Progress in Education for All: focus on governance

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A report from the IWGE

International Working Group on Education
(IWGE)
Washington, DC, USA, 19-21 October 2004

Paris 2005
UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning

This document is the summary of discussions of the 2004 International Working Group on Education (IWGE) meeting. The views and opinions expressed in this volume are those of individual participants in the meeting and should in no way be attributed to UNESCO, IIEP or any of the agencies that are members of the Working Group.

Financial support for organizing the IWGE meeting was provided by member agencies of the IWGE Planning Committee.

This volume has been printed in IIEP's printshop

Cover design by Corinne Hayworth
Cover photo: UNESCO/E. Barrios

International Institute for Educational Planning
7-9 rue Eugène Delacroix, 75116 Paris

ISBN: 92-803-1281-2

Preface

With sorrow, I need to open this preface with a tribute to someone who with his institution supported the IWGE strongly for many years. Jeremy Greenland worked for the Aga Khan Foundation for nearly 20 years and was a regular and keen participant in the IWGE meetings during that period. Despite a long and troubling illness, he took part in the discussions in Helsinki in 2003 and would have been active in the present meeting, had his health permitted. Nevertheless, he contributed a paper which his colleague, Sarah Bouchie, presented on his behalf, a summary of which appears in this book under the theme of 'decentralization' and can be read in full on the IIEP web site. The paper reflects Jeremy's wide experience of education in many cultures and in many environments and his compassionate understanding of people's responses to different forms and vehicles of education. We shall miss his interventions in future meetings of the IWGE.

Many years ago, the actor John Cleese starred in a film on time management entitled 'Meetings, bloody meetings'. A remake of the film could well send Cleese even more berserk, for the numbers of meetings seem to have multiplied uncontrollably, not simply within organizations, but equally between them. Agencies concerned with international development have not been exempt from this growth, even though the costs are aggravated by the international travel that they necessitate. Are all these meetings really necessary? What value do they add? Projects have to justify themselves in terms of output, outcomes and impacts: Can international meetings justify themselves similarly? The question is particularly acute when there are no decisions to be taken or even issues to be clarified for eventual decision; when there might be measurable products in terms of papers and other publications, but no clear impact in terms of policy or practice. To home in on a very specific case, let us look at the IWGE itself. How might we justify the time, intellectual energy, organizational effort, temporary diversion of attention and priority from the problems at hand, travel and, of course, the scarce and famously ever diminishing cash available for international development?

The IWGE Planning Committee confronted such questions when it met to settle the programme the day before the Group assembled, and our host at the World Bank, Ruth Kagia, indirectly addressed them in her opening remarks, "*Quo vadis*, IWGE?". The Planning Committee acknowledged their validity and put them to the participants as part of the evaluation, the conclusion of which is presented at the end of this report. For the moment, I would like to use this preface to reflect on the uses of organized face-to-face discussion in this 'age of knowledge'. When we enjoy almost instant access to vast ranges of newly available information and can arrange equally instant comment, exchange and controversy by e-mail or tele- and video-conference, do we need the actual physical presence of participants around a table or assembled in a lecture hall?

Let me start my reflections with one of the sources of new knowledge, the university systems and their disciplinary departments. Despite the dire complaints of almost every university about underfunding and inadequate resources for research and teaching, I have not heard anybody question the usefulness of the annual conferences of the disciplines and learned societies that universities hold – economics included. These gatherings, national and international, are no less expensive than the IWGE in terms of any dimension one cares to mention. Yet universities and their several disciplinary departments continue to include them in the set of priorities for which provision is obligatory. Indeed, even the bodies that fund research incorporate provision for participation in disciplinary conferences as a legitimate – indeed necessary – element of research activity. Closer to our meeting, our host, the World Bank, organizes its ABCDE – the Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics – and regularly sends a large contingent to take part in the World Economic Forum in Davos without, as far as I can tell, requiring the calculation of an internal rate of return on the considerable investment in either occasion.

Of course, one might challenge the term ‘investment’ and argue that these expenditures are more in the nature of welfare expenditures. Even then, they would need justification at least on the grounds of compassion if no other tougher minded reasons came to mind.

However, perhaps the most convincing argument for this meeting of the IWGE is the range of topics it covers: governance in education; corruption; decentralization; a sector-wide approach (SWAp) from the point of view of one of its ‘victims’, Namibia; alternative basic education; monitoring progress in EFA from several points of view; and a dazzling, even hypnotizing, display of the power of electronic software to bring statistics alive. No professional educationalist engrossed in the daily details of projects, programmes and memoranda would have felt able to make the time to catch up on all these issues in education and development. But taking three days off from the daily grind to sit with colleagues from other agencies and from other fields of specialization in education enables a professional to catch up, to expand the stock of information, to get acquainted with potential new sources of information, counsel and ideas – in short, to participate in greater breadth and depth in the educational regions of the knowledge society.

Participants leave meetings like this fortified with fresh knowledge and a better grasp of the big picture. Many also leave with a sense that, whatever the apparent lack of progress at their micro-level, the struggle for EFA and better quality education for all children and adults is making headway on a pretty broad front. That knowledge is worth having.

John Oxenham drafted this report on behalf of the Secretariat, and members of the Planning Committee reviewed it before its publication. As with its predecessors, the report reflects only the personal perceptions and views of the participants themselves, not the views or policies of the institutions for which they work, or the views or policies of either IIEP or UNESCO.

Gudmund Hernes
Director, IIEP

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Composition of the Planning Committee

The International Working Group on Education (IWGE) is an informal group of aid agencies and foundations that come together at regular intervals to discuss issues of common interest relating to international co-operation in the field of education. At present, the Planning Committee of IWGE is composed of representatives of the following agencies:

- Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)
- UK Department for International Development (DFID)
- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD/World Bank)
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

The Secretariat of the International Working Group on Education is provided by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

List of abbreviations

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ANTRIEP	Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FTI	(Education for All) Fast Track Initiative
GANER	Grade appropriate net enrolment ratio
GER	Gross enrolment ratio
GMR	(Education for All) Global Monitoring Report
GTZ	*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* [German agency for technical co-operation]
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICT	Information and communication technology

IDA	International Development Association
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO)
ILO	International Labour Organization
INEE	Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies
INSET	In-service training for teachers
IWGE	International Working Group on Education
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
NER	Net enrolment ratio
ODA	Overseas development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PTA	Parent-teacher association
PETS	Public expenditure tracking survey
RedEtis	*Red Latinoamericana de Educación, Trabajo e Inserción Social* [Network for Educational Development, Employment and Social Insertion (in Latin America)]
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIGP	Schools Improvement Grants Program
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SWAp	Sector-wide approach (to assistance for education and other sectors)
TA	Technical assistance
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nation's Children's Fund
UPC	Universal primary completion
UPE	Universal primary education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

The International Working Group on Education (IWGE) met in Washington DC, USA, from 19 to 21 October 2004. Its host on this occasion was the World Bank through its Education Department in the Human Development Network. Participants came from a total of 24 agencies, four fewer than were present at the previous meeting in Helsinki in 2003. A decline in the number of bilateral agencies from 15 to eight was offset by a large increase in the numbers of foundations and other non-governmental institutions from two to eight and a slight increase in the number of international agencies from six to eight. Such an even representation of different sorts of institutions all oriented towards social, economic and in particular educational development, was fortuitous. Nevertheless, it was certainly fortunate for the variety and quality of the presentations and discussions.

IWGE organizes informal discussions between the key representatives concerned with the development of education policies in the donor agencies. The group meets about every 18 months to two years for an intensive professional interchange on current policy issues. The informality of the sessions ensures the development of wide-ranging discussions, in which the participants express their own personal views as well as those of their agencies. To encourage and preserve the informal, questioning and probing nature of the exchanges, the record credits the authors of particular presentations, but does not note the names or affiliations of participants who offer comments or views in the general discussions. A list of those who participated in the 2004 meeting is provided in *Appendix 1*.

