

Overview

Eight years have passed since representatives of more than 160 governments gathered at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, to adopt an ambitious Framework for Action aimed at expanding learning opportunities for children, youth and adults. At the heart of the Framework is a pledge to achieve six Education for All (EFA) goals. The Dakar promise extends from early childhood care and education (ECCE) and universal primary education (UPE) to gender equality, the spread of adult literacy, the expansion of skills programmes for youth and adults, and improvements in the quality of education. Underpinning the Framework is a commitment to inclusive and equitable education provision and opportunity for all the world's citizens.

This edition of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* comes at a critical moment. With the 2015 deadline for some key goals just over the horizon, there are worrying signs of a large-scale shortfall. Remarkable gains have been registered in many of the world's poorest countries,¹ but the distance remaining is great. Governments and aid donors have to act with a renewed sense of urgency and shared commitment to deliver on the pledges they made in 2000. These promises cannot wait and time is running out.

The Report, titled *Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*, identifies deep and persistent disparities based on income, gender, location, ethnicity and other markers for disadvantage as a major barrier to progress in education. Inequity in education is linked to wider disparities in the distribution of power, wealth and opportunity. And it is perpetuated by policies that either tolerate or actively exacerbate an unfair distribution of life chances – policies that fuel the transmission of poverty across generations.

Inequalities in education of the magnitude observed in many countries are unacceptable. The circumstances into which children are born, their gender, the wealth of their parents, their language and the colour of their skin should not define their educational opportunities. Apart from being inequitable, large disparities in education are inefficient: they hold back economic growth and progress in other areas. Governments

and aid donors can do a great deal to equalize opportunity in education, working with civil society and local movements for change. The starting point is to put equity squarely at the centre of the EFA agenda.

Extreme inequalities in education are linked to wider disparities in society. Overcoming these inequalities requires effective and committed government leadership and a public sector with the human and financial resources to break down disadvantage. More than that, it requires good governance. In its broadest sense, governance is about the processes, policies and institutional arrangements that connect the many actors in education. It defines the responsibilities of national and subnational governments in areas such as finance, management and regulation. Governance rules stipulate who decides what, from the national finance or education ministry down to the classroom and community. Good governance practices can help foster development of more inclusive, more responsive education systems that address the real needs of the marginalized. Bad governance practices have the opposite effect.

Education has been at the forefront of a wider governance reform agenda. Outcomes to date have not been encouraging, especially when it comes to equity. Approaches to financial decentralization, choice and competition in school management, and the integration of education planning with wider strategies for poverty reduction have not given the required impetus to EFA. One reason is that equity considerations have typically been bolted onto governance reforms as an afterthought.

Government responsibility for acting on the Dakar Framework extends to international aid partnerships. Having signed up for the Framework, donors in rich countries have underperformed. Aid flows are falling far short of the required levels, calling into question donors' commitment to ensure that no developing country would fail in its planning for EFA for want of finance. Donors are also falling short of commitments to increase aid by 2010. Besides keeping their promises on aid, donors need to address governance problems that are undermining the quality and effectiveness of development assistance.

1. Throughout the Report, the word 'countries' should generally be understood as meaning 'countries and territories'.

Chapter 1

Education for all: human right and catalyst for development

The EFA agenda is rooted in a commitment to human rights and social justice. It recognizes that expanding and equalizing opportunities for education are development goals in their own right. But the Dakar Framework for Action also defines a public policy agenda linking education to wider development goals. Progress towards equitable education can act as a powerful catalyst for progress in other areas, including public health, poverty reduction, gender equality, participation and democratization.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), also adopted in 2000, are the world's time-bound and quantitative targets for addressing extreme human deprivation in its many dimensions. The targets range from halving extreme poverty to cutting child and maternal death rates and reducing malnutrition. Education is part of the MDG framework. However, the MDG targets for education are far less ambitious and more restrictive than the EFA agenda. The MDG project is at a watershed. While there has been progress in many areas, it has been uneven and too slow to achieve the targets. In September 2008, governments from around the world met at a United Nations summit in New York to reaffirm their MDG commitments – but reaffirmation alone does not bring the targets within reach.

Accelerated progress in education could play an important role in getting the world on track to achieve the wider MDG goals. Recent research has reinforced earlier evidence on the key role of education as a catalyst for human development. The links run two ways. Progress in education can unlock progress in health, nutrition and poverty reduction, and vice versa. This has important implications in areas where the MDG outcomes are lagging far behind target levels:

- **Halving extreme poverty.** Broad-based and equitable economic growth is the key to cutting income poverty. There is strong evidence linking education to higher growth and productivity. The increasing importance of knowledge for economic growth may be strengthening the links. When educational opportunities are broadly shared, with marginalized groups participating, prospects for shared economic growth are strengthened.
- **Child mortality and nutrition.** In many countries, having a mother with secondary or higher education more than halves the risk of child mortality, relative to mothers with no education. Controlling for other factors, when a Bangladeshi mother has completed primary education, it cuts the risk of child stunting by 20%. These outcomes reflect the empowering effects of education in expanding access to information and to health service use. The case for gender equality in education is important in its own right. It is also true that no country can afford the prohibitive human, social and economic costs that come with gender inequality.

The potential benefits of the EFA agenda extend far beyond the MDGs. Recent evidence from sub-Saharan Africa points to the important role of education in building support for multiparty democracy and in challenging autocracy. As the latest learning assessment by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD-PISA) shows, education also equips children with the learning skills they need to understand complex environmental problems – including climate change – and to hold political leaders to account for resolving them.

Chapter 2

The Dakar goals: monitoring progress and inequality

Monitoring of progress towards the EFA goals serves many purposes. It provides global, regional and national measures of how close the Dakar Framework is to being fulfilled. Effective monitoring can also pick up early warning signals, alerting governments

and the international community to potential failures. And it is an essential element for holding governments to account for their actions and performance.

Building on the previous Report's systematic midterm assessment of progress towards EFA, the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009* draws on data for the school year ending in 2006. It highlights the extraordinary progress made in many areas, notably by some of the poorest countries. That progress bears testimony to the fact that the EFA goals are attainable. With strong political commitment, the right public policies and sufficient financial commitment, all countries have the potential to move rapidly towards meeting the six goals. The bad news is that the world is not on track for achieving several key targets, including UPE by 2015. Changing this picture requires urgent action. It takes time to build classrooms, train teachers and put in place policies to remove barriers facing the disadvantaged – and time is running out.

