

FORUM Education

Newsletter of the World Education Forum in Dakar

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DAKAR ACTION FRAMEWORK

DAKAR OUTCOMES



RENEWED COMMITMENT TO ALL-INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The World Education Forum which opened in Dakar Wednesday wound up Friday after rejecting a proposal to set up a special fund to support Education for All. The 15,00 delegates from 181 countries, however, agreed to support 'existing mechanisms' for the attainment of universal basic education and literacy by 2015.

US Hints on Possible Return to UNESCO

Dakar - Mr. Gene Sperling, Economic Advisor to US President Bill Clinton, met Friday morning with the Director-General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, in Dakar and declared after the meeting that his country might return to the organisation at the appropriate time.

"Our financial contributions to

UNESCO will be re-established as soon as we get back; President Clinton sent me here to express his support for what the institution is doing," Mr. Sperling said at a press conference Friday. He pointed out that the United States was urging donors to increase aid for basic education.

"This issue, he said, will be on the agenda of the next G7 meeting in Okinawa." The slogan "Trade and not aid" so dear to President Clinton is, according to Mr. Sperling's expression, turning into "Trade and aid".

According to the head of the American delegation at the Dakar

Forum, the official position of the United States is now to combine trade partnerships with public aid for development, especially in Africa. On that subject, Mr. Sperling indicated that Clinton is very optimistic that the American congress will pass a Bill on Growth Opportunities in Africa. The project includes a 30 to 40 percent in the volume of African exports to the United States.

American development aid policy is to encourage debt relief to promote the constitution of funds that beneficiary countries should direct towards health and education policies and poverty-reduction programmes.

"A country like Senegal, indica-



ted Mr. Sperling, has already benefited from this formula, along with 4 other countries in the framework of a sharp reduction of the debt to promote economic and social development".

The United States spent 100 million dollars to fund basic education through USAID programmes. The American authorities expect that bilateral aid this year will reach 150 million dollars. Mr. Sperling declared that, "the American government's support for ILO to prevent child labour jumped from 3 million dollars last year to 30 million dollars this year. It will increase to 45 million dollars next year if the Clinton administration's projections are confirmed". He expects that total foreign financing for Education for All will exceed the 4 billion dollars demanded by the NGO community.

"In the upcoming years, the American government intends to be particularly active in training people from developing countries in new information technologies so that the world will not be divided into victims and beneficiaries of globalisation," promised the head of the American delegation.

The Decisions of Dakar

In a late evening meeting of "all group members who could be traced (50 percent)" after the plenary on Thursday, the Group decided the "implementation of the goals and strategies will require national, regional and international mechanisms to be galvanised immediately. To be most effective these mechanisms will be participatory and, wherever possible, build on what already exists".

The proposal to create a 'Global Education for All Council' was dropped. Instead the Futures Group decided "UNESCO will continue its mandated role in co-ordinating EFA partners and maintaining their collaborative momentum. In line with this, the UNESCO Director-General will convene annually a high-level small and flexible group."

This group of the "highest-level leaders from the government and civil society from both the developed and developing world" will serve to "leverage political commitment and technical and financial resource mobilisation". The annual meetings will also be an "opportunity to hold the global community to account for commitments made in Dakar".

Achieving the EFA goal of quality basic education in the next 15 years will require an additional funding support of an estimated 8 billion dollars annually. The Futures Group says "it is therefore essential that new, concrete financial commitments be made by national governments and also by multilateral donors including the World Bank, and the regional development banks, civil society and foundations."

Meanwhile, National EFA Forums will need to be strengthened or established to speed up progress to the EFA goal. Countries are required to prepare comprehensive National EFAP plans by 2002 "at the latest", according to the Futures Group. Countries with "significant challenges, such as complex crises or natural disasters" are assured special technical support by the international community.

And once these plans are in place, partner members of the international community are committed to contributing to ensure "that resource gaps are filled". Also working closely with the

National EFA Forums will be a Regional EFA Forum. These are "linked organically with, and ... accountable to" the country-level forums, which the Futures Group identifies as the "heart of EFA activity".

The function of the Regional Forums will be among others co-ordination with all relevant networks; setting and monitoring regional/sub-regional targets; advocacy; sharing of

best practices; and monitoring and reporting for accountability.

Operational plans for implementing these decisions of the Futures Group will be made by UNESCO guided by the recommendations of the final meeting of the Steering Committee on April 29, the day after the World Education Forum, and "subsequently by wide and representative consultation."

Donors Reject proposal for a Global Education Fund

Ms. Eveline Herfkens, Netherlands Minister of Development Co-operation, Ms. Clare Short, United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Development and Mr. Jean-Claude Faure, Chairman of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, gave a joint press conference Thursday morning. On behalf of the donor countries, they presented their new approach to public aid for development. However, they turned down a proposal for the establishment of a 4 billion dollar international development fund for basic education.

Mr. Faure of the OECD considered the approach outdated and said his organisation would not support it. He explained that developing countries experiencing difficulties with the implementation and management of appropriate programmes could not be put in the same boat with others that have made significant advances in the area of basic education.

Ms. Short of the United Kingdom and Ms. Herfkens of the Netherlands both indicated that developing countries should allocate larger funds for basic education to set the tone for donors. "We are ready to help those who are ready", declared Ms. Short.

She cited the examples of Ghana, Uganda and Malawi, which, according to her, "are examples that should be followed by other developing countries, for their extraordinary efforts in allo-

cating funds to basic education and programme management".

The three officials were clear they wanted to help certain countries improve their basic education programme management skills rather than increase the flow of funding without making sure it was well used.

In response to a question on whether Dakar was just a rerun of Jomtien, Mr. Faure explained that the donors had not come to Dakar to renew commitments already made at Jomtien.

Mr. Victor M. Ordonez of UNESCO, who attended the press conference, added, "one of Dakar's innovations will be the establishment of a monitoring commit-

tee on the financial commitments undertaken by donors and UN agencies". "However," added Ms. Short, "the donor countries do not consider money to be a sine qua non condition for achieving education for all".



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E-Nine Countries

“Dakar Made a Difference”

If there is one thing that came out clearly in the Dakar Education For All forum that was not emphasised in Jomtien ten years ago, in the words of the E9 region spokesperson, Prof. Michael Omolewa, that thing would be - participation.

“When I was coming for this meeting, I thought this was going to be another Jomtien, but now it is clear that things are going to be different,” he said soon after the adoption of the Dakar Framework of Action Friday.

“Jomtien was a colossal failure because people made empty promises. We are just beginning again. Now we are saying Jomtien should not be allowed to take place again,” he said.

