

Education for All
Literacy for life

Education for All

Literacy for life

The analysis and policy recommendations of this Report do not necessarily reflect the views of UNESCO. The Report is an independent publication commissioned by UNESCO on behalf of the international community. It is the product of a collaborative effort involving members of the Report Team and many other people, agencies, institutions and governments. Overall responsibility for the views and opinions expressed in the Report is taken by its Director.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Published in 2005 by the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

Graphic design by Sylvaine Baeyens
Iconographer: Delphine Gaillard
Maps: INDID
Printed by Graphoprint, Paris
ISBN 92-3-104008-1

©UNESCO 2005
Printed in France

Foreword

This fourth annual *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, produced by an independent team housed at UNESCO, invites us to give renewed and bold attention to the global literacy challenge.

There are good reasons why literacy is at the core of Education for All (EFA) – a good quality basic education equips pupils with literacy skills for life and further learning; literate parents are more likely to send their children to school; literate people are better able to access continuing education opportunities; and literate societies are better geared to meet pressing development challenges.

Yet literacy is one of the most neglected EFA goals. The fact that some 770 million adults – about one-fifth of the world's adult population – do not have basic literacy skills is not only morally indefensible but is also an appalling loss of human potential and economic capacity. The *Report* makes a powerful case to end this neglect by affirming that literacy is a right in itself, essential to achieve all the EFA goals and critically important for development. The emergence of knowledge societies makes literacy even more critical than in the past. Achieving widespread literacy can only happen in the context of building literate societies that encourage individuals to acquire and use their literacy skills.

Since its founding, UNESCO has played a lead role in defining literacy, relentlessly affirming its vital importance for development, and supporting country initiatives to expand adult learning. There has been remarkable progress over the past sixty years. The momentous challenge that persists is our collective responsibility. UNESCO is the lead agency and international coordinator of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), which states that '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.' We are giving the Decade concrete support through our programmes, particularly through the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) launched in October 2005 during the 33rd session of UNESCO's General Conference, and more broadly, through our international coordination of Education for All, which we are endeavouring to further strengthen.

The Decade is a framework for promoting international, regional and national efforts aimed at enabling millions of youth and adults to enjoy increased opportunities to acquire literacy skills. To achieve this, countries must commit to literacy at the highest political levels and assign more resources to youth and adult literacy programmes. As this *Report* informs us, literacy typically receives only 1% of the national education budget. International aid for literacy is minuscule as a share of aid to basic education, which is itself too low. Much bolder commitments are urgently required if the EFA goals are to be met.

As in previous years, this *Report* examines progress towards the six EFA goals. The year 2005 has been particularly significant. On the one hand, it is now apparent, as the Report confirms, that the goal to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 has not been met, despite very rapid progress, especially in a number of low-income countries. We must renew our commitment and move forward. On the other hand, resources for basic education are increasing: public spending on education is rising in developing countries and the international community has promised to increase its support, especially to sub-Saharan Africa, as reflected at the G-8 summit in Gleneagles in July 2005 and the United Nations World Summit in New York in September 2005. The challenge now is to translate broad commitments into specific actions in developing countries and to step up the pace of change everywhere. We only have ten years left and we must not fail.

I am confident that this *Report* provides a solid basis to recommit ourselves to achieving the six Education for All goals and, in particular, to making literacy a reality for all people in the world.



Koichiro Matsuura

Acknowledgements

Former Director Christopher Colclough initiated the work for this Report.

We are indebted to Peter Smith, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education (ADG/ED), to Aïcha Bah Diallo, former Assistant Director-General a.i., and to Abhimanyu Singh, Director of the Division of International Coordination and Monitoring for Education for All, and their colleagues for their support.