Goal 1: Early childhood care and education

ECCE is the foundation of the EFA agenda. The health and nutritional status of children, especially during the first two years of life, has a profound influence on their cognitive development and learning achievements in school. Early childhood malnutrition affects brain development and diminishes prospects for success in school and beyond. Pre-primary education and health provision can counter early childhood disadvantage. Good-quality ECCE programmes have

a strong track record in reducing dropout rates in primary school, improving learning achievements and narrowing inequalities.



Childhood malnutrition and poor health are two of the greatest barriers to EFA. Progress in both areas has lagged far behind progress in getting children into school. The upshot is that millions of children entering school have had their brains, their

cognitive development and their education potential permanently damaged by hunger and ill health. This runs counter to the commitments made in the Dakar Framework for Action: filling classrooms with malnourished and sick children is not what UPE is about. The facts of childhood deprivation make their own case for a strengthened focus on early childhood:

- **Child mortality.** Around 10 million children a year die in developing countries before their fifth birthday. Survival prospects are improving – but far too slowly. Estimates for 2015 based on current trends show that the gap between the MDG target of a two-thirds reduction in child deaths and actual outcomes will amount to 4.3 million deaths. Already significant inequalities in child death rates between rich and poor are widening in many countries.
- **Stunting and low birth weight.** Around one in three children under 5 – 193 million in total – suffer moderate to severe stunting. The vast majority of these children live in South Asia, where almost half of all children are affected, and in sub-Saharan Africa. Low birth weight is a risk factor for ill-health and stunting and an indicator for poor maternal health. Some 16% of children in developing countries were delivered with low birth weight in 2006, rising to 29% in South Asia.
- **Vitamin and mineral deficiencies.** Millions of children are affected by micronutrient deficiency. Iron deficiency anaemia, which affects around half of pre-school children in developing countries, impairs cognitive development and increases vulnerability to infectious diseases.

More rapid economic growth alone will not overcome these deficits. Over the past two decades, India has been among the world's fastest-growing economies. By contrast, child health and nutrition have been improving very slowly. Rising food prices could undermine international efforts to counteract malnutrition in many countries, with damaging consequences for the EFA goals.

The record on pre-school provision is discouraging. Enrolments are increasing but the vast majority of the world's children continue to lack access to quality pre-schools. Gross enrolment ratios (GERs) in 2006 averaged 79% in developed countries and 36% in developing countries. Of the thirty-five countries in sub-Saharan Africa for which data are available, seventeen had coverage rates below 10%. Coverage rates are lowest for precisely those children who stand to gain the most: namely, the poor and disadvantaged.

Weak public policies in ECCE are holding back accelerated progress towards wider EFA goals and reinforcing education disparities. Evidence from several countries demonstrates what can be achieved. Countries such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania have made rapid progress in

reducing child mortality and improving child health. In the Philippines an integrated ECCE programme has registered strong improvements in cognitive development. In Mexico a conditional cash transfer programme linked to early childhood health and education has achieved tangible gains in primary school progression and learning achievement.

It is not just developing countries that face problems in ECCE. While most developed countries have high levels of early childhood provision, this is not the case in the United States, which has relatively low and highly unequal levels of coverage. The evidence suggests that inequalities in early childhood education are an important source of disparities in primary and secondary school.

Goal 2: Universal primary education

UPE is not just about getting children into school at an appropriate age. It is also about ensuring that they stay in school to complete a full cycle of quality basic education. The report card is mixed.

Some impressive gains have been registered. The net enrolment ratio (NER) for developing countries as a group increased between 1999 and 2006 at twice the rate of the 1990s. In sub-Saharan Africa, it increased from 54% to 70%. This is six times the rate of the 1990s – and it was achieved despite rapid population growth. In South and West Asia the NER climbed from 75% to 86%. Behind these regional figures are some remarkable achievements:

- Ethiopia more than doubled its NER to 71%.
- The NERs for Benin and the United Republic of Tanzania moved from around 50% to more than 80%.
- In the midst of a civil conflict, Nepal increased its NER from 65% to 79% (in 2004).
- Among the Arab States, Djibouti, Mauritania, Morocco and Yemen registered strong gains.

Post-Dakar progress is also reflected in a decline in the number of children out of school. There were 28 million fewer out-of-school children in 2006 than when governments met in Dakar in 2000. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of primary-school-age children not in school dropped by 10 million while the population in that age group increased by 17 million. South and West Asia more than halved its out-of-school population, from 37 million to 18 million.

These figures can be traced to political leadership and effective public policies. Increased public investment, ambitious school construction programmes, the abolition of school fees, measures to strengthen quality and – critically – the targeting of disadvantaged groups have all played a role. So have increased recruitment and training of teachers.

The distance travelled towards the EFA goals since 1999 should not obscure the distance that remains. The yardstick is not the record of the 1990s but the target of UPE by 2015. On current trends, it will be missed:

- In 2006 some 75 million children of primary school age were not in school. This is 12% of the developing world's primary-school-age population. In sub-Saharan Africa, nearly one-third of that age group is out of school. At the start of the twenty-first century, in an increasingly prosperous, knowledge-based global economy, millions of children do not even have a foot on the first rung of the EFA ladder.
- Girls still account for the majority of the world's out-of-school children (55%). Importantly, out-of-school girls are also more likely never to have been to school than boys.

This Report provides a partial projection for the out-of-school population in 2015. It is partial because, for reasons of data limitation, it covers countries that are home to just two-thirds of out-of-school children in the relevant age group. Countries that are not covered include Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, both of which have large populations affected. Even with the exemptions, a business-as-usual trajectory suggests that there will still be 29 million children out of school in 2015. Slow progress towards UPE in Nigeria and Pakistan is pushing these countries towards the top of the out-of-school league table. By 2015, more than 10 million children could be out of school in these two countries alone.

Out-of-school figures and projections capture just one aspect of the challenge that has to be addressed to bring UPE within reach by 2015. In many countries, primary school students are locked into cycles of repetition and early dropout. In Malawi, just over six in ten children enter primary school at the official age – and half of them either drop out or repeat grade 1. Of the thirty-one countries in sub-Saharan Africa with data, eleven have grade 1 and 2 repetition rates in excess of 20%. The problem is also widespread in Latin America. This year's Report highlights the inefficiencies and inequalities associated with grade repetition.

Combining data on enrolment and completion highlights the scale of global inequality in education. Children in Britain or France are more likely to enter tertiary education than children in the Niger or Senegal are to complete primary school. Such inequalities in the international distribution of opportunity for education have important implications for future patterns of globalization. Today's inequalities in education are tomorrow's inequalities in the distribution of wealth and wider opportunities for human development.