According to Omolewa, a number of things have clearly emerged out of the Dakar Forum. Firstly, the preparation of the framework of action has been a participatory exercise which climaxed when governments, non-governmental organisations, the United Nations and donors came together and agreed on the way forward.

“We may not agree on the content of the framework, but we agree that there has been a participatory negotiation,” he said.

For E-9 countries, which Omolewa represents, plans for post-Dakar are in top gear. With a new vision and strategy, the region is set to provide quality universal basic education tailored to empower its people and communities.

Non-governmental organisations, some sixty of which participated in an International Consultation in Dakar before the opening of the three-day World Education Forum that ended Friday evening in Dakar, have denounced the Framework of Action adopted by the meeting.

“The Framework of Action does not meet our expectations. It is incomplete. The commitments are not tied to a schedule. It is soft in terms of financing. We hoped there would be a commitment to recognise that 6 percent of the gross national product of each state should be allocated to education – the threshold recommended by the Delors Commission – and 8 percent of development aid budgets should be allocated to basic education”.

According to the NGOs, whose statement was read publicly before the larger meeting wound up, the Framework for Action is weak because it contains no mechanisms for transparency and accountability.

“This we deeply deplore”.

The text on the global initiative is “vague and lacks details”. The NGOs reported being stunned by the contrast between the obligations that need to be fulfilled by governments of countries in the South and the relative lack of comparable commitments on the part of Northern countries and multilateral institutions.

However, the statement thanked the governments and multilateral institutions for “your willingness to stand by our side on this important task”.

He said the Dakar education forum has provided the turning point for E-9, in which the methodology, scope, content and goals of education has changed.

The group is constituted by the nine of the most populous countries in the world. These are includes Egypt, China, Nigeria, Brazil, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan and India. They account for nearly half of the world’s illiterate population.

Some of the countries in the group are also among the most indebted in the world. “Because of big populations, these countries have big employment problems, big health problems and big education problems,” he said.

“We have also listened to the comments made by donors. They are all now saying publicly that they should give a little bit more,” he said, but war-

ned developing countries against folding their hands and doing nothing instead of joining hands in partnerships.

He said with the lessons learnt from failures to meet Jomtien goals, the new goals set for 2015, are less likely to be frustrated with the new vision. The region’s efforts to educate its people who make up nearly half of the world’s six billion people.

The group will, however, need a strong foundation in their education reform, if their post-Dakar goal of providing universal primary education is to be met by 2015.

Perhaps the most important outcome, as Prof. Omolewa pointed out, is the fact that the actual people, women and children on the ground, were also present to share their experiences and views on what kind of education is needed.



Caribbean

“Forum was not interactive enough”



Jamaican Minister, who expected that the Caribbean region would redouble efforts over the next ten years so as to achieve universal education around 2010.

He was pleased to note that since Jomtien, there has been a groundswell of political will favourable to education in particular and development in general.

Asia-Pacific

“Forum was a Success”



Dakar - The Asian and Pacific delegation to the World Education Forum which ended Friday in Dakar has expressed satisfaction with what has been achieved at the Forum.

They said unlike the Jomtien conference in 1990, the Dakar Forum has been able to raise awareness on the challenges posed by EFA which participants now realise is a much more difficult task to achieve than they did at Jomtien.

The Chairperson of the drafting committee for the Asia and Pacific region, Abhimanyu Singh, who works for the Indian ministry of Education, said people are now more aware of the nature of challenges in meeting the EFA goals.

“We have now realised that there is need for everybody, that is, the donors, international agencies, civil society and governments to really work together. The major task now remains that of political commitment to the EFA goals and there is the realisation that there has to be much stronger political commitment by governments,” Singh said.

He said the forum was able to focus on areas that need special attention, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia such as issues concerning girls education, children in difficult circumstances like the disabled and those geographically isolated and affected by displacement because of civil conflicts.

Singh said the forum realised that it was not just within the powers of governments alone to implement the EFA goals, but also needed the serious involvement of international partners like the donors and non-governmental organisations in the monitoring of the EFA programmes.

“I think we have achieved the objectives of the conference. This is a conference that put much emphasis on education as a human right of all children and citizens, HIV/AIDS and measures to address this and education programmes to promote mutual understanding, peace and development. We will now learn from experience,” Singh said.

The regional objectives and strategies of the Asia and Pacific goals and targets for 2015 include, Early childhood care and education, universal basic education, basic learning and skills programmes, learning achievements, literacy and continuing education, education of women and girls and the elimination of gender disparities.

Short and Sharp

Participants at the World Education Forum held in Dakar from 26 to 28 April have expressed the desire to work together in the next fifteen years to achieve the goal of Education For All (EFA).

Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director-General, said at a post-conference briefing We will do our best to respond to the Dakar appeal by implementing the action framework which we unanimously approved. Matsuura said that the task facing the international community in this regard was enormous, but

that by working co-operatively success could be obtained. He appealed to the press to contribute to this task through constructive criticism. The outcome of the commitments made by the international community over the last fifty years is far from meeting expectations. However, we should recognise that great efforts have been made in the field of education in particular. In 1948, the year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, less than half of adults knew how to read or write a simple text in at least one language; today, 4 of 5 adults around the world can do so.

Mr. Tom Bediako, the spokesperson for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) said he was willing to talk and work with other partners in Education For All by the year 2015, although he expressed some reservations on the possibility of this being achieved especially regarding the unreliable fundraising mechanisms.

Mr. A.S.H.K. Sadique, the Bangladesh Minister of Education, emphasised the need to close the yawning gap in education.

Sadique said his country has surpassed the Jomtien objectives. But Dakar remains a great source of hope for all countries, since it has laid down a general framework acceptable to all countries.

Ms. Marie Minna, Canadian Minister of International Cooperation and representative of the donor countries, said that the world needed egalitarian and equitable education with the necessary contributions from developing countries.

Minna said donors have decided to place emphasis on project packages over isolated projects, and concentrate on women’s and girls education as well as catering to the needs of marginalised children, by co-operating with civil society

Ms Clare Short, UK Secretary of State for Development Cooperation. Africa and Asia risk being left behind by the globalisation movement. It is a moral duty for Northern countries to help weaker countries, but it must be recognised it is hard to set up a partnership to finance all the costs of Education for All. Developing countries must make more efforts to prove that they themselves view basic education as important. The NGOs’ proposal to set up an international development fund for basic education is dangerous. We are convinced that money is not enough to achieve the goal of Education for All. Political will is also vital and national and international civil society must put pressure on governments to obtain genuine political will. It is not the responsibility of an organisation such as the Forum on Education to force governments to act in one way or another.

Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) “An educated child is a source of wealth for the family and for the country. The World Forum on Education For All is proof we are determined to find solutions to illiteracy among children and adults”, he said.



