

# Overview

## Chapter 1 The enduring relevance of Education for All



This edition of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* marks the midway point in an ambitious international movement to expand learning opportunities for every child, youth and adult in the world by 2015.

In April 2000 in Dakar, 164 governments together with partner institutions adopted a Framework for Action focusing on the achievement of six Education for All goals pertaining to the expansion of early childhood care and education, the achievement of universal primary education, the development of learning opportunities for youth and adults, the spread of literacy, the achievement of gender parity and gender equality in education and improvements in education quality.

The EFA agenda rests on a belief that public policy can radically transform education systems, given adequate political will and resources. The global prospect for achieving EFA is also influenced by trends in demography, urbanization, migration, health, and economic and political systems. By 2008, for example, more than half the world's population (about 3.3 billion people) will live in urban areas, nearly one-third of whom will live in slums. Due to continued population growth, the least developed countries, which are furthest from universal participation at primary and secondary level, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, will face increasing enrolment pressure in coming decades. Among health concerns, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are having a devastating impact on school systems, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Real per capita income growth was sustained in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia between 2000 and 2005, and remained high in East Asia and the Pacific. But despite reductions in the number of people living in absolute poverty, there has been rising inequality between rich and poor. Unless policies targeting poor and disadvantaged children are introduced, existing socio-economic inequality may be worsened through poor education and differentiated school systems.

Strengthening and supporting 'fragile' states has been an emerging priority on the EFA agenda since 2000. Such states are characterized by weak institutions, prolonged economic hardship and/or conflict, with a direct negative impact on education development. More than half a billion people are estimated to live in thirty-five fragile states.

Official development assistance from bilateral donors grew by 9% annually between 1999 and 2005, but preliminary data indicate a downturn in 2006. In 2005, the G8 countries made commitments to increase aid substantially through a variety of means, including traditional development assistance and debt relief. Yet donors need to accelerate plans to scale up aid to Africa if their promises are to retain credibility.

Recent research confirms the developmental benefits of expanding education systems, but points to a need for complementary policies to offset inequality and improve learning. The right to education has been enforced through measures such as compulsory education laws, passed by an increasing number of countries since 2000.

At international level, initiatives have focused on specific targets (literacy, girls, HIV/AIDS) and on improving the quality of aid. The convergence of such initiatives, however, will be vital for the full range of education for all goals to be achieved.

## Chapter 2 The six goals: how far have we come?



This chapter provides a systematic assessment of progress towards EFA since Dakar, comparing data which pertain to the school year ending in 2005 with corresponding 1999 figures. It focuses on the regions and countries that face the greatest challenges in achieving the goals by 2015 and draws attention to inequities within countries.

Early childhood care and education programmes improve children's health, nutrition, well-being and cognitive development. They offset disadvantage and inequality and lead to better achievement in primary school. The comprehensive care and education of children below age 3 remains a neglected area. Meanwhile, access to pre-primary education for children aged 3 and above has improved, but remains very uneven. Many developing countries still have limited or non-existent pre-primary education systems.

Access to and participation in primary education have sharply increased since Dakar, and the number of out-of-school children dropped from 96 million to 72 million between 1999 and 2005. The Arab States, sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia have shown substantial increases in enrolment ratios. However, progression through the primary grades and school completion remain important concerns nearly everywhere. Most countries, even those with relatively high primary enrolment ratios, need to address equity issues.

The learning needs of young people and adults remain woefully undocumented. This goal has been particularly neglected, in part because of the difficulty of defining and monitoring it. Many young people and adults acquire skills through informal means, or through a great variety of non-formal literacy, equivalency, life-skills and livelihood programmes.

Adult literacy remains a serious global issue: 774 million adults (of whom 64% are women) still lack basic literacy skills. Three regions (East Asia, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa) concentrate the vast majority of the one in five adults around the world still denied the right to literacy. Except in China, there has been little progress during the past decade in reducing the large number of illiterate adults.

The goal of eliminating gender disparities in both primary and secondary education by 2005 has been missed in a great majority of countries. While about 63% of countries with data have managed to eliminate gender disparities in primary education, only 37% have done so at secondary level.

Progress towards gender equality remains elusive. Sexual violence, insecure environments, and inadequate sanitation in schools disproportionately affect girls. Physical violence, by contrast, mainly affects boys. Gender-biased teacher attitudes, perceptions and expectations are common, and textbooks often reinforce stereotypes of gender-

specific roles of adult men and women. Academic performance of boys and girls is converging, but fields of study and occupational orientations continue to be clustered by gender.