IWGE has been meeting since the early 1980s, when it took over the functions of the earlier Bellagio Group, which also acted as a forum for high-level discussions on policies in aid to education. Its meetings are organized and supported professionally by IIEP in Paris, which acts as the secretariat of the Working Group and is responsible, with the Group's Ad Hoc Planning Committee, for the production of this report.

Appendix 2 provides a detailed programme of discussions. The opening addresses by James Adams (Vice President and Head of Networks, Operations Policy and Country Services in the World Bank), Ruth Kagia and Jamil Salmi (respectively Director and Acting Director of the World Bank's Education Department), and Gudmund Hernes (Director of IIEP) was followed by the customary 'show and tell'. The participants each briefed the meeting on significant developments – actual or prospective – in policy, practice and key personnel in their institutions since the previous meeting.

The meeting then moved on first to a briefing on the 2005 Global Monitoring Report and next to an extended discussion on 'Ethics and corruption in education' on the basis of a broad overview and five case studies. The theme of 'Decentralization' opened the discussions of the second day with three cases and an assessment of whether the current trends towards more decentralization helped or hindered progress to Education for All (EFA). A panel on 'Participation and human rights' completed the morning with examinations of appropriate capacity building, the role of civil society and encouraging poor and rural people to take part in non-formal education.

Discussions during the second afternoon took up the theme of 'Data and EFA' with examinations of how best to build capacity to collect reliable and comprehensive data and the kinds of data required to support results-based management. Later the group moved on to listening to the experiences and points of view of countries that had undertaken sector-wide approaches to planning for education (SWAp).

The final morning was devoted to briefings on 'The Millennium Development Goals and EFA', the 'Fast Track Initiative' and the World Bank's recent thinking on its overall education strategy and revised approach to secondary education.

In concluding its discussions, IWGE, as usual, evaluated the meeting, aired suggestions for improving the format and considered proposals for its next meeting. It was pleased to accept an invitation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to gather in Rome in June 2006 to follow up a range of concerns, and to focus particularly on education for rural people. More unusually, taking up a question raised in the Planning Committee and by Ruth Kagia, the group discussed its future: Did it have a useful role? Should it continue to meet? And, if so, how might it add more value to its meetings? Positive answers were given for the first two questions – and unanimously – but time was insufficient to examine the third in depth.

The discussions are summarized in the body of the main text. Except where the name of the presenter already appears on the programme in *Appendix 2*, statements are not assigned to specific, named individuals, nor are the discussions necessarily presented in the order in which they took place. The report attempts to draw out the main issues and themes in an order that is logical rather than chronological, using the presentations and discussions to provide a source of information for the general reader as well as for those who contributed to the meeting and their agency colleagues.

The text of this report is also available on the IIEP web site (www.unesco.org/iiep), with links to copies of the papers presented at the meeting. The titles of these appear against the names of their presenters in *Appendix 2*.

Welcome and keynote addresses

Welcome

Gudmund Hernes, Director of IIEP, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Secretariat to the 2004 meeting of IWGE. He looked forward to the discussions of this gathering of educational professionals on current live issues such as decentralization, ethics, corruption, strategies for achieving the Dakar goals and for planning and managing education in general. He also thanked the World Bank for hosting the meeting, and in particular Luis Crouch and Marga Deloayza and their team of Young Professionals for the detailed, smooth and punctual arrangements. On behalf of the World Bank, Ruth Kagia and Jamil Salmi, Director and Acting Director of the Education Department of the Human Development Network, welcomed the meeting and hoped for exchanges that would help everyone look at the world with new eyes.

Opening addresses

James W. Adams
Vice President and Head
of Networks, Operations Policy
and Country Services,
World Bank

James Adams took as his theme the challenge that the World Bank's lending categories, procedures and rules set for the education sector.

Lending for education is now part of the mainstream in the World Bank's portfolio of loans, for the Bank now more than ever before sees education as a key component of efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the range of social and economic developments at which its member governments aim. IWGE has helped to stimulate and focus concerns on aspects of the drive for EFA that are not immediately obvious. For example, it has taken time to grasp in full operational terms that the issue of quality in education is not a unitary feature. Thus, it does not affect only textbooks, or only the teaching-learning relationship between teachers and pupils. On the contrary, we have come to appreciate that every link in an education system needs to be of good quality to ensure learning outcomes that are of good quality.

There is no question that there have been changes and much modernization in the World Bank's thinking and operations. One example is the ancient and entrenched distinction that proved questionable in its application to education. It is the distinction between investment and recurrent expenditures: Investments were clearly delimited, once and for all, and loans could be clearly attached to them; recurrent commitments persisted indefinitely and needed therefore to be financed not by loans, but by some more permanent, reliable source of income. The distinction, quite acceptable when applied to roads or waterworks, was applied willy-nilly to education, because the Bank's early work in the field had mainly to do with building schools. There was doubtless the quite reasonable assumption that the borrowing governments' routine revenues would cover recurrent items like teachers' and administrators' salaries. In the event, the distinction proved over-constraining, for the assumption of self-sufficiency in revenue was not fulfilled and the distinction failed to recognize sufficiently the need for sustainability. Now that the limitation of the distinction is acknowledged, the World Bank is prepared to finance any amount necessary to sustain the project. Such action is termed 'Post project support for investment'. It is a better, but still not perfect, analytical and operational framework for supporting education.

The sector-wide approach to planning the development of education systems and mobilizing support for education as a whole has also proved to be a good way forward and an advance on the approach through projects. Uganda was the first country in Africa to adopt it, but it is now interesting for middle-income countries, and is certainly attractive to donors.

Ensuring good governance and minimizing the abuse of position and resources remains an enormous challenge, particularly in efforts to engage local capacity in procurements and implementation. Two points present particular difficulties. The first is how to engage local communities in monitoring expenditures and implementation. Later in this meeting, there will be a presentation on how one effort in Uganda fared. But clearly there can be no single solution and each attempt will need to found itself on a thorough appreciation of local norms, customs and political economies.

The second difficult area is public sector reform. The basic challenge is to build smaller but more effective governments, and to minimize the use of government agencies as sponges to mop up the unemployed. Within governments, the education system is a large employer – indeed, often the largest – and a key institution in any drive for higher productivity and greater effectiveness.

In short, forming education systems that offer better quality, that are more effective in their teaching and learning and that are more efficient in their use of resources constitutes a key development challenge that IWGE has helped address in the past through the ideas its discussions have generated. This meeting could well help conceive fresh ideas to deal with the issues just described, and it is to be hoped, even expected, that future meetings will continue the tradition.

General discussion

Primary education versus SWAp? Participants questioned the continuing current emphasis on primary education as the starting point for educational improvement and EFA: Had this strategy not been tried for too long? Was there not also some inconsistency between this emphasis and the sector-wide approach? How accurate was the term ‘SWAp’, if all the attention was focused on primary education?

In response, Adams pointed to the example of Chile, where the attainment of universal primary education (UPE) had opened the way for dealing with secondary schooling within a SWAp framework. As for tertiary education, there had been faults on both sides, with universities being wholly uninterested in reform during the 1980s. However, in the 1990s Uganda had led the way and totally transformed its universities and expanded enrolments by several factors. In contrast, the United Republic of Tanzania had adopted a different attitude, perhaps because the Ministry of Education did not seem to understand the issues. Overall, while one did need to look at priorities at the country level, primary education was, and must for the time being, remain the prime concern.

Quality and sustainability? Participants raised the issue of sustainability and how it affected the issue of quality, particularly after the current target date of 2015 for universal primary completion (UPC). Given the extraordinary efforts required to mobilize the resources, even for the countries in the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI), can there be any assurance that whatever is attained by 2015 will be sustained?

In Adams's view, rebuilding quality in education was a central issue. However, there had to be honesty about the likely trade-off between growth and quality. Rapidly increasing enrolments and enrolment ratios had to be part of the target, but if it led, as it often did, to pupil-teacher ratios not of 40:1, which was difficult enough, but as high as 90:1, the desired levels of quality in learning environments, learning supports, instruction and actual learning could scarcely be achieved. Mitigating the trade-off and eventually making it unnecessary was part of the task of the next decade.