The Dakar Framework for Action

Objectives Spread over 15 Years

1. Meeting in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, we, the participants in the World Education Forum, commit ourselves to the achievement of education for all (EFA) goals and targets for every citizen and for every society.

2. The Dakar Framework is a collective commitment to action. Governments have an obligation to ensure that EFA goals and targets are reached and sustained. This is a responsibility that will be met most effectively through broad-based partnerships within countries, supported by cooperation with regional and international agencies and institutions.

3. We re-affirm the vision of the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien 1990), supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that every child, youth and adult has the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. It is an education geared to tapping each person's talents and potential, and developing learners' personalities, so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies.

4. We welcome the commitments made by the international community to basic education throughout the 1990s, notably at the World Summit for Children (1990), the Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the Mid-Term Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (1996), the



7. We hereby collectively commit ourselves to the attainment of the following goals:

- expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

- ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

- ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;

- achieving a 50 per cent improvement in

- develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management;

- meet the needs of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability and conduct educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and help to prevent violence and conflict;

- implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education which recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values and practices;

- urgently implement education programmes and actions to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic;

The proceedings of the three-day World Forum on Education For All came to a close on Friday evening in Dakar, with the adoption of a 13-point Framework of Action by the 1,500 participants from all five continents who attended the event.

The participants at the meeting affirmed their determination to act collectively to promote education, especially at the primary school level, to which 113 million children in the world lack access. Around 880 million adults also on the margin of society because they can neither read nor write.

In order to meet these many challenges, the participants identified the following priorities:

- A stronger commitment to free, compulsory and quality primary education;

- A commitment that no country presenting a viable education plan shall be rejected due to insufficient resources;

- A global effort based on national education plans;

- A recognition of the need to give priority to girls' education;

- A commitment to form a genuine partnership with civil society, that is NGOs, teachers' unions, parents' associations, among others;

- A promise to immediately implement education programmes to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Banishing gender discrimination from education systems is one of the principal themes of the Framework of Action, which also stresses that the quality of learning and the acquisition of human values and skills is not beyond the aspirations and needs of our citizens and societies.

The Action Framework decries the situation in which young people and adults do not have access to the necessary skills and knowledge to find salaried employment and participate fully in the development of their society.

date, and no later than 2015. They will also set out clear strategies for overcoming the special problems facing those currently excluded from educational opportunities, with a clear commitment to girls' education and gender equity. The plans will give substance and form to the goals and strategies set out in this document, and to the commitments made during a succession of international conferences in the 1990s. Regional activities to support national strategies will be based on strengthened regional and subregional organizations, networks and initiatives.

10. Political will and stronger national leadership are needed for the effective and successful implementation of national plans in each of the countries concerned. However, political will must be underpinned by resources. The international community acknowledges that many countries currently lack the resources to achieve education for all within an acceptable time-frame. New financial resources, preferably in the form of grants and concessional assistance, must therefore be mobilized by bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, including the World Bank and regional development banks, and the private sector. We affirm that no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources.

11. The international community will deliver on this collective commitment by developing with immediate effect a global initiative aimed at developing the strategies and mobilizing the resources needed to provide effective support to national efforts. Options to be considered under this initiative will include:

- increasing external finance for education, in particular basic education;

- ensuring greater predictability in the flow of external assistance;

- facilitating more effective donor coordination; strengthening sector-wide approaches;

- providing earlier, deeper and broader debt relief and/or debt cancellation for poverty

"The goals of Education For All cannot be postponed any longer. We must urgently respond to the fundamental education needs of all", says the document.

One of the challenges that remain to be met before the year 2015 deadline, said forum participants, is increasing adult literacy by at least 50%, especially among women, and providing equal access for all adults to basic education and continuing education programmes.

The governments, organisations, institutions, groups and associations that participated in the meeting have committed themselves to muster the required political will to facilitate the accomplishment of the goals of Education for All.

A strong political will backed by financial support has become rare in many countries. Only new financial resources, preferably in the form of loans and assistance on reasonable terms, through bilateral and multilateral funding institutions such as the World Bank and the regional development banks, but also the private sector, can bring a solution. The emergency package applies to all developing countries, but especially sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, where the situation is said to be most alarming.

FORUM EDUCATION



reduction, with a strong commitment to basic education;

undertaking more effective and regular monitoring of progress towards EFA goals and targets, including periodic assessments.

There is already evidence from many countries of what can be achieved through strong national strategies supported by effective development cooperation.

Progress under these strategies could – and must – be accelerated through increased international support. At the same time, countries with less developed strategies – including countries affected by conflict, countries in transition, and post-crisis countries – must be given the support they need to achieve more rapid progress towards education for all.

12. We will strengthen accountable international and regional mechanisms to give clear expression to these commitments and ensure that the Dakar Framework for Action is on the agenda of every international and regional organization, every national legislature and every local decision-making forum.

13. The EFA 2000 Assessment highlights that the challenge of education for all is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia, and in the least developed countries. Accordingly, while no country in need should be denied international assistance, priority should be given to these regions and countries. Countries in conflict or undergoing reconstruction should also be given special attention in building up their education systems to meet the needs of all learners.

Education for All
Forum Revised final draft

Dakar, Senegal, 26-29 April 2000



Futures Group Report

A National EFA Plan for Each Country by 2002

Every country should draw up an overall national plan for Education For All (EFA) by the year 2002. Each plan, according to the Futures Group Report, shall be defined by national officials in direct and systematic consultation with the country's civil society.

"Achieving the goals set will require an additional effort from bilateral and multilateral donors in the area of eight billion dollars per year," we need, "strong new financial commitments from governments and other donors, including the World Bank, civil society and foundations".

National plans should, "concentrate the coordinated support of all partners in development, define reforms corresponding to the six EFA goals and establish a long-term financial framework," stressed the report. It added that the plan should also be "action-oriented" fit "into a detailed calendar and also include midterm results indicators".

The Futures Group also said that national plans should, "obtain the synergy of all human development efforts by being integrated into the national development framework and planning process."

Furthermore, the report notes that, "whenever these processes are launched in the context of a credible plan, partners from the international community commit themselves to consistent, coordinated and coherent action". And that, "each partner makes a contribution in keeping with its comparative advantages regarding the support of national EFA plans to complete resources".

At regional and sub-regional levels, "a supervisory network that could become a regional forum on EFA with a specific mandate is envisaged". For its part, "UNESCO will continue its role as coordinator of the EFA partners and maintain the dynamics of cooperation, and will also serve as a secretariat".

The centre of Education For All (EFA) activities is the national level. And the organisation or establishment of transparent and democratic national forums will support the achievement of the objectives. All government departments and civil society organisations concerned will be systematically represented. Countries facing particular problems, especially complex crises or natural disasters, will receive special technical support from the international community.

