

# 3 questions to Nicholas Burnett

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Report Team



## 1 What is the focus of the 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report?

Our special focus this year is on early childhood care and education (ECCE) – the first of the six EFA goals. While efforts to achieve universal primary education have dominated national and international policy agendas, minimal attention is paid to what happens in the first six to eight years of life. This is a serious mistake. Supporting children during these early years sets strong foundations for all future learning. The case is overwhelming, based both on rights and on reducing poverty.

## 2 How is ECCE important in the contexts of social development, gender equity and poverty reduction?

We know that a child born in the developing world has a four out of ten chance of living in extreme poverty. About 10.5 million children die each year before age five, most from preventable diseases. Good quality ECCE programmes provide health, nutrition, hygiene, stimulation and social interaction that supports the child's development and learning. They improve children's chances of doing well in primary school. When young children attend ECCE programmes, their older sisters or female relatives are relieved of care-giving responsibilities, often

a barrier to school attendance. ECCE programmes yield very high economic returns, especially for children from poor families. They are thus a powerful contributor to reducing poverty, the overarching objective of the Millennium Development Goals.

## 3 What is the greatest challenge to EFA?

Time is running out to meet even the primary education goal by 2015. Acting with urgency is imperative. We need to ensure that education really is for all. Right now it is not. The comprehensive vision of the Dakar agenda is being lost. Most countries – and most donor agencies – are paying minimal attention to improving adult literacy and to ECCE. There is a wide gap between enrolment and completion rates in primary school. The number of out-of-school children remains unacceptably high. Efforts need to be accelerated and more focused. In too many countries, fees and indirect costs remain a major obstacle to poor children's schooling. Public spending on basic education clearly needs to increase but so does international aid: levels have increased, but aid to low-income countries must at least double to reach the EFA goals.

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