Inequality as a barrier to progress

Inequalities within countries are also marked. When it comes to primary school attendance, children from rich and poor households move in different worlds. National averages can obscure this point. If the richest 20% in countries including Bangladesh, Bolivia, Ghana, India and Nigeria were a country, they would almost have achieved UPE. The poor have a long way to go.

Simple UPE arithmetic points to a strong case for greater focus on equity. In countries with school attendance rates above 80%, children from poor households are heavily over-represented among out-of-school children. They account for more than 40% of the non-attending school population in countries from Cameroon and Kenya to Indonesia and Nicaragua. Even in countries with lower levels of attendance reported in household surveys, such as Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia, the poorest quintile accounts for 30% to 40% of the out-of-school population.

Income-based disparities intersect with wider inequalities. Rural children in many developing countries are less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out. In Senegal, children in urban areas are twice as likely as those in rural areas to be in school. Slum dwellers face a distinctive set of challenges, with high levels of poverty, ill health and limited provision restricting access. Socio-cultural inequalities linked to ethnicity and language are also important. Disadvantage

in each of these areas is related to, and compounded by, poverty and income-based inequalities – but they are also important in their own right.

Other barriers to UPE also have to be removed if the 2015 targets are to be

achieved. Child labour is one of the most formidable. There are around 218 million child labourers in developing countries, and numbers are coming down slowly in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia. Ill health and malnutrition undermine school attendance and learning capacity for millions of children. And childhood disability is strongly associated with inequalities in participation, reflecting a widespread failure to implement policies for inclusive education.

Post-primary education

Increasing participation in secondary education is part of the Dakar commitment. Progress in this area is vital. Expanded access to secondary school is needed to absorb the increase in numbers of children emerging from primary schools, to create incentives for primary school completion and to train teachers. Secondary and post-secondary education is also important for the development of skills needed in an increasingly knowledge-based global economy.

There are large regional disparities in participation in secondary schools. At one end of the spectrum, most developed and transition economies are nearing universal secondary education. At the other, the secondary NER for sub-Saharan Africa is just 25%, implying that nearly 78 million children of the relevant age group are not enrolled in secondary school. The transition point from primary to secondary is marked by high levels of dropout in many countries. As at primary level, progression through the secondary school system is characterized by rising inequalities. In Latin America, 88% of children from the wealthiest decile move steadily through the secondary school system without repetition or dropout – twice the share for the poorest decile.

Global disparities are strongly apparent at tertiary level. The global tertiary GER is around 25%. Regional GERs, however, range from 70% in North America and Western Europe to 32% in Latin America and 5% in sub-Saharan Africa. Beyond the quantitative gaps are large qualitative disparities fuelled by differences in financing capacity. In equivalent dollar terms, France spends sixteen times as much per university student as Peru. In 2005, the top American universities spent over twenty-five times as much per student as Dar-es-Salaam University in the United Republic of Tanzania.

Tertiary education is the point at which the cumulative effects of disparities at the primary and secondary level become apparent. In Brazil, the university participation for black people is 6% – just under one-third of the rate for white Brazilians.



Goals 3 and 4: Lifelong learning and literacy

Achieving UPE would establish a basis for lifelong learning and literacy for future generations. But there is an immense backlog of unmet need. Millions of teenagers have never attended primary school and millions more leave without the skills they need. Limited access to educational opportunities in the past has also left 776 million adults –two-thirds of them women – lacking basic literacy skills.

Many governments have paid insufficient attention to youth and adult learning needs. Public funding remains inadequate and provision highly unequal. The fact that some of the goals in the Dakar Framework were vaguely worded may have contributed to a lack of urgency. The sixth International Conference on Adult Education, scheduled for 2009, provides an important opportunity to change this picture.

Illiteracy continues to receive inadequate attention from policy-makers. Although there were 95 million fewer illiterates worldwide in 2000–2006 than in 1985–1994, absolute numbers have increased in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States. On current trends there will still be over 700 million adult illiterates in 2015.

Many factors contribute to low literacy levels, including gender disparities, poverty, location and ethnicity. The problem is not restricted to developing countries. Many OECD countries also record high levels of literacy problems: 1 million native Dutch speakers in the Netherlands are classified as functionally illiterate, for example. In metropolitan France, some 10% of the population aged 18 to 65 – more than 3 million people – lacks basic reading, writing, arithmetic and other fundamental skills despite having attended French schools.

Goal 5: Gender disparities and inequalities in education

The Dakar Framework sets out an ambitious two-part agenda on gender equity. The first part aims at gender parity in school participation and the second at wider progress towards equality between girls and boys in educational opportunities and outcomes.

The world has made sustained progress towards gender parity, but deficits remain large. Of the 176 countries in 2006 with data, 59 had achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education. Over half the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and the Arab States have yet to achieve parity at primary level.

There are large regional variations in progress towards gender parity. Advances in sub-Saharan Africa have been slow and uneven. The regional gender parity index (GPI), which measures the ratio of girls to boys primary GER, rose from 0.85 in 1999 to 0.89 in 2006, though several countries – including Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania – have achieved parity. The GPI for South and West Asia rose from 0.84 to 0.95. However, Pakistan still enrolls only 80 girls for every 100 boys in primary school.

Expansion of secondary school enrolment has led to reductions in gender disparities in most regions. However, gender disparities remain larger in secondary education than in primary. In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, participation rates for girls remain low and disparities high. One major exception is Bangladesh, which has achieved gender parity. Public policy, notably the creation of financial incentives through stipend programmes, has played a key role. Underparticipation by boys is marked in many countries, especially in Latin America.

Gender disparities are unequally distributed across societies. Being born into a household that is poor, rural or indigenous, or speaks a minority language, reinforces gender disadvantage in many countries. In Mali, the GPI for the poorest 20% of households was 0.60 in 2001, whereas many more girls in the richest 20% were attending primary school. The secondary GPI is 0.50 for the poorest households and 0.96 for the wealthiest. Such facts demonstrate how poverty often magnifies the effects of gender disparities.

Gender equality is more difficult to measure than parity. Learning achievements provide one benchmark. Four broad themes emerge from international assessments. First, girls often outperform boys in reading and literacy. Second, boys outperform girls in mathematics, though the gap is closing. Third, boys maintain a small advantage in science. Fourth, at the tertiary level women remain under-represented in science and engineering and 'over-represented' in areas such as education and health.

