

Reaching and teaching the most marginalised

Concept note for the 2010 Global Monitoring Report

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All education systems have to address problems of marginalisation. Chronic poverty, social exclusion, and inequalities linked to gender, race and ethnicity, conflict, location, and disability can interact to lock disadvantaged groups into extreme educational disadvantage. Effective and innovative education policies open enormous opportunities for overcoming marginalisation, just as flawed policies reinforce disadvantage.

The 2010 *Global Monitoring Report* will focus on the theme of *Reaching and teaching the most marginalised*. Building on the 2009 GMR, it will look beyond the broad theme of inequality to explore what marginalisation means in a wide variety of contexts, drawing on evidence from developed and developing countries. The report will explore the factors that perpetuate marginalisation, along with the success – or failure – of public policy responses, focussing on two core areas:

- Access to schooling and learning opportunities
- Teaching, learning processes and achievements

The GMR will look at distinctive characteristics that cause marginalisation, and consider their consequences for education opportunities. By looking beyond particular groups, it will also provide a comprehensive framework for understanding extreme marginalisation and the distinctive policy challenges that emerge. These issues will be explored in the context of the prevailing economic climate.

Background

Social contexts for marginalisation vary widely. So do the educational problems that policy makers have to address. Child labourers in Manila or migrant agricultural labourers in northern Mexico do not face the same problems as low-income black American children dropping out of high school in Baltimore. Low caste Indian girls, pastoral farmers in northern Kenya, or members of the Hmung community in Vietnam, confront different challenges than, say, Roma children in Italy, immigrants from North African in France, or Aboriginal children in Australia. Girls from the poorest households in countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal, confront different pressures than boys from poor households in Jamaica or Honduras. And disabled children in Nepal face different problems to children living in conflict-affected areas of southern Sudan.

The common thread linking each of these groups is that they figure prominently at the lower end of the distribution for education access and achievement in their respective societies. Reaching and providing a meaningful education to the most marginalised poses a distinctive set of challenges that go beyond promoting equity in general.

Building on earlier GMRs, the 2009 report contributed to the documentation of marginalisation on some key dimensions. The 2010 Report will take this forward using a range of household survey techniques to build a more nuanced picture that captures inter-generational and life-cycle effects, relationships between different dimensions of deprivation, and the interaction between marginalisation in education and social marginalisation.

Policy priorities for tackling marginalisation will be identified and explored. These will include a range of targeted interventions, financing strategies, teaching and learning

innovations, and strategies outside of the education sector specifically which have an impact on education. The framework will allow for attention to be paid to areas such as literacy and non-formal education.

The 2010 report will also address financing issues related to marginalisation. It is widely recognised that the 'marginal cost' of reaching the most marginalised is greater than the average costs. Working with research partners, the GMR team will provide national/global estimates for financing EFA based on marginal costing.

Understanding marginalisation

Marginalisation is related to but different from inequality. While academic definitions vary, the GMR will use the term to describe situations of acute and persistent disadvantage in education (as distinct from the overall distribution of education opportunity).

Education-for-all perspectives have varied in their approach to marginalisation. The Jomtien Declaration incorporated an explicit commitment to 'under-served groups' including "the poor; street and working children; rural and remote populations; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous peoples; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; refugees; those displaced by war; and people under occupation." The Dakar Framework has a more implicit commitment, referring to "children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities". However, overcoming marginalisation is clearly part of the commitment to inclusive education.

The GMR will consider attainment and achievement as twin aspects of marginalisation. When it comes to attainment, children from marginalised groups are often hard (physically and metaphorically) for education systems to reach and retain: they are often out-of-school, at the bottom end of the distribution for years in basic education, and heavily under-represented in secondary education. Marginalised adults are often illiterate, and lacking in opportunities for skills development. In the area of learning achievement, children from marginalised social groups are more likely to experience poor quality education, and to leave school and enter adulthood with poor skills.

Social and political marginalisation reinforces these problems by weakening the voice of the marginalised in framing education policy priorities. And evidence from many countries suggests that groups experiencing high levels of marginalisation often perceive education systems as remote, difficult to access, poor quality, and ill-equipped to provide a meaningful education.

Research framework

Research for the GMR will develop on four broad tracks.

The first track will report progress towards the EFA goals. The second track will be global in nature. It will examine broad conceptual approaches to understanding of marginalisation, linking academic research to the public policy arena. Drawing on both administrative data and household survey evidence, the GMR will aim to develop new approaches to the measurement of marginalisation, using these approaches to inform policy debates, policy-makers, and aid donors.

The third track will develop a portfolio of national and thematic case studies. These case studies will explore the impact of marginalisation and the social, cultural, and economic factors perpetuating it in a variety of contexts. Four broad thematic clusters of marginalisation will be considered:

- Group-based: ethnicity; language; race; caste
- Poverty-related: extreme and persistent poverty and vulnerability; child labour
- Location: urban slums; rural (drought-prone, pastoralist etc); conflict zones (including refugees and internally-displaced persons)

- Individual: disability and special needs; HIV/orphans; other health-related. Inequalities associated with gender will be considered across these four clusters.

The case studies will include evaluations of public policies designed to overcome marginalisation, looking at the interaction between education and other areas. One of the challenges in this track of research is that of understanding the 'overlap' between different aspects of marginalisation – for example, chronic poverty and ethnicity – as well as their interconnection with other forms of inequality, such as gender. Another challenge, apart from identifying relevant case studies, is striking the right balance between regions, national and thematic case studies.

Both the global and case study research will include a strong focus on teaching and learning. In many countries, reaching the marginalised and retaining them in school is a central challenge. However, what ultimately counts is the experience of education and what children learn – a point emphasised in GMR 2009. Building on this year's analysis, GMR 2010 will look at how approaches to teacher recruitment and training can either alleviate or exacerbate marginalisation. Challenges for teachers can be particularly acute when they are facing large class sizes or multigrade groups, with children from a variety of social backgrounds and ages in one classroom. The GMR will look at how these challenges are being addressed and attempt to identify what works in particular contexts.

As indicated above, the GMR will incorporate a strong focus on pedagogical processes. It will seek to identify the specific problems to be addressed in delivering good quality and meaningful education to marginalised children – and the innovative solutions that can be developed. This will draw on experience from both formal and non-formal approaches to teaching and learning. Moving beyond the school system, the Report will also consider approaches to adult literacy which can help to break the inter-generational cycle of marginalisation.

The research will have a strong public-policy focus. The global analysis and case studies will look at a wide range of policies within the education systems, including incentives for school entry to curriculum and pedagogy. It will also explore the interface between education planning and wider strategies for overcoming marginalisation.

For the fourth track, the Report will analyse the resources necessary to implement effective policies to overcome marginalisation and thereby provide more realistic estimates of the global costs of achieving EFA. Assessing the prospects of a significant scaling up of aid necessary to deliver on the EFA promise in light of the global economic downturn will also be a central theme. The 2010 Report will provide an opportunity to assess the current direction in aid policy of a number of key donors. It will explore the effectiveness of current mechanisms for financing and delivering aid to education and evaluate current proposals for reform. The specific issues around the delivery of aid in fragile states will also be an important component of this analysis.

Objectives of the Report

Through the analysis presented in the 2010 Report, the GMR will aim to achieve three distinctive goals:

- Raise the profile of marginalisation as an obstacle to achieving the Dakar Framework for Action goals, and providing an analytical framework that goes from local to global
- Link academic research and survey analysis more strongly to public policy debates
- Set out a clear and strong agenda for overcoming marginalisation, informing and influencing national and international policy dialogue