

## Chapter **1**

# Literacy: the core of Education for All

This year's *EFA Global Monitoring Report* focuses on literacy, one of the most neglected of the six goals adopted in 2000 by 164 countries at the World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal). Yet literacy is a human right and at the core of Education for All. Literacy skills are essential in today's knowledge societies, conferring benefits on individuals, communities and nations. This chapter explores some of the reasons for the neglect of literacy, and notes signs of renewed attention. It traces the changing notions of literacy from a narrowly defined concept to one embracing a holistic view of educational development that includes the building of literate societies. Ultimately, literacy's crucial role in achieving each of the other five EFA goals may also provide a key to improving the lives of millions of people living in extreme poverty, and especially women.

**The Dakar framework embraces a holistic conception of educational development**

**A holistic approach to Education for All**

Five years after 164 countries agreed on the Dakar Framework for Action, it is time not only to assess progress towards the Education for All goals but also, importantly, to remember that the Framework is not concerned only with universal primary education and gender parity (which are also two of the Millennium Development Goals). Rather, it consists of a set of six goals that, taken together, embrace a holistic conception of educational development (Box 1.1). And yet, since 2000, most attention has been devoted to the three EFA goals that concern the extension and improvement of formal elementary education systems, namely:

- universal primary education (goal 2);
- gender parity (goal 5, the theme of the 2003/4 Report – especially important now, as its first target date was 2005);
- and, more recently, educational quality (goal 6, the theme of the 2005 Report).

The other three EFA goals (goals 1, 3 and 4) have been relatively neglected. Several factors contributed to this neglect.

- Rather than concerning the strengthening of existing formal education systems for school-age children, goals 1, 3 and 4 involve the *creation* of new educational opportunities for very young children (i.e. early childhood care and education), as well as for youth and adults (learning and life-skills programmes, basic and continuing education, and literacy programmes), often through non-formal institutions. As a result, in most countries, implementation responsibility does not fall neatly under the mandate of the Ministry of Education but rather is spread among several ministries.
- National governments and the international community have tended to assume that the political and economic returns from investing in young children, youth and adults are lower than those from investing in school-age children. The resulting neglect has been compounded by the inclusion of only two EFA goals among the Millennium Development Goals and by the decision to limit the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, the only significant multilateral aid vehicle,<sup>1</sup> to universal primary completion.
- The unfounded idea that primary education is more cost effective than youth and adult literacy programmes proved partly a self-

1. The Fast Track Initiative had been, until recently, exclusively concerned with primary education (see Chapter 4).

2. See Chapter 3. While more schools have been made available, many parents are too poor to afford the costs (direct and indirect) of schooling. In addition, many poor children fail to achieve expected learning outcomes because of poor health, malnutrition, lack of a home or community environment conducive to learning, excessive distance to schools, unfamiliar language of instruction, and so on. Thus, in addition to the children who do not start school, many others do not complete primary education; these will grow up as out-of-school youth and adults, in need of basic education, including literacy skills.

**Box 1.1 The Dakar Framework for**

■ **The six EFA Dakar goals**

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
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.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

fulfilling one. As budget, loan and grant allocations to primary education grew rapidly, adult programmes had their public funding reduced, and responsibility was often transferred from the public sector to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This reflected a misguided belief that such programmes were the responsibility of NGOs rather than of government, a belief that confused service-delivery mechanisms – in which NGOs play an important role – with broad policy and finance measures, which are the responsibility of government.

- Although the focus on primary education was justified – as this is the principal route to achieving Education for All – it was also limited, for it neglected those who had either not attended school, or who had done so without becoming literate.<sup>2</sup>
- Goals 1, 3 and 4 are difficult to define precisely and are stated in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. Monitoring and measuring progress towards them is thus difficult. For example, early childhood care and education (the theme of next year's Report) potentially includes health, nutrition, education and care interventions, and yet there is no agreed standardized definition. Even more difficult to define, and hence to measure and monitor, are the EFA goals concerned with equitable access to learning and life-skills programmes and to basic and continuing education for all adults (EFA goal 3 and the second part of goal 4). Previous *EFA Global Monitoring Reports* have interpreted these goals differently, and indeed

## Action and the Millennium Development Goals

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

Source: UNESCO (2000b).