Goal 6: Education quality and learning achievements

The ultimate goal of education is to equip children with the knowledge, skills and opportunities they need to realize their potential and to participate in social and political life. Many education systems are failing to achieve this goal.

Progress in quantitative headcount indicators has masked problems in qualitative learning achievement. In many developing countries, absolute levels of average learning are exceptionally low. International learning assessments draw attention to the very large disparities between rich and poor countries. Within countries, too, there are often large differences in test scores based on socio-economic status, school performance and other variables.

Getting children into school and through a full cycle of basic education remains a major priority. But evidence from many countries suggests that, once in school, many children are acquiring only the most rudimentary skills, as the following examples demonstrate:

- One recent assessment in the Punjab province of Pakistan found that over two-thirds of grade 3 students could not write a sentence in Urdu and a similar proportion could not solve a simple subtraction problem.
- In India, a large-scale assessment found that 45% of children in standard 3 could not read a text designed for standard 1 students.
- Results from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) II assessment in Africa indicated that the share of grade 6 children reaching the 'desirable' level of literacy was less than 25% in Botswana, Kenya and South Africa, and less than 10% in Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia.
- A recent assessment in Peru found that as few as 30% of children in grade 1, and 50% in grade 2, could read a simple passage from a grade 1 textbook.

These examples, which could be multiplied many times over, draw attention to the sheer scale of the learning achievement deficit in many countries.

International assessments reinforce this picture. They draw attention to the low average level of learning in many developing countries relative to developed countries. To take one illustration from the PISA 2001 assessment, the median scores for students in Brazil, Indonesia and Peru would be situated in the lowest 20% of the distribution in France or the United States. PISA 2006 showed that over 60% of students from Brazil and Indonesia scored at or below the lowest level in science, compared with fewer than 10% in Canada or Finland. Other international assessments confirm the scale of global inequalities.

Real learning divides are larger than those captured in international assessments. This is because assessments measure learning outcomes among children in school and do not include children who are currently or permanently out of school. Given that out-of-school children would be expected to score at lower levels than children in school, the real national averages may be well below those indicated.

Within-country inequalities in outcomes often mirror global disparities in scale. In countries including Morocco and South Africa, the top 5% of pupils covered in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey (PIRLS) assessment registered scores comparable to those of the best pupils in high-achieving countries. But the scores of the bottom 5% were less than one-fifth of those for top performers. Research in the Indian states of Rajasthan and Orissa also points to extremely large learning disparities.

Many factors influence learning achievement levels. Student characteristics play a significant role. Socio-economic status, family size and composition, immigrant status and home language are all important variables. System-level variables, such as access to early childhood provision, selection and the social composition of schools, are also influential.

School-based factors have a strong effect on learning. Insufficient instructional time is one source of underachievement. A study in Bangladesh found that 10% of government schools provided fewer than 500 hours of instruction, compared with 860 hours at the other end of the spectrum. In many cases, children and teachers lack access to basic learning materials. SACMEQ II found that over half of grade 6 pupils in many countries – including Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia – did not have a single book. A poor learning environment can exacerbate social disparities.



The state of a nation's schools can have an important bearing on prospects for success in education. Dilapidated school buildings, overcrowded and under-resourced classrooms, and an inadequate supply of teaching materials can all hurt learning prospects – and dilapidation is widespread. One of the most comprehensive recent surveys of the state of primary schools, overseen by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, found that more than one-third of students in India, Peru and the Philippines attended schools with insufficient toilets. More than half the school heads in some countries surveyed felt their schools needed complete rebuilding. As in other areas, the poor bear the brunt. Evidence from Latin America shows that badly equipped schools are disproportionately attended by children from the poorest households.

Teachers are the front-line providers in education. Delivery of quality education is critically dependent on having a sufficient supply of properly trained and motivated teachers. How teachers are deployed also has an important bearing on equity and learning outcomes.

Acute teacher shortages remain a problem in many countries. If the world is to achieve UPE by 2015, it will need to recruit an estimated 18 million additional teachers. In sub-Saharan Africa, an additional 145,000 recruitments are needed annually – 77% above the observed increase between 1999 and 2006. South and West Asia will need an additional 3.6 million teachers.

National pupil/teacher ratios (PTRs) sometimes mask very large disparities. There are large variations in ratios within countries, often reflecting differences between rich and poor, rural and urban, and indigenous and non-indigenous areas. Inequalities in access to trained teachers reinforce these differences. In India, the majority of untrained teachers are concentrated in rural areas. In Ghana, they are concentrated in the north, the poorest part of the country.

Reported PTRs are often a misleading indicator for what happens in schools. Teacher absenteeism has an important bearing on learning in many countries. In a recent study covering six developing countries, absenteeism rates averaged 19%, rising to 25% for India. Absenteeism was more pronounced in poorer and rural areas – and it disproportionately affected children from low socio-economic backgrounds. Low teacher morale and weak motivation, linked to inadequate pay, poor conditions of service and weak support systems, are systemic problems in many countries.

Chapter 3 Raising quality and strengthening equity: why governance matters



Education governance is not an abstract concept. It is something that affects the lives of parents, the school experience of children, and the efficiency and equity of education provision. If the precise meaning of 'good governance' can be debated, the consequences of bad governance are readily observable. They include chronically underfinanced schools, service providers and government agencies that are unresponsive to local needs and unaccountable to parents, large disparities in school access, participation and completion, and low levels of learning achievement.

Governance reform is a prominent part of the EFA agenda. Within the vast array of country experience, several themes recur. Many governments have moved towards decentralized provision, shifting the locus of decision-making from central to local level. The umbrella category of decentralization, however, covers multiple patterns. The Report maps decision-making in a large group of countries (see annex on education decision-making), revealing a variety of possible arrangements.

Many of the central currents in governance reform span the developed and developing world. School-based management, which aims at giving schools and communities more autonomy in decision-making, is one illustration. Another is the growth of education provision models emphasizing the virtues of choice and competition, either within the state sector or through an expanded role for the private sector. In many developing countries, low-fee private schools are emerging as another source of choice and competition, often outside government regulation. In teacher management, governance issues focus on concerns over pay and policies for allocating teachers to different areas.

Other governance issues have received less attention. One striking example is the integration of education planning with broader poverty reduction strategies. This is a key issue for the Dakar Framework for Action. Many of the most entrenched barriers to EFA are rooted beyond the school in underlying structures of poverty and social disadvantage. Effective education governance can make some difference. But ultimately, sustained progress towards EFA depends on the effective integration of education planning in wider poverty reduction strategies, for an obvious reason: poverty, poor nutrition and ill health are formidable barriers to success in education.