International and regional assessments, and a growing number of national assessments conducted since 1999 show that poor learning outcomes in language, mathematics and other subjects still characterize many countries worldwide. More than 60% of countries allocate fewer than 800 yearly hours of instruction in grades 1–6, even though recent research confirms positive correlations between instructional time and learning outcomes. Many developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, have crowded classrooms, poor school infrastructure and inadequate learning environments. Acute shortages of teachers are common, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, and even greater shortages of trained teachers in some countries restrict quality teaching and learning.

The EFA Development Index, calculated for 129 countries, points to multiple challenges in 25 countries that are far from achieving EFA as a whole, several of them characterized as fragile states. Two-thirds are in sub-Saharan Africa, but the group also includes some Arab States and countries of South and West Asia. Data are lacking for many countries, among them a number of fragile states, which are likely to suffer from limited education development.

### Chapter 3 Countries on the move



This chapter focuses on three policy areas to illustrate how countries are developing and strengthening education systems

in order to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults: the importance of having an institutional environment that promotes and supports education; strategies that countries have followed to expand access to education, especially for the poorest and most disadvantaged groups; and measures countries are taking to improve teaching and learning. Information is based on a review of policies and strategies adopted since 2000 by a selected group of thirty developing countries.

Governments' efforts to develop national education sector plans have gained momentum since 2000 but weak management capacity is a major barrier to progress in many low-income countries. Although civil society has played a much more visible advocacy role since Dakar, opportunities to engage with government in setting national education agendas remain limited.

Two other institutional trends are the increasing prominence of non-state providers, especially in countries where enrolment has risen sharply since 2000, and the decentralization of financial, political and administrative responsibilities for education. A common problem with decentralization is confusion about new roles and responsibilities, and there is a risk of making subnational inequality worse.

The Dakar Framework calls on governments to ensure that education systems explicitly identify, target and respond to the circumstances of the poorest and most marginalized populations. The need for a comprehensive approach not limited to universal primary education is a hallmark of the Dakar agenda.

Early childhood care and education has moved up on policy agendas, especially pre-primary education, but problems persist: not enough focus on under-3s; a lack of holistic approaches encompassing care, health and nutrition in addition to education; a poorly trained workforce; and a lack of coordination among providers.

The Dakar goal of halving the illiteracy rate by 2015 will not be met without a substantial scaling up of programmes. Although some governments in recent years have made efforts to develop national frameworks for meeting the needs of youth and adults, programmes remain marginal and underfunded.

Fourteen countries have abolished tuition fees for primary school since 2000. Evidence suggests that this measure encourages enrolment of the most disadvantaged children. In several countries where girls' enrolment has increased sharply since 1999, governments have taken special measures to increase their participation: improving school infrastructure, encouraging the recruitment of female teachers and making learning materials free.

More targeted approaches are needed to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized children. A number of countries in Latin America have introduced programmes transferring money directly to marginalized households that enrol their children. In Asia, stipend programmes have encouraged the

transition of girls to secondary school. Flexible schooling, non-formal equivalency courses and bridging courses are among options being taken to provide for the learning needs of working children and youth.

To varying degrees, all countries need to improve the quality of education. There is no single strategy, but key elements include health and safety at school, enough learning time and textbooks, skilled and motivated teachers, and effective teaching methods. To address teacher shortages and limit costs, many governments are hiring teachers on temporary contracts. In the long term, governments need a policy framework assuring the integration of contract teachers with regular teachers into one career stream.

Classroom practices and curricula influence teaching and learning. Of particular importance are the use of children's mother tongue, regular assessment, enough textbooks, and access to information and communication technology. Many countries are moving towards a system of continuous pupil assessment. While there is a long way to go in promoting multilingualism and mother-tongue initial instruction in primary education, progress is being made.

Although the number of armed conflicts around the world is in decline, most wars continue to be fought in the developing world, with civilians suffering the most casualties. By investing in education in post-conflict situations, governments and the international community send out a forceful message about building a more peaceful future.

## Chapter 4 Progress in financing Education for All



The ultimate responsibility for achieving EFA lies with governments, but for many countries, especially the poorest, progress also relies on support from donors.

While a majority of governments, particularly in the least developed countries and most noticeably in sub-Saharan Africa, have increased the financial priority given to education, too many countries continue to allocate very low shares of GNP and total government expenditure to education.

Even when tuition fees have been abolished, costs of schooling remain an obstacle for the poorest families, although some governments have been innovative in devising ways to reduce the financial burden of schooling on households.

The overall amount of external financial support for basic education grew consistently between 2000 and 2004, particularly benefiting low-income countries, but declined in 2005. The amount and distribution of aid remain inadequate: too many donors are giving greater priority to higher levels of education, too high a share of education aid continues to go to middle-income rather than low-income countries, and levels of assistance to the latter vary widely by country.