As for sustaining achievements in the post-2015 era, there could be confidence that the international donors and financiers would not suddenly or arbitrarily go away. On the contrary, good performers could well attract increased resources. The sector approach opened the way for governments to ask the right questions about policy, planning and implementation. One of the key issues in the matter of resources for education was how to mobilize parents' contributions. Many governments find this a difficult issue, for it immediately appears to penalize poor families. But when it comes down to actual situations on the ground, as in Tanzania, for example, it is found that around 90 per cent of the university students come from the higher income groups, which is to say that the more financially better-off are virtually monopolizing a public good that the poor do not use, even when it is free.

In order to sustain quality, more creative thinking is needed about what are the right and the wrong incentives for teachers to practise quality teaching and not to neglect the interests of children from poor families. More creative thinking is needed also about the kinds of resources that are needed to remove obstacles that block the access of poor children to education. Pilot work is still needed to figure out ways to address these problems effectively and sustainably. The World Bank is open to suggestions on all these points.

Skills development and rural people? Participants questioned whether the sectoral approach led people 'to see only what they knew' in terms of schooling and to ignore vocational training and rural issues. In all the discussions on sector-wide policy and planning, what roles had been sketched out for skills development?

Adams responded that, after considerable analysis of a range of experiences worldwide, the World Bank had become sceptical of vocational education within the usual school system. It was expensive and its impact appeared to be negligible. On the rural side, however, the World Bank was more flexible, as it recognized that rural people still constituted the majority in a large number of countries and that their needs for education and skills development could well differ from those of their urban fellow citizens. There was a need in every country to involve macro-economists from other sectors in figuring out what forms of skills development would be likely to add most value and be most sustainable for the long-term development of rural societies and economies.

Regional issues? Participants noted that the World Bank organized itself on a regional basis – e.g. the Africa and the South Asia regions – and enquired whether it took a regional view of education and looked at issues that might be considered regional rather than only national. Adams replied that during the past few years the emphasis on ‘putting the country in the driving seat’ and the country level focus had indeed led to a loss of regional perspective. The requirement that all lending – except for International Development Association (IDA) credits – must enjoy a sovereign guarantee tended to reinforce that loss and the Bank has not used the flexibility that the IDA exception afforded. However, some work was now proceeding on a regional basis, but indeed more was needed.

Quo vadis, IWGE?

Ruth Kagia
Director, Education Department
Human Developement Network,
World Bank

Ruth Kagia, Director of Education in the Human Development Network of the World Bank, took as her theme *“Quo vadis,* IWGE*?”* – future directions for IWGE. The group originated just over 30 years ago in 1972. It has played a part in maintaining the momentum for EFA, in helping to disseminate fresh and modified knowledge and novel ideas, and in sharing the evolving policies and changing practices of donors. If there has been a limitation, it is that IWGE has largely confined its activities to the education sector; it has not succeeded in connecting with those other sectors that absorb the graduates of education and in giving them the materials for reducing poverty, improving nutrition and health, and taking all the other actions required to reach the Millennium Development Goals. How might IWGE maximize its potential to make these connections and strengthen the flow of signals and influences between education and the other social and economic development sectors?

The best of times

Currently, education is experiencing both the best and the worst of times. On the one hand, the business case for education has grown to be even more compelling. As regards poverty alleviation and poverty reduction, no less a person than Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen has recognized that education broadens what he calls a person's capabilities for 'agency', the initiative and the will to take matters into one's own hands. In all theories of economic growth, "regardless of the underlying model, it is a fairly robust finding that a country's human capital is always identified as an essential ingredient for achieving growth". The operative word here is 'essential': not 'desirable', not 'helpful', but 'essential'. Taking that point a little further into the concept of the 'knowledge society', Chen and Dahlman only this year argued that an educated and skilled population is one of the four preconditions for knowledge to become an engine of growth. Here again we see a very strong term: 'precondition' – without education, knowledge is inert. Thanks to this widening and deepening recognition of the necessity of education to realize our dream of a world free of poverty, this should be the best of times for educators.

The worst of times

Yet we seem to live in the worst of times. The Global Monitoring Report warns that many countries, some of them among the largest in the world, are at risk of missing the MDG for education. Criticism of the poor performances of teachers, administrators, trainers, examiners, indeed entire education systems is rife, and efforts to reform – some token, some successful, some faltering – are witnessed everywhere. Demands are clamorous that educators do better in the black box of teaching and learning, better in achieving equity on all fronts, better in delivery, better in managing the change from practices of the age of Rip Van Winkle to the opportunities that new technologies are opening up so rapidly.

Quality

Education presently faces five grave challenges. The first is the quality challenge: nobody denies that the range of quality between the most and the least effective schools found in every country must be narrowed. But even the best need to go further. Nearly 10 years ago in 1995, Rosenzweig pointed out that "there is no evidence that schooling investments in the absence of learning opportunities are profitable unless such investments themselves induce innovation…" – that is, even the best need to maintain the pursuit of innovation simply to remain the best.

Technology

Alongside the above is the technology challenge, for in comparison with health, biotechnology, agriculture or indeed any other field, education is lagging a good 100 years behind and seems so far to have been unaffected by the ICT revolution.

Diversity

Diversity is the third challenge. Here it is not the diversity of cultures that matters, although that certainly affects the kinds of education that should be available. It is the diversity of values and priorities that blocks resources from reaching education and education from reaching the people who need it most. The rich countries spend US$56 billion on all forms of development assistance, but more than 10 times that (US$600 billion) on defence. The three richest individuals in the world have assets that exceed the combined GDP of all the people in the poorest 48 countries. In terms of the availability and distribution of technology, Burkina Faso currently has just one computer for every 1,000 of its inhabitants, while Singapore has 172 and Switzerland has 348.

Interdependence of sectors

The fourth challenge is the multi-sectoral nature of education; it takes contributions from several sectors to educate children thoroughly. A simple illustration comes from Chile: Iron-replete children there performed up to 400 per cent better on standardized tests than anaemic children. Good education depends on the health sector and on the agricultural sector, as well as on the construction sector and in many cases the transport sector.

Leadership

Finally, leadership can be termed the fifth challenge. The need is urgent to retool staff at every level and function in education. Each function demands more technical depth, a broader, multi-sectoral outlook, an entrepreneurial spirit that does not shrink before the prospect of operating outside the black box. To achieve these qualities, the education sector requires leaders and managers who will press and take risks for them. From the donors' point of view, these qualities require strong counterparts in the education systems that are striving to meet the MDG on time.

IWGE 2004-2015?

Can this discussion of the factors that favour and challenge education help answer the question *"Quo vadis,* IWGE?*"* It suggests four avenues of effort on which IWGE could focus over the next decade at least. The group's forums and publications, traditional and electronic, could help alert educators, policy-makers and managers in both donor and user countries to the possibilities that emerge constantly and unstoppably for:

- technical depth – doing more and doing better within the 'black box' of interaction between students and the people who are supposed to help them learn;
- pushing technologically-driven change in the processes of learning, supporting learning and managing learning systems;
- building bridges with other sectors whose knowledge, expertise and action can support and promote both education for all and better quality and more effective education for all;
- strengthening professional leadership in the quest for better education for all.

The big picture – where are we heading?

Gudmund Hernes
Director
International Institute for Educational Planning

The 'Whig interpretation of history', characterized by such thinkers as Max Weber and, more recently, Francis Fukuyama, sees the modern world as a triumph of gradual rational progress. Despite setbacks, human capacities and institutions have developed in beneficent ways, while human freedom has expanded. Representative democracy and the free market are the steadily universalizing forms of human political and economic organization, undergirded by the acceptance of a set of universal human rights. Opposing such an optimistic view is a diagnosis, such as Samuel Huntington's, that identifies the fundamental source of human conflict as neither ideological nor economic, but cultural. The defining moment in modern history would then be not the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, but the fall of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center in 2001. The first symbolized the failure of the Communist political and economic ideology in the face of liberal capitalist ideology, but the latter brought explosively into the open the clash between cultures with very different views of what constitutes acceptable individual and social mores and what authority should guide them.

