or a non-formal education (NFE) project. Look for human interest stories and write about how gaining literacy has changed one person’s life or their struggles to gain literacy. In visiting a CLC or NFE project site, check how well the literacy programmes address the specific learning needs of women, ethnic and cultural minorities, socially disadvantaged groups and other learners with special learning needs?
- To what extent have public authorities and their partners been successful in expanding basic literacy, post-literacy and continuing education opportunities for the adult population? Are these programmes successful in creating ‘literate environments’ and are adequate resources and infrastructures available to achieve these objectives?
- Is there a policy promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in non-formal literacy programmes and courses, with appropriately trained teachers and accessible materials? What is the number of persons with disabilities participating in literacy programmes? Is there a strategy to find and encourage persons with disabilities to attend literacy programmes?
- Literate and educated parents tend to send their children to school. Find out if parents of out-of-school children do not have an education. Does the government literacy programmes reach these families?

Note that when making cross-country, regional or global comparisons of literacy rates, the definitions of ‘what is literate?’ will tend to differ from country to country. Whenever possible, refer to the national definitions and calculations of literacy rates to ensure appropriate understanding of the concept.

Sample stories and topics:

Allowing ethnic minority children to learn in their own language first will reduce drop out rates and improve learning among these children (Guest column article by Sheldon Shaeffer, Director of UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education; Published in the Bangkok Post, October 22, 2006)

China’s illiteracy rate rocketing; illiterate population grew by 30M according to new census (The Nation, April 3, 2007; BBC News Website, April 2, 2007)
More than half the world’s illiterate adults live in Asia (News story based on the 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report published in the Asia News Network webpage, November 18, 2005)

**Key indicators and possible data sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<th>Rationale/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Literacy Rate (15 years and above)</td>
<td>Household surveys from the NSO</td>
<td>This reflects the accumulated achievement of the primary education system and adult literacy programmes in imparting basic literacy skills to the population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population census from the NSO</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Literacy Rate (15-24 years old)</td>
<td>Household surveys from the NSO</td>
<td>This indicates the effectiveness of the primary education system over the previous 10 years or so. It is often seen as a proxy measure of social progress and economic achievement since it shows the effectiveness of the primary and secondary education systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population census from the NSO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Expenditure on Literacy and NFE as a Percentage of Total Public Expenditure on Education</td>
<td>National Budget from the Finance or Budget Department/Ministry</td>
<td>It indicates government emphasis to literacy and non-formal education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Promoting gender parity and equality**

*Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realizing the right to education.* - Dakar Framework for Action Extended Text on Gender

Gender refers to “the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in families, societies and cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men.” It is clearly distinguished from sex, which describes the biological differences between men and women. “Gender equality” means that “women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development”. It is therefore the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences and the roles they play (source: UNESCO Gender Toolkit).

**Story ideas:**

- Investigate if the country was able to meet the target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. Gender parity means there is now equal number of boys and girls in school, relative to the population size of each sex. If yes, how was it achieved? If gender parity was not achieved, what were the major obstacles? Use the gender parity index as a measure.

- Where are the gender inequalities in basic education? Is it in terms of enrolment, drop-out, repetition, survival, transition from primary to secondary education? In all or in some? Are gender disparities found in favour of boys or of girls? What disparities are in favour of boys
(e.g. more boys dropping out of school) and what are in favour of girls (e.g. fewer girls enrolled in school compared to the ratio of boys and girls to the total population)?

- Studies have shown that girls generally tend to perform better in school. Girls have usually higher survival rates to Grade 5 than boys. But when it comes to moving up to lower secondary (measured by transition rates), girls tend to be disadvantaged. Check if this is true in your country or a specific province or locality. Find out the reasons why girls tend not to proceed to the lower secondary level. Is it because of early marriage (common in rural areas) or because parents cannot afford to send all children to school and they prefer to spend for the boys education, etc.

- Explore how the government views gender as an issue. How is gender equality understood in the Ministry of Education/government? Do government/education officials often say “there is no gender problem” in the country just because there is a balance in the enrolment rates for both sexes? Are there any specifically-targeted policies or strategies to eliminate gender disparities in education, e.g. stipends, scholarships for girls in countries with lower enrolment of girls? Are these policies in conformance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)? Some countries undertake a gender review of their education sector plan, curriculum, textbooks, education facilities, etc. the results of which can be a good source for a story.

