

## **A NEW FOCUS ON EDUCATION FOR ALL**

The world community gathered in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 to take stock of progress made in achieving Education for All (EFA), a major challenge tackled a decade earlier in Jomtien. It reached a consensus to pursue six comprehensive goals:

- improving early childhood care and education;
- ensuring by 2015 that all children have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- ensuring equitable access to life skills programs;
- achieving a 50 percent increase in adult literacy by 2015;
- eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005; and
- improving all aspects of the quality of education.

At the Genoa Summit in July 2001, we reaffirmed our commitment to help countries meet these goals, with a special emphasis on the achievement of universal primary education (UPE) and equal access for girls—two objectives that are also reflected in the International Development Goals contained in the 2000 Millennium Declaration.

We mandated a task force of senior officials to consult with developing countries, relevant international organizations, and other stakeholders and suggest ways in which the G8 might best support the achievement of these goals. Their report is attached. We welcome and endorse their conclusions.

# **REPORT OF THE G8 EDUCATION TASK FORCE**

## **Why Education for All?**

Education is the foundation for higher living standards and democratic societies. It is an important long-term investment in peace and development. We reaffirm the importance of literacy, numeracy, and learning, and our support for the EFA initiative.

## **Too many people remain uneducated**

More than 100 million children worldwide are out of school, and 60 percent of these are girls. One in four children does not complete five years of basic education. Nearly one billion adults are illiterate. Almost all of these people live in developing countries. HIV/AIDS and violent conflicts compound the problem.

## **The goals we have set for ourselves are at risk**

More than 30 countries are not on track to achieve universal primary enrollment by 2015. Given current trends, 75 percent of those out of school in 2015 will be in Africa. Enrolment, however, is not enough: at least five years of quality schooling is required for basic literacy and numeracy. Completing primary education of good quality is the indicator of success, and almost 90 countries are not on track to achieve this.

Also, 35 countries are not on track to meet the 2005 gender goals at the primary and secondary levels.

## **The time has now come for action**

After reviewing the challenges facing EFA, we have reached the following conclusions:

- the need for developing-country commitment;
- the response required from developed countries; and
- the need for better assessment.

## **The first step must be developing-country commitment**

Political commitment at the country level, the provision of adequate domestic financing, and the development of sound education strategies are the foundations for achieving EFA.

## **Political commitment is a prerequisite**

In countries that have achieved universal primary education or are making sound progress, success has depended on strong political leadership, good governance, transparency, and an unequivocal commitment to poverty eradication, with primary education as a top priority. This commitment has been reflected in transparent national budgets down to the local level and effective public expenditure management systems that ensure resources reach the classroom level and provide the basis for local involvement and accountability.

## **Resource commitments must be adequate**

To achieve UPE, developing countries will have to devote a significant share of domestically generated funds to education. Research by the World Bank indicates that countries on track to achieve five years of UPE spend about 20 percent of their recurrent budget on education, and half of this on primary education.

## **National education plans must address issues of access, equity, and quality**

The responsibility for developing and implementing sound education plans must remain with developing-country governments. The sustainability of these plans is enhanced when they are integrated into the country's broader strategy for poverty eradication. Local communities, private providers, and non-governmental organizations should be seriously engaged in the development and implementation of education plans.

- **National education plans should address access for all, but special attention is required for girls**

In too many countries, improving education for girls is not a priority. Specific measures to address their education should be included in plans for all countries with significant gender disparities. The quality of these measures should be a key determinant of the credibility of a country's educational plan. The efforts of UNICEF and other UN agencies to promote access for girls and gender equality should be supported.

- **Measures for disadvantaged children should be included in national education plans:**
  - **AIDS-affected children:** There are now more than 13 million AIDS orphans; this number is projected to reach 35 million by 2010. The unique circumstances of AIDS orphans will require creative—often unique—solutions. Community groups can play an important role.
  - **Working children:** Some 300 million boys and girls are estimated to be working. For some working children, non-formal education is one means to provide them with access to learning. Stronger efforts must be made to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and to mainstream working children into formal schools. We applaud the efforts of the International Labour Organization in this regard.
  - **Children with special needs:** Education must be inclusive; children with special needs should not be excluded from the formal system. Currently in developing countries, fewer than 2 percent of children with disabilities participate in the formal education system.
  - **Children affected by conflict:** Special efforts need to be made to address the circumstances of children in wartorn societies and post-conflict situations, including the reintegration of child soldiers.
  - **Children in rural areas:** Equity and broad-based development goals require that attention be paid to the provision of primary education in rural areas, even if costs are relatively high.

- **Improving quality is essential**

The focus of national education plans must be on results. Children need to complete school, not simply be enrolled in the early grades. Better teaching methods, improved curricula, and reasonable class sizes are critical to reducing high dropout and repetition rates. In many countries, this will only be affordable if teachers' salaries, in relation to the economy, are brought more in line with the levels prevailing in those countries on track to achieve UPE.

Teacher training programs can help minimize the trade-off between access and quality. Technology can help: expanded teacher training through the appropriate use of information technologies holds considerable promise. The Digital Opportunity Task Force is undertaking some valuable work in support of a greater role for technology in education.

The quality of a national education plan is also enhanced when primary and secondary education, and programs for higher education and vocational training, complement and reinforce each other.

- **The impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems must be addressed**

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the teaching profession and the operations of schools must be acknowledged and addressed in national educational plans. In some of the most affected countries, the extra recruitment of teachers due to HIV/AIDS ranges from 20 to 60 percent. Technical assistance to help countries address the impacts of HIV/AIDS on the supply, demand, and quality of education, including the effect on teachers, can make an important contribution to these strategies.