The United Nations system is grounded in the Whig interpretation. It promotes human rights, representative institutions, greater equity, liberalized economies, more and better education for all, better health for all, stronger supports for human welfare, technological innovation and development to benefit all humankind. And it does all this on the basis of a humanistic, secular, non-religious philosophy. Much of its effort has been successful. Yet gaps, inconsistencies, inequalities and inequities arise, persist, even increase. The system itself is under attack for under-performance on many fronts. How will it deal with the implicit challenge to its very foundations?

We are in effect at a defining moment in multilateral co-operation, for parallel with the cultural challenge is the practical need to secure international co-ordination on a slew of problems facing humankind as a whole: mitigating a variety of conflicts, both intra- and international; eliminating varieties of exploitation; managing the rate and impact of global warming; managing the world's water resources; halting and reversing the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS; and conserving human diversity in the face of global forces for homogenization. This daunting array demands an equally daunting redefinition of roles, redesign of agencies, and a re-engineering of interactions to improve performance and enhance legitimacy.

These observations do not imply that the UN system has not already begun responding to the challenges listed above. The global conferences on population, women, the environment, trade, education and HIV/AIDS are one form of response. Defining tasks with timelines and figures, such as eliminating gender disparities in education by 2005 and attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, is another. Working systematically and in a sustained fashion to improve co-ordination between the specialized agencies is a third response. Finally, and most conspicuously is Kofi Annan's high-level panel on radically reforming the UN itself and making it more democratically representative of the world's peoples. That said, these responses still have a long way to develop before the shared analysis, common vision and common strategy will emerge.

In the field of education we have an example of how difficult it is to get an act together, even when there is a shared analysis of at least part of the field and a common vision of where to go. The forum at Dakar gave the drive for UPC a powerful impetus and, with explicit formality, accorded the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) a powerful role in leading and guiding this drive. One component of the role is monitoring progress towards the Dakar goals; UNESCO has succeeded in publishing a series of *Global monitoring reports* that have drawn wide attention and commendation. Yet the organization's own Executive Board has complained that UNESCO has not drawn the consequences of the findings and has not developed its leadership forcefully enough to compel the world to pursue the goals with sufficient vigour. There is even a risk that many countries will fail to meet the targets for primary education alone, with repercussions for too many young people.

A report to the UNESCO Executive Board has recommended measures to reinforce the organization's role in co-ordinating the drive for UPC and the other Dakar goals. One is that the High Level Group, formed to monitor and advise on progress, should exert itself to influence and encourage governments more directly; a second is that the *Global monitoring report* should be deployed more vigorously as a stimulus to more effective action; third, the organization should refocus its education programme to place the Dakar goals at the heart of its work; fourth, it needs to revive its efforts to tighten internal co-ordination; fifth, it should also hand more responsibilities to the decentralized regional offices and; sixth, it should enable its affiliated institutes – especially the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and IIEP – to serve the regional offices more directly.

The report also identifies four areas to which UNESCO should press its members and partners to give priority: The first is literacy, both through primary schooling and through adult education; the second is teacher education; the third is the HIV/AIDS Global Initiative on Prevention Education – too many governments and their societies are still reluctant to equip their people, young and older, with the information and understanding that could slow and in time stop the spread of the pandemic; and finally the fourth priority that the report advocates is the transversal issue of quality throughout the system – quality learning environments, quality supports for learning, and quality instruction leading to quality learning.

Responding to the report naturally raises practical questions. For an obvious start, whence will come the additional funding to support the proposed measures? The implication is that, even as the organization seeks greater cost-efficiency, it must simultaneously seek extra-budgetary funding to support the fresh initiatives demanded from it. And this challenge is complicated by the decisions of a number of member states to reassess their criteria for apportioning support to multilateral institutions. Norway provides a ready example: It proposes to calibrate its support for initiatives in proportion to their potential contributions to the MDGs – which are, of course, much broader than education. In addition, Norway wishes to back only organizations that exhibit a potential for improvement. Further, it wishes to support only those parts that are functioning well and contributing to institutional reform.

Second, the crisis of credibility and perceived under-performance that affects the UN system as a whole does not exempt the specialized agency for education. UNESCO and its affiliated institutes have therefore to work rather more effectively at communicating to their sponsors, partners and beneficiaries just what it is they aim to do to better the human condition, just how they are setting about it, and just how well they are succeeding.

Within that broad global and institutional context, what is one affiliated institute, IIEP, doing? Briefly stated, IIEP's mission is to build governments' capacities to design sound educational policies, to draw up coherent plans to develop their education systems and implement them. That mission involves providing assistance to build the institutional framework by which education is managed, training is organized to maintain, renew and improve the system, and progress is monitored. Currently, seven streams of action embody the mission.

The first is IIEP's original activity: training. At its base in Paris, France, IIEP runs its long and well established year-long Advanced Training Programme (ATP) mainly for government planners and administrators. It may be a staple course, but it is not stagnant: IIEP makes sure that the components of the ATP change continuously in response to the evolution of policy and practice. PRSPs and the SWAp, for instance, are already incorporated in the curriculum. In addition, in the last couple of years the Institute has developed and offered an extension to the ATP that leads to a Master's degree in educational planning and administration. Alongside that basic staple, there are a variety of short courses and workshops on current issues in educational planning, delivered both in Paris and in regional centres in Africa, Asia, Central Europe and Latin America. All the training materials, new and revised, also appear on the Institute's web site and are thus accessible to educational planners and trainers around the world.

Dealing with groups of institutions points to a second way in which IIEP pursues institutional strengthening. It fosters networks of institutions concerned with educational policy and planning and enables them to undertake joint courses, workshops, research, data processing and publications on topics like 'successful school management' and 'assessing educational attainments'. The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) in Africa, the Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning (ANTRIEP) in Asia and RedEtis (*Red*

Latinoamericana de Educación, Trabajo e Inserción Social) in Latin America are all examples.

The third and fourth streams of action involve first expanding knowledge and then sharing it. The current priority is naturally knowledge of how to achieve EFA: This involves research on an extensive range of issues, from effective forms and modalities of decentralization and of expanding secondary education to keep pace with the demand that will unavoidably arise from UPC, to education for rural people and flexible systems for university accreditation. In order to make this knowledge accessible, IIEP has set up or supports a number of specialized web sites, examples of which include: SACMEQ; RedEtis; the HIV/AIDS Clearing House; ETICO, which offers information to do with ethics and corruption in education; and the 'Virtual Institute', which includes a number of experiences of and discussions on setting up and running virtual universities.

IIEP's final stream of action is its involvement in three of the 'flagship' programmes that UNESCO has established in pursuit of EFA and UPC: One is the Global Initiative for HIV/AIDS Prevention Education, in which IIEP is a lead institution; another is Education in Situations of Emergency and Reconstruction, for which IIEP is closely collaborating with the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE); the third, in collaboration with FAO, is 'Education for Rural People'. There is also an older flagship that IIEP services which is still active: the International Working Group on Education itself.

The foregoing catalogue of IIEP's involvement in education sets the Institute firmly in the Whig interpretation and implementation of history. Education for All is the expression of a universal human right and implies a universalizing ambition that admits no cultural exception to its central tenet, which is simply that every human being has the right to an education that at the least equips her or him with the skills necessary to take a full part in society. Viewing education from this perspective, the three letters that stand for Education for All (EFA) can be rearranged (AFE) to provide two other meanings that are implied in, and that are centrally important to, Education for All: 'All Forms of Education', meaning not merely primary education, fundamentally important though that is – especially in the form of UPC – or simply scholastic forms of education; and 'All for Education', which means that no human being is excluded from the right or the obligation to educate her- or himself.

Theme 1
Recent trends in education aid policies and practices
A 'show and tell' session, in which participating agencies present their most recent developments: commentary

The first session of the meeting provided a platform for participants to inform and explain to each other the current status of their institutions in terms of priorities, policies, practices and internal organization. The statements are presented in alphabetical order according to the names of the countries or institutions being discussed.