- Are there gender disparities in the teaching profession, i.e. is there gender balance in the number of teachers, principals/management level, in the training opportunities? Is gender training provided to all teaching professionals (during pre/in-service training), to ministry of education staff? Is there a policy or legislation to eliminate gender disparities in the teaching profession? If females (or males) dominate the teaching profession, find out the reason why. What is the impact of the imbalance on the learning process?

- Gender parity is a pre-requisite of gender equality; however, reaching parity does not indicate achievement of equality. How has your country defined gender equality? Are there indicators to measure this target?

- Inside the classroom, are boys and girls treated the same? Do teachers encourage girls and boys to participate, speak out and contribute to learning equally? Do teachers value the views of both boys and girls equally? Do both boys and girls feel confident in making subject choices? Do both boys and girls equally participate in all subject areas such as mathematics and sciences, in literacy and history? If not, what are the constraints? In the schools, are there well maintained and separated latrines for girls and boys?

- Has there been any gender scan carried out on the curriculum, textbooks, and supplementary teaching/learning materials? Do teaching/learning materials portray girls and boys with equal prominence, potential and respect? Is any gender bias found in the curriculum/textbooks, in terms of content, illustrations, and role models? Do curriculum, textbooks and the classroom environment promote equality for boys and girls regardless of their age, class, caste, religious or ethnic/language background?

- What limitations/ restrictions (legally, by regulations or in practice) are there on girls obtaining full and equal access to basic education?

- Are community leaders and parents equally supportive of boys and girls attending school? Do they value female and male teachers equally? Examine the prevailing public attitude on girls and women. Does society see the need for both sexes to have equal rights and opportunities? Are women aware of their rights?

The GENIA Network of Asian Ministries of Education Gender Focal Points and UNESCO Bangkok developed in 2003 a checklist called Gender Lens to assess the gender responsiveness of government and NGO projects and regular operations. Among the Gender Lenses available are: Gender Lens for Education Projects; Gender Lens for Measuring Child-Friendliness of Schools; Gender Lens to Create Curriculum and Textbooks Free of Gender Bias; and to Measure the Gender-Responsiveness of MoE Departments and CLCs. Download these Gender Lenses from the UNESCO Bangkok Website or see the Annex for a complete list.
There is also a global movement to ensure fair gender portrayal in reporting in the media. The Global Media Report 2005 can be downloaded from the official website: [http://www.whomakesthenews.org/](http://www.whomakesthenews.org/)

**Sample stories**

Women dominate high schools as students, teachers, heads, according to Philippine EFA Mid-Decade Assessment Report (Published: Philippine Daily Inquirer, March 19, 2007)

Book makes ‘ass’ of wives; textbook used in Indian state of Rajasthan compares housewives to donkeys (Published: Bangkok Post, April 5, 2006)

**Key indicators and possible data sources**

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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity Index (GPI) for: GER in ECCE, GIR and NIR in Primary/Secondary Education, GER and NER in Primary/Secondary Education, Survival Rate to Grade 5, Transition Rate to Secondary Education</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE Population census from the NSO Household and specialized surveys from the NSO</td>
<td>The GPI is used to assess gender differences in various categories, either in ECCE, primary education, literacy, etc. A value of less than one indicates a difference in favor of males; a value above one indicates a difference in favor of females. The difference below or above 1 implies the degree of disparities. It can be assumed that there is no disparity if GPI value ranges between 0.97 and 1.03.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Female Enrolment</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE Various institutional data sources</td>
<td>This indicator shows the degree of female participation in specific levels of education. However, the population structure of the specific age-groups must be considered to interpret it correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Female Teachers; Percentage of Female School Principals and Administrators</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE Various institutional data sources</td>
<td>This shows the gender composition of the teaching force. It also helps in assessing the need for opportunities and/or incentives to encourage women to participate in teaching activities at a given level of education.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Ensuring good quality education**

“Quality is at the heart of education, and what takes place in classrooms and other learning environments is fundamentally important to the future well-being of children, young people and adults. A quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs, and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living.” - Dakar Framework for Action Extended Text on Quality Education
Story ideas:

- It is important to note that although countries may have reached near universal access to primary or basic education with enrolment rates close to 100 per cent, this does not automatically mean education provided is of good quality. It is thus important to evaluate the education system in the country and whether it is of good quality education. Start with establishing how the government defines quality. How is good quality education measured? Is there a quality standards criterion set by the Ministry of Education? If so, do most schools meet it?

