

Assessment and Funding of EFA

Statement by Claudia von Monbart, World Bank, Paris

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Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Ms. Ruth Kagia, Director for Education, and of Jo Ritzen, Vice President for Human Development, thank you very much for this opportunity to take the floor and briefly present our review of the EFA attainment. Thanks also to UNESCO for convening the Second Meeting of the Working Group. We very much appreciate the consultation and coordination process lead by you.

1. In spite of increased international commitment to education during the past decade, progress on the ground remains uneven and inadequate. Globally, the challenge is considerable. With well over 100 million school age children out of school and nearly a billion illiterate adults, the Dakar goals will not be met unless progress is accelerated sharply. Education for All is best conceived as education system development along a continuum of shorter-term goals. The necessary first stage would be full completion of 5 years of schooling. But the expectation must be that these goals will be pushed further out over time to embrace lower secondary schooling and beyond. Indeed, in most countries, improved functioning of secondary and tertiary education is necessary for sustainable progress in basic education. The supply of qualified teachers and school leaders, the capacity for curriculum design, research on teaching and learning, economic analysis and skilled management: these and many more components of basic education reform are hampered in many EFA countries by weaknesses at higher levels of the education system. EFA efforts have generally given more attention to aggregate enrollment numbers than to the actual learning experiences of individual students. Yet, while many children fail to complete the primary cycle, a growing body of research suggests that 5-6 years of schooling is a critical threshold. Literacy surveys from Togo, Niger and elsewhere indicate that adults with less than six years of primary education remain functionally illiterate and non-numerate for the rest of their lives. For these reasons, we believe that the proportion of children completing a primary school education is the most meaningful indicator of EFA progress. We note, for instance, that even in countries where the GER is close to or over 100 percent, the proportion of the primary age group reaching grade 5 can be very low. Completion rates are typically far lower for girls, the poor, and children living in rural areas. Although Madagascar has technically achieved "education for all" on the basis of its GER, only 11 percent of rural girls reaches grade 5. Focusing on completion rates and looking at the indicators for vulnerable groups are both crucial for true monitoring of "education for all". EFA's focus on the necessary growth of enrollments, then, must not obscure the fact that the quality of education provided is crucial. International assessments and other studies show wide variance in the knowledge and skills students attain per year of schooling, irrespective of education spending. The clear implication is that countries must maintain a strong focus on student learning achievement, and not simply on the expansion of schooling

coverage. The attainment of EFA, however, goes beyond access to education. Research concludes that both quality and quantity of education matter, but quality matters more in boosting economic growth. In assessing progress towards EFA, it is important to use primary completion rates rather than gross enrollment rates and to focus assessment of progress on quality and learning outcome measures. In addition – we believe – the achievement of EFA goals should be regarded not as an end, but rather as the first critical step towards a broad based education which embraces secondary education and beyond. This is a necessary condition to ensure that countries have an adequate basis for participating and competing in the global economy and for reducing poverty.

2. There are several dimensions of the required accelerated action. The first is financial. Over the medium term, additional resources would be required for primary education to cover the extra cost of enrolling all children in school, improving education quality and reducing the direct costs of education, such as user fees. For the countries lagging furthest behind, national resources would need to be complemented with substantial additional external financing. The second dimension is a sound policy framework. Improvements would be needed on issues such as government commitment to education, inter-sectoral and intra-sectoral resource allocation, gender and regional equity, institutional delivery mechanisms and the role of non government agencies in complementary inputs such as health and nutrition, water and sanitation, rural infrastructure and economic opportunities. In this context, a major threat is the HIV/AIDS pandemic which undermines both the EFA goals and national productivity.
3. Within the limits of this presentation, we will not be able to discuss the determinants of success in achieving EFA, but let me just briefly mention some. Education spending is necessary but not sufficient for educational progress. A handful of key factors emerge as crucial: (i) the level of national resources being devoted to education, (ii) unit costs, and (iii) repetition and dropout. The implication of our analysis is that countries cannot hope to achieve universal primary access and completion (and gender equity) unless key parameters of their education systems are within reasonable norms of efficiency and national levels to invest sufficient. These parameters also provide a sounder basis for calculating the level of international financial support required to ensure the achievement of EFA goals.
4. Let me now come to the financing implications of EFA. For most countries, school enrollment growth of 5 percent per year over the next 15 years would suffice to achieve EFA goals, several will need growth up to 10 percent per year. The challenge will be to improve quality at the same time. Estimates of additional costs to achieve EFA, consistent with quality, have been put forward (you know Oxfam suggests \$ 8 billion in additional financing each year). We will be trying to refine the estimates, and come up with a firm position by April 2002 on overall EFA financing needs, and the World Bank's role, in the meantime, we will continue to work on this on a country-by-country basis.. An urgent priority in any renewed push towards EFA must be a concerted effort by all partners to refine the basic enrollment statistics, national cost figures, and international financing parameters in the context of agreed policies that will improve the quality of teaching and learning.

5. Let me briefly recap the next steps for accelerating EFA:

- a) Without significant policy changes, existing structural imbalances will prevent attainment of the Dakar goals. EFA national plans, which should be seen as evolving instruments, will need to include such considerations.
- b) Financing needs for EFA should be established through country-by-country analysis. This includes tracking of expenditures from debt relief and determination of the scope for additional resources.
- c) Making knowledge of what works and what does not work to the countries most in need would constitute an important element in accelerating the process.
- d) The quality of existing data does not provide a sufficient basis for decision-making. Therefore, we would like to enter into discussions over the coming months with the UNESCO Bureau of Statistics and other partners about what it would take to obtain near-real time data for the majority of the EFA countries, as the basis for operational decision-making.
- e) Primary school completion rates, rather than gross enrollment rates should be the focus of efforts, with greater efforts to measure and improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- f) The HIV/Aids pandemic is a major threat to the attainment of EFA goals, but at the same time, education could be a major force to fight the epidemic.

6. What are the conclusions:

The urgency of the current situation, and the potential offered by increased international attention to education as reflected in the G8 leaders interest, call for a renewed global commitment, based on rigorous financial framework and closer attention to what is already known about better teaching and learning and or efficient system management. While many donor agencies and partners are working with the countries most in need, the efforts should be consolidated in order to quickly develop the basis for a global framework and agreed action plan. Universal primary completion, no matter how challenging the goal, is only a modest step towards the ultimate goal of lifelong learning from all citizens, which is as relevant for the low-income world as for OECD countries. But universal primary completion is the necessary first step and its achievement is of global interest. The World Bank will work with its partners and the donor community over the coming months to develop a firm and coherent framework for addressing these issues. In this process we will also carefully examine our own performance and directions for the future. We strongly believe we can only achieve the EFA goals in very close coordination and cooperation with all of you.

Thank you.