### ■ Millennium Development Goals

- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.  
*Target 3:* Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.  
*Target 4:* Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.

Source: United Nations General Assembly, Resolution A/56/326, 6 September 2001.

Countries have various interpretations of 'life skills', which complicates monitoring

### Box 1.2 Interpretation of EFA goals 3 and 4

The interpretation – and hence the monitoring – of EFA goals 3 and 4 has varied (even among past *EFA Global Monitoring Reports*), owing to the lack of consensus over how to define and measure both 'literacy' and 'equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes'.

**Goal 3:** Learning and life skills are offered as formal, informal or non-formal programmes. The myriad of institutions delivering programmes follow widely varying guidelines. To limit barriers to access, they all must have flexible options for those groups (which differ in each country) that have been excluded from learning opportunities. Further complicating monitoring is the fact that countries have various interpretations of 'life skills', each prioritizing skills differently. For example, some conceive of life skills as practical and technical skills, others as basic reading and writing skills, and still others as including psycho-social skills. Countries in North America and Western Europe, for instance, tend to emphasize (more than do other countries) critical and conceptual problem-solving skills, considering these to be among the more important skills for everyday life. 'Life skills' can also be interpreted as those tools (e.g. health knowledge) an individual must have in order to change his/her

behaviour – raising the question of whether it is the skills or the changes in behaviour that ought to be monitored. In short, a universal interpretation and monitoring of goal 3 has proved elusive.

**Goal 4:** Traditionally (and in the 2005 Report), two factors set parameters for the literacy rates reported for goal 4: (a) the UNESCO definition of literacy as 'the ability to read and write, with understanding, a short, simple sentence about one's everyday life'; and (b) data on educational attainment. The modes of reporting included self-reporting and head of household responses on surveys, in addition to grade attainment proxy, but this excludes objective measurement, as well as any consideration of the context (see Chapter 7).

The interpretation of terms such as 'learning needs', 'appropriate learning', and 'life skills' can be open to debate, but the essence of goals 3 and 4 concerns equitable access. As such, monitoring these goals should at a minimum involve collecting data on literacy rates and degree of programme participation (enrolment rates) as proxies for equitable access. Future *EFA Global Monitoring Reports* will explore further the monitoring of goals 3 and 4.

Sources: Maurer (2005), OECD (2005b).

there are many different understandings of them (Box 1.2); the Report team intends to develop appropriate ways to monitor these important but imprecise goals, consistent with growing interest in this goal among developing

countries. In Senegal, for instance, a lively public debate resulted in 2004 in the *Éducation qualifiante des jeunes et des adultes* (Programme of Skills Development for Youth and Adults) (Box 1.3).

### Box 1.3 Senegal's *Éducation qualifiante des jeunes et des adultes*

In Senegal, the Programme of Skills Development for Youth and Adults (EQJA) seeks to more clearly delineate EFA goal 3, so as to promote equity and much-needed socio-economic integration for groups excluded from literacy opportunities. In light of Senegal's limited experience with educational provision for out-of-school youth and adults, the Ministry of Education, the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and UNESCO's Division of Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education have begun with a coordination centre external to Senegal's Department of Educational Planning and Reform, to gather opinions of various programme partners.

An initial study of programmes targeting three groups – female professionals (in the food and agricultural sector); youth in *daaras* (Koranic schools); and apprentices and those not yet apprenticed – helped to define the initiatives' relevance for a variety of excluded learners. The initial investigation revealed the need for the programmes to pay attention also to factors such as age, gender, data collection, data publication on the Internet and partnerships. The UNESCO/IIEP support particularly targets, and tries to find solutions for, youths who are not apprentices. A key strength of the EQJA lies in its network of partners across sectors, including craftspeople representatives, administrations, local authorities, associations and donors.

Source: Delluc (2005).

## Literacy for rights, capabilities and development

As noted above, the special theme of this year's Report is literacy, which is also the object of the first part of goal 4.

