

Sixth Meeting of the High-Level Group

on Education for All

14 – 16 November 2006

Cairo, Egypt

Final Communiqué

1. We, Ministers, heads and top officials of multilateral and bilateral agencies, and leaders of civil society organizations, met in Cairo from 14 to 16 November 2006, at the invitation of the Director-General of UNESCO, for the Sixth Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All (EFA), whose central theme was Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). We extend our sincere gratitude to our host, the Government of Egypt, for its warm hospitality and support.
2. Our meeting takes place towards the end of another significant year for development and for education. Education is higher on the political agenda, and many countries have made efforts to raise educational budgets and accelerate progress on EFA. We welcome the explicit support of the G8 Summit in St Petersburg for EFA, the inclusion of the EFA-FTI in the G7 Finance Ministers' communiqué and by the World Bank Development Committee, and the new initiatives for financing education over the next ten years announced at the Abuja Finance for Development Conference. We further acknowledge the increased interaction among the five original EFA convening agencies with a view to enhancing coordinated action in support of EFA efforts at the country level.
3. We acknowledge the more integrated agendas of the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI), whose meetings prior to the High-Level Group provided substantive input into our deliberations.
4. The 2007 *EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR)* indicates that further progress has been made in EFA, with over 37 million more children in primary school from 1999 to 2004. More countries have abolished school fees, and aid to education is on the rise. Increases in adult literacy rates are real but slow – of 781 million adult illiterates, only 100 million will achieve literacy by 2015 at current rates of progress. Two-thirds of the 181 countries with data have now achieved gender parity at primary level. Post-conflict and post-emergency situations require country-specific solutions to bring learning opportunities to children and adults. The remaining EFA challenge is large and urgent; for example, with increases in enrolment, the quality of education and the assessment of learning outcomes remain essential priorities to be simultaneously addressed.

5. We draw renewed attention to challenges that we addressed last year, but which require sustained efforts from all of us:
- Education is key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**); we call for stronger integration of education-sector planning with that for broader development objectives, at both national and international levels.
 - The six EFA goals constitute an integrated educational agenda, in support of which we once again commit ourselves to a **comprehensive approach**;
 - Progress towards **gender parity** in basic education is too slow. Gender equality in education remains an even more challenging goal. We commit ourselves to more targeted efforts to remove barriers to girls' access to school, through UNGEI and every possible means, as well as to address girls' and boys' performance within school at both primary and secondary levels.
 - One in five adults is without **literacy** skills, and most are women – an unacceptable situation and a shameful loss of potential. We commit ourselves to address this challenge through innovation and new investment.
 - Drawing upon the 2005 GMR *The Quality Imperative* and other studies, governments and EFA partners will design an integrated approach at national level that ensures that all dimensions of the **quality of education** are factored into monitoring and evaluation and related planning and policy-making processes.
 - Accurate and concise data are essential for **monitoring** progress towards EFA, and we welcome the 2007 GMR analysis of educational statistics and financing of education. We commit ourselves to accelerating efforts to secure data on those countries not included, particularly those affected by conflict, as well as on sub-national realities.
 - The multiple economic, social, cultural and educational issues behind **child labour** call for context-specific solutions – we commit ourselves to working transparently with communities and providing resources to eliminate child labour and ensure equitable access to quality learning opportunities.
 - For every child to be taught by a qualified teacher in a class of no more than 40 will require 18 million new **teachers** by 2015. In working towards that goal, we commit ourselves to strategies and innovation to improve the quality of teachers of all levels and in all circumstances. This will include attention to well-designed and relevant curricula to facilitate learning and improve teacher effectiveness, and help in filling pedagogical gaps while teaching quality is raised.
 - As EFA partners, we will continue to identify appropriate ways of supporting and resourcing education in **post-conflict and post-disaster situations**, and in **fragile states**, effectively and in a sustained manner, as part of a focus on addressing the EFA needs of the most disadvantaged groups.
 - **South-South cooperation** has more potential for EFA than is currently being realised, particularly regarding capacity-building and institutional development. Moreover, it is a key means of coordinating action in addressing similar challenges.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

