

Education For All: Two Gaps to Bridge

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I. The Challenge of EFA

1. The global community has committed itself firmly to the notion that every child and every adult ought to have the opportunity to learn to read and write and to achieve basic numeracy. There is now wide acceptance that these skills are an essential prerequisite both for democracy and for development. The primacy of education in development was re-affirmed by last September's UN Millennial Summit, which generated a set of Millennium Development Goals, two of which relate directly to education's role in reducing poverty and empowering people:
 - Every child should participate in primary education by 2015
 - Gender disparities in education should be eliminated by 2005.Indeed, it is the importance that each of us attaches to these goals that has brought us here today.
2. In a recent ministerial paper for the development committee of the World Bank (these are the 24 ministers who form what might loosely be understood as the "Government" of the Bank), we argue that unless there is major progress in mobilizing stronger international political will and mobilizing greater financial resources, these goals will not be reached. We have suggested that 32 countries will not achieve universal primary education by 2015 unless all of us in the global community renew and, indeed, significantly increase our efforts to this end. Further, at least 44 countries will fall short of the gender equity goals, yet girls' education is even more important, if that is possible, than that of boys.
3. Moreover, the paper goes even beyond the targets established just 18 months ago at the Dakar conference. It argues for a broader and deeper commitment to education for all. First, it calls not just for universal access to school, but universal completion of the primary cycle, with internationally competitive results in terms of student learning. And second, it recognizes that Education for all (EFA) is one in which universal primary education is seen as but one of the many steps in education which developing countries need to take to become part of the "knowledge economies." Secondary and higher education are also important components needed for a dynamic economy and for human development.
4. The impact of HIV/AIDS on children's welfare and on their chances to participate in primary education is tremendous. HIV/AIDS is already a substantial setback for many developing countries and as teachers die

from the disease and children are increasingly orphaned, the ability of many children to attend school is diminished. There are situations of conflicts and violence in many EFA countries, i.e., teachers murdered, schools destroyed, refugees and displaced children.

5. The recent downturn in economic development worldwide, which has been aggravated by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the USA, will make it harder to achieve the Dakar goals for EFA.

II. Reaching EFA: When the Policy Gap Meets the Financing Gap

6. I have chosen as the title for this paper: Education for All—Two Gaps to Bridge. Much has been made recently of the EFA *financing* gap, that is to say, the difference between the amount of money countries are currently able to mobilize internally and externally and the amount they will need for achieving universal primary coverage. Several valiant efforts have been made to calculate this amount, with the idea that the international community can then be mobilized for the express purpose of making up the difference. UNICEF and OXFAM have each come up with estimates ranging from US\$7-9 billion annually. My own institution has come up with a more recent estimate of \$13 billion [cited in Education for Dynamic Economies, World Bank, September 2001]
7. Many EFA countries have recently begun to benefit from debt relief. Results from the first countries to receive debt relief show that about 40 per cent of these resources are being directed towards education. Debt relief from IDA alone will average some US\$375 million per year over the next 8 years. For the first 23 HIPC, or debt relief, countries, average annual savings over the next 3 years amount to about 2.4 billion dollars, or 2.7 per cent of GDP. Average social sector spending will increase from 5.8 per cent of GDP to 7.0 per cent of GDP.
8. It is clear that the HIPC debt relief initiative will give many countries a much-needed window of opportunity as regards EFA, but much more will still need to be done. I would like very much to be able to give you a solid figure today for the costs of EFA—a simple arithmetical calculation adding the estimated costs and subtracting debt relief and other funds, but unfortunately it is not quite that simple. We believe we will ultimately arrive at such a figure, but not yet. This is because we are still not fully satisfied with the estimates that have been derived. We believe they fall short on two fronts. First, they are based on current policies and practices in the various countries. They

generally extrapolate on the basis of existing unit costs and existing financial structures. This means that they assume for the most part that EFA can be achieved by doing what is already being done, only more of it. Yet we know that this may not be realistic. EFA entails reaching out increasingly to ever more marginalized populations. If we take the expanded definition of EFA which includes universal primary completion, then the quest for EFA must also address the issue of repetition rates that are often 20 or 30 per cent or more, and stunningly high dropout rates, particularly for girls. The current wide neglect of disabled children, street children and other populations with special needs must also be reversed.