- Does the number of classrooms match the population needs? What is the average pupil-teacher ratio and what is the reality in the classrooms? How big is the average class size? Do students have to share a textbook? The national average may indicate ideal ratios (1:25) but some teachers in other parts of the country may have to manage many more students per class. The same applies for the pupil-textbook ratio.

- What is the state of the physical facilities (classroom buildings, toilets, etc.)? Are they in good condition and conducive for learning? It may not be possible for children to get quality education in very crowded classrooms, poorly lit rooms or no classroom facilities at all. What educational supplies and teaching equipment do most schools have? Is there a big difference in the facilities and conditions between public and private schools?

- Examine the teacher situation in the country. What is the percentage of the teachers who possess the required academic qualifications? What portion of the teaching staff is certified to teach according to national standards? Does your country deploy para-teachers? Are there teacher training programmes for continuous education? Do they get pre- and in-service training? What is the gender make up of the teachers in each facility? Are the teachers well paid and do they get good incentives?

- Are there standard tests for measuring learning achievements linked to national curriculum? How do students generally fair in these tests? What percentage of the examinees pass the test and what percentage fail? In which areas do they get low scores? Investigate if the government participates in international learning achievement tests such as TIMMS, PISA, EALAS or other multi-country initiative. What were the results or trends in terms of student performance? How does your country rank compared with other countries?

- How much is the government spending for education? Review the national budget and compare the education budget vis-à-vis the budget for other sectors, for example, military spending. This would reflect the government's spending priorities and how much emphasis is given to education. What portion of the education budget goes to teachers and staff salaries? Are there enough funds to support the education system and ensure the provision of good quality education? UNESCO recommends that countries allot at least six per cent of the gross national product equivalent to public education spending.

- What policies are in place regarding corporal punishment and what is the current practice in classrooms? What is the situation in terms of violence in schools? There is often a big gap between policy and practice in relation to corporal punishment. You can interview students and talk to parents to check if corporal punishment occurs in schools. You can use as reference the UN Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children

- Examine the overall situation in the country, in particular the extent of the poverty problem and its impact on education, particularly school attendance, quality and attainment. School children cannot learn properly if they are hungry, and neither can teachers teach properly. Children may also have difficulty studying if they also have to work in the streets or till the fields all day.

Sample stories and topics:

World may miss education goals due to teacher shortages (Source: 2006 UNESCO Institute for Statistics on the State of Teachers)
Close to half of teachers in Lao do not meet minimum qualifications (Source: 2006 UNESCO Institute for Statistics on the State of Teachers)

“Is our children learning?” (An analysis of the success of getting children to school and whether they are learning. Published in The Economist, July 15, 2006)

Thailand also faced with teacher shortage and attracting young, motivated people to the profession (Feature story on teachers linked to a regional seminar on teachers published in the Bangkok Post, August 29, 2006)

### Key indicators and possible data sources

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<th>Rationale/ Interpretation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil-Teacher Ratio for ECCE; Primary Education; Secondary Education</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE</td>
<td>A high pupil-teacher ratio suggests that each teacher has to deal with a large number of students implying that pupils receive less attention from the teacher. It does not take into account other factors that affect quality of teaching/learning and student performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Primary School Teachers Having the Required Academic Qualifications</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE</td>
<td>Teacher qualification, together with pre- and in-service training, is a crucial factor in the quality of the teaching-learning process. A high number of qualified teachers denote better quality in the teaching force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil-Textbook Ratio for Primary Education; Secondary Education</td>
<td>School census from the MoE, usually found in the Annual Statistical Yearbook of the MOE</td>
<td>This gives a rough indication of allocation of resources/materials to support the learning process. It is also used to assess the efficiency of resource utilization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of Total Government Expenditure; as a Percentage of Gross National Product (GNP)</td>
<td>National Budget from the Finance or Budget Department/Ministry</td>
<td>It shows the government's policy emphasis on education relative to other sectors. It also reflects the commitment of a government to invest in human capital development. UNESCO recommends that countries allot at least 6% of the GNP equivalent to public education spending.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EFA and the other global initiatives