### Defining literacy

No standard international definition of literacy captures all its facets. Indeed there are numerous different understandings of literacy, some of which are even contradictory.<sup>3</sup> While recognizing that other understandings help illuminate other dimensions, this Report adopts, as its working definition, UNESCO's (1978) definition of 'functional literacy': 'A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.' In this Report, therefore, 'literacy' refers to a context-bound continuum of reading, writing and numeracy skills, acquired and

developed through processes of learning and application, in schools and in other settings appropriate to youth and adults.

Even with such a pragmatic definition, there is no standard, internationally comparable measurement of literacy; as Chapter 6 also makes clear, the literacy rates reported by the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* are among the weaker international education statistics. There are, moreover, two further problems with the wording of the literacy goal. First, it ignores the crucial question of language (i.e. literacy in which language?).<sup>4</sup> Second, there is a definitional problem with the precise wording of the goal: strictly speaking, a 50% improvement in levels of literacy is impossible for countries with literacy rates already above 67%. This Report therefore pragmatically interprets the goal as implying a 50% reduction in *illiteracy* rates, consistent with the wording and intentions of the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All that initiated the entire Education for All movement.<sup>5</sup>

Today, by conventional measurements, some 771 million adults are illiterate, two-thirds of them women.<sup>6</sup> This is – for a fifth of the world's adult population – a serious violation of human rights. It also constitutes a major impediment to the realization of human capabilities and the achievement of equity and of economic and social development, particularly for women.

### The benefits of literacy

Being literate adds value to a person's life. Literacy can be instrumental in the pursuit of development – at personal, family and community levels, as well as at macro-levels of nations, regions and the world.

A child denied the right to a quality primary education is deprived not only as a child: he/she is also handicapped for life – unable to cope with situations requiring reading, writing and arithmetic – unless given access to educational opportunities as a youth or adult. A lack of literacy is strongly correlated with poverty – both in an economic sense and in the broader sense of a deprivation of capabilities. Literacy strengthens the capabilities of individuals, families and communities to access health, educational, political, economic and cultural opportunities and services. The literacy of women and girls is of crucial importance to the issue of gender inequality. While the benefits accruing from women's formal education are well understood, less well known are those accruing from women's non-formal

3. See Chapter 6.

4. The language question is extensively analysed in Chapters 6, 8 and 9.

5. The Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (agreed to at Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) called for the 'reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to one-half its 1990 level by the year 2000.'

6. Measuring, and hence monitoring, literacy is not easy. Chapter 7 discusses this; Chapters 2 and 7 present basic data on world literacy, both for today and historically.

education; literacy contributes positively to women's empowerment, in terms of self-esteem, economic independence and social emancipation. Many women who have benefited from adult basic and literacy education have spoken of feeling a sense of personal empowerment as a result.

Indeed, literacy is at the core of education and especially Education for All with its focus on basic education. Literacy helps people understand decontextualized information and language, verbal as well as written. As such, it paves the way for further learning and, as stated in Article 1 of the World Declaration on Education for All<sup>7</sup> (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) and reiterated in Dakar (Senegal, 2000), literacy and numeracy are essential learning tools of basic education. The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012) was launched because 'literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all ... [and] creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy' (United Nations, 2002b).

Literacy is also important for achieving the other EFA goals. Mothers who are educated are more likely to send their children to school than those who have not attended school (Schultz, 1993; Comings et al., 1992). The same is true of parents who have participated in adult literacy programmes. Children's school attendance increased when their parents attended literacy classes in Bangladesh (Cawthera, 1997) and Nepal (Burchfield, 1997). Literate parents are more likely to be able to support their children in practical ways, such as meeting with teachers and discussing progress with their children, as seen in Nepal (Burchfield et al., 2002a) and Uganda (Carr-Hill et al., 2001). When literacy courses instruct parents on ways of helping children in school and inform them about the content of the curriculum, the children's education benefit is even greater, as seen in Nepal, South Africa and Turkey (Bekman, 1998; Oxenham, 2004a).

It is important to note, however, that these effects are not automatic, but result only when literate individuals are able to exercise their literacy, which requires that broader development and rights policies are in effect and implemented. Indeed, literacy per se is not the sole solution to social ills such as poverty, malnutrition and unemployment, though it is one factor in helping to overcome them.