FORUM EDUCATION

Explanatory Note: After a first draft of the Futures Group was orally presented to the plenary on Thursday, a late evening meeting was convened of all group members who could be traced (50% of the original group) to develop this second draft in response to the comments from the Ministers.

14. Build on existing mechanisms to accelerate progress of EFA.

Implementation of the preceding goals and strategies will require national, regional and international mechanisms to be galvanised immediately. To be most effective, these mechanisms will be participatory and, wherever possible, build on what already exists. They will include representatives and stakeholders and partners and will operate in transparent and accountable ways. They will respond comprehensively to the word and spirit of the Jomtien Declaration and this Dakar Framework of Action. The functions of these mechanisms will include, to a varying degree, advocacy, resource mobilization, monitoring and EFA knowledge generation and sharing.

The heart of EFA activity lies at the country level. National EFA forums will be strengthened or established to support the achievement of EFA. All relevant ministries and national civil society organisations will be systematically represented in these Forums. They should be transparent and democratic. Countries will prepare comprehensive National EFA plans by 2002 at the latest. For those countries with significant challenges, such as complex crises or natural disasters, special technical support will be provided by the international community. Each National EFA plan will:

- Be developed by the govern-



ment leadership in direct and systematic consultation with national civil society;

- Attract coordinated support of all development partner;

- Specify reforms addressing the six EFA goals;

- Establish a sustainable financial framework;

- Be time-bound and action-oriented;

- Include mid-term performance

Their functions will be: coordination with all relevant networks; setting and monitoring regional/sub-regional targets; advocacy; policy dialogue; the promotion of partnerships and technical cooperation; the sharing of best practice and lessons learned, monitoring and reporting for accountability; and promoting resource mobilization. Regional and international support will be available to strengthen Regional forums and relevant EFA capacities, especially within Africa and South Asia.

UNESCO will continue its mandated role in coordinating EFA partners and maintaining their collaborative momentum. In line with this, UNESCO Director-General will convene annually a high-level small and flexible group. It will serve to leverage political commitment and technical and financial resource-mobilization. Informed by the monitoring report from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics and inputs from

regional EFA forums, it will also be an opportunity to hold the global community to account for commitments made in Dakar. It will be composed of highest-

level leader from governments and civil society of developing and developed countries, and development agencies.

Astrengthened and reformed UNESCO will serve as the Secretariat. This Secretariat will work closely with other organisations and may include staff seconded from them.

Operational plans for implementing these decisions will be made by UNESCO guided by recommendations of the final meeting of the steering committee on the day after the Dakar World Education Forum and, subsequently, by wide and representative consultation.

Achieving Education for All will require additional financial support by countries and also by bilateral and multilateral donors, estimated to cost in the order of \$8 billion a year. It is therefore essential that new, concrete financial commitments be made by the national governments and also by the multilateral donors including the World Bank, and the regional development banks, civil society and foundations.

NGOs Reject Framework for Action

Non-governmental organizations, some sixty of which participated in an International Consultation in Dakar before the opening of the three-day World Education Forum that ended Friday evening in Dakar, have denounced the Framework of Action adopted by the meeting.

"The Framework of Action does not meet our expectations. It is incomplete. The commitments are not tied to a schedule. It is soft in terms of financing. We hoped there would be a commitment to recognise that 6 percent of the gross national product of each state should be allocated to education – the threshold recommended by the Delors Commission – and 8 percent of development aid budgets should be allocated to basic education".

According to the NGOs, whose statement was read publicly before the larger meeting wound up, the Framework for Action is weak because it contains no mechanisms for transparency and accountability. "This we deeply deplore".

The text on the global initiative is "vague and lacks details". The NGOs reported being stunned by the contrast between the obligations that need to be fulfilled by governments of countries in the South and the relative lack of comparable commitments on the part of Northern countries and multilateral institutions.

However, the statement thanked the governments and multilateral institutions for "your willingness to stand by our side on this important task".

Education for All Meeting our Policy Objectives

International Conference on Adult Education (1997), and the International Conference on Child Labour (1997). The challenge now is to deliver on these commitments.

5. The EFA2000 Assessment demonstrates that there has been significant progress in many countries. But it is unacceptable in the year 2000 that more than 113 million children have no access to primary education, 880 million adults are illiterate, gender discrimination continues to permeate education systems, and the quality of learning and the acquisition of human values and skills fall far short of the aspirations and needs of individuals and societies. Youth and adults are denied access to the skills and knowledge necessary for gainful employment and full participation in their societies. Without accelerated progress towards education for all, national and internationally agreed targets for poverty reduction will be missed, and inequalities between countries and within societies will widen.

6. Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are witnessing rapid globalization. Achieving EFA goals should be postponed no longer. The basic learning needs of all can and must be met urgently.

levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

- 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;

- 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.

8. To achieve these goals, we the governments, organizations, agencies, groups and associations represented at the World Education Forum pledge ourselves to:

- mobilize strong national and international political commitment for education for all, develop national action plans and enhance significantly investment in basic education;

- promote EFA policies within a sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies;

- ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development;

Old Technology, New Technology or the technology?

While the digital revolution offers real opportunities for education, information and communication technology is a costly investment. There is still much to be said for using a mixture of appropriate technologies, including the less costly "old reliables", radio and television.

The global spread of computers and the Internet is changing the way people communicate and do business. Yet there is considerable disagreement among experts over what the impact of the digital revolution will be on education, particularly in developing countries. Despite the enthusiasm of many proponents, new technology is unlikely to be a "magic bullet" capable of solving problems educationalists have been struggling with for years. On the contrary, it may aggravate existing inequalities. Mark Malloch Brown of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reminds us that "even as science and technology continue to create new wealth in rich countries, the conditions in developing countries are in many instances worsening". Professor David Johnston of Canada's Information Highway Advisory Council (IHAC) is an enthusiastic proponent of information and communication technology (ICT). IHAC's national connectivity strategy has already linked over 15,000 schools and 3,000 public libraries to the Internet, as part of a public-private partnership. Johnston explains that its goal is to prepare for a world in which "globalisation is pervasive, the information highway is reshaping business and markets, there is a shift to knowledge workers in every sector of the economy and innovation is the source of value-added growth". The promise that ICT holds for education in such a context is undeniable.

Maris O'Rourke of the World Bank identifies three other ways in which ICT can make a difference: it can include the excluded, by developing open and distance learning options; it can decentralise education administrations and increase community involvement; and it can be used to teach about the technology itself, helping people acquire the skills and competencies needed for the future. "A nineteenth-century education is not going to get us a twenty-first century future," she remarks. Programmes such as IHAC require massive resources beyond the reach of most developing countries. The critical question is whether such programmes are appropriate anyway. A thematic study for the EFA 2000 Assessment by the International Research Foundation for Open Learning assesses the feasibility

of applying ICT in the poorer countries of the world. It concludes that, whatever the technology used, the imperative to build, maintain and staff primary schools must remain a financial priority. As for secondary and higher education, ICT has perhaps great potential but costs are high.