The 2015 EFA goals were further enhanced in September 2000 when 189 nations came together at the United Nations Millennium Summit and endorsed the Millennium Declaration which set out the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 - achieving universal primary education, and promoting gender equality and empowering women – are directly related to EFA and share the same target date of 2015. Good education, however, also contributes to the attainment of the other six MDGs, namely poverty reduction, improvements in child and maternal health, environmental sustainability and positive and well-balanced partnerships in a globalizing world community. For more information, visit the UN Website on the MDGs.

EFA is also directly related to other global initiatives being spearheaded by UNESCO:

- The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), 2003-2012
  Over 781 million adults have not had the opportunity to learn to read and write. The UNLD contributes to all EFA goals by making sure that people have the tools and skills they need for reading, writing and calculation not just in school but in their daily life. Specifically, the UNLD’s main goal is the 50 per cent reduction in illiteracy rates in countries by 2015, with special focus on women. For more information, visit UNESCO Bangkok's UNLD page.

- The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), 2005-2014
  Education has a central role in promoting sustainable development. Part of the DESD’s objectives is to make people aware that education is crucial for a sustainable way of life. The principles of sustainable development must find their place in children’s schooling, higher education, non-formal education and community-based learning activities. Specifically, both EFA and ESD focus on quality education and quality learning, and gives emphasis on the importance of non-formal education. For more information, visit UNESCO Bangkok's ESD Website or download the Links between the Global Initiatives in Education (pdf) publication of UNESCO.

National commitments

Although countries committed in Dakar to make their own national EFA Action Plans, most countries have their own separate medium-term national education development plans, with specific targets and timelines. It is thus useful to examine both the national education plan and the EFA National Action Plan. Among the points to consider are:

- Did the country participate in the Word Education Forum in Dakar? If no, find out the reasons why. Does the current administration recognize the commitments made in Dakar? Does the country recognize the commitment to provide Education for All, regardless of citizenship status, race, class or religion? Do the EFA National Action Plan and the national development plan reflect human rights and gender equality principles? Regardless of whether the government committed to the EFA goals in Dakar, governments are obligated to fulfill, respect and protect children, youth and adults’ right to education and hence should ensure the provision of quality education for all.

- In what ways has the country adopted the EFA goals and targets to fit with national education development priorities? Examine the national education development plan. What are the specific goals contained in the plan? How far along is the country in relation to these goals and timelines? For example, some countries aim to realize universal primary education by 2010 instead of 2015. Or some countries feel they have achieved universal primary education and are aiming for universal secondary education by 2015.

- Check if the country monitors and report annually the progress towards the national EFA goals and targets? It is usually the Ministry of Education that prepares these reports.
Countries did a comprehensive review of national progress in EFA in 2000 (called the EFA 2000 Assessment). Another review focused especially in countries in Asia and Pacific called the EFA Mid-Decade Assessment is ongoing and will be finalized in late 2007 to early 2008. Both reports will be good sources of stories. If you can, also compare the results from the 2000 assessment and the latest assessment report.

- Along with the EFA National Action Plans, countries have also formed national EFA coordinating bodies usually headed by the Ministry of Education. These bodies would be good sources of information regarding EFA progress in the country. Journalists can set up interviews with members of the EFA coordinating body. Also consider if the coordinating body is inter-agency and whether it involves other stakeholders in education.

National governments, along with the UN team in the specific countries also prepare comprehensive development plans such as the Common Country Assessment (CCA), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), which usually include specific targets and strategies related to education. These plans aim to ensure that the government and the UN adopt a coherent vision and strategy that allows for a unified approach towards common development goals. Learn more about PRSPs, CCAs and UNDAF from the official UN Website.