Governance reform has delivered highly variable results. While the progress achieved in some countries has to be acknowledged, overall outcomes have been disappointing. One reason is that governance reforms have often been designed with scant regard for their impact on the most disadvantaged people and regions. Choice and competition have their merits – but also their limits, notably for the poor. Governance reform design problems have sometimes been compounded by a tendency to embrace fixed blueprints, many of them originating in developed countries.

The Report explores four central themes in national governance reform, principally as they relate to basic education:

- financing;
- 'voice', participation and choice;
- governance of teachers and monitoring of learning;
- integration of EFA and poverty reduction strategies.

Financing for basic education

It costs nothing to set ambitious goals in education. However, achieving those goals requires financial resources, along with policies that maximize efficiency and equity in the management of those resources. While many of the issues appear technical, financial governance has a critical bearing on prospects for achieving EFA.

Countries vary enormously in their capacity to finance education. Increased public spending is not guaranteed to improve access, equity or learning outcomes. But chronic and sustained underfinancing is a sure route to limited, poor-quality provision.

Most countries have increased the share of national income allocated to education since 1999. In some cases, such as those of Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique

and Senegal, the share has climbed sharply. In others, as in India and Pakistan, it has stagnated at a relatively low 3% of gross national product or less. While cross-regional comparisons have to be treated with caution, spending patterns in South and West Asia would appear to indicate a limited public spending commitment to education.

Global wealth inequalities are mirrored by inequalities in education spending. In 2006, per-student expenditure for primary school (expressed in constant dollars) ranged from less than US\$300 in much of sub-Saharan Africa to over US\$5,000 in most developed countries. As a region sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 15% of 5- to 25-year-olds but just 2% of global spending on their education. South and West Asia represent over one-quarter of the population and 7% of spending.

As in any area of public financing, efficiency is an important determinant of outcomes. Technical efficiency provides a crude indicator of the cost associated with turning finance into quantitative and qualitative outcomes. In many countries, corruption is a major source of both inefficiency and inequity – the former because it means more public money provides fewer inputs and the latter because the costs of corruption invariably fall most heavily on the poor.

Public spending on education has the potential to redress inequalities but often reinforces them instead. Wealthier regions and advantaged groups often attract more financing than poorer regions and disadvantaged groups. Public spending is often not pro-poor. Governments have developed various approaches aimed at strengthening equity, including school grants and formula funding linked to need – with mixed outcomes.

Financial decentralization has important implications for equity. There is nothing intrinsically equitable or inequitable about reforms in this area: outcomes depend on the rules governing issues such as revenue raising and resource transfer. One obvious danger is that, in the absence of redistributive transfers from richer to poorer areas, decentralization will widen financing gaps in education, with damaging consequences for equity. Another is that subnational governments will seek to mobilize revenue through charges on local services, including education.

Evidence from many countries highlights the risks associated with financial decentralization. In China, Indonesia and the Philippines, decentralization appears to have exacerbated inequalities. In Nigeria, financial decentralization has consolidated large disparities in

education financing, often to the detriment of the states facing the most serious problems. However, countries including South Africa, Uganda and Viet Nam have developed models aimed at greater equity, with rules on financial decentralization geared towards the attainment of national goals in education and other areas.

'Voice', participation and choice in school governance

Schools are on the front line of the campaign to bring high-quality education to all children. They are also at the centre of debates on education governance in which choice, competition, participation and 'voice' are buzzwords. Behind these terms are crucial questions about the role of governments, parents, communities and private providers in managing and financing schools.

Many countries with poorly performing education systems suffer from institutional problems. The Dakar Framework does not set out a blueprint for resolving these problems. But it does call on governments to 'develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management'. Translating these widely shared objectives into practical strategies that tackle institutional weaknesses, expand access, raise quality and strengthen equity is far from straightforward.

The Report focuses on three broad reform currents in school governance. School-based management, the first current, aspires to anchor education in the social fabric of communities. Transferring authority to front-line providers is presented as a vehicle for increasing parental influence in decisions affecting children's education – and for ensuring that schools reflect local priorities and values.

The second reform current focuses on choice and competition. Expanding parental choice in the selection of schools is widely viewed as a key to driving up standards, with competition creating powerful incentives for improved performance. In some countries, public-private partnerships are seen as a route to enlarged choice. Governments are using vouchers and other instruments to facilitate transfers from public to private providers, or contracting out the management of government schools to private providers.

The locus for the third thematic area is outside the public education system. Low-fee private schools have spread rapidly in many countries. Some commentators see these schools as a vehicle for improving access and quality for poor households.

Proponents of all three approaches claim various benefits from governance reform. These range from gains in efficiency to increases in participation, accountability and equity. There is a widely shared underlying assumption that devolution of authority, competition and the growth of low-fee private schools will strengthen the voices of the poor and increase their choices. Are the claims and assumptions backed by evidence?

There are no simple answers to that question. In some cases, school-based management reforms have improved learning achievements and strengthened equity. The EDUCO schools in El Salvador are an example. More widely, though, there is limited evidence either of systematic benefits in learning outcomes or of changes in teaching practices. Effects on 'voice' are also ambiguous. More localized decision-making may bring authority closer to parents and communities, but it does not follow that this will overcome wider disadvantages. An obvious danger is that local power structures associated with poverty and social inequality will limit the real influence of the poor and marginalized.

Choice and competition are at the centre of sometimes polarized debates in both developed and developing countries. Underlying these debates are strongly held views about the role and responsibilities of government. The idea that increased parental choice leads to improved learning outcomes and greater equity may have intuitive appeal. But once again the evidence is not clear cut. Evidence from PISA data does not point to strong effects of school competition on learning outcomes. In the United States, neither the still limited recourse to voucher programmes nor the more expansive development of charter schools has unambiguously raised academic achievement standards or tackled disparities.

Evidence from Chile is also instructive. Over more than two decades, Chile has introduced education governance reforms, aimed at increasing choice, that are broader and deeper than in most countries. Yet private schools with state subsidies do not register any advantage over municipal schools once adjustments are made for socio-economic status. Overall improvements in education quality have been limited – as has progress towards greater equity. While Chile is widely cited as a model governance reformer, it is not clear from the outcomes that it merits this description.