Clearly, new technology presents both threats and opportunities for education. One of the opportunities is the enormous scope for co-operation among developing countries. Malloch Brown believes that the South is perfectly capable of finding its own solutions to the challenges of change. He cites the Republic of Korea's experience in promoting state-of-the-art research and development, the policies that have worked for India in establishing its "Silicon Valley" in Bangalore and the emerging software industry in Costa Rica. All these initiatives, says Malloch Brown, can provide adaptable blueprints for development. One of the threats is that the "digital divide" between those who have access to computer skills and the Internet, and those who don't, may actually widen, rather than narrow. Indian software specialist Venkatesh Hariharan points out that because only 10 per cent of India's population (of one billion) speak English, some 900 million Indians are effectively excluded from the "digital revolution" for the foreseeable future. This is the case for speakers of minority languages everywhere: the dominance of English on the

Internet is in many ways as much a barrier as the high cost of equipment.

New technology is unlikely to be a "magic bullet" capable of solving problems educationalists have been struggling with for years.

Putting a computer in every classroom, besides being extremely costly, may not necessarily be the best policy for a developing country. The cost of delivering interactive educational radio programmes has been estimated at somewhere between \$3 and \$8 per student per year, while the equivalent cost for computers in schools is between \$18 and \$63 per person per year. The EFA study lists alternative strategies for providing computer access: "the use of mobile units, the sharing of computer facilities with other agencies and mediated access where a third party seeks information through computer networks on behalf of learners". All were "under-emphasised in early planning", claims the report. Many initiatives combine new and old technologies in imaginative ways to deliver educational content. Chulie de Silva of Lanka Academic Network (LANet), explains how an interactive radio programme offers Sri Lankan villagers the possibility of requesting Internet searches on subjects they are interested in. Telesecundaria in Mexico has been offering television-based secondary education for children in rural areas of the country for the last quarter of a century, and educational television looks set to continue for some time yet. Some people question the way in which the technology discussion is being framed. Jan Visser, president



of the Learning Development Institute, claims that proponents of the new technology often tend to see education as a delivery process. He calls for reassessment of traditional assumptions: the nature of pedagogy, the role of learners and of those who facilitate learning, and the relationship between school and community. The uncertainties about the impact of ICT on education will take time to be resolved. "Out with the old, in with the new" is a stark choice: it is perhaps more useful to frame the debate not in terms of old or new technologies, but of appropriate technologies applied in a cost-effective way to the task of delivering education for all.

Writing off Debt to Fund Education

The impact of foreign debt is one of the principal reasons education budgets suffer. While investing in education yields major long-term benefits, governments face pressing short-term demands for resources to service foreign debt payments. Falling into arrears has an immediate negative effect on a country's ability to raise credit or pay for its imports. Yet at the global level, there is a strong cost-benefit argument to be made for writing off at least some international debt and using those resources to invest in education, at a time when overseas aid from rich to poor countries is declining.

The 1996 Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries debt relief initiative supported by the World Bank and a group of wealthy countries acknowledged the social cost of structural adjustment policies. The G8 meeting of some of the world's richest countries in Cologne in 1999 widened its scope. Yet many argue that debt relief is still moving too slowly, is too bureaucratic, and is too restricted by special conditions.

Has the role of overseas aid changed? Another thematic study prepared for the EFA 2000 Assessment, by the Overseas Development Institute, notes that aid to education, as a proportion of overall bilateral aid, has remained fairly steady at 15 per cent throughout the decade, despite the downward trend for overall bilateral aid. Multilateral commitments to education rose to an annual peak of US\$2 billion in 1994, falling back to US\$1.3 billion in 1998.

The study detects a move away from conventional delivery systems, such as projects and programmes, towards a sector-wide approach or "policy dialogue and partnership to ensure that aid is used in accordance with host government policy priorities".

Who Pays for Education?

Globally, around 63 per cent of the cost of education is met by governments, 35 per cent comes from the private sector and 2 per cent comes from overseas aid programmes.

Has education financing changed over the past decade? Almost all the current financial models in the world bring a variety of different partners together. Good education depends at least in part on the quality of those partnerships. In other words, it is not just a matter of how much money is spent, but how well it is spent. Maris O'Rourke of the World Bank admits that the World Declaration on Education for

All did not fully recognise the need for a plan to mobilise resources a decade ago.

"There is a widespread understanding now that no country is ever going to pull itself out of poverty or have social or economic growth without educating its people," she comments, highlighting the "remarkable strides" made in this field by countries such as Brazil, China and India. However, as she puts it, "there was never an overall researching framework or a real understanding of how much finance would be needed to reach the goal." Globally, around 63 per cent of the cost of education is met by governments, with the second largest contribution, 35 per cent, coming from the private sector: a combination of students, parents,

employers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and commercial enterprises. The final 2 per cent comes from overseas aid programmes.

The central role played by government is clear. "You can't get past the sovereignty of governments to allocate their budgets," says O'Rourke. A thematic study on partnerships prepared for the EFA 2000 Assessment identifies a key point: In developed countries with better tax systems, governments simply have more money to put into education; in poorer countries other partners have to play a more significant role.

According to UNDP, tax revenues represent 26 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in industrialised countries and less than half that in developing countries. In Cambodia, only 12 per cent of the funding of the "public" education system actually comes from the government. Households and communities meet 60 per cent of the bill, NGOs and foreign aid account for 18 per cent and politicians donate 10 per cent.

Often, the collapse of central government leads to alter-native, non-formal arrangements. During the civil war in El Salvador, for example, communities realised they could not expect help from the government and hired their own teachers for schools that had been closed because of the fighting. This was the birth of EDUCO, a communal education movement, which, after the war ended, received government assistance.

A different example of non-formal education is the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) which operates parallel to government primary schools and serves around 1.2 million children. "NGOs have shown themselves to be enormously cost-effective in education delivery. They often use highly unconventional approaches to difficult subject areas where traditional methods have failed", says Gordon Naidoo, who heads a South Africa-based NGO.



Learning on the streets of Dakar

In the heart of Dakar, "school in the service of street children", as it is labeled by its founders, is barely visible from the street. In fact very few passers-by even know of its existence.

The "school in the service of street children" is squeezed in among private houses and stores. Its five-classroom structure, dedicated to underprivileged children, was built only last December, on land donated by the non-governmental organization "Enda Third World". Before that, in the bustling rue Tolbiac where retail shopkeepers from all over the Senegalese capital come to buy their wares, classes were held outdoors on the sidewalk.