A country's education system can perform a constructive role in equipping people to address—and ultimately reverse—the devastating spread of this disease. Teachers can play an important role in reinforcing the importance of prevention. In these circumstances, the proper training of teachers is essential.

*The responsibility for developing sound education plans and providing sufficient resources lies with developing-country governments. Political commitment and transparent budgets are essential.*

*Developing countries should allocate resources to primary education commensurate with that of countries on track to achieve Universal Primary Education.*

*National education plans should be comprehensive, and deal with access, equity, and quality issues, and integrating primary education into an overall education policy.*

### **Developed-country response**

Achieving EFA requires effective delivery of assistance on the ground, increased and predictable financial support for countries with sound policies, and coherent processes for organizing the international community.

## **Effective on-the-ground delivery**

Development cooperation is increasingly driven by national poverty-reduction strategies and, within them, sector-wide programming in areas such as education. These sectoral approaches, which require more coordinated donor support, under developing-country leadership, offer significantly improved prospects for positive development results.

*We have a responsibility to coordinate our on-the-ground activities in support of developing-country strategies.*

*We consider country-owned national poverty-reduction strategies as preferred frameworks for our coordinated activities. We recognize the potential of sector-wide approaches to improve results in the context of effective national education plans.*

*We support the accelerated development of harmonized operational procedures to enhance aid effectiveness and efficiency.*

*We note that some donors are pooling funds or providing budget support to further reduce administrative burdens in countries that are well governed and have in place effective and transparent financial management systems.*

## **Unlocking resources for Education for All**

In April 2000, G8 governments agreed in Dakar that "no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources."

In March 2002, international leaders supported the Monterrey Consensus, which established a new partnership between developed and developing countries, based on mutual responsibility and accountability. It offers the prospect of positive and measurable development results by linking greater contributions from developed countries to greater responsibility from developing countries.

Monterrey also signaled new resources to countries committed to alleviating poverty. G8 members joined other donors in announcing significant increases in financial assistance for countries with sound policies in place. These resources will complement the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which has already freed up significant local resources for the education sector.

In April 2002, the Development Committee of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund endorsed an action plan prepared by the World Bank to accelerate progress toward EFA. This plan recognizes that by far the greatest source of resources for EFA must come from developing countries themselves. It concludes, however, that significant additional external funding is also needed to achieve EFA. The bulk of this support is needed in Africa.

A centerpiece of the action plan is a proposal to fast-track countries that demonstrate strong political commitment to education and have effective systems for managing public expenditures. This is an important initiative to advance EFA, which puts into action the Monterrey Consensus. Our response should ensure that no child is left behind.

*We recognize that there is a high recurrent-cost component in basic education.*

*We will significantly increase the support provided by our bilateral aid agencies to basic education for countries with a strong policy and financial commitment to the sector. Each G8 donor will make public the steps it will take to fulfill this commitment.*

*In that regard, we view the World Bank's Fast Track proposal as a welcome first step in mobilizing financial resources for countries committed to Education for All and demonstrating credible performance. We will take the World Bank's recently published list of Fast Track countries fully into account as we work to achieve universal primary education.*

*We call upon the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks to provide additional support to countries that have made a commitment to education and gender equality, and have a proven track record of strong management or are demonstrating strong management progress. We will reflect this position in the governing councils of these organizations.*

*We will strengthen our existing efforts to build capacity in developing countries not yet in a position to qualify for enhanced support, with a particular focus on countries with large out-of-school populations.*

*We will accelerate the reconstruction of education systems in countries emerging from conflict.*

## **A more coherent international process**

At the international level, a number of institutions are working in support of EFA. The World Bank and UNESCO are perhaps the two most important.

The World Bank is currently moving ahead aggressively with its EFA Action Plan, reflecting the strong support it received from the international community at the Development Committee meeting in April 2002.

UNESCO continues to perform the coordinating role it was asked to play at the Dakar conference, including bringing together annually the High Level Group of Ministers and representatives of NGOs, institutions, and developing countries whose purpose is to maintain the political momentum of EFA.

*We support closer cooperation between the World Bank and UNESCO in moving the Education for All process forward. More specifically, we suggest:*

- *that the UNESCO High Level Group on Education for All continues to meet annually to provide broad political direction and maintain the momentum for Education for All.*
- *a donors' consultative group meeting take place immediately after the next High Level Group meeting with a view to identifying bottlenecks, requiring donor attention.*
- *both groups, in their work, draw on the data and analysis of an increasingly high-quality monitoring report on global progress toward Education for All (see below).*

### **Better assessment and monitoring is needed**

A high-quality, independent, annual monitoring report that draws upon the best available information and analysis is indispensable to the EFA process. Current assessment tools used to measure EFA progress, identify best practices, and ensure accountability for results, require strengthening.

Key institutions, including the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) and the World Bank, are working in partnership to improve the quality, timeliness, and maintenance of education statistics, and to produce an improved annual monitoring report. The report will draw upon data from the World Bank, UIS, developing countries, and other sources.

A major effort is required within developing countries, where the capacity to collect, process, and analyze data on school attendance and student performance is variable and often weak. Increased political support for statistics-gathering in countries and long-term capacity-building initiatives is essential.

*We call on the UNESCO Institute of Statistics and the World Bank to continue their efforts to produce a high-quality, annual monitoring report based on the best data available from national governments, the World Bank, and other sources.*

*The monitoring report should serve as the foundation for coordinating action at the international level by the High Level Group and the donors' consultative group.*

*We encourage international institutions involved in education-data activities to increase their coordination in order to minimize the burden on developing countries and to improve the quality and consistency of education data.*

*A credible system of assessment and testing is crucial to real Education for All progress. Donors should help developing countries build the necessary institutional capacity.*