ADEA's new vision

Hamidou Boukary
Senior Programme Officer
Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

Quite recently ADEA published a new policy document, *From past to future: continuity and change in ADEA*. Its essence declared that ADEA would move from acting mainly as a forum for policy dialogue to becoming a more effective partnership tool for developing education in Africa. ADEA's future requires that it build and expand on its unique approach in order to *anchor* itself in its comparative advantages, in the action carried out by its constituent members, who comprise ministers of education, a range of bilateral and multilateral agencies concerned with education, and a number of Working Groups, each tasked with focusing on a defined area of education, and in the challenges that these face.

The steps that ADEA will be taking to realize its new role will include:

- strengthening the linkage between analytical work and action on the ground: the ‘praxis’ approach;
- strengthening instruments and initiatives for promoting regional co-operation: an essential component in the process of co-learning, of exchanging good practices and of producing knowledge appropriate to the local context;
- extending partnerships: bringing civil society and private partners into ADEA’s work;
- better tools for collecting, managing and disseminating knowledge: creating and sustaining networks;
- enabling the Working Groups to link their work more closely to actual country needs and priorities, and to operate more coherently and flexibly.

As it develops these steps, ADEA will continue with its on-going and planned activities. It is currently involved in two major undertakings. The first is following up the 2003 Biennale, which focused on improving the quality of education in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): How can African countries improve the quality of instruction and learning achievement in basic education in a financially sustainable way? This was a positive and practical contribution to EFA in Africa. The second undertaking is following up sub-regional ministerial conferences on: (1) fighting HIV/AIDS in the education sector (May 2003); (2) providing education in conflict and post-conflict situations (June 2004); and (3) integrating ICT in the education sector (July 2004).

For the 2004/2005 programme following up the 2003 Biennale on the quality of education, ADEA is focusing on four main areas, each with four main modes of intervention. The four areas are teacher professional development, implementing reforms at the school and classroom levels, decentralizing school management and diversifying provision and, fourth, adapting the curriculum for use in different national languages. The four modes of intervention are research and experimentation, capacity building and experience sharing, policy dialogue and publication and dissemination through all appropriate means of communication.

To implement the programme, ADEA has devised a three-part strategy:

(i) It is securing an active commitment on the part of the governments and development agencies by inviting all SSA ministries of education to sign up under the five pillars based on their priorities. More than 20 countries have responded.
(ii) It has mobilized its standing and *ad hoc* Working Groups, urging them to make an active contribution in those areas related to quality improvement that fall within their thematic area. Their 2005 Work plans should reflect this priority.
(iii) It has checked the availability of regional, sub-regional, international and national institutions and networks with which it could develop partnerships for quality improvement and is working out agreements with a number of them.

Besides the follow-up on activities, ADEA is preparing for its 2005 Biennale in Central Africa. The tentative arrangements are that the theme will be 'Literacy and quality', the venue will be Libreville in Gabon and the timing November or December 2005. In addition, ADEA will organize a number of sub-regional ministerial conferences on the following topics:

1. Contractual Teachers in Francophone countries (in late 2004, with the World Bank and Education International);
2. Education in rural settings (with FAO and IIEP);
3. Bilingual Education (with the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*/GTZ);
4. Special education: mainstreaming the disabled (with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/OECD);

5. Recognition of learning assessment and outcomes in the Indian Ocean region (this is in fact a regional initiative).

Ramsamy Rumajogee
Programme Co-ordinator
Agence intergouvernementale de la francophonie (AIF)

The Intergovernmental Agency for Francophony (AIF), or *Francophonie*, is primarily a cultural organization. In the past, it has been regarded as a vehicle for promoting the use of the French language. However, it is working on the integration of local languages and multilingualism into education systems. *Francophonie* serves 50 states that use French as their main official or working language. For 29 of these states, most of them in SSA, French is the sole medium of instruction in their schools and universities.

They all face increasing demands for education at all levels, and at the same time face difficult issues of access, equity, quality and relevance. Efficiency and effectiveness are also alarmingly deficient: repetition and dropout continue at high rates, while primary school graduates are said to be poorly skilled in basic literacy and numeracy. Indeed, it is estimated that 20 of the SSA members of *Francophonie* will not reach the MDG goals for 2015. Clearly, the language of instruction (French) is failing the mass of school children.

Francophonie organized a meeting of ministers of education in Libreville in 2003 to discuss a programme to promote the use of national languages and later published a guide on the use of African languages in education. A second meeting in Bamako during October 2004 discussed the integration of national languages into the curricula of all levels of education. Adopting demand-driven approaches, *Francophonie* is launching a new programme for literacy, basic and vocational education. It will involve its member governments in data collection and in research on country-specific needs. This new programme is very much in line with the philosophy of the need to preserve and sustain the linguistic and cultural diversity of societies in balance with the simultaneous need to promote social communication and harmony.

Scott Walter
Principal Advisor – Education
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

Like many other countries, Canada is in the middle of a review of its international policies: the draft carries the title "Vision 2010". Defence, foreign affairs and international co-operation are all involved. Part of the exercise involves efforts to promote mutual understanding between these departments of government, for example staff from the defence department are being seconded for brief periods to work in CIDA.

In international co-operation, Canada is moving along the lines of some other countries to limit the numbers of countries and sectors with which it will work. That will alter its current status as OECD/Development Assistance Committee's (DAC's) 'most dispersed' donor, running programmes with no fewer than 150 countries.

The MDGs and drive for EFA will influence Canada's overall co-operation policies, while the 'Programme' approach will begin to outweigh the 'Project' approach, until 60 per cent of funding will be allocated to programmes, with only 40 per cent going to projects. CIDA will also pursue stronger co-ordination with other donors and financiers through forms of consortium finance. It has launched the new approach in Nicaragua in partnership with the World Bank, the Netherlands and the European Union (EU).

In terms of priorities, CIDA perceives that the quality and remuneration of teachers constitute the biggest block to the sustainability of efforts to expand and improve education. The first results in poor instruction and education, while the second causes excessively high rates of teacher turnover, again to the detriment of education. CIDA therefore sees improved teacher education as a key element in the push for EFA and with it assistance to assure teachers of decent salaries. These are top priorities. Alongside them must be the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the kinds of education that will equip young people to avoid infection. However, the issue needs to be integrated into general national planning and not be seen as a separate or isolated initiative.

Kristian K. Edinger
Technical Adviser on Education
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(Denmark)

Although a new government in Denmark in 2001 cut overseas development assistance (ODA) in real terms, the overall level nevertheless still reached 0.9 per cent; that is 0.2 per cent in excess of the UN agreed target of 0.7 per cent. Despite the cuts, allocations in support of the MDGs, including those for education, were protected. Indeed, some new countries were added to the education programme: Bhutan, Bolivia and Nicaragua. Further, the government's policy is that education will in due course be allocated 15 per cent of the total aid budget.

Denmark favours and supports the sector-wide approach to planning education and the best uses of ODA for education, and also supports closer co-ordination with other donors. In terms of structural change, the aid programme has seen a huge transfer of responsibility away from the centre in Copenhagen to embassies. The latter are now responsible for preparing programmes, while the centre is responsible for appraisals and reviews.

Heikki Kokkala
Education Adviser
Department for Development Policy
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(Finland)

As Finland's Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reported to IWGE in Helsinki in 2003, the new government of that year introduced a new set of policies on international relations, trade and development co-operation. As regards development co-operation, the balance between bilateral and multilateral funding will shift in favour of the latter: Finland will double the amount of funds allocated to multilateral channels.

The overall framework for bilateral operations derives from the MDG, but is modified by the principles of concentration by country and development sector. Finland will now undertake long-term development co-operation with only eight countries and in a maximum of three sectors per country. Programmes with six other countries will be comparatively minor. The 'Sector-wide Programme' approach will govern planning and negotiations in the eight long-term partners, while projects will continue to be the main modality in the six other countries.