"Pupils sat on straw mats, because we had no tables or benches, much less a luxury like an electric lamp. After sundown we were forced to light candles to conduct evening classes," said the Director who described how, in those days, pupils were exposed to the blistering sun and gas fumes from the exhaust pipes of passing cars, their voices often drowned out by the vociferous shouting of drivers and the deafening roar of speeding cars.

The school was in fact bathed in the tumultuous atmosphere of a busy traffic hub from the time it was set up in 1990 until last year when solid walls were finally built and classrooms equipped thanks to gifts from anonymous donors, assistance from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the sale of a wide variety of crafts produced and donated by local artisans. According to the Director, the school's operating budget and indeed survival is ensured by NGOs. A second chance for learning The school now counts 108 pupils from nursery school to about 4th grade, and seven teachers all volunteers, who, "in exchange for their devotion to education," said the Director, "receive only a modest monthly remuneration". The teachers themselves explain that their main objective is to give these children the kind of instruction which will be useful for their further schooling and, in the long run, enable them to earn a decent living. Thus, the teaching staff in this informal institution in the rue Tolbiac prepares pupils for integration with the state school system, by initiating them to reading and writing skills, in order to provide them with a solid base on which to pursue their studies. "At the beginning

of each school year, the staff of the Tolbiac school help parents of school-age children to enrol them in the formal school system", the teachers say, explaining that their school also welcomes children age 7 to 15 who are not enrolled. These are generally orphans, children abandoned by their parents or in difficult circumstances who were unable to enter school at the proper age, and are getting instruction close to what they would have received in the formal school system. This is the case for Ousmane Sy, 17, who has been attending school in the rue Tolbiac for the last three years. Speaking in his father's shoe repair shop where he can now help with the business, he says, "I write down the names of clients and their orders, and can keep the accounts whereas, two years ago, I couldn't even write my name." Realizing children's dreams Every Friday, after high prayers, the talibes, students attending the Koranic school in Dakar and its suburbs such as Pikine and Guediawaye, go to the rue Tolbiac to learn French (the official language of Senegal) and notions of hygiene. The school also gives free literacy



classes in local languages to young boys who were unable to attend French-language schools and girls working as domestic servants.

And, for those who seek additional instruction, the school offers courses in English, Arab literature and Wolof. Absa Diallo is not a maid. She has a stall in the central-Dakar market. At 25, she could barely write her name. "Now, I no longer

need to ask for help to run my business," she said. "Over the last six months, in fact, I have started to expand my activities within an association I set up last year with colleague friends in the market". The Director, who hopes that the school will soon be recognized on the level of any other institution under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, has only one aim: "to help our children realize their dreams and to fight illiteracy."

Kenya makes great strides in early childhood education

Nation Newspapers, Nairobi, Kenya Although Kenya's efforts towards achieving education for all by the year 2000 may not be realized, there is every evidence that major strides have been made to boost enrolment and participation levels. One sector that has registered great achievement is early childhood education; a fact attributed to collective efforts by the government, United Nations agencies, local and international non-governmental organisations. According to the permanent secretary in the ministry of education, Mr Wilfred Kimalat, the number of children enrolled in the ECD centres has risen by 32 per cent in the last eight years. Similarly, the number of ECD centres increased from 16,329 in

1990 to 23,977 in 1998 with a corresponding increase in the teaching force. So, while there were only 6,213 pre-school teachers in 1990, to date the number stands at 37,752, out of whom 16,000 are trained.

The improvement in enrolment, though not yet 50 per cent of all eligible pupils as targeted by EFA, is commendable in the region. "The progress that has been achieved in this sub-sector still remains the highest amongst other African countries," says Mr Kimalat, adding that the greatest success has been witnessed in the pre-school teacher training programme.

Basically, the training of pre-school teachers is carried out at regional level by District Centres for Early Childhood Education (DICESEs). The two-year in-service training aims to equip teachers with knowledge and skills that meet the children's intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs. The programmes for the DICESEs are developed at the National Centre for Early Childhood Education, which is based at the Kenya Institute of Education in Nairobi. Additionally, there is an Islamic Integrated Education Course, which is a special programme for those who teach in Islamic schools. Started in 1994, the course for "Maalims" (teachers) integrates formal education and Islamic teaching. The teachers eventually teach in the Muslim schools commonly referred to as Madrasas and Dugsis. Other than these, there are several training programmes managed by different organisations like the Kindergarten Headmistresses Association and the Child Developer Programme, among others. Top calibre teachers for the pre-schools are trained at Kenyatta University, the country's leading training institution for educationists, which has been offering a bachelor's degree in early childhood education since 1995. The achievements made in the early education sector are largely attributed to the close partnership that exists between the government, parents, donors and communities. So, whereas the government provides a co-ordination role, the parents and communities are left to make decisions on the kind of programmes they want. And the donors only come in to provide funds and logistical support. The long and short of it is that the

communities claim ownership over the ECD centres, thus they are ready to take responsibility and manage the institutions themselves. They are willing to send their children to the centres, provide some money when required and even provide their labour during the construction of classes. The aim of pre-school education is to socialise children and prepare them for entry into the formal education. According to Mrs Mary Njoroge, the co-ordinator of the ECD programmes in Kenya. "It has been noted that good foundation during the formative period of a child will normally result to increased achievement in primary education." Currently, the Kenyan government is running a multi-dollar ECD project, which is funded by the World Bank at a cost of US\$35.1 million. The five-year project has five components, namely: improved teacher performance; community capacity building and mobilisation; community support grant and transition from pre-school to primary schools. Despite the achievements made so far in early childhood education in Kenya, there are some teething problems that have to be solved. Chief among these is funding. Since the government's overall expenditure on education has been declining in recent years, non-priority areas like early childhood education have had their budgets whittled down by a bigger percentage. Another problem facing the sector is quality of education. Whereas many teachers have been trained so that they are able to offer quality education, there is still a big percentage of untrained staff. Added to the fact that the teachers are generally poorly paid, their performance sometimes falls below expectation. Further, there are disparities in enrolment, especially in terms of regions, with the marginal areas in the northern frontiers of the country registering low participation rates compared to other areas. Overall, Kenya stands out in the region as a success story in regard to early childhood education. If the pace is maintained and enhanced, then the new century will see half of the country's children aged between 0-5 get access to pre-school education.



Hunger Takes Learning Hostage

Several districts in Kenya are struggling against famine and every day pupils drop out due to hunger.

