

## **Fifth Meeting of the High-Level Group**

### **on Education for All**

**28 – 30 November 2005**

**Beijing, China**

## **Final Communiqué**

1. We, Heads of State, ministers, heads and top officials of multilateral and bilateral agencies, and leaders of non-governmental organisations, met in Beijing from 28 to 30 November 2005, at the invitation of the Director-General of UNESCO, for the Fifth Meeting of the High Level Group on Education for All, whose central theme was literacy and education for rural people. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our Chinese hosts for their warm hospitality and excellent logistical support.
2. The meeting was enriched by the deliberations of the Technical Meeting of the UN Girls' Education Initiative, the Third Round Table on the Elimination of Child Labour, and the partners of the Fast Track Initiative. The Sino-African Education Ministers Forum stressed the importance of education within locally-driven development and as a means of respecting cultural diversity.
3. Our discussions have taken place at the end of a significant year for global development. At the United Nations World Summit in September 2005, and as called for in our 2004 Brasilia Communiqué, world leaders emphasised the critical role of education in the achievement of the MDGs, and reaffirmed support for the implementation of Education for All.
4. The 2006 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* makes clear that additional progress has been made towards the 2015 goals: about 70 countries have increased the share of national budgets devoted to education, twenty million more children are in school in the regions of sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, South-South cooperation is flourishing, and aid to basic education more than doubled between 1999 and 2003.
5. Nevertheless, the 2005 gender parity goal has been missed. One hundred million children are still out of school and more than 771 million adults

remain illiterate – the majority of whom are female, and live in rural areas. In addition, the increasing effects of natural disasters, civil unrest, social violence, HIV & AIDS and other pandemics, and deepening poverty threaten the capacity of countries to achieve the EFA goals. Current rates of progress in enrolling more children in school still need to double in South Asia and quadruple in sub-Saharan Africa in order to reach the 2015 goal of providing all children with a complete education of good quality. Educating children, particularly girls, along with the education of their mothers, will substantially contribute to the fulfilment of the EFA goals.

6. As school enrolments expand worldwide, we must acknowledge and address the teacher shortage crises facing nations. It is projected that 60 million new teachers, in addition to filling the current shortage in existing ranks, must be recruited and trained if we are to successfully fulfil the EFA goals by 2015.
7. There is an enduring finance gap of at least \$5 billion per annum, according to estimates of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report*. New pledges of significant increases in development assistance and debt relief must be translated into additional resources for education in general and EFA in particular, and used efficiently in accordance with the Monterrey Consensus and the Paris Declaration.
8. EFA will only be fully successful when currently marginalised children and adults complete school and workforce preparation programmes which they can use to improve their lives. This outcome – not just access, but also success in learning for all – is the finality which the following commitments are designed to achieve. In the spirit of a mutual compact among developing countries, donor agencies, multilateral agencies and civil society, we commit ourselves to promoting inclusion, equity and quality through actions in the following three areas – literacy, education for rural people, and gender parity and equality.

## **Literacy**

9. Given the low priority of adult literacy in national budgets and development assistance, and the continuous need for schools to attract and retain

children for a full cycle of basic education, we recommend that

**Governments and EFA partners:**

- Demonstrate political commitment by integrating literacy into education sector plans, based on the recognition of the fundamental importance for enjoying the right to education;
- Give higher priority to literacy in formulating education budgets;
- Implement a three-pronged strategy for literacy:
  - quality education for all;
  - significant expansion of targeted literacy, adult learning and continuing education programmes, using appropriate adult learning strategies and improving the training and conditions of facilitators;
  - the development of sustainable literate environments.

10. **Funding agencies** are encouraged to work with governments to provide significant and regular funding and capacity development for effective literacy programmes.

11. We welcome the UNESCO Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) as a significant new strategy for achieving literacy for all within the framework of the UN Literacy Decade, and urge close collaboration.

**Education for rural people**

12. Since the majority of those left behind and excluded from education live in rural areas, education for rural people is vital and urgent.

13. We recommend that **Governments and EFA partners:**

- Invest more to reach and serve successfully the poorest, minorities, migrants, unorganised workers and other disadvantaged groups through best practices and other beneficial policies;
- Design and implement targeted strategies, an intersectoral approach and strong partnerships to cater to the diversity of situations and needs;

- In order to address the serious gap in the availability of teachers, design and urgently support strategies of teacher mobilisation and training programmes, including the UNESCO strategy for Teacher Training in sub-Saharan Africa. Where teachers remain insufficient in numbers, create alternative strategies and programmes.
- Promote the quality of teaching and learning, with special attention to the strategies for placing, supporting and retaining qualified and trained teachers in rural areas and improving their working conditions;
- Implement innovative measures, including curriculum reform, distance learning, non-formal education and application of ICTs, to improve relevance, respecting the diversity of local culture and languages, validating local knowledge and adopting flexible calendars;

### **Gender parity and equality**

14. In order to ensure that the 2005 gender parity target, which has been missed in 94 countries, is met without further delay, we recommend that

#### **Governments and EFA partners:**

- Implement strategies to boost girls' participation and female literacy. These will include removing cost barriers and strengthening schools as gender-sensitive centres of quality learning, care and protection, in line with the recommendations of the UNGEI Technical meeting.
- Scale up efforts significantly to enable girls to attend and complete their education, including gender-sensitive learning content and school environments.
- Include in all sector plans clearly defined gender outcomes and targets in support of gender parity and equality, as well as budget lines for specific actions in favour of girls and women (and in some countries boys and men), including capacity development.

