



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Parliamentarians and the challenge of Education for All

Nicholas Burnett

Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

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Education: a driver of development

Education is a fundamental human right and a key foundation of sustainable human development

Education is a catalyst for development. It:

- Improves health, nutrition, income and livelihoods
- Reduces poverty
- Contributes to economic growth
- Promotes citizenship and democratic participation
- Is a condition for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals

Education: a top priority for UNESCO

UNESCO promotes education as a fundamental human right and a key to personal, social and economic development

- Lead coordinator of the global Education for All initiative
- Provides guidance to countries in planning and management of education policies; supports capacity development
- Leads UN Decades on Literacy and on Education for Sustainable Development
- Runs three special initiatives: UNAIDS Global Initiative on Education and AIDS; the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE); and the Teacher Training in sub-Saharan Africa Initiative
- Publishes the annual *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (next edition 25 November 2008)

Why Education for All?

Education for All (EFA) is a global collective commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults

- World Conference on Education For All convened by 4 UN agencies and World Bank (Jomtien, 1990)
- World Education Forum (Dakar, April 2000):
 - Commitment to achieve the six EFA Goals by 2015 – *Dakar Framework for Action*
 - UNESCO is entrusted with the global coordination of EFA partners
- The notion of EFA is embedded in UNESCO's Constitution (1946)
- The right to education is affirmed in many international instruments since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Global Commitments: Education for All and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Six EFA Goals

1. Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education
2. Universal primary education by 2015
3. Learning and life skills programmes for youth and adults
4. 50% increase in adult literacy rates by 2015
5. Gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015
6. Improving quality of education

MDGs

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality, and other health goals
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Achieving EFA requires a holistic approach, targeting the entire educational system

No countries seriously committed to EFA will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources

The road travelled since 2000: A record of progress

- More children in primary school
647 million (1999) to 688 million (2006)
- More girls in primary school
Two-thirds of countries with data have achieved gender parity
- Out-of-school primary age children declining
96 million (1999) to 75 million (2006)
- Increased public spending on education
5% annual increase in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia
- More countries abolished primary school tuition fees
Some 15 countries since 2000

Stronger support systems for EFA

Political support

High-Level Group on EFA as a lever for political commitment and resource mobilization
Keeping EFA on agenda of G8, UN General Assembly, World Economic Forum
Cooperation with regional fora

Technical support

Thematic groups focusing on gender, education in emergencies and other
UN's "Delivering as One" process to promote policy harmonization

Financial Support

EFA-Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI)
Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness process (e.g. Accra Agenda for Action)

Advocacy

Global Campaign for Education – annual Global Action Week every April puts pressure on governments to meet their commitments

Specific partnerships

Regular consultation with NGOs
Regional forums for parliamentarians (Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa)
Public Private Partnerships

What has made a difference?

- Political will, strong national leadership and effective policies
- Universal and targeted measures (fee abolition, conditional cash transfer programs)
- Measures to expand early childhood care and education programs. They promote health, cognitive development and transition to primary school
- Broad-based inclusive partnerships to support national efforts
- Increased financial resources – both domestic and external

Overcoming inequalities

Achievements are uneven across the six EFA goals and across different regions and population groups

- 58 out of 86 countries that have not reached universal primary education are at serious risk of not achieving it by 2015
- Inequalities based on income, gender, location, ethnicity, language and disability are major causes of exclusion from education
- Up to 40% of students in many developing countries do not reach minimum achievement standards in language and mathematics
- An estimated 776 million adults lack basic literacy skills – 16% of world's population
- Child malnutrition and ill-health are undermining progress towards universal primary education in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia
- Lack of policies to address learning needs of youth and adults

Policy priorities

Promoting access, equity and quality through adequately financed universal and targeted measures

- Focus on reaching most vulnerable groups, underserved regions and populations
- Recognize importance of early childhood care and education to offset disadvantage
- Improve education quality: school environment, textbooks, instructional time
- Training teachers: 18 million additional teachers needed to reach UPE alone (7.6 million in Asia Pacific)
- Attention to language in multi-lingual contexts
- Expand adult literacy programs
- Strengthen partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders in support of national efforts
- Increase external funding: US\$11 billion/year to reach EFA in low-income countries

Parliamentarians: protecting the right to education

Parliamentarians play an important role in respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to education

The right to education is ensured through:

- ✓ Universal access to free primary education
- ✓ Positive measures and affirmative actions to overcome inequalities
- ✓ Special consideration to children from poorest households
- ✓ Ensuring quality of education
- ✓ Respect for learners' language and culture

Legislative responsibilities

- Ensure that core international normative instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) have been ratified
- Influence the framing of national legislation and frameworks to facilitate the achievement of Education for All
- Encourage enforcement of national legislation
- Assist in monitoring the implementation status of ratified treaties and conventions

Shaping policy

Parliamentarians can participate in developing policies that promote inclusion and equity in education

- Ensure that education is adequately addressed in national development strategies and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
- Ensure that national policies comply with international standards, goals and frameworks on education – both legal and political
- Promote policy reforms that focus on equity and that reduce disparities in access to education and in learning outcomes
- Strengthen cooperation with other sectors, ministries and stakeholders to ensure an inclusive policy process
- Ensure mechanisms to monitor learning outcomes and the performance of education systems

Playing the financial card

Education is first and foremost financed through domestic resources.
Parliamentarians can lobby for adequate allocations

They can:

- Press their governments to allocate larger shares of national budgets to education
- Verify that spending decisions respect national priorities
- Help governments to mobilize external financial and technical resources and ensure their effective use

Strong voices for education

As elected representatives, parliamentarians can bring educational gaps and challenges into the political spotlight

- Dialogue with national stakeholders including civil society, the private sector, and communities to hear and act on their concerns
- Ensure that political parties take EFA on board
- Take part in networks, summits and conferences on education
- Generate public debate on key EFA issues and organise campaigns to increase public awareness of EFA
- Disseminate EFA messages through the media



Thank you