Others countries have a stronger claim to successful governance reform. Sweden is a case in point. Since the mid-1990s it has allowed parents to choose non-public

education providers and take state funding with them. There is a broad consensus in Sweden behind the reforms. However, the exportability of the Swedish model is unproven. Increased competition in this case was introduced against the backdrop of a public education system that meets high achievement standards, with relatively low inequality and a highly developed institutional capacity for regulation. These are not the prevailing conditions in most countries, developed or developing.

Serious questions have to be asked about current approaches to school-based management. Parental participation is important and, under the right conditions, choice and competition can help raise standards and equalize opportunity. But the overwhelming priority, especially in the poorest countries, is to ensure that a properly financed public education system is available to all citizens.

The rapid emergence of low-fee private schools raises a different set of concerns. In many countries, these schools are outside state auspices. There is no question that low-fee private schools are catering for real demand. Countries as diverse as Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan have experienced increases in enrolment in such schools. But to what extent have they raised standards and enhanced equity?

While international evidence remains patchy, it offers little cause for optimism. In many countries, parents select private schools not as a positive choice but as a negative response to perceived – and usually real – failures of the public system. In the case of slum areas, as in Nairobi, public schools often simply do not exist. In India evidence does not suggest that poor parents are more actively involved in decision-making in low-fee schools, or that teachers are less likely to be absent. While the fact that parents meet school charges may be taken as evidence of willingness to pay, the costs impose a considerable burden on household budgets. Efforts to integrate low-fee private schools into private-public partnerships through voucher-type programmes, as advocated by some, do not appear to offer a short cut to greater equity.

The rapid growth of low-fee private schools is in large measure a symptom of state failure. Chronic underfinancing, often combined with weak accountability, low levels of responsiveness and poor quality of provision, has led millions of poor households to vote with their feet – and their income – to exit public provision. This is not a prescription either for equity or for accelerated progress towards EFA.

Basic education is a fundamental human right, not a tradable commodity. It follows that provision must be available to all, regardless of ability to pay. Moreover, the public sector must govern provision, underwriting finance, providing management and setting a clear policy framework.

Public sector leadership does not mean that actors such as non-government organizations and the private sector have no role or responsibilities. In the right conditions, properly regulated choice and competition can strengthen standards, especially at secondary level. However, there are acute dangers for equity. Where government failure leads to creeping commercialization through the low-fee private sector, it poses the risk of rising inequity, and the fragmentation of services and standards. The real challenge for governments with basic education systems that are broken is to fix the system.

Governance of teachers – improving motivation and monitoring

The effectiveness of any school is heavily influenced by the quality of teaching, and the skills, motivation and commitment of its teachers. Ensuring that children – including the most disadvantaged – have access to enough trained and motivated teachers is vital to the delivery of good and equitable education. The effectiveness and equity of school systems are also linked to national monitoring of standards. Good monitoring systems can help inform policy and so raise quality and enhance equity. Weak systems have the opposite effect.

The governance of teachers raises issues that go far beyond administrative technicalities. One recent assessment of teacher morale in sub-Saharan Africa concludes that school systems catering for tens of millions of children face a ‘teacher motivation crisis’ over issues ranging from employment conditions to training and support. How teachers are distributed within countries has profound implications for equity and access: deployment patterns in many countries reinforce disparities.

Teacher salaries are at the centre of polarized exchanges in public policy debate. Some commentators say salary levels in many countries are too high and crowd out spending on other aspects of education. Apart from cost factors, hiring teachers centrally on permanent civil service contracts is also viewed as a source of weak accountability and poor performance. The problem with these perspectives is that they

overlook wider issues. These include the low absolute salary levels of many teachers. In Malawi, average teacher salaries are too low to meet basic needs. There, and in many other countries, teachers often have to supplement their income with a second job, with damaging consequences for the quality of their teaching.

Teacher recruitment to reduce PTRs and address shortages confronts governments with tough choices. Some governments have attempted to contain costs by recruiting teachers on contract outside the civil service pay structure. Hiring contract teachers can expand access to basic education at lower cost, often benefiting areas that might otherwise not have enough teachers, as in parts of India.

On the other side of the coin are potential threats to quality and equity. Seeking to reduce recruitment costs through contract arrangements can weaken quality by lowering the standard of new entrants or reducing teacher morale. In Togo, expanded use of contract teachers is associated with reduced learning achievement. And if contract teachers are deployed principally in poor and marginalized areas, it can also weaken equity. There are no easy answers, but it is important for governments to be aware of potentially damaging trade-offs between lower-cost recruitment and wider education goals with respect to equity and quality.

Teacher deployment is often inequitable within countries, which can exacerbate disparities. The rural-urban divide is particularly marked. In Uganda, two-thirds of urban teachers are qualified, compared with 40% in rural areas. Urban bias in deployment reflects many teachers' aversion to working in hard-to-reach, remote, rural and sparsely populated areas, often for both professional and personal reasons.

Public policies can overcome inequalities in deployment. In Brazil, central government redistribution of financial resources has been used to support teacher recruitment and training in poor states. In Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, institutional incentives encourage the recruitment of teachers from marginalized areas and groups; a lesson from their experience is that very strong incentives may be needed.

One symptom of poor teacher motivation is absenteeism. In many developing countries absenteeism is endemic (see Chapter 2). Motivation is not always the culprit: in parts of Africa HIV-related health problems are heavily implicated. Some governments see performance-related pay as a strategy to address

motivation problems and so raise quality. But there is little evidence from cross-country experience that performance-related pay produces positive results – and some evidence that it creates perverse incentives for teachers to focus on the best-performing students.

The importance of monitoring in raising quality standards and addressing equity concerns is widely overlooked. Information is one of the keys to improved learning outcomes – and the flow of information is increasing. Between 2000 and 2006, around half the world's countries conducted at least one national learning assessment. Regional assessments have also expanded: thirty-seven sub-Saharan African countries and sixteen Latin American countries now participate in major regional assessments.

While large gaps in coverage remain, many governments have access to more national and international learning assessment information than their predecessors had in the 1990s. Many of these assessments are 'high stakes' – so called because they have direct consequences for student progression, and sometimes for teachers and schools. Others are 'low stake' exercises that provide information, with no direct consequences for students, teachers or schools. The value of 'high stakes' assessment as a vehicle for holding schools and teachers to account is widely contested. In the United States, the No Child Left Behind Act offers a particularly high-profile example of high stakes testing – and one with a mixed record in terms of its effects on achievement.