### Calendar of Major Events and International Days related to EFA

**FEBRUARY**

21 International Mother Language Day

**MARCH**

8 International Women's Day
21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**APRIL**

7 World Health Day  
Last week of April: EFA/Global Action Week

**MAY**

3 World Press Freedom Day  
15 International Day of Families

**JUNE**

4 International Day of Child Victims of Aggression  
5 World Environment Day  
12 International Day Against Child Labour  
26 International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

**AUGUST**
9  International Day of the World's Indigenous People
12  International Youth Day

SEPTEMBER
8  International Literacy Day
21  International Day of Peace

OCTOBER
5  World Teacher's Day
16  World Food Day
17  International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
24  United Nations Day

NOVEMBER
16  International Day for Tolerance
20  Universal Children's Day
25  International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
EFA Working Group Meeting
EFA Global Monitoring Report Launch

DECEMBER
1  World AIDS Day
3  International Day of Disabled Persons
10  Human Rights Day
18  International Migrants Day

Visit the Asia and Pacific EFA Website (http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=efacalendar) for a full list of events in the region.

Resources
Titles of major publications with brief description (To follow), including WEBSITES

Contact Persons/ Focal Points
(UNESCO offices, focal points, UN agencies, CSOs, NGOs, etc)

Annex:
LINKS to:
UNICEF's Ethical Guidelines for Reporting of Children
UNESCO's Gender Lens
Education-related Journalism Prizes
Glossary of Terms

**Adult education.** Educational activities, offered through formal, non-formal or informal frameworks, targeted at adults and aimed at advancing, or substituting for, initial education and training. The purpose may be to (a) complete a given level of formal education or professional qualification; (b) acquire knowledge and skills in a new field (not necessarily for a qualification); and/or (c) refresh or update knowledge and skills.

**Adult literacy/illiteracy rate.** Number of literate/illiterate persons aged 15 and above, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. Different ways of defining and assessing literacy yield different results regarding the number of persons designated as literate.

**Basic education.** The whole range of educational activities taking place in various settings (formal, non formal and informal), that aim to meet basic learning needs. According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), basic education comprises primary education (first stage of basic education) and lower secondary education (second stage).

**Disability.** A physical or mental condition which may be temporary or permanent, and which limits a person’s opportunities to take part in the community on an equal level with others.

**Early childhood.** The period of a child’s life from birth to age 8.

**Early childhood care and education (ECCE).** Programmes that, in addition to providing children with care, offer a structured and purposeful set of learning activities either in a formal institution (pre-primary or ISCED 0) or as part of a non-formal child development programme. ECCE programmes are normally designed for children from age 3 and include organized learning activities that constitute, on average, the equivalent of at least 2 hours per day and 100 days per year.

**Education for All Development Index (EDI).** Composite index aimed at measuring overall progress towards EFA. At present, the EDI incorporates four of the most easily quantifiable EFA goals – universal primary education as measured by the net enrolment ratio, adult literacy as measured by the adult literacy rate, gender parity as measured by the gender-specific EFA index, and quality of education as measured by the survival rate to grade 5. Its value is the arithmetical mean of the observed values of these four indicators.

**Enrolment.** Number of pupils or students enrolled at a given level of education, regardless of age. See also gross enrolment ratio and net enrolment ratio.

**Entrance age (official).** Age at which pupils or students would enter a given programme or level of education – assuming they had started at the official entrance age for the lowest level, studied full-time throughout and progressed through the system without repeating or skipping a grade. The theoretical entrance age to a given programme or level may be very different from the actual or even the most common entrance age.

**Equity:** In education, the extent to which access and opportunities for children and adults are just and fair. This implies reduction in disparities based on gender, poverty, residence, ethnicity, language or other characteristics.

**Gender parity index (GPI).** Ratio of female to male values (or male to female, in certain cases) of a given indicator. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between sexes; a GPI above or below 1 indicates a disparity in favour of one sex over the other.

**General education.** Programmes designed to lead students to a deeper understanding of a subject or group of subjects, especially, but not necessarily, with a view to preparing them for further education at the same or a higher level. These programmes are typically school-based and may or may not contain vocational elements. Their successful completion may or may not provide students with a labour-market-relevant qualification.

**Inclusive education.** Education that addresses the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion.
Informal education. Learning that takes place in daily life without clearly stated objectives. The term refers to a lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experiences and the educative influences and resources in his/her environment - e.g. family and neighbours, work and play, the marketplace, the library, mass media.