## The right to literacy

Literacy is a right, indeed an essential part of the right of every individual to education, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>8</sup> It is also a means to achieving other human rights. Those who can use literacy skills to defend their legal rights have a significant advantage over those who cannot. Indeed, it is often the poorest, most socially excluded and least literate individuals (especially women) whose rights are violated by those with more power. Their inability to read, write and calculate keeps them from knowing what they are entitled to, and how to demand it. It limits their ability to participate politically in society. It denies them a voice.

## A renewed emphasis on literacy?

There are signs that literacy is receiving increased attention. As noted above, the United Nations has declared 2003–2012 as the Literacy Decade. The World Bank has in recent years prepared various papers on adult literacy. In addition to international organizations, some governments have recently begun to devote increasing attention to literacy (Box 1.4), joining countries such as Bangladesh, China and India, all of which achieved considerable results in the 1990s.

## Literate individuals and literate societies

The Education for All goals and the MDGs concerned with education are expressed in terms of individuals; indeed the literacy part of goal 4 is framed in terms of a quantitative increase in literacy rates. However, education – and literacy within it – does not concern only individuals, as a rights and capabilities framework alone might suggest; it also has a critical social dimension. The types of educational inputs (e.g. material and human resources), outcomes (e.g. reading, writing and numeracy skills), and processes (e.g. curricula, teaching and learning methods) that are relevant to individuals are very much influenced by the social context. Moreover, the degree to which a society enables, promotes and sustains educational outcomes has an overwhelming impact on the demand for, and the value of, these skills.

A 'literate society', then, is more than a society with high literacy rates; rather, it is one 'in which

**Literacy is a right, indeed an essential part of the right of every individual to education**

7. 'Every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning' (World Declaration on Education for All, 1990).

8. Treaty bodies and international and domestic jurisprudence have gone some way to elaborating the requirements – and outlining violations – of the right of all humans to education. As Chapter 5 will show, the right to education is in most cases explicitly or implicitly linked to the right to literacy.

### Box 1.4 A renewed attention to literacy

Recent national developments, consistent with the United Nation's Literacy Decade, include:

- Brazil's 2003 launch of an accelerated Literacy Brazil Programme, with significant involvement of local governments and NGOs;
- Burkina Faso's establishment of a national fund for literacy and non-formal education in 2001, and of a Ministry for Literacy and Non-formal Education in 2002;
- Indonesia's 2004 launch of a national literacy movement by the President;
- Morocco's 2002 creation of a State Secretariat for Literacy and Non-formal Education;
- Mozambique's re-establishment of a national directorate for adult literacy in 2000, followed by the launch of a new adult literacy strategy;
- Nicaragua's increasing the share of adult education in the overall education budget from 1.5% in 2000 to 2.2% in 2002;
- Rwanda's moving responsibility for adult literacy to the Ministry of Education in 2004, inventorying of available literacy resources, and outlining of a new literacy policy and strategy;
- Senegal's continuing strong commitment to a private-public partnership approach (called 'faire-faire') to promote adult literacy;
- Venezuela's 2003 launch of the intensive Misión Robinson campaign to extend literacy to all youth and adults and education at least through Grade 6 to all children.

Many of the examples summarized in this box are developed in Chapter 9.

important aspects of social life such as economics, law, science, and government ... form what we may call "textual institutions" (Olson and Torrance, 2001). These institutions should be responsive to the developmental needs and priorities of citizens; and, in turn, the acquisition and use of literacy skills should enable citizens to actively participate in these institutions. As such, 'an understanding of literacy must include how individuals and groups adopt and utilize writing in the pursuit of their goals ... [but also how they] come to terms with such textual practices of the dominant (textual) institutions ... [B]eing able to read and write a contract is worthless unless there are institutions such as courts to enforce them' (Olson and Torrance, 2001). Box 1.5 gives three examples of countries that have, in different ways, succeeded in creating literate societies.