How information is used is as important as the flow of information. Education authorities in many developing countries increasingly use assessments to inform policy design. In Kenya, SACMEQ results were a basis for benchmarks on minimum classroom facilities. In Senegal, data from a PASEC assessment showed that grade repetition imposed high costs on school systems with no tangible benefits for learning outcomes – a finding that prompted a prohibition on repetition for some primary grades. Viet Nam has used learning assessments to identify disparities in achievement and guide the framing of regulations aimed at raising input provision for disadvantaged groups and areas. Uruguay has applied carefully designed national assessment programmes to strengthen pedagogical management. Learning outcomes improved in some grades by as much as 30% in six years.

These positive examples are the exception rather than the rule. In many cases, the findings from assessments have no influence on resource allocation or teacher

support programmes. Even where good assessment systems are in place, their effects are often limited. The reason, in many cases, is weak institutional capacity. Thus, Bolivia has a first-rate assessment system and strong expertise, but they have had limited impact on policy design or what happens in the classroom.

Integrated planning to advance EFA

Progress in education is contingent on wider social conditions influencing inequalities based on income, gender, ethnicity and location. The Dakar Framework for Action calls for EFA policies to be promoted 'within a sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies'. While education planning has been strengthened, a failure to join education strategies to general poverty reduction strategies, along with high levels of fragmentation and weak coordination, continues to hamper progress.

Education planning within the framework of sector-wide approaches (SWAs) has been instrumental in clarifying priorities, broadening the EFA agenda and allowing governments to develop longer-term planning horizons. However, many education SWAs suffer from continued weaknesses. Financial costing is often inadequate, education targets are not reflected in national budgets and there is a tendency to adopt blueprint models.

Even more serious is the widespread tendency to delink education planning from wider strategies for overcoming poverty and inequality. Poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) provide a vehicle for addressing this problem. Fifty-four countries – just over half of them in sub-Saharan Africa – have operational PRSPs. While PRSPs are 'nationally owned' documents, they also set out the terms of the aid partnership with donors. PRSPs have brought poverty closer to the centre of the development agenda but they are not yet facilitating effective integration in education planning, for at least four reasons:

- **Weak linkage to the EFA agenda.** The point of reference for PRSPs is the MDGs. One consequence is an overwhelming emphasis on quantitative targets related to primary education, often to the exclusion of wider EFA goals. When wider goals are considered, they are typically not linked to a broader poverty reduction agenda. For example, in a review of eighteen recent PRSPs the Report finds that ECCE is regarded primarily as a mechanism for increasing primary school enrolment rather than as a strategy to improve the health and nutrition of young children.
- **Poor targeting and limited consideration of equity in target-setting.** Targets rarely include the narrowing of equity gaps, with the partial exception of gender parity goals; they invariably address access rather than learning achievement.
- **No link between education and broader governance reforms.** PRSPs often incorporate national commitments to wide-ranging governance reforms. However, the implications of the reforms for equity in education are seldom considered in any detail, even where the reforms have potentially significant consequences. Decentralization is one prominent example. More generally, few PRSPs set out practical strategies for ensuring that governance reforms strengthen the link between education planning and wider poverty reduction efforts.
- **Poor integration of cross-sectoral policies.** As Chapter 2 notes, there are deep and persistent inequalities in education linked to poverty, gender, nutrition, health, disability and other forms of marginalization. Addressing these inequalities requires policies that extend far beyond the education sector. Evidence from PRSPs suggests that education strategies are often disconnected from such policies.

While PRSPs have thus far seldom provided an integrated framework, there are positive experiences to draw upon. Social protection programmes are making a strong contribution to education by addressing problems in health, nutrition and child labour. Targeted cash transfers in Latin America have been particularly successful – so much so that one has been adopted on a pilot basis in New York City. There are strong grounds for considering an increase in public investment and aid for cross-sectoral programmes of this kind in other contexts.

Planning is not just about technical documents. It is also about the political process through which priorities are set. Consultation processes are a central part of PRSPs. They provide opportunities for civil society organizations to participate in policy discussions. They also help ensure that education figures in debates over national poverty strategies. The challenge is to extend participation to ensure that the voices of the poor and vulnerable are heard. This in turn will help focus more attention on ECCE, adult literacy and skills development. It will also inform policy-makers about factors beyond the education sector that are holding back progress towards equitable education. Sustained political commitment is crucial for priorities set out in consultation processes to become reality.

Chapter 4

Increasing aid and improving governance



The Dakar Framework for Action is based on an international partnership. Developing countries pledged to strengthen national education planning, tackle inequalities and enhance accountability. Rich countries also made an important commitment, pledging that no credible national plan would be allowed to fail for want of finance. Increased and more effective aid is vital to achieving the goals and targets set at Dakar. Are donors delivering on their promises?

Not in the area of financing. On a highly conservative estimate, the aid financing required for a narrow range of basic education goals in low-income countries is around US\$11 billion annually. In 2006, aid in support of basic education to these countries was just one-third of the estimated requirement, leaving a financing gap of around US\$7 billion.

These large aid deficits are holding back progress. Debates over the achievements and effectiveness of development assistance continue. Pessimists claim aid has had a modest impact at best, and a negative effect in many cases. Evidence in education does not support this view. In the United Republic of Tanzania aid has supported a national education strategy that has cut the number of out-of-school children by 3 million since 1999. In Cambodia, Kenya, Mozambique and Zambia, aid helped finance the abolition of school fees, extending educational opportunities to previously excluded children. In Bangladesh and Nepal, aid supported national strategies providing incentives for girls and disadvantaged groups. Development assistance is not a panacea or a corrective for bad policy – but it makes a difference.

Aid levels for education are linked to overall development assistance flows. In 2005 donors made a number of important commitments to increase aid

flows, notably at the Gleneagles summit of the Group of Eight (G8) and at a European Council meeting. This was a backdrop to the United Nations 'Millennium +5' summit. Delivery on these commitments would lead to an increase of around US\$50 billion in development assistance by 2010 (at 2004 prices), with around half going to sub-Saharan Africa.

Prospects for delivery, however, are not encouraging. As a group, donors are not on track to meet their commitments. Taking into account increased aid and programmed commitments to 2010, there is a shortfall of US\$30 billion against the pledges made in 2005 (again in 2004 prices). The aid gap for sub-Saharan Africa is US\$14 billion – a financing shortfall that has damaging implications for progress towards the MDGs and EFA. Most individual donor countries are not on track to meet their Gleneagles commitments and two G8 countries – the United States and Japan – continue to invest a very low share of gross national income in development assistance.

Commitments to education have followed the overall trend. The average annual aid commitments in 2005–2006 were below the level for 2003–2004, and there is a real danger that this will be reflected in slower growth of disbursements, or even stagnation.