Education will be the primary sector for co-operation in most partner countries. Some, however, such as Kenya, Nicaragua and Viet Nam – which are among the eight long-term partners – feel that their education systems are sufficiently developed to permit them to apply Finnish co-operation in other sectors. Other partners are using Finnish support for special themes – teacher education and in-service training reform, inclusive education, bilingual and multicultural education, assessment systems, developing educational materials, and higher education reform.

In addition to the multilateral and bilateral programmes, Finland supports a number of Finnish and international NGOs.

In monetary terms, Finland's bilateral commitments to education have more than doubled since 1998, from €16.08 million to €35.60 million in 2002. As a percentage of the bilateral budget, they have increased from 6.9 to 10.8 per cent.

An external evaluation of Finland's programme of co-operation in education raised the issue of a need for a single policy on education. While staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are in favour of the idea, its partner countries are not. They argue that the MDG and the elements of the drive for EFA provide a sufficient policy frame, within which the particular conditions of a given country can be accommodated. They fear that a policy statement could on one side constrain the flexibility that Finland has historically shown in co-operation, and on the other side reduce the strong sense of ownership that Finland's partners have been able to develop over the projects and programmes that Finland has supported.

Hubert Hartmann
Basic Education Specialist
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
[German agency for technical co-operation]

The focus of the GTZ, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, remains fixed on poverty reduction and support for basic education. However, the Agency is preparing a new position paper on the forms that its co-operation should take. Previously, efforts to contribute to baskets of funding arranged by several donors faced problems of accountability and audit. The new design should enable GTZ to take part in 'basket' arrangements in what might be called the 'Big 5' sectors: energy; environment; water; livelihoods; and basic education.

Under the current policies of the German Government, each of its 40 local partner countries is asked to select up to three thematic areas from a possible 10 on which to concentrate assistance from Germany. Other countries do also receive help, but they are not focal concerns. Only seven of the focal 40 have decided to include basic education in their portfolios of co-operation with Germany: Bangladesh, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Malawi, Mozambique and Pakistan. Currently, GTZ allocates €75 million for basic education. This sum is scheduled to increase over the next few years to €125 million.

Recently, the German Government took two initiatives through the Foreign Ministry to open focal areas in the countries of the Caucasus region and in the Near and Middle East.

Juan Carlos Navarro
Chief, Education Unit
Sustainable Development Deparment
Inter-American Development Bank
(IDB)

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has for the last 40 years been serving 26 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its portfolio in education amounts to some US$3 billion. During the past few years, IDB has published three strategy papers on education. The Education Unit has now been mandated to consolidate their content, update the diagnoses of the different situations in Latin America and the Caribbean and ensure that they reflect the lessons that the IDB has learned over the past half decade. The Unit is also taking care to ensure that the educational strategies are co-ordinated with the main IDB strategies and with the larger institutional mandates on poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth.

The objective of this revised strategy "will be to outline areas where, given its competencies, priorities and means of financial and technical assistance, the Bank will be able to best support borrowing countries in strengthening and enhancing their education systems, thus improving their ability to capitalize on investments in human capital as a means for reducing poverty and fostering competitiveness and sustainable growth".

IDB has identified five challenges and determined its priorities in dealing with them. The first challenge is to ensure not only universal inclusion and equal access to education, but also universal and equal access to education of good quality. The priorities here are a combination of three strands of action. In promoting the attainment of the MDG, which is the first priority – particularly for populations who are currently excluded – IDB will advocate the adoption of equity-oriented criteria in formulating and monitoring mainstream policies and proactively support the expansion of access to underserved levels of education and, of course, to underserved populations.

The second challenge is the poor average quality of education at all levels. To meet it, IDB has two priority focuses: One is to improve the standards of teaching and attainments at the primary and secondary levels; the other is to improve evaluation and accreditation in higher education.

The third challenge lies not in the education system but in the labour markets and the ways they are changing: How should education change so that its graduates at all levels can locate a niche and make a living? Here IDB will advocate education programmes that respond and are relevant to current and emerging demands in local labour markets. It will help identify ways to link education with national systems of innovation, and it will promote a better integration of ICT in education.

Fourth is the challenge of the large numbers of weak institutions throughout the region. IDB will help in the identification and assessment of such institutions and support measures to strengthen them at both the national and sub-national levels. What forms the support will take will naturally depend on the institutions and the nature of their weaknesses.

The final challenge is to satisfy the growing demand for productive forms of co-operation between the countries of the region. The priorities here will include promoting the production of regional public goods in education, monitoring the international education goals and ensuring that the education communities of all the countries in the region are aware of the progress that their systems are making in relation to meeting those goals; and emphasizing that the governments of the region should take care to co-ordinate whatever support IDB can offer with the assistance available from other sources.

The Education Unit has of course launched a substantial programme of review, research and consultation in support of the priorities set out above. The three tracks can be summarized as follows:

- State-of-the-art reviews on:
  - pre-service training;
  - national strategies for expanding pre-school education;
  - extending ‘time on task’ in the classroom and lengthening the school day;
  - the evaluation of education projects and policies.
- Research on:
  - education finance;
  - the impact of labour market dynamics on education systems;
  - education, social exclusion and poverty;
  - systematic approaches to a taxonomy of countries in terms of their educational development;
  - school autonomy and decentralization.
- Consultation in the form of specialized seminars on:
  - pre-school education;
  - life-long learning;
  - new priorities for higher education;
  - new priorities for science and technology development.

Yumiko Yokozeki
Senior Adviser
Institute for International Cooperation
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Since IWGE’s last meeting in Helsinki in mid-2003, the Japanese Government has granted the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) a new administrative status with increased autonomy. The new

President is Professor Sadako Ogata, former High Commissioner for UNHCR and the first female president of JICA. Sadako Ogata has initiated a restructuring of the departments, allocating geographical responsibilities to some and subject areas to others. Education now falls within the portfolio of the Human Development Department. The Agency is moving to put much more emphasis on the operations of the field offices and will strengthen their capacities and discretion.

In its global agenda, JICA includes the MDG and EFA and indeed accords a heightened importance to education: It will be allocating more resources in support of basic education. Alongside these activities, JICA stresses human security, freedom from fear and freedom from hunger. It will continue to pursue poverty reduction through economic development and more equitable distributions of income. There will be special support for post-conflict countries, with particular attention to capacity development and good governance.

Regionally, JICA will shift more towards Africa, but will move to include new countries in its portfolio: Afghanistan and Timor-Leste are current examples. To support the new roles for the field offices, JICA will also create a number of regional offices.

Among its new initiatives, JICA includes:

- educational aid to Afghanistan;
- the institutionalization of in-service training for teachers (INSET);
- non-formal education;
- effective combination of technical co-operation and budgetary support;
- formulating strategies and financing for scaling up successful pilot work;
- regional support; and
- upgrading science and mathematics education in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Stephen Baines
Consultant
Ministry of Overseas Development
(The Netherlands)

The one big change that the Netherlands Ministry of Overseas Development has had to report since the last IWGE meeting in Helsinki was an undertaking that the Minister of Education had given to Parliament: by 2007, the proportion of aid for basic education would rise from its current level of just under 6 per cent of the total aid budget to a full 15 per cent. As there were less than three years for that target to be reached, there was need for some swift and drastic restructuring in the allocations of the aid budget. No doubt there has been pain felt in some quarters. The term 'basic education' is to encompass basic vocational skills, but not secondary education. The latter would be taken into consideration as the Ministry of Overseas Development moved more fully to supporting governments through SWAp.

Bente Nilson
Senior Education Adviser
Norvegian Agency of Development Cooperation (NORAD)

In the view of NORAD, "Education is job number one!". The Agency has undergone a major reorganization in its administration of development assistance. To promote more and better co-ordination in both its bilateral and multilateral programmes, Norway has delegated more responsibilities to its embassies. NORAD itself is now an agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the function of providing technical assistance to the Ministry itself and to several embassies. Thus NORAD must ensure that its own technical capacities can meet the demands that are placed upon it.

