

TO TURN PROMISES INTO ACHIEVEMENTS

NGOs Ask for 8 Billion Dollars a Year

Dakar, Senegal – NGOs attending the Dakar Forum have calculated it would cost 8 billion dollars annually to translate into reality the promises made 10 years ago in Jomtien to universalise education.

The amount, which is paltry in view of the tremendous resources of the international community, is the equivalent of only four days of global military spending, or barely 9 minutes of foreign exchange speculation, said a group of sixty NGOs participating in the World Education Forum in Dakar, in a declaration adopted April 25 at NGO Forum meetings.

According to the NGOs, Education for All is possible, on condition that governments and international agencies display the necessary political will and make concerted efforts to ensure quality basic education for children and adults.

Nearly 300 representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society castigated governments' lack of political will and the lack of sufficient financial resources to guarantee Education for All (EFA) people in the world.

The NGOs listed the commitments that governments and the international community must make to achieve the new goal of Education for All by the year 2015. One of their demands is the cancellation of the debts of poor countries.

The NGO declaration stresses the need for governments to consider education a fundamental right which they should uphold. States should also guarantee free basic education for children and adults. All partners in education and governments should commit themselves to ensuring quality education for all learners. Governments should devote the necessary resources to the achievement of EFA. They are urged to allocate 6 percent of their Gross National Product (GNP) to the education sector.

The NGOs asked donors to make the resources necessary to guarantee basic education for all available to governments who have serious education problems.

The NGOs decried the pathetic state

of education in the world ten years after the EFA slogan was adopted in Jomtien, Thailand. The right to education of some 125 million children around the world is still being violated, condemning them to live in extreme poverty. Four million children lack teachers, classrooms and books. Two thirds of girls are uneducated and one adult out of three – from among 880 million people – in developing countries is illiterate.

The various declarations made at the Forum are unanimous on one point: the failure of the EFA goal can be ascribed to a blatant lack of political will.

"Why has the Jomtien Declaration not been applied? Due to a lack of political will. Neither the developing countries, nor the industrialised countries have demonstrated the will to devote the necessary money, expertise and energy to achieving basic education for all", said Paul Gerin-Lajoie, the octogenarian president of the foundation that bears his name.

The Paul Gerin-Lajoie Foundation is an organisation that promotes basic education in developing countries and Canada. "We can change the world if we want to. We can do it if we can convince government decision-makers to accept their responsibilities", added Gerin-Lajoie.



World Education Campaign 1,500 Young People Appeal To Kofi Annan

On Wednesday, 1,500 young Senegalese submitted to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, a petition which calls for "closer co-operation between States, NGOs, local communities and donors, as well as consultation and harmonisation of actions between the different actors in Education". The youth also called for "legal recognition of ACAPES, a Senegalese NGO as an education and training structure".

In the afternoon, the young people organised a walk under the auspices of the World Education Campaign, a global coalition of more than 400 NGOs and teachers unions. The coalition says it is worried about the possibility of the Education Forum again not succeeding and repeating the errors of Jomtien.

Speaking at a news briefing, Mr. Abdoul Hamid Sy, President of ACAPES, declared that people participating in the meeting should stop "putting on a show".

"We can no longer wait. Providing

free and quality education for all is attainable by all governments, if the political will exists".

He said that "without adopting a world Plan of Action with time-frames and adequate financial resources, the World Forum on Education which opened today will not be able to ensure education for all children or reduce adult illiteracy rates".

Mr. Sy added that the World Education Campaign estimates that "if this condition is unmet, the decisions taken in the Dakar meeting will suffer the same fate as the commitments made in 1990".

Mr. Thomas Bediako of Education International noted that "125 million children in the world, two-thirds of them girls, have never seen the four-walls of a classroom, and 880 million adults are illiterate. He said assistance to Africa has decreased by 3 billion dollars since 1990, and only 2 percent of development aid for poor countries is allocated to Education.



WHAT THEY SAID

**Ms. Aicha Barki,
Vice-President of the Algerian
NGO Association IQRHA:**

"Opportunities for South-South partnerships have become indispensable. To be strong, NGOs have to organize themselves and go beyond speeches. We have to prove we exist because there are over 100 million illiterate people in Africa.