It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, but Syombuka Mwema and her sister Veronica had not eaten since morning. They were in school for the morning session but walked out in the afternoon, unable to concentrate as hunger pangs started biting. And they weren't even sure of getting something to eat for dinner. At Thome Primary School in Kitui District, Maria Mutiso nearly missed sitting a national examination, the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), were it not for the teachers, who contributed money to provide her with meals to sustain her during the exam period. KCPE is taken at the end of the primary school cycle. It determines who will go on to secondary level and ultimately higher education. Kenya's education system is structured into eight years of primary schooling, four of secondary schooling and four at university level. Some tertiary colleges such as teacher training institutions operate on a three-year basis. The cases above abound in Kitui District in Kenya's Eastern Province and threaten to slow down enrolment in schools, thus diminishing all hopes of achieving the education for all goal. Kitui is only one of the twenty-one districts in Kenya faced with famine and every day pupils drop out due to hunger. Other affected districts include Turkana, Mwingi, Mbeere, Maralal, Garissa, Wajir, Kwale, Marsabit, Isiolo, West Pokot, among others. In many of these, head teachers expressed alarm not only over high dropouts but also declining academic standards. Premature close of schools because of poor harvests due to a lack of rain, many families who depend on farming are faced with starvation, and asking children to attend school regularly is expecting too much. In Mwingi District, where some 500 pupils had dropped out of school before the end of the third term, the district education officer, Mr Silvester Shiundu, warned last

October that many of his schools were threatened by premature closure. Although the total number of pupils who have dropped out of school due to famine cannot as yet be ascertained, reports on the spot are chilling. Food is scarce and when available, expensive, with the result that many families can provide only one meal a day. According to some headteachers in Kitui district, other pupils were forced to drop out to take care of their siblings when the parents went in search of food or to look for jobs to supplement the family income. The headteacher of Thome Primary school, Mr Maurice Makau, said this was the case for many of the twenty-one pupils who dropped out from his school to look for employment as herd boys.

Children may also have to miss school to assist in domestic chores such as fetching water which is scarce and often to be found only at long distances from their homes. Although the short rains fell in November, it had been months without real showers. The farms, the livelihood of most people in this area, were bereft of anything. Animals were dying for lack of grass and water. Most water points had dried and people had to squeeze the water from small holes in the sandy river bed.

At Kwa Vonza Primary School, the number of pupils has dropped by about 20 per cent, from 320 in January to 265 by the end of 1999. "If the famine continues as severe as it has been this year," said Mr Daniel Nzilu, the headteacher, "we may not have any pupils next year." Lack of concentration "Some children come to school on an empty stomach and stay the whole day without eating", said Mr Makau. "It is simply pathetic.

Certainly, they cannot concentrate in class, which means they are not likely to do well in the exams. Expanding enrolment is therefore difficult to impossible. At Thibo Primary School, there were only 7 candidates sitting the exam and the number will probably not increase next year.

When communities take the place of the State

Dakar Senegal (Pana) –Indeed, the withdrawal of the state, which increasingly only supervises the educational system, leaves ample room for local initiatives.

Before it allowed initiatives develop in Burkina Faso, the central government selected communities combining several conditions aimed at optimizing their involvement, i.e. not having a school (the closest school is over 3 km away), having sufficient population density, having a management committee, a formal request from the village, and having a source of water.

Afterwards, between 1995 and 1999, with support from foreign partners, it founded 194 community schools with a total of 10,056 pupils, or 1% of the school population, of which 42% were girls (in 1995, girls only made up 39% of the primary school population).

In Burundi, the state encouraged communities to build schools, while in Côte d'Ivoire, experimental schools were located in poor, culturally heterogeneous communities.

In order to marshal community resources (in cash and in kind), a partnership developed between existing parent teacher associations, local structures of the Department of Education and volunteer committees founded for that purpose, to implement teaching programmes and manage school business on the whole.

In Madagascar, the "programme contract" approach linking the government, the school and the community (plus NGOs and partners in technical and financial aid) was founded based on pre-existing forms of cooperation and cultural standards ("Dina" or the social contract, a solemn commitment between two parties) and mutual obligations between members of the community.

The goal: to improve access to education through greater community involvement and empowerment in the managing of schools and school-related activities in view of giving back the schools to their communities. The results: on the national scale, between 1994 and 1997, enrolments in "Dina" schools rose by

Most African countries that have successfully adjusted their rate of enrolment have benefited from community participation in the promotion of Basic Education. The people's intervention in the school system is a result of the new political-institutional environment created by the state's new definition of its own role. It may range, to varying degrees, from the construction of school buildings to programme management, not to mention hiring of teachers.

44% as compared to 32% in other schools. Enrolments in "Dina" schools represented 16% of the school population in 1997-1998.

In Mali, international NGOs have been working directly with communities to help create a network of community associations for the promotion and management of schools.

Thus, rural and urban communities and associations have founded and continue to run schools. They are responsible for hiring and paying teachers, but also for recruiting pupils, and building, equipping and maintaining school buildings.

When they are recognized as being in the public interest, community schools

are given a grant from the municipal budget, and pedagogical monitoring and supervision are ensured by state services.

Due to this popular participation, between 1997 and 1998, 83,360 pupils already attended community schools. That represents 10% of the first cycle fundamental school population.

However, the percentage of girls is 40.6% in the first cycle of fundamental education as a whole, but only 38.3% in community schools.

The major problem in these communities is often the low levels of qualification of the teachers they hire. Other problems include, inadequate pedagogical supervision, problems

making roles clear and accepted by the different partners and the problem of sustainability.

In Chad, the movement was sparked by internal conflicts and government inadequacy in past years. During the period of civil war and political upheaval, there could be no educational activities unless they were taken charge of by communities themselves.

A case study shows that one of the common points in all these experiences, with the exception of Chad, is the difficulty of determining what falls within the scope of the communities and what falls within the scope of the government.

The recurring problem of role definition needs to be resolved in any partnership for it to make sustainable progress. Furthermore, in every case, the central government and/or political authorities initiated the process, provided the initial conceptual framework and continue to supply the schools with material resources. This is attested by examples in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal where the government ensures regular supervision and monitoring using qualified teachers and inspectors.

In Senegal, unlike the other two countries mentioned above, the teachers come from the communities, and are recruited by them with advice and assistance from Department of Education services.

The salaries of these teachers are paid by the communities, with assistance from international NGOs. Difficulties have arisen in both countries in terms of harmonizing the way "things are handled".

In Burkina Faso, frictions are linked to the frequency and schedule of school inspections. This is due to the fact that the inspectors have not sufficiently

integrated the innovations in their working programme.

In Côte d'Ivoire, communities feel that the Department of Education tends to restrict their freedom in terms of fund raising.