Donors have a mixed record on aid for basic education. In 2006, half of all aid commitments for basic education came from just three sources – the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the World Bank's International Development Association. These sources accounted for 85% of the overall increase in aid commitments to basic education in 2006. However, the combined effort of a few committed donors could not counteract an overall fall in aid commitments from 2004.

The profile of donor aid commitments varies widely. Some countries, such as Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, allocate more than three-quarters of their education aid to low income countries – and at least half to basic education. By contrast, France and Germany, both major donors to education, attach less weight to basic education in the poorest countries. Only 12% of French aid and 7% of German aid is devoted to basic education in low income countries. Both countries put greater priority on subsidizing attendance at their universities by foreign students, mostly from middle income developing countries, than on supporting basic education in low income countries. In France two-thirds of education aid is absorbed by imputed costs for students studying at French tertiary institutions.

The continued aid financing gap in education raises important questions about the future of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI). Established in 2002, the FTI was seen as a multilateral mechanism to encourage broad donor support for EFA and, through the Catalytic Fund begun in 2003, an element of financing. Unfortunately, the FTI has not developed a sufficiently deep donor base and it faces an uncertain future. In mid-2008, the thirty-five countries with endorsed FTI plans faced a financing gap of US\$640 million. Factoring in the eight countries with plans in the pipeline would push that figure up to around US\$1 billion. By the end of 2009, the financing deficit for countries with approved FTI plans could be as high as US\$2.2 billion. Assuming that the Catalytic Fund might be expected to cover around 40% to 50% of the deficit, around US\$1 billion would still have to be mobilized.

Current aid financing trends do not augur well for achieving the goals and targets in the Dakar Framework. Yet there are some positive signs. In 2007, the G8 reaffirmed its pledge that no national strategy would fail for want of finance. It also promised to meet shortfalls in FTI-endorsed plans. In June 2008, the European Council also reaffirmed its support for EFA. However, reaffirmations of long-standing commitments do not put children into school or deliver a good-quality education. If donors are serious about their pledges to education, they cannot afford more years of underperformance.

Increased aid is just part of the equation. Ultimately, the case for increased commitments will be accepted only if aid is perceived to deliver real results. Much depends on governance in developing countries. But the governance and management of aid are also important. In 2005, donors and developing country governments pledged to strengthen the effectiveness of development assistance. That promise, in the Paris Declaration, envisages the harmonization and alignment of donor practices behind nationally owned development strategies. The approach signals a shift in emphasis away from project-based support and towards programme support – a shift already strongly evident in education. Targets were set for 2010 to measure progress.

It is too early to fully assess the extent to which new aid principles are being translated into practice. In terms of financial commitment, there has been a strong push away from projects towards programme-based support. Best estimates suggest that just over half of all aid is now delivered through education sector programmes – up from around one-third in 1999–2000.

Preliminary assessment suggests that some Paris Declaration targets will be hard to achieve. Monitoring results for fifty-four countries accounting for half of all aid are not entirely encouraging. Use of national systems remains limited, with only 45% of aid channelled through national public financial management systems (the 2010 target is 80%). In some cases, donors are not using national systems even when they have been strengthened. Donor coordination is often still rudimentary. In 2007, the fifty-four countries received more than 14,000 donor missions, of which only 20% were jointly coordinated.

Progress towards greater coordination has been more evident in education than many other areas. Even so, the rate of progress has been both erratic and uneven – and far more needs to be done. In Cambodia, only 39% of donor missions in education in 2007 were jointly conducted, raising transaction costs for the host government.

While all donors stress their commitment to the alignment of aid with national priorities and the use of national systems, outcomes have been variable. Progress has proved far from straightforward, with frustrations and concerns on both sides. Donors often point to worries over corruption and weak capacity. For their part, many aid recipients complain about what they see as unrealistic donor demands and onerous reporting requirements.

Emerging aid modalities have the potential to resolve these problems. In the best cases, improved national management systems, greater sector coherence, better oversight and coordination of donor activity, and more innovative approaches to finance are coming to the fore. Important achievements have already been made in some countries, including Burkina Faso, Cambodia, India and Mozambique. Successful implementation of the Paris agenda will require commitment and flexibility on both sides, with donors avoiding the use of financial support to leverage change.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and recommendations



Delivering on the pledges set out in the Dakar Framework for Action will require strong political leadership, a sense of urgency and practical strategies. The final chapter of this Report sets out some of the key priorities. While avoiding blueprints, it identifies principles for good practice, including the following:

- **Get serious about equity.** Many governments have not given sufficient weight to policies aimed at overcoming inequalities in education. Setting time-bound 'equity targets' aimed at reducing disparities based on wealth, gender, language and other markers for disadvantage, and carefully monitoring progress, would help to focus political attention. At the same time, education planning has to put far higher priority on pro-poor public spending and the development of incentives targeted at the poorest and most disadvantaged.
- Strengthen the **links between education planning and poverty reduction** strategies. Education policies can make an important difference in equalizing opportunity and reducing disadvantage. However, progress in education depends critically on progress in other areas, including poverty reduction, nutrition and public health. While education sector planning has become stronger, it remains weakly integrated with wider poverty reduction strategies.
- Reinforce the commitment to **quality education** for all. Progress on expanded access to schools is outstripping improvements in quality. Policy-makers should renew and strengthen the Dakar commitment to quality in education and put in place the infrastructure, teacher support and monitoring programmes needed to deliver results.
- Act on the commitment to **equity in financing.** Many governments have failed to develop pro-poor public spending patterns and decentralization reforms have often exacerbated inequalities in education. Looking to the future, it is important for governments to develop approaches that avoid these outcomes. Central government needs to retain its capacity for redistribution from wealthier to poorer regions and subnational bodies need to ensure that spending plans reflect a national commitment to EFA.
- Recognize the **limits to choice and competition.** The development of quasi-markets in education and the rapid emergence of low-fee private providers are not resolving underlying problems in access, equity or quality. While many actors have a role to play in education provision, there is no substitute for a properly financed and effectively managed state education system, especially at primary level.
- Deliver on **aid commitments.** The donor community needs to recognize the wide-ranging benefits of accelerated progress towards EFA and to close the aid financing gap. At a conservative estimate, this means increasing aid to basic education by around US\$7 billion annually and acting on the commitments undertaken in 2005. Closing the projected 2010 financing gap of US\$2.2 billion in countries with plans approved by the Fast Track Initiative is another priority. Strengthening the commitment of some key donors to equity in aid allocations would help to cut the financing deficits. ■