



Background

The CARK Education Forum is the annual meeting of national policy makers, technical experts and programme planners in education of the five Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan established as a follow-up institutional mechanism to the World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000). The 5 countries have joined their efforts for regional cooperation towards the solution of key problems and challenges on a common platform. The Forum has become an institutional venue for identifying, debating and discussing priority issues in education. It also has established a mechanism for decision-making through the Executive Committee that meets twice a year and the technical experts through thematic working groups.

The first CARK Education Forum was held in 2002 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. This was the first opportunity for each of the country to provide an overview of its own situation in the area of education. It covered a wide range of problems and concerns, from bigger issues such as policy reforms, investments and financing, access and quality, standards, etc.

The Second CARK Education Forum took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 2003. The Forum focussed on discussions for improvement of National Plans of Action on EFA, establishment of national coalitions, and the EFA progress monitoring. It adopted a resolution confirming commitment to the EFA in its “expanded vision of basic education” in the context of the six EFA goals. It further emphasized the importance of community participation not only in the implementation of education policies, plans and programs, but also in their development and integration.

The Third CARK Education Forum was in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 2004. The Forum centred on “Gender and Education in Central Asia” and discussed other priority concerns in CARK such as HIV/AIDS and Education and creating favourable environments for boys and girls education in child-friendly schools. The Forum adopted a resolution to strengthen promotion of general EFA priorities in the region.

In 2005, Tajikistan hosted the Fourth CARK Education Forum in Dushanbe. The meeting was devoted to the issue of improved quality and access to education through the reform of education systems. The resolution adopted during this meeting re-confirmed the CARK Forum’s compliance with the EFA goals, reform and improvement of national educational systems, and a higher level of regional cooperation. In addition, a fifth thematic group on early child development was proposed to be established and led by Turkmenistan.

Expected Outcome of the 5th CARK Education Forum

Based on the consensus reached during the Executive Committee meeting in January 2006, the theme of the 5th CARK Education Forum will be “MOVING FORWARD TO ACHIEVE EFA GOALS”. This year’s theme is also timely and consistent with the global initiative to undertake the Mid-Decade Assessment of EFA goals in 2006-2007 in preparation for the Medium-Term Review of EFA by 2008.

At the end of the Forum, it is expected that the following have been deliberated upon and a common resolution formulated to ensure access, equity and quality Education for All in the 5 CARK countries:

- a) Global EFA framework and regional perspective on policy and institutional measures that the CARK countries are encouraged to pursue for accelerating the achievement of the six Education for All goals
- b) Country overview of progress against the 6 EFA goals, remaining challenges, policies and programmes, and strategies to accelerate goals achievement
- c) Consensus and commitment on pursuing an organized system and analytical process for the Mid-Decade Assessment of the EFA

The six EFA goals to which the 5 CARK countries, together with other countries in the world, pledged and committed to achieve by 2015:

Goal 1 Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Goal 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

Goal 3 Ensuring that learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes

Goal 4 Achieving 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults

Goal 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

Goal 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

Mechanics and Design of the Forum

The Forum will be held for 3 days. The Ministries of Education of all five countries will take turn in chairing the various sessions and Turkmenistan will be the overall chair of the Forum.

The Forum will have six sessions that will combine selected topics to be discussed by identified resource persons or speakers. Q&A sessions in plenary will allow for other guests and participants to contribute to the discussions.

Session 1 – Opening of the Forum. The formal opening will proceed with the handing-over ceremony from the Government of Tajikistan to the Government of Turkmenistan, as the host of the 5th forum and followed by remarks from the UN system.

Session 2 – Setting the Framework for the 5th CARK education Forum. Keynote speakers from international organizations are to discuss their perspectives and insights on challenges to

education and their vision towards EFA goals achievement in the region. There will be one plenary Q&A session.

Session 3 – EFA Mid-Decade Assessment. This session will be devoted solely to discussion of the EFA Mid-Decade Assessment. The regional strategy and requirements for the EFA Mid-Decade Assessment will be presented. This will be followed by deliberations and recommendations for the conduct of the assessment in CARK.

Session 4 - Country Reports on Progress Towards the Achievement of the 6 EFA Goals. Each of the 5 countries will have a 30-minute presentation of progress and trends in EFA goals achievements, remaining challenges in keeping the country on-track with the goals and medium-term and long-term strategies to accelerate and move forward EFA goals' achievement.

Session 5 – Early Childhood, Multi-Lingual and Gender Education. As the newest thematic working group of the Forum, the Comprehensive Child Development and Readiness for Schooling TWG will present its report on expanding ECCE in CARK. This will be followed by presentations on Multi-Lingual Education and EFA Goal 5 on Going Beyond Parity and Towards Achieving Gender Equality in Education.

Session 6 – Concluding Session. At the concluding session, the draft resolution will be presented to the body for adoption. After the adoption of the resolution of the 5th CARK Education Forum, the Forum will formally conclude with closing remarks from country representatives and notable guests.