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Classification system designed to serve as an instrument for assembling, compiling and presenting comparable indicators and statistics of education both within countries and internationally. The system, introduced in 1976, was revised in 1997 (ISCED97).

Lifelong learning. The concept of learning as a process that continues throughout life to address an individual’s learning needs. The term is used widely in adult education to refer to learning processes in many forms and at many levels.

Literacy. According to UNESCO’s 1958 definition, the term refers to the ability of an individual to read and write with understanding a simple short statement related to his/her everyday life. The concept of literacy has since evolved to embrace multiple skill domains, each conceived on a scale of different mastery levels and serving different purposes. Many today view literacy as the ability to identify, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials in various contexts. Literacy is a process of learning that enables individuals to achieve personal goals, develop their knowledge and potential, and participate fully in the community and wider society.

Mother tongue language. Main language spoken in the home environment and acquired as a first language. Sometimes known as a home language.

Non-formal education. Learning activities typically organized outside the formal education system. The term is generally contrasted with formal and informal education. In different contexts, non-formal education covers educational activities aimed at imparting adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children and youth, life skills, work skills and general culture. Such activities usually have clear learning objectives, but vary by duration, in conferring certification for acquired learning, and in organizational structure.

Primary Education. According to ISCED is the first stage of basic education designed to give students a sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics along with an elementary understanding of other such subjects as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music.

School life expectancy (SLE). Number of years a child of school entrance age is expected to spend at school or university, including years spent on repetition. It is the sum of the age-specific enrolment ratios for primary, secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary and tertiary education.

School-age population. Population of the age group officially corresponding to a given level of education, whether enrolled in school or not.

Secondary education. Programmes at ISCED levels 2 and 3. Lower secondary education (ISCED 2) is generally designed to continue the basic programmes of the primary level but the teaching is typically more subject-focused, requiring more specialized teachers for each subject area. The end of this level often coincides with the end of compulsory education. In upper secondary education (ISCED 3), the final stage of secondary education in most countries, instruction is often organized even more along subject lines and teachers typically need a higher or more subject-specific qualification than at ISCED level 2.

Stunting. Proportion of under-5s falling below minus 2 and minus 3 standard deviations from the median height-for-age of the reference population. Low height for age is a basic indicator of malnutrition.

Survival rate by grade. Percentage of a cohort of students who are enrolled in the first grade of an education cycle in a given school year and are expected to reach a specified grade, regardless of repetition.

Teachers or teaching staff. Number of persons employed full time or part time in an official capacity to guide and direct the learning experience of pupils and students, irrespective of their qualifications or the delivery mechanism, i.e. face-to-face and/or at a distance. Excludes educational personnel who have no active teaching
duties (e.g. headmasters, headmistresses or principals who do not teach) and persons who work occasionally or in a voluntary capacity.

**Technical and vocational education.** Programmes designed mainly to prepare students for direct entry into a particular occupation or trade (or class of occupations or trades). Successful completion of such programmes normally leads to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities (ministry of education, employers' associations) in the country in which it is obtained.

**Tertiary or higher education.** Programmes with an educational content more advanced than what is offered at ISCED levels 3 and 4. The first stage of tertiary education, ISCED level 5, includes level 5A, composed of largely theoretically based programmes intended to provide sufficient qualifications for gaining entry to advanced research programmes and professions with high skill requirements; and level 5B, where programmes are generally more practical, technical and/or occupationally specific. The second stage of tertiary education, ISCED level 6, comprises programmes devoted to advanced study and original research, and leading to the award of an advanced research qualification.

**Trained teacher.** Teacher who has received the minimum organized teacher training normally required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country.

**Transition rate to secondary education.** New entrants to the first grade of secondary education in a given year, expressed as a percentage of the number of pupils enrolled in the final grade of primary education in the previous year.

**Youth literacy rate.** Number of literate persons aged 15 to 24, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

Definitions and explanations used here were derived from the [EFA Global Monitoring Report](http://www.efareport.unesco.org). A more complete list of terms and their definitions is available on [www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org).

For simplified versions of terms, visit the [BBC World Trust’s Guide to Development Speak](http://www.bbc.co.uk).