Though the notion of a literate society is highly context-specific, as Box 1.5 shows, some common lessons have emerged. First, literate

### Box 1.5 Creating literate societies:

#### ■ Japan

Japan is a highly literate society with near universal literacy rates and a strong sustaining environment. Over its long history (more than one and a half millennia), Japanese literacy evolved in several steps of adapting imported letters. The art of writing first came to Japan in the form of *kanji*, or written Chinese. Over the course of several centuries, a new script called *kana* evolved, in a move to simplify the Chinese characters into sounds, rather than meanings. By the sixteenth century, when the Japanese first learned of Western-style alphabetic letters, a mixed *kanji-kana* orthography was firmly in place. Deliberate interventions for standardizing and simplifying written Japanese were numerous, especially after contacts with the West intensified in the nineteenth century and elements of the Roman alphabet were integrated into Japanese script. However, the alphabetic script has never been adopted and the old systems never fully discarded.

Nevertheless, with new word processing and information and communication technologies, alphabetic letters must now be considered an indispensable part of Japanese literacy. The electronic media in Japan have thus both promoted the alphabet and reinforced the traditional writing system.

The Japanese experience suggests two things: first, that writing systems evolve not just according to practical needs for recording and retrieving information, but also in response to other requirements, such as social control; second, that 'literacy' does not mean simply knowing a script. In Japan, several scripts are involved, each in its proper place; and, as such, the system continues to be too complex for universal literacy to be sustained in the absence of intensive schooling.

societies should enable individuals and groups to acquire, develop, sustain and use relevant literacy skills. This has generally been achieved through a combination of three strategies,<sup>9</sup> which necessarily involve each of the six EFA goals:

- Enabling children to acquire literacy through *basic schooling of good quality*: The principal route to achieving literacy is through quality primary schools in which learning takes place. This requires getting all children – girls as well as boys – into primary schools, ensuring gender parity and equity in initial access to schools,<sup>10</sup> continued enrolment and educational

9. See Chapter 9 for more about these strategies.

10. See the 2003/4 Report, which focused on goal 2: Gender parity and equity in schooling.

## Japan, Cuba and Germany

### ■ Cuba

In 1961, the Cuban literacy campaign aimed to (a) extend primary education to all children of school age in order to eradicate future illiteracy, (b) wage a national literacy campaign, and (c) wage a post-literacy campaign to prevent relapse into illiteracy through disuse and to introduce systematic lifelong education. In a single year, more than 700,000 people (in a country of only 7.5 million) became literate.

Fuelled by a social-justice-based orientation, the campaign provided many schoolrooms: 10,000 were opened in a single day, and qualified unemployed teachers were assigned to them, together with thousands of well-educated young people who responded to the revolutionary call to serve anywhere (e.g. in remote mountainous areas to which access was difficult) as volunteer teachers. In addition, parents, neighbours, community organizers, and the pupils and teachers themselves helped improvise premises and rudimentary furniture.

Today, free from illiteracy (as Fidel Castro declared in December 1961), Cuba's schools are quite different; the teaching staff is well qualified and universal schooling is guaranteed. Moreover, a strong 'literate environment' has been set in place, with resources for sustaining and developing literacy, and the use of information and communication technologies (mainly through radio, television and video).

### ■ Germany

Germany has never been linguistically homogeneous. Yet, in the sixteenth century, a variety of High German began to be dominant, following the shift of the economic centres to the south. Only in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the massive redistribution of the population following industrialization and mass urbanization, did a universally spoken variety of High German come into use. This process was then accelerated in the past century by the electronic mass media – first radio, and then television.

Two factors greatly propelled the development of literacy in Germany: nationalization of culture (which established High German as the official language of administration, education beyond elementary school, and – along with Latin – the Church and literature), and public control of schooling (which, though mainly concentrated on reading, included, towards the end of the seventeenth century, bookkeeping and greater use of writing in activities such as journal and letter writing).

In the nineteenth century, use of Latin diminished, and a German orthography was established and officially regulated. Following enforced compulsory schooling in the latter half of the nineteenth century, literacy rates, by the early twentieth century, reached 90% to 95% of the population. Key to the accomplishment of such high literacy rates was the introduction of a writing system based upon both national language knowledge and local oral varieties. While the more formal uses of High German allow access to literate structures, regional varieties of High German remain in use.

Sources: Coulmas (2001) and Maas (2001), in Olson and Torrance (2001); Keeble (2001).