In Burundi, on the other hand, the financial burden has been divided up between the communities, local administration, NGOs and the government. Local administration bears 40% of construction costs, parents 20%, NGOs 20% and the remaining 20% is provided by the central government. The government has also established a double-session system and raised teachers' salaries accordingly.

In Madagascar, the government has set resources in place for teachers' salaries, equipment, construction, renovations, upkeep, teaching supplies and materials, supervision and maintenance services. In return, communities have participated in construction and renovations by donating local materials and labour.

They have also committed themselves to ensuring the upkeep of the buildings, improving the school environment, enrolling their children and sometimes hiring teachers. But when "disputes", arise, as in cases where commitments are not met, it is much easier for the government to sanction the communities than the opposite.



Bangladesh

Reaching Out to 'Hard-to-Reach' Children

DHAKA, Apr (IPS) - For 16 dollars a month Firoz Kabir, a university student, takes time off his classes to teach children who live in Jigatola, a slum that co-exists with the posh Dhanmondi residential area in the Bangladesh capital.

More than the money, Kabir finds great satisfaction spending two hours every morning at the Jigatola non-formal school with the 30-odd children of domestic help, street vendors and daily wage workers. The school, run by 'Development For The Poor', a non-government organisation (NGO), imparts basic education. Its impoverished pupils, most of them girls, are divided into two shifts a day and provided free books and educational material. Many of the pupils are themselves wage earners and work as domestics, shop helpers, hotel boys and mechanics to supplement meagre family incomes.

These working children are what experts call "hard-to-reach" in the Education for All (EFA) drive.

Before the Jigatola non-formal school came up children in the slum did not attend school, and according to KhodejaAkhter, a teacher, success of any EFAproject here depends on allowing the children flexibility to "learn as well as earn."

In Dhaka city, as many as 2,025 non-formal schools are now imparting basic education to about 60,750 slum children, 54 percent of whom are girls, says Kazi Farid Ahmed, director of the Directorate of Non-Formal Education.

Funded by the UN children's agency, UNICEF, and supported by the governments of Bangladesh and Sweden, the Basic Education for Hard-To-Reach Urban Children's project (BEHTRUC) aims at providing non-formal basic education (NFE) to 350,000 children. In six divisional headquarters between 1997 and 2002. Already, under BEHTRUC, 180,000 children in Bangladesh's six divisional headquarters of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal and Sylhet are receiving a basic education. The next 16 months are expected to see several thousand more (NFE) schools established for urban non-literate children in the 8-14 age group as the biggest initiative of its kind.

Some 125 NGOs have been entrusted the responsibility of operating these NFE schools for slum children who are a source of income for their impoverished families and in fact form 56 percent of the total slum population. In some families, child labour makes up one third of the family's income. Not only do these working children have little time to go to school, but in most slum areas, there are no schools to attend.

And even if there were schools, the children still cannot afford the extra-costs associated with education and so they are considered the most hard-to-reach, a UNICEF study says.

As part of the project, teachers from participating NGOs receive special training in participatory, child-centered teaching methods and in the specific needs and concerns of hard-to-reach children. Project teachers are required to make home visits to all their students to closely monitor progress and to keep their families informed. Aided by the Asian Development Bank (ASDB), the International Development Agency (IDA), the Swiss International Development Agency (SIDA) and the Norwegian aid agency, four NFE projects worth 309 million dollars are now underway in Bangladesh. Education Minister A. Sadique told Bangladesh Parliament last month that as a result of sustained efforts, the literacy rate has now reached 60 percent from 34.6 percent in 1991 and that he expected it to rise further to 80 percent by 2001. But many experts think the government needed to formulate a more realistic policy to address the problem of drop-outs and never-enrolled children at the primary level.

The majority of the country's roughly 120 million people live in its villages. Currently there is a 38 percent drop-out rate and imparting education to five million drop-outs and children who have never been enrolled in schools poses a formidable challenge to the government.

Also there is as yet no comprehensive plan for the education of over six million child workers in the 9-15 age group.

Ansar Ali Khan, UNESCO or the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's representative in Bangladesh advocates a more vigorous drive to remove illiteracy from the country by 2006.

"For this the government will have to invest more funds in the education sector and make all-out efforts for the spread and sustenance of education," Khan said.

Currently, Bangladesh spends 2.3 percent of its GNP on education which is far less than what other countries in the region spend, according to the Education Watch Report, 1999.

The report pointed out that allocation for primary education is also very little and that 90 percent of the allocations are swallowed by salaries and allowances for teaching staff and administrators.

Right to Education

What Priorities ?

(The third part of a series by Katrien Beekman, Associate Expert, UNESCO-Dakar. The views expressed in this article are those of its author and do not necessarily reflect those of the organization).

It is not enough to have the necessary resources and technical capacities to achieve education for all at the national level. Realising the right to education demands political will, social commitment and genuine international cooperation.

Protecting the Right to Education is an Attitude Above All.

Education is a right. However, education for all is far from being achieved. While low literacy and high dropout rates prove that developing countries are far off the mark, it is equally premature to applaud industrialised countries with universal education. For, they are experiencing problems with functional illiteracy and new disparities, such as those affecting indigenous or immigrant children. So the attainment of the right to education still remains a challenge.

Indeed, the attainment of the right to education goes beyond high scores on education indicators, it is an ongoing process. Neither economic prosperity, nor sustainable development will spell its end. The "human rights attitude" means that the ultimate purpose of education will always be the self fulfilment of individuals and respect for their dignity. Attaining the right to education involves social commitment. A society that makes constant efforts to give the most vulnerable the same opportunity to learn and succeed in life as the "elite" and to eradicate de facto inequalities can say it is on the road to protecting the right to education. Furthermore, the content of education should also reflect the human rights philosophy. Education should spread the message of human rights and promote a democratic, pluralistic and tolerant society.

But, the "human rights attitude" also leads us to act at a higher level, because the attainment of the right to education cannot be restricted to internal levels. The conventions point this out and makes it the responsibility of international solidarity to defend the cause of social justice on the global scale. We must close the growing divide between the North, where kindergarten classes already play with Internet, and the South, which often does not even have enough resources to provide each child with a textbook.

Making Strong and Clear Commitments

It is high time the international community, in all its components, translated political speeches into clear commitments. These should be tied to time-bound deadlines measurable through achievement and implementation indicators. To this end, it is vital for partners in education to consult with the Committees in charge of Supervising Human Rights Conventions in order to define new priorities and adopt a system of common indicators, capable of reflecting the fundamental pillars of the right to education, such as human dignity, non-discrimination, children's participation in matters concerning them, etc. Finally, henceforth, failure to comply with commitments should no longer go unnoticed but be accompanied by pressure from the international community. Only then will we be able to meet the fundamental education needs of every citizen of the world.