The movement to improve the effectiveness of aid through greater harmonization between donors and alignment between donors and governments has accelerated since 2000. The Fast Track Initiative is one illustration of this, with education sector plans of thirty-one countries now endorsed. Multiple donors have been giving growing support for sector-wide programmes with sectoral budget support, including for education.

External aid for basic education does not automatically lead to improvement in educational outcomes. Quantitative studies suggest that the impact is positive, though less than generally anticipated, and more qualitative evaluations indicate that some objectives are much easier to reach through external funding than others.

Some major initiatives to increase levels of debt relief for highly indebted poor countries have been taken since 1999, first for bilateral debt and since 2005 for debt to multilateral institutions; these initiatives appear to have benefited basic education. In some countries governments and donors have worked well together since Dakar and been able to increase financial resources for basic education significantly. In others, however, this has not happened. Such countries, where education development is low, no strong reform programmes are in place and donor interest is lacking, are in the greatest danger of not fulfilling the goals set at Dakar.

## Chapter 5 The way forward



As we move beyond the midway point from Dakar to 2015, key questions arise. What are the prospects for achieving

the goals, and how can governments and actors at every level accelerate the movement towards quality education for all?

Projections suggest that, without accelerated efforts:

- 58 of the 86 countries that have not yet reached universal primary enrolment will not achieve it by 2015;
- 72 out of 101 countries will not succeed in halving their adult illiteracy rates by 2015;
- only 18 of the 113 countries that missed the gender parity goal at primary and secondary level in 2005 stand a chance of achieving it by 2015.

Countries making significant progress towards universal enrolment in primary education have tended to increase their education expenditure as a share of GNP. In countries where the progress has been slower, the share has decreased.

The analysis also signals that, although early childhood care and education is receiving increasing attention, participation rates remain relatively low in all developing regions except Latin America and the Caribbean. Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, the two regions with the lowest literacy rates and the highest number of out-of-school children, need to pay much stronger attention to the inclusion of youth and adults in basic education through literacy and other programmes.

Across the world, more than 18 million new teachers will need to be employed by 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa faces the greatest challenge. To reach universal primary education the stock of teachers will have to increase from 2.4 million in 2004 to 4 million in 2015, in addition to the 2.1 million new teachers required to replace those leaving the teaching workforce.

Growth in per capita income across all low-income countries creates the potential for higher government expenditure on EFA, as does the increasing share of national income that governments across Asia and sub-Saharan Africa allocate to EFA. But governments face the need to spend more on secondary and tertiary education, as well as on basic education.

The amount of aid to basic education for low-income countries in 2004 and 2005 – an average of US\$3.1 billion year – is clearly well below the estimated annual US\$11 billion required to reach the EFA goals. If donors fulfil their pledges, annual bilateral aid to basic education will reach US\$5 billion by 2010.

Overall, the thirty-two low-income countries identified as having the lowest levels of education development received one-third of total aid to basic education in 2004–2005, roughly the same as before Dakar; six of them received below-average amounts of aid to basic education per primary school-age child.

## **Towards an agenda to make EFA happen**

### ***At global level:***

- All stakeholders need to ensure that EFA remains a priority in the face of other emerging issues such as climate change and public health, and that the focus is not just on universal primary education.
- Policy and implementation must emphasize inclusion, literacy, quality, capacity development and finance.
- The international architecture for EFA needs to be made more effective.

### ***National governments must:***

- take full responsibility for all the EFA goals, even if all services are not delivered through the public sector;
- include the poorest and most marginalized children, youth and adults through better school infrastructure, elimination of tuition fees, provision of additional financial support to the poorest households and flexible schooling for working children and youth;
- ensure that progress towards gender parity is maintained sustained and that gender equality is pursued;

- recruit and train teachers on a vast scale;
- greatly expand adult literacy programmes;
- make sure pupils master basic skills by paying particular attention to teacher training, safe and healthy learning environments, mother tongue instruction and sufficient learning resources;
- maintain public spending on basic education and expand it where necessary;
- engage with civil society organizations in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.

### ***Bilateral and multilateral agencies alike need to:***

- increase the amount of aid they provide and deploy it differently;
- make long-term commitments, to enable finance ministers to approve major policy initiatives;
- pay special attention to sub-Saharan Africa and fragile states;
- continue efforts on aligning aid behind country-led sector plans.

The evidence since Dakar is clear: determined national governments have made progress in all regions and increased aid has worked to support this progress. This momentum must be maintained and accelerated in the short time left to 2015 if the right to education at every age is to be fulfilled.