School today does not solve the problem of achieving literacy for all children

outcomes, and improving the quality of education<sup>11</sup> in these schools (both directly and indirectly, through, for instance, EFA goal 1 – early childhood care and education programmes that enable children from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter primary school well prepared).

- Enabling youth and adults to acquire and develop literacy (including in response to demand for new literacy skills) through *youth and adult literacy programmes*: School today does not solve the problem of achieving literacy for all children and, even less so,

for the great number of youth and adults who have been denied basic literacy skills, or who – though having learned to read, write and calculate – are either unable to use their literacy skills or have lost them over time. EFA goals 3 and 4 emphasize the need to provide literacy programmes and adult education/training schemes in response to these challenges.

- Developing *environments in which literacy can flourish* and where its value is recognized by individuals, households, schools and communities.

11. See the 2005 Report, which focused on goal 6: Quality of schooling, especially at the primary level.

Literate societies should provide and develop literacy that is of relevance to citizens, communities and the nation

Second, literate societies should provide and develop literacy that is of relevance to citizens, communities and the nation, and, at the same time, acknowledge the diverse needs and priorities of different groups – particularly those who are disadvantaged and excluded.<sup>12</sup> Provision and development of literacy should be built on:

- cautious response to demand for literacy, taking into account such factors as gender, age, rural and urban circumstances, levels of motivation and language;
- careful language decisions – including ensuring an orthography that reflects the oral competence of the readers and builds on solid foundations of initial literacy in the mother tongue;
- an appropriate curriculum and teaching/learning methods;
- a well-defined national literacy policy, which addresses issues including languages, books, and other media and information.

Literacy is thus at the core of Education for All, and the implied necessity of developing literate societies provides a link between all six goals. Literacy is simultaneously an outcome (e.g. reading, writing and numeracy), a process (e.g. taught and learned through formal schooling, non-formal programmes or informal networks), and an input (paving the way to: further cognitive skill development; participation in lifelong learning opportunities, including technical and vocational education and training, and continuing education; better education for children; and broader societal developments).

## Outline of the Report

This *EFA Global Monitoring Report*:

- assesses progress (as have previous Reports) towards the six EFA goals around the world, especially among developing and transitional countries, finding that progress is steady but insufficient if the goals are to be achieved, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and the Arab States (Chapter 2);
- examines national commitments to achieve EFA – particularly by looking at national plans, national financing and teacher policies – and reviews crucial issues for achieving EFA, notably policies of inclusion (especially of girls and women), dealing with instability (whether caused by conflict or economic factors), establishing safe and healthy schools in which children can learn, and adapting to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Chapter 3);
- reviews international commitments to finance EFA in light of the pledge in the Dakar Framework for Action that that ‘no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources’, finding that even the various pledges of increased aid made during 2005 – particularly the commitments at the G8 summit in Gleneagles – are still likely to fall short of what is needed (Chapter 4);
- summarizes the crucial importance of literacy, as both a human right and in terms of its contributions to economic and social development (Chapter 5);

12. See Chapter 7 for an overview of such groups.

- argues that there is value in understanding 'literacy' not only as a set of reading, writing and numeracy skills, but also as a set of skills that are socially relevant in terms of the ways they are acquired and applied (or 'practised') (Chapter 6); as discussed above, the goal is thus not only literacy skills for individuals, but also literate societies, which support and are supported by the development and use of these skills;
- summarizes data available on the state of literacy around the world, based on conventional monitoring efforts, which tend to focus on the relative presence or absence of literacy skills in individuals (Chapter 7);
- goes beyond these data to examine the conditions and determinants of literacy, by placing them in a social context, arguing that the creation of rich and dynamic 'literate environments' is a key factor in promoting literacy (both for individuals and societies) (Chapter 8);
- with the ultimate goal of establishing literate societies as its starting point, proposes a three-pronged approach to literacy policy that integrates the expansion (and a renewed commitment to the quality) of schooling, the development of youth and adult literacy programmes, and the promotion and sustaining of rich literate environments (Chapter 9); and
- concludes by summarizing some priority activities, at national and international levels, if the EFA goals, especially literacy, are to be achieved in the ten years that remain until 2015 (Chapter 10). ■