I call upon NGOs to be vigilant regarding the perspective of globalisation, which threatens to destroy our efforts. Southern NGOs should form networks here and now to establish a synergetic partnership".

**Mr. Etienne Triaille,
Pax Romana, and Nairobi, Kenya:**

In the thirty years I have lived on this continent, I have seen that more and more Africans want to develop on their own. Therefore, I think we should focus on South-South cooperation, and put an end to financial dependence on the North. The quality of African human resources, he said, is a real treasure".

**Anatole Milandou,
of the Democratic Republic of Congo:**

"Partnership is a matter of political will. North-South cooperation needs to be built on sincere, transparent and concrete foundations. Aid is good, but superficial. We want pragmatic action. We need synergetic partnerships."

**Félicia Malanda,
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):**

"Funding from the North is used to pay staff and purchase equipment rather than actually finance programmes. There is a need to strengthen solidarity between Northern and Southern NGOs and implement strategic alliances between NGOs and rural communities."

**Aly Badara Doucouré,
Plan International
(Guinea-Conakry):**

"The private sector is very important to the partnership mechanism. NGOs should not only be advisory organizations, but active organizations as well."

**David Hosch,
Global Campaign for Education:**

"It has become necessary to strengthen the cooperation process at national and international levels and improve wherever possible what is being done at all levels."

**Paul Gérin-Lajoie,
President of the NGO Fondation
Paul Gérin-Lajoie, Canada:**

"Partnership begins with dialogue, which is the foundation for all development. Dialogue and exchanges of ideas are vital for genuine sustainable development."

**Abdoulaye Wade,
Senegalese Head of State:**

Commenting on the gender imbalance in decision-making spheres, he pointed out "according to my hasty calculations, there are less than 0.5% women among the 1500 participants in this hall." He was referring to the Conference Hall of the Meridien President hotel, the venue of the plenary sessions of the Forum on Education. ●

Piece of African Optimism On Goree Island Education is Key to African Renaissance

A Group of African intellectuals has identified education as the strategic tool for the quick realisation of an African Renaissance.

The group, in a round-table discussion held at the Mariama Ba Education Building on the Goree Island in Senegal, as part of the ongoing World Education Forum in Dakar, said the concept can only be realised through the rehabilitation of African traditional values.

The need for an African renaissance had been espoused by Africanists such as the late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and renowned writer Frantz Fanon and more recently by former South African President Nelson Mandela, among others. "Judging from how it all began, the African Renaissance will have a salutary effect on humanity, contrary to the European renaissance, which had devastating effects", the moderator of the discussion, Professor Dialo Diop, said.

In his contribution, renowned Egyptian economist, Samir Amin, made a strong case for public support for education saying it should not be privatised even within the context of globalisation.

Professor Amin also advocated practical education aimed at turning out productive citizens.

His colleague at the Third World Forum, Bernard Founou, said he is surprised when people say African universities are facing a crisis of over-production of professionals, when they, "have not produced anything yet".

The widow of the late Senegalese anthropologist, Professor Cheikh Anta Diop, Mrs. Louise Marie Diop, reiterated her husband's call for the rehabilitation of African languages. She cited the case of Finland which has achieved rapid development by promoting the use of local languages in education.

She read from the works of her late husband who conducted a number of seminal experiments to demonstrate how national languages could be used to convey the most complex concepts. "Europe began its boom when languages other than Latin came into systematic use", Mrs. Diop said, citing France and Germany as good examples of how national languages can enhance development which is the essence of an African Renaissance.

"There can be no African renaissance without the use of national languages", she stressed. Another Senegalese intellectual, Professor Dialo Diop, pointed out that the groundswell of African Renaissance is sweeping from the Cape to Cairo. President Mandela is a living incarnation of the renaissance. "Mandela is approved of and accepted by people around the world," he said. Closing the discussion, Professor Salion Kandji A Senegalese historian, emphasised the spiritual aspect of pan-Africanism, especially the contribution of Black civilisation to values that are currently the pride of the Arab-Muslim world. The intellectuals paid homage to the late President Nyerere, whose struggle for African Renaissance will remain forever engraved in the collective memory of our continent.

The meeting was organised by Professor Boubacar Diop, Buuba, head of the Senegalese NGO s involved in Development NGOs (CONGAD). ●