## **Joint Action Plan**

15. We endorse the development of the proposed draft *Joint Action Plan for achieving EFA by 2015*, to be further elaborated by UNESCO in close consultation with the main global partners and presented to the UNESCO Executive Board at its spring session 2006. Its aim is a more strategic and coherent approach to achieve all six EFA goals. The *Plan* should set objectives, targets and timelines for the implementation process.
16. We recommend that UNESCO convene the Heads of the five convening agencies of Jomtien and Dakar at the latest by mid-2006 to discuss and, if possible, affirm the *Plan*.
17. We request UNESCO and the other EFA partners to encourage and support South-South cooperation, mutual learning and exchange at the regional level, including strengthening the E-9 network and other groupings as platforms for doing so. This will include cooperation on a triangular basis.
18. We encourage UNESCO to strengthen its capacity to perform its role of coordinating the EFA process at the international level and provide strategic support at regional and country levels.

## **Financial resources and capacity development**

19. Pledges by the donor community, estimated by the OECD to amount to US\$50 billion per annum by 2010, including the announcement by the G8 and the Development Committee of the World Bank to increase and accelerate debt relief, should result in significant benefits for education. We urge that these promises be translated into real resources and that education receive the high priority that it deserves, within the country's overall development and poverty reduction strategy. We recognise that to achieve the UPE goal by 2015 all students must be enrolled in school by 2008. We recommend that:
  - Countries increase the proportion of national budgets allocated to basic education to meet the scale and the scope of the national EFA challenge as expressed in their national education plan.
  - Within an increased budget, countries and EFA partners raise significantly the percentage devoted to adult literacy and continuing

education. The 2006 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* estimates that US\$2.5 billion per year will be needed to make significant progress towards the EFA literacy goal.

- Countries should work with EFA partners to progressively remove both formal and informal school fee barriers, so as to enable all children, and in particular girls, to attend and complete primary schooling by 2015. They should also provide appropriate incentives to the poorest families, such as school grants, to support their children's education.
- In order to improve their capacity to maintain quality while absorbing the impact of enhanced enrolments, FTI and EFA partners will need to give prompt and long-term support to governments of developing countries that take these bold initiatives.
- Donors should close the external funding gap for EFA by making all efforts to double current levels of ODA to education and, in line with the needs identified in the 2006 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, give higher priority to basic education. Also in accordance with the *Report*, particular emphasis should be given to the education needs of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- FTI be expanded as a means of mobilising additional funds and technical assistance, as well as a forum for donor coordination and policy dialogue. Funds will be allocated according to national priorities articulated in education sector plans and aligned with sound public financial frameworks, for all low-income countries including fragile states.
- EFA partners explore the potential of such new and innovative financing mechanisms as may be adopted, for example, an International Finance Facility, an airline solidarity tax and debt swaps, for mobilising resources for EFA.
- Aid be made more effective, in the education sector, in accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration on *Aid Effectiveness: Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability*, with FTI serving as a mechanism to promote good practice, and donors harmonising their administrative and budgetary procedures, with the aim

of ensuring effective implementation of national plans and reducing the burden on partner countries.

- EFA partners ensure that adequate attention is given to further building the capacity of countries to monitor and evaluate progress in EFA, including the collection and use of disaggregated and improved data which capture sub-national realities, as evidence for formulating policy and documenting good practices at the country and regional levels.

20. We acknowledge that child labour is a major obstacle to achieving EFA. We welcome the establishment of the Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education as a further step in enabling children to stop working and enjoy a quality education. We endorse its proposed role for advocacy, coordination and research in this field.

21. We recommend that civil society organisations and networks strengthen their involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation of and advocacy in favour of achieving EFA goals within the framework of national EFA strategies, working in coordination with governments.

22. We request UNESCO and other EFA partners to increase support to countries in planning and monitoring, including capturing the most efficient approaches to achieve maximum results.

23. Finally, we resolve to use our individual and collective energies, resources and influence to implement these commitments with the urgency which the continuing challenge of EFA requires. As partners in EFA, we will intensify our action, recognising that the year 2005 represents a pivotal moment for the international community, and we pledge ourselves to the extra efforts necessary if we are to reach the 2015 EFA targets.

24. We recommend that funding agencies and government partners provide to UNESCO, by the end of March 2006, information on our agreed financial commitments to the achievement of the EFA goals.

### **Way forward**

25. We ask that in its global progress review, the 2008 Education for All Global Monitoring Report should pay close attention to the performance of those countries that are currently off track in reaching the EFA and Millennium

Development Goals, especially but not exclusively in relation to: the gender, UPE and literacy goals; the levels and types of aid to basic education to the countries with the deepest needs; the policies being implemented by countries making the most rapid progress towards the 2015 goals; and monitoring the progress of pledges made by donors.

26. During 2006, EFA partners will ensure visibility for the recommendations of this Communiqué at the Summit on Education and Culture of the African Union in January, the meeting of the Education Ministers of the E-9 group of high population countries in Mexico in February, the spring session of UNESCO's Executive Board, the spring meetings of the World Bank/IMF Development Committee, and other such forums.
27. In view of the high profile likely to be given to EFA at the G8 Summit in Russia in June 2006, EFA partners will use the opportunity to urge G8 members to implement their commitments to increase development assistance and accelerate debt relief.

#### **Next meeting**

28. We welcome the invitation of the government of Egypt to host the next High-Level Group meeting on Education for All on 14 – 16 November 2006, on the theme of early childhood development and education.