6. We welcome the evidence of the 2007 EFA GMR on the benefits of early childhood care and education to children, to the possibility of achieving universal primary completion, and to national socio-economic development. Within the framework of all the EFA goals, we commit ourselves to work together to:
 - expand enrolment in early childhood education programmes, targeting particularly the most disadvantaged groups in society;
 - develop clear and comprehensive national policies on ECCE, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, especially parents, and as part of a national education sector plan;
 - increase the range and depth of partnerships in ECCE, particularly between government, local communities, NGOs and the private sector;
 - foster inclusive ECCE programmes which take a holistic approach to the needs of the child, comprising education, health, nutrition, social services and protection, and which are respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity, including the use of the mother tongue;
 - strengthen literacy and non-formal education, particularly for women, as part of an integrated approach to ECCE;
 - address gender issues in the early years as a crucial part of efforts to reach the gender parity and equality goals;
 - upgrade the qualifications and status of ECCE staff in order to enhance the quality of their interaction with children.

SUPPORT AND FINANCING

7. We recognise the urgent need to increase funding from national and external sources if the EFA goals are to be achieved by 2015, and we note the 2007 GMR estimate of an annual external funding requirement of US\$11 billion for UPE, with provision for adult literacy and ECCE. We welcome the growing role of the EFA-FTI as a catalyst for harmonisation and alignment and increased flow of funds to basic education.
8. In particular, we recommend that:
 - further in-depth analysis of the financing gap be undertaken, taking into consideration the projected long-term financing implications of addressing the six EFA goals, and that a report be presented to the 2007 High-Level Group meeting;
 - EFA partners engage in dialogue with Ministers of Finance and the IMF to encourage countries to develop the fiscal space to increase investments in EFA and enable them to remove constraints such as public sector wage-bill caps;
 - all EFA partners make increased efforts to generate adequate resources for achieving the EFA goals by 2015, in the context of increased ODA pledges:
 - › developing country governments will continue to increase the proportion of national budgets allocated to education, seeking to reach 4%-6% of GNP for education;

- external funding partners will raise levels of predictable and long-term financing to education in general and to basic education in particular, including adult literacy, ECCE and lifeskills education for adolescents. External financing should pay particular attention to the timely flow of resources, and to filling the funding gap of FTI-endorsed education sector plans;
- governments and aid agencies should urgently identify financing goals for ECCE substantially above current levels in order to achieve coverage for the most disadvantaged groups in society;
- innovative financing mechanisms, including debt swaps, public-private partnerships, and other financing possibilities, should be further developed in feasible and appropriate ways for supporting EFA;
- if countries choose to abolish school fees then external funding partners should urgently consider measures to help close the resulting funding gap.

HIV & AIDS

9. We reaffirm the central role of education in enabling individuals, communities and nations to respond effectively to the challenges of HIV & AIDS, and in enabling learners to protect themselves and others from HIV.
10. Recognising that HIV & AIDS are of importance globally, we commit ourselves specifically in all countries to:
 - linking education sector planning with the commitment to achieve universal access to prevention, care, treatment and support by 2010;
 - using educational strategies and drawing on the full potential of the education sector to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV & AIDS;
 - addressing the impact of the epidemic on the education sector, including expanded training and support for educators, and replacement of teachers lost to AIDS;
 - adopting supportive and anti-discriminatory workplace policies in education systems, such as the ILO code of practice;
 - developing and strengthening lifeskills-based education and similar programmes to promote awareness and prevention of HIV & AIDS;
 - ensuring that orphans and other vulnerable children have equitable access to, and complete, quality basic education;
 - ensuring that educational systems provide access to care, support and treatment for teachers and other staff infected or affected by HIV & AIDS;
 - fostering strategic cross-sectoral partnerships to strengthen and support a comprehensive education sector response.