The key words for Norway's development co-operation are: harmonization and alignment; the programme approach; budget support; human rights approach; marginalized groups; the crucial need for quality;

and institutional strengthening. A full statement of NORAD's strategy for support to the education sector can be found at www.norad.no.

Jana Huttova
Director
Education Support Programme
Open Society Institute
(Soros Foundation)

The Open Society Institute (OSI) of the Soros Foundation has been following its policy of opening foundations where they are needed and closing them either when the need has been met or when local conditions make it impossible to continue operations. Some of the closures have been in the Russian Federation, Mongolia and Uzbekistan, but the network has extended to more countries.

There is of course still a need to fund education, so the OSI central office has been making the necessary grants. Over the past couple of years, it has been able to better articulate its approaches to sub-regions, with focuses on policy formation, monitoring and education for the Roma communities, and has been working with some of the governments in South-Eastern Europe on reforming their education systems.

On democratization, OSI has been trying to construct incentives for more open democratic institutions, such as, for example, in Georgia. The conditions of Central Asia demand a long-term presence, for they present large challenges that in some cases make it no longer possible to work with governments.

Globally, OSI is undertaking research on a number of countries, including Pakistan and Angola, before constructing appropriate strategies for helping to work on their education systems. However, the priorities of the Education Support Unit are guided not so much by the MDG or EFA as by OSI's concern for equity and the inequities that help explain dropout from schools and other educational institutions.

Christian Lien
Programme Officer, Education Division
Department for Democracy
and Social Development
Swedish International Development
Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Since the last IWGE meeting in Helsinki in 2003, the Swedish Government has introduced what it believes is one of the first fully integrated policies for global development: What was previously considered to be a primary task for the policy area of international assistance will become a task for all policy areas. The new policy has eight central components that together emphasize shared responsibility, equitable human rights and the perspectives of the poor.[1]

To support the new policy, Sweden will increase its budgetary allocation for international co-operation to a full 1 per cent of the country's GDP, i.e. to €1.8 billion. It will allocate 8 per cent of this total to supporting education. Combating the spread and adverse impacts of the HIV/AIDS pandemic – i.e. both prevention and treatment – combating corruption in public services – on the principles of 'never accept', act and inform against it – and promoting co-ordination among donors for the most productive application of additional resources are the leading priorities. Sweden does believe that closer multilateral and bilateral partnerships constitute one key to more effective development efforts.

Sida supports education in 18 countries and is promoting sector-wide approaches to planning and programming. Primary education currently attracts the bulk of Swedish support, but attention to secondary schooling is on the rise.

Sida considers that the key areas that need improvement to support education more effectively are co-ordination between all the actors, monitoring and follow-up, capacity development and strengthening the field units.

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1. See Swedish Parliament (2004) for a full explanation of the policy.

A final sign of Sweden's commitment to EFA is that it shares with the USA the chairmanship of the Fast Track Initiative.

Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta
Director
Division of Basic Education
(UNESCO)

UNESCO is moving on two important changes to the way it does business: It is adopting results-based management and reinforcing the process of decentralizing decision-making to its regional offices and institutes. Less radically, but still important for its role in leading the drive for EFA, it is seeing how it can make the Global Monitoring Reports on EFA more user-friendly.

It has decided to revisit the EFA goals, which currently stop at UPC and gender parity and equality. The time has come to begin thinking beyond primary education and 2015 and to examine what goals might be feasible for the secondary and tertiary levels. UNESCO is also contemplating three fresh initiatives in literacy, teacher training and AIDS prevention. These are fields in which much has already been done and tried over a long period of time. In the light of all the experience that must have been accumulated and of all that still remains to be done, UNESCO needs to determine what initiatives are likely to be most productive in each field and is in the process of mobilizing ideas for the purposes. Ideas are of course not the only necessities. For each of these issues, UNESCO has already formed 'flagships' with appropriate partners to attack the problems with innovative stratagems. All the partners should own these flagships and help bring to bear the necessary ideas, resources and action to ensure that we do reach all the EFA goals by 2015.

UNESCO is seeking more ways to make it more likely that all the intellectual energy, scrutiny and ingenuity that are invested in meetings like this do get fed into actual policy and practice. For example, in literacy, working to help mothers become literate so that they can help their children's schooling has proved a sound strategy. Now UNESCO needs its partners to help push the adoption and application of the strategy wherever it might be applicable. This is a challenge with which UNESCO must continue to wrestle: How can it get its partners and flagships to really work together on the UN Literacy Decade, on Sustainable Development for All and on HIV/AIDS to achieve a breakthrough to EFA?

Greg Loos
Team Leader, Basic Education/
Technical Leadership
United States Agency for International
Development (USAID)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) made six succinct points:

1. Its education programme does not steer itself by the MDG, nor does it take into account the various global funds that are being mobilized for education. It is steered by the priorities that it agrees upon together with educators and policy-makers in particular regions and sub-regions.
2. USAID aims to take a sector-wide view. It is concerned with education for women and with the needs for human capital in different sectors and at different levels.
3. It asks: 'What is education for? And from whose point of view?'. Four of the six goals for EFA are supply-driven, decided by educators and policy-makers. But many parents, especially poor parents in livelihoods that can use children's labour, need incentives to send their children to school, and the older the children are, the more incentives such parents need to keep them in school.
4. The USAID education programme focuses on global and sub-regional audiences rather than on particular sovereign governments. It deals with four broad regions, each with a number of sub-regions. An example of an effort to serve a global audience is the Global Learning Portal (www.glpnet.org) that USAID funds and that the Academy for Educational Development (AED) operates on its behalf, with contributions from Sun Microsystems under a co-operative agreement.

5. The work with AED and Sun is an example of what USAID terms ‘Development alliances’. The idea is to form alliances with civil society and the private sector to promote local ownership in mobilizing a variety of resources in support of educational initiatives. In regard to resources, it is estimated that the ‘dead capital’ in Africa that could be productively invested amounts to ten times the current level of ODA for the continent.
6. Like everybody else, the Education Programme of USAID believes that we should learn from experience and that the outcomes of experience should be systematically recorded and disseminated. It will therefore promote more results-based evaluations and will be making them available to anyone interested through its web site.

Updating strategy

Jamil Salmi
Director for Higher Education
Education Department
Human Development Network
(World Bank)

The World Bank’s Education Department is currently updating the institution’s Education Sector Strategy. It will incorporate the following themes:

- sustaining momentum on EFA;
- applying a sector-wide perspective;
- adopting a country-wide perspective;
- becoming more results-oriented;
- maximizing effectiveness.

This latest updating responds to the urgency created by the possibility that a substantial number of countries, some of them among the largest, will fail to reach the 2015 MDG. More is known about what works in engineering education reform and improvement. Equally important is that more is known about what has not worked. The focus on primary completion as being distinct from simple access to primary education is new and requires new thinking.

So does the effort to align educational strategy with the indicative framework for benchmarking education sector development plans and with the stress that the 2004 World Development Report laid on making services work for the poor in terms of both access and quality.

On the donors' side, the updating concerns the sustained efforts that the stakeholders in the Fast Track Initiative are making to move donors to harmonize their policies, regulations and processes, step up their efforts to mobilize the resources needed for the FTI, and maintain their focus on sound policy.

As regards client countries, the updated strategy must take into account the need to strengthen capacities to undertake sector-wide analysis and design the integration of education with the requirements and activities of other sectors. In administration and institutional culture, the strategy needs to indicate how to provide more and better support to decentralization, while for the front line in the classrooms there is a need to strengthen curricula for science and technology.

In preparing for the update, a review of the World Bank's lending to primary education found that 86 per cent of it had occurred since 1990, i.e. since Jomtien. Between then and 2004, the Bank had lent a total of US$10.2 billion for this purpose, most of it channelled through projects. These had focused mainly on four areas: increasing enrolments generally; widening girls' access; raising the quality of primary education; and improving governance in the sector. The review recommended a stronger focus on learning outcomes, better monitoring and evaluation of actual outcomes, and improved tracking of how the loans for primary education were actually spent.