9. The second front on which we believe the current estimates fall short is that of learning outcomes. The recent studies generally assume learning outcomes that are roughly along the lines of those that currently prevail. Again, we consider this to be inadequate. Far too many children are spending far too much time in class with far too little to show for it by way of learning achievement. These observations have led us to believe that we need to take a fresh look at the estimates of the financing gap, and that we must introduce a new term into the EFA glossary. That new term is *the policy gap*

10. The kinds of outcomes needed to underpin EFA cannot be achieved with a business as usual approach. These outcomes will only be possible with what for some countries will be a dramatic shift in policies. We recognize the difficulties inherent in such changes. Machiavelli himself once said: “there is nothing more difficult to plan, more uncertain of success, or more dangerous to manage than the establishment of a new order...for he who introduces it makes enemies of all those who derived advantage from the old order and finds but lukewarm defenders among those who stand to gain from the new one...who actually have no faith in new things until they have been proved by experience.” (The Prince, page 27)

11. I understand that there is a political dimension to change, and that there is often a political cost when it comes to working with teachers, with union leadership, with parents, with civil society. In my former position as Minister of Education in the Netherlands, I experienced these sorts of political reality all too frequently. I also realized that there were real limits to what a minister of education could achieve. As a minister one realizes fairly quickly the inadequacies of a system. Many of you have expressed frustration in trying to change a system in which rote approaches to reading still dominate, where high repetition rates, are the norm, and where it is difficult to get a true measure of

learning outcomes.

12. Similar observations could be made at other levels of educational systems. Many of you are trying to cope with a system where few secondary schools have adequate operating funds for science and technologies, university systems that are unable to adequately invest in international-quality libraries, information systems and scientific equipment. Education systems in many of your countries have been obliged to run on extremely short school years, with primary school children putting in 500 to 700 hours per year, shortened even further by expensive, morale-draining strikes. This comes at a time when these systems need to be playing catch-up with international systems where students are spending literally twice as much time in school each year, from 1000 to over 1200 hours a year in most developed countries.
13. I recognize all too well your sense of frustration in trying to turn such systems around. I experienced the same feeling myself, many times over. And yet, some things can be done. Important progress can be made, and the World Bank and other partners are prepared to invest as never before in the EFA effort. The effort to fill the financing gap must necessarily be matched by a firm commitment at the country level to fill the policy gap, but we are fully prepared to support you in this difficult undertaking. Such a partnership will place the EFA movement on a much firmer footing.
I have directed my staff to develop over the next several months, prior to the spring meetings of the World Bank and the Development Committee, a new estimate of the EFA financing gap based on the concepts that I have laid out this morning. We will renew our country-by-country consultations regarding the policy gap, and are also preparing a background paper clarifying what we have learned to date through the efforts of a number of countries over the past decade.

III. Education Cooperation

1. Basic Principles are:
 - Ownership of education reform in the country. Reform cannot be “bought,” it needs the participation and support of a broad array of stakeholders, at both the local and nation level, from policymakers teachers to community groups for it to take root and flower. If there is no broad ownership, then the chances of successful implementation will be remote indeed.

- Education cooperation is first and foremost exchange of knowledge and experience.
 - Substantial general budget support for education becomes a serious proposition if the policy environment is “right.”
 - In the absence of good policies the emphasis should be on “creating room for momentum” towards good policies.
2. Upgrading and expanding the local capacity of ministries, of think tanks, of civil society, of decentralized education units, of statistical agencies is an essential element of education cooperation. Civil service reform should be designed so as to keep qualified people in the country, not to push them out.
 3. Substantial additional resources are required to promote EFA and even more for an overall upgrade of education in developing countries. We are defining the resources needs under “good policies” plus the requirements for engagement with countries with moderate or poor policies.

IV. Conclusion

We owe it to our children and our children’s children to ensure that the Dakar goals are achieved, that every child receives a good quality primary education and that gender disparities are eliminated. But how do we get there? And how do we get there fast enough to reach the goals in time?

As I have indicated, there are two interconnected challenges: We need to bridge the finance gap and we need to bridge the policy gap. Without bridging one, we will not be able to bridge the other.

First, let us return to the issue of the financing gap. My institution is committed to mobilize the financing needed to reach the Dakar goals for education. My team and I will work over the next months to calculate the scope of the financing gap on the basis of a country-by country analysis of the EFA countries. Also, the process started with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the HIPC debt relief initiative will provide a window of opportunity to channel additional resources to EFA.

Second, the policy gap. Reaching the Dakar goals requires both political and technical support to move forward on some difficult, but necessary choices required to achieve universal, quality primary education. We will support you as you work through these change processes country by country, so that all children are schooled, quality is improved, and marginalized groups, such as street children, disabled children, child

workers, and orphans, especially those hit by the HIV/AIDS tragedy, are brought into the system.

In short, to reach our goals requires change and it requires money. I have full confidence that both of these challenges can be met. The financing gap *and* the policy gap can be closed and must be closed. We owe it to the children of the world.

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