The Report benefited strongly from the advice of the international Editorial Board and its chairperson Ingemar Gustafsson, as well as from in-depth guidance from a small advisory group composed of Helen Abadzi, Anita Dighe, Sonja Fagerberg-Diallo, Vera Masagão Ribeiro, Anna Robinson-Pant, Alan Rogers, and Shigeru Aoyagi and Adama Ouane, both from UNESCO. It also profited from the over 120 people who took part in the web-based consultation on the outline, whose comments can be reviewed at: www.efareport.unesco.org

The EFA Report depends greatly on the work of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Former Director Denise Lievesley, Michael Millward, Director a. i., Said Belkachla, Michael Bruneforth, Brian Buffett, Simon Ellis, Alison Kennedy, Olivier Labé, Albert Motivans, Pascale Ratovondrahona, Ioulia Sementchouk, Mamadou Thiam, Subramaniyam Venkatraman, Peter Wallet, Yanhong Zhang and their colleagues contributed significantly to this Report, particularly in the preparation of Chapters 2 and 3 and the statistical tables.

Special thanks are due to all those who prepared background papers, notes and boxes for the Report. These were:

Marifat Abdullaeva, ActionAid, Carlos Aggio, Mark Agranovitch, John Aitchinson, Massimo Amadio, Juan B. Arrien, David Baker, Jill Balescut, Yembuu Batchuluun, Antonio Augusto Gomes Batista, Julien Bayou, Raja Bentaouet-Kattan, Alain Bentolila, Anne Bernard, K. Biswal, H.S. Bholá, Mohammed Bougroum, Jennifer Bowser, Shoshan Brosh-Vaitz, Don Bundy, Grace Bunyi, Roy Carr-Hill, John Cameron, Stuart Cameron, Nalini Chhetri, Munir Ahmed Choudhry, Roser Cusso, Aimé Damiba, André Delluc, Mark De Maeyer, Kendra Derosseau, Kamal Desai, Chris Duke, Jan Eldred, Karen Erickson, Makhoumy Fall, Iffat Farah, Benjamin Fernandez, Birger Fredriksen, Jonas Frister, Bruno Germain, Christine Glanz, Global Campaign for Education, Christophe Gouel, R. Govinda, Talmadge C. Guy, Hasan Hamomud, Ulrike Hanemann, Heribert Hinzen, Nour Laila Iskandar, Fasli Jalal, Jingjing Lou, Matthew Jukes, Mohamed Abdellatif Kissami, Bidya Nath Koirala, Tatiana Koke, Hanke Koopman, Lisa Krolak, Elaine Lameta, Mirna Lawrence, Aliza Lazerson, Leslie Limage, Wolfgang Lutz, Bryan Maddox, Maria Ester Mancebo, Jean-Claude Mantes, A. Mathew, Markus Maurer, Anne McGill Franzen, Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo, Mario Mouzinho, Khulan Munkh-Erdene, Debora Nandja, Abou Napon, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bjorn Nordtveit, Pai Obanya, Keichi Ogawa, Anthony Okech, Adama Ouane, Hussain Oujour, Ila Patel, Jason Pennells, Mastin Prinsloo, Norman Reynolds, Vera Masagão Ribeiro, Lisa Maria Rinna, Clinton Robinson, Anna Robinson-Pant, Alan Rogers, Heidi Ross, Peter Rule, Olga Rybakova, Samuel Sandwidi, Salimata Sanou, Nina Sardjunani, Claude Sauvageot, Julie Schaffner, Amanda Seel, Lynne Sergeant, Inon Shenker, Mammo Kebede Shenkut, Mariko Shiohata, Ronald Siebes, David Sifuentes, Maria Teresa Siniscalco, Penny Smith, John Smyth, Marie-Andrée Somers, Brian Street, Nelly Stromquist, Shaizada Tasbulatova, Lucy Thornton, Rosa Maria Torres, Mami Umayahara, Jan Van Ravens, Consuelo Vélaz de Medrano, Daniel Wagner, Phoebe Wakhunga, Ling Wang, Yaikah Jeng, Yang Lijing and Tidao Zhang.

The Report also benefited considerably from the advice and support of individuals, Divisions and Units within UNESCO's Education Sector, the International Institute for Educational Planning, the International Bureau of Education, and the UNESCO Institute for Education,