OTHER MAJOR CONCERNS

11. We underline that poverty and social exclusion remain the major barriers to achieving the EFA goals and commit ourselves to further measures in support of the poorest populations, such as school fee abolition and cash transfers, as well as policies to promote inclusion.
12. We commit ourselves to address gender inequality in all its forms, both where girls continue to be disadvantaged, and where boys are marginalised, addressing obstacles to access, retention, performance and quality learning outcomes.
13. We will address the specific educational needs of adolescents, both girls and boys, through appropriate programmes, within or outside the school system, with an emphasis on lifeskills.

COOPERATION AND GLOBAL ACTION PLAN

14. We recognise the central importance of increased cooperation and coordination in our collective efforts to achieve the EFA goals. Thus, we welcome the improved version of the *EFA Global Action Plan: improving support to countries in achieving the EFA goals*, as well as the support given to the process by the heads of the EFA convening agencies and the 2006 G8 Summit. We wish to highlight the emphasis that the *Plan* puts on 'one country ~ one education sector plan' as the pivot for better coordination. Mindful that the *Plan* seeks to enhance coordination among multilateral agencies, in conformity with the Paris Declaration and as a significant part of improved country-level coordination among all stakeholders, we make the following recommendations for action in four areas during the next year, and wish to receive a report on them at the 2007 High-Level Group meeting:
 - a) *Application of the Plan:*
 - EFA partners should move expeditiously to apply the *Plan* at country level, including in the UN Reform pilot countries, in order to demonstrate more effective coordination on the ground;
 - The *Plan* should utilise and extend the scope of existing coordination mechanisms with a documented process and model at national level;
 - UNESCO should monitor the process of implementation in selected countries closely in order to learn the lessons of experience and adapt the *Plan* accordingly;
 - b) *Capacity development*
 - Globally, as well as in national education sector planning processes, the EFA convening agencies should facilitate a coordinated and systematic approach to supporting country-led capacity development strategies in and beyond the education sector. This will include approaches identified in the EFA-FTI partnership meeting;
 - c) *South-South and triangular cooperation*
 - UNESCO should, by the 2007 High-Level Group meeting, develop a specific plan in cooperation with the E-9 countries, the Group of 77 and China, and aid agencies, to increase South-South and South-South-North (triangular) cooperation.

- d) *Monitoring and evaluation*
- Building on the reviews of EFA progress at national level and complementary to the 2008 GMR global review of progress, EFA partners should design a longer-term review and research process for monitoring and evaluation which will inform national policies and programmes, in close collaboration with the EFA-FTI proposals for strengthening monitoring systems through increased collaboration.
15. We also expect that the EFA convening agencies will maintain regular consultations at international level so that the *Plan* remains a dynamic instrument of coordination, particularly reaching out to other EFA partners, beyond the original five EFA convening agencies.

THE WAY FORWARD

16. We look forward to the 2008 *EFA* GMR and its review of EFA progress, as outlined in the 2005 Beijing High-Level Group Communiqué. We welcome the plans to adopt a new sequence of EFA mechanisms – GMR publication ~ Working Group ~ High-Level Group – with a view to making greater use of the evidence of the GMR in shaping ongoing collective efforts.
17. We also recommend that additional efforts be made to reinvigorate the High-Level Group meeting and attract representation at ministerial and head-of-agency level in order to demonstrate commitment and to enhance the impact of the meeting.
18. We further welcome the regional efforts to undertake in 2007 a Review and Stocktaking of EFA Progress. These complementary processes will not only measure progress since 2000, but also serve to shape efforts up to 2015. We commit ourselves collectively to do all in our power to respond robustly to the outcomes of these reviews.
19. We commit ourselves to promoting EFA and fostering the integration of the EFA goals into wider development agendas through events in 2007, such as: the G8 Summit, the World Bank and IMF annual meetings, the regional literacy conferences, the General Conference of UNESCO, and meetings of the AU, ALECSO, COMEDAF, among others.
20. We welcome the invitation of the Government of Senegal to host the next High-Level Group meeting on Education for All from 11 to 13 December 2007, which will focus on an overall review of EFA progress.