

Whether applied within the family, the community or in schools and learning centres, ECPs should endeavour to ensure all-round protection and education of the child from birth to access to primary school.

The region would also promote complete physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive and linguistic development of the child, based on appropriate cultural and social norms.

It is important, depending on the countries concerned, to increase investment in childcare and education, in child and family-oriented programmes. ECP programmes should remain flexible, adaptable to the needs of pre-primary school-age children, and not become mere extensions of formal education systems.

Moreover, they should have a structure, which is appropriate and capable of meeting children's needs and areas of interest, and be firmly grounded in the family and community, as the immediate learning and protection environment of the child.

The Asia and Pacific countries also indicated their priorities in the field of basic education for all. As part of these priorities, they opt for access of every individual to good quality basic education, which focuses on "the whole" individual by intervening in the fields of health, nutrition, and psychosocial and cognitive development.

To achieve these results, education systems should meet the individual needs of learners. There should be a firm commitment towards the inclusion of those who are left out. It is also necessary to improve demand and increase supply through close collaboration and active participation of parents, communities and the private sector in education.

The Asia Pacific region is also working

Pre-School
Establishment
Nepal
(Unesco)



Asia and the Pacific

The Asia and Pacific countries developed their regional framework at a preparatory conference that took place from 17 to 20 January 2000 in Bangkok, Thailand. One of the major challenges identified by this regional framework of action is Early Childhood Protection (ECP).

toward reducing the cost of basic education, especially for the underprivileged.

Skill development programmes in basic education also remain one of the major challenges of the countries. They believe that in a rapidly changing world, it is appropriate to pay more attention to the development of abilities and useful skills for daily and vocational life.

Cultural values and identities, as well as the need for their preservation should continue to get priority attention in all school programmes and all learning processes. Also, basic skills in reading and numeracy should be improved as part of life skills.

However, Asia and Pacific countries are of the opinion that education on peace, conflict resolution, gender relations, gene-

Children First

ral health and sensitisation on HIV/AIDS should take into account the age and culture of learners.

In the field of gender equality, access to basic education, they opt for the elimination, where they persist, of systemic inequalities between boys and girls, throughout the educational system with regard to school enrolments, achievements, and completion rate for each cycle.

Furthermore, it is appropriate to take special measures in order to integrate disabled women and girls in all learning processes.

In the field of investments and resource mobilisation, the Asia and Pacific region invite governments and international funding agencies to increase the relative and absolute size of the budgets alloca-

ted to basic education, without sacrificing the resources necessary for higher education.

They should also continue to intervene in favour of a more rapid debt alleviation and the setting up of new funding mechanisms, in order to supplement the resources already allocated to education and health, by transferring to those sectors the budget allocated to defence, if need be.

The money saved through greater efficiency should be reinvested in educational systems, and not removed from the global budget for education. Moreover, the elaboration of education policies should really be at the heart of the public policy dialogue and decision-making.

This implies the use of more integrated government processes and mechanisms in the field of public policy planning.

Finally, in its framework of action, the Asia and Pacific region calls for greater participation of the civil society; increased use of new technologies in basic education; the autonomy of teachers and education administrators, and the real integration of development activities in the school curriculum.

The Asia and Pacific countries took this opportunity to remind the World Forum of the progress recorded by their region in the decade following the Jomtien conference.

The region, they emphasised, recorded a rise in primary school enrolments, as well as the expansion of education and early childhood protection programmes during the period.

It also paid greater attention to the quality of education, real progress in functional adult literacy, improvement of education management information systems and increase in national budgets allocated to basic education.

Finally, the Asia and Pacific region underlined its commitment to more efficient use of existing resources, increase in the number of legislative measures and the expansion of partnership between the private sector and the civil society.

Amongst the world's developing regions, East Asia and the Pacific combined are closest to achieving education for all with 97 per cent of all children in school.

Most of the East Asian adult population can now read and write, with a 94 per cent literacy rate.

Early childhood education, a relatively new development, has expanded rapidly. Enrolment grew from 36 million in 1990 to over 45 million in 1998, an increase of almost 25 per cent.

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

The mature education systems in the region offer 100 per cent coverage in primary and secondary education up to the age of 16.

Despite universal coverage, there is a persistent 'hard core' of underachievers estimated at between 15 and 20 per cent who fail to acquire basic skills at primary school and fall behind in secondary school.

Between 10 to 30 per cent of the population in the region has difficulty with basic reading, writing and numeracy skills.

Priority Education Zones in France and Portugal are examples of positive discrimination in underprivileged areas.

Europe and North of America

Devoting at Least 6 % of PNB to Education

The countries in Europe and North America identified a set of operational objectives for 2015. They urged countries to set up, after consultation with all those who are involved, a national Plan of action with precise aims and objectives, and to agree on modalities for assessing implementation. This plan should devote particular attention to the right of disadvantaged groups in education.

They agreed that the present volume of investment in education should be maintained, in spite of a decrease in population growth since 1990.

In accordance with recommendations by the International Education Committee, the agreed to devote at least 6% of their GNP to education for the 21st Century. The allocation of public resources should be fair in order to reduce inequalities in access to education, mainly through positive discrimination.

To achieve a genuine allocation of responsibilities among various education partners, the group would have to establish binding institutional and legal formulas.

Education for democracy and citizenship also depends on partnership efficiency, and should ensure commitment of the entire society to prevent racism and xenophobia.

Convened by UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Bank, official representatives of 39 countries in Europe and North America, as well as representatives of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations met in Varsovie from 6 to 8 February 2000. The participants prepared a framework of action on crucial education issues affecting their regions.

Also, partnerships could establish links between education and vocational life, they said. In this framework, vocational information and guidance services should be reinforced to deal with both youth and adults.

Furthermore, the Western countries decided to encourage teachers to take greater initiative, creativity and decision-making as well as the cultivation of positive attitudes towards learning.

In order to encourage greater attention to general skills, modern life experiences and competitions, it is necessary to rethink general education, both in content and organization.

To improve the quality of education, countries in Europe and North America recommend a broader definition of the notion of quality, to embrace the situation of learners (health, food, etc.), the quality of the learning process, and the quality of the learning environment.

At the global level, European and American countries believe that it is necessary to reinforce the capacity of developing countries to identify their needs and take charge of their development, by working in close partnership in order to achieve the objective which will be defined during the Dakar Forum.

They urged international organisations, mainly UNESCO and its Institute of Statistics, to develop quality research. This process should be realised in co-operation with national and regional research and statistics institutions.

They urged international organisations to help set up national structures for the collection and processing of statistics for the needy countries. Finally, the European and American countries invite donor countries to re-examine the various modalities of development assistance in line with the recommendations of the World Forum in Dakar.