Secondary education

The Bank has also produced a report on secondary education to help policy-makers address the growing demand for it. Two forces are fuelling this demand. One flows from the success of countries in approaching universal primary education, the other comes from economic growth that requires more and more highly skilled labour forces to compete in a globalizing knowledge economy. Three challenges come with the demand: expanding access; ensuring equity of access; and guaranteeing high quality with relevance to contemporary needs. That last challenge arises from what some term the 'information society'. It generates changing patterns of work, which in turn require radically new approaches in the way 'curriculum knowledge' is selected, organized and sequenced. In turn, imparting the new curricula effectively calls for high quality and motivated secondary school teachers – they are critical for secondary education reforms to succeed.

In a number of countries, the private and voluntary sectors have taken large roles in providing secondary education, but the newer forces are increasingly moving governments to take up a stronger role. However, that does not imply that all the funding should come from governments: Multiple sources of funding are possible and should be considered. These observations suggest of course that countries could learn from each other's experiences and that the international education institutions could facilitate that.

Post-conflict education

Quite apart from what might be called the routines of education, the World Bank has had to be involved during the past few years in rather less routine situations of 'post-conflict education'. A recent review of these experiences has found that education systems can make significant contributions to reconstruction: Sound policies, adequate operational capacity and a focus on results will create positive environments in which reconciliation and reconstruction can take root. Of course, it goes without saying that returning teachers need to be well trained to be sure of achieving good results.

One bonus in post-conflict education is that it often provides an opportunity for revising curricula and instructional materials in ways that remove potentially divisive subjects and topics. However, these early reforms often require international support and, unfortunately, some attention to issues of corruption.

In the efforts towards reconciliation and enhancing the ability of education systems to foster social cohesion, the Bank is supporting pilot programmes in five 'post-conflict' countries to:

- improve initial teacher preparation;
- gain consensus on textbook content;
- promote reading as a tool for social cohesion;
- better understand minority language learning; and
- promote peace-based initiatives at school level.

The pilot work seeks to assist educators and project managers to:

- construct frameworks for approaching the appraisal and review of the contents and presentation of textbooks;
- fashion social analysis tools that they can apply to their situations; and
- develop and master tools for curriculum development.

The Fast Track Initiative

As the World Bank houses the secretariat of the Fast Track Initiative, it provided a brief update on progress. By October 2004, 12 countries had qualified for special support from the FTI in their efforts to reach the MDG for education. They are, in chronological order of qualification: Nicaragua; Honduras; Guyana; Burkina Faso; Niger; Mauritania; Guinea; The Gambia; Mozambique; Yemen; Viet Nam; and Ghana. Ten of the 12 increased the finance available for their schools by over 30 per cent in the first year.

The FTI promotes a stronger focus on the following: having children complete their primary education, not simply their entry into primary school;

improved linkages between central and field levels in donor agencies; stronger partnerships between donors and FTI countries; and increased attention to sector programmes and financing mechanisms that are not tied to particular projects.

It has also set up a Catalytic Fund for countries that currently do not enjoy much support from international donors ('donor orphans') and devised streamlined procedures for disbursements. Contributions to the fund amounted to US$45 million in 2004.

The FTI faces something of an uphill battle, even though it has the blessing of the Development Committee of IMF, the World Bank and the G8, and is currently co-chaired by the USA and Sweden. Generating support among donor nations for yet another international cause and moving them not only to provide, but also to sustain their provision of resources for a decade ahead, is tough, to say the least. No less challenging is strengthening the capacities of the countries benefiting from the FTI to absorb the additional funds, expand their education systems within the timeframe of the MDG and raise the quality of the education that their children receive. It is equally hard to convince people that the FTI is not just extra money for business as usual. The final challenge is to assemble the ability both to monitor progress and to demonstrate that it has indeed happened.

The Roma Education Fund

The final initiative that the World Bank's Education Sector has helped to sponsor since the IWGE meeting in Helsinki in June 2003 is the Roma Education Fund with the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The World Bank was of course not alone: the Open Society Institute and the European Commission were co-sponsors, while UNDP, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the governments of Finland, Hungary and Sweden were strong contributors. The Roma people are a regional issue for they are Europe's largest and poorest minority, spread through many countries.

They constitute a social inclusion issue, for they suffer deep poverty, quite severe degrees of ethnic discrimination and, in some countries, segregated schooling. They also constitute an issue for EFA, as the conditions of social exclusion under which they live lead to low levels of basic schooling and literacy among their children and young people.

A conference in Budapest in July 2003 resulted in two main outcomes: the establishment of a Roma Education Fund and the declaration of a Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-15. The latter will include drives for improvements in education, employment, health and housing. The eight participating Central and South-Eastern European countries are currently finalizing the necessary action plans.

As education is the single most important key to improving the lives of the Roma, the Roma Education Fund will have the explicit objective of closing the gap in education outcomes between Roma and non-Roma communities. Although the eight countries sponsoring the decade are the main contributors, the fund is open to others. The fund will be making grants to public, private and non-governmental agencies to support analysis and policy development, pilot efforts and scaling up proven pilots. It will also open a ‘Resource Portal’ on the Internet to offer ‘Roma Education Knowledge’ and undertake advocacy linked to work on the decade.

Initial funding will come from the Open Society Institute and the World Bank’s Development Grant Facility, and a small number of staff seconded from the two institutions will begin operations in 2005 from a base in the Council of Europe Development Bank in Paris. A donor conference in Paris in December 2004 will assemble official donors, foundations, possible sources in the private sectors of Europe and the governments of the beneficiary countries in an effort to raise funds, both direct and co-financing.

Theme 2

Governance, ethics and corruption in education

The World Education Forum in Dakar acknowledged the problem of corruption in education with this sentence: "Corruption is a major drain on the effective use of resources for education and should be drastically curbed". Three years later, the Secretary General to the UN, Kofi Annan, reiterated this concern when the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Corruption: "Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately – by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid". Over the past few years, several agencies, members of IWGE among them, have studied the problem and devised a range of strategies to counter it. At this meeting, staff from five members shared their findings and reflections. This report provides first a summary of each of the five, followed by a summary of the general discussion that followed.

Ethics and corruption in education: an overview

Muriel Poisson
IIEP

The project that IIEP has been undertaking in the problems of unethical behaviour and corruption in education systems is based on three assumptions. The first is that forms of 'monopoly power' and lack of effective mechanisms for accountability favour the development of corrupt practices in the education sector. Second, the behaviours of individual and groups of actors – what might be called the intangible inputs of education – have a significant impact on problems of access, of quality and of equity in education. Third, any efforts to improve transparency and accountability in the use of educational resources necessitate facilitating access to information and promoting the active interest of communities – the term 'citizens' voice' is often used here. The first in effect is the institutional framework that can be taken to be a governing influence on what is observed in the behaviours of actors in a system and in the response of citizens to those behaviours. Therefore, the IIEP project focused on institutions, procedures and mechanisms, rather than on individuals. It also adopted a positive approach by giving priority to identifying and documenting strategies that had proved successful in combating corruption, rather than cataloguing sins and failures.

As a necessary preliminary step, however, the project used research evidence and consultations to form a typology of eight areas in which various forms of corruption could arise and affect education adversely in access, equity, quality or policy priorities.[2] From that, IIEP was able to document a series of successful experiments aimed at improving transparency and accountability in education. The few reported here come from just three areas: teacher codes of conduct, reforming teacher management and regulating private tutoring.

Teacher codes of conduct: Bangladesh, India and Nepal, among other countries, have developed professional codes of conduct for the education sector. A comparative study reveals that all the relevant actors find them to be useful instruments with positive impacts on professional commitment, behaviour and performance, and particular effects in reducing absenteeism among teachers (Hallak and Poisson, 2002). Three conclusions can be drawn from the study. First, adherence to codes of conduct can greatly contribute to the establishment of a more favourable educational environment, thus directly influencing the quality of education. Second, the enforcement of these codes requires a clear definition of their aims, their wide dissemination, the establishment of social or professional controls for their implementation, and training education

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2. For more references on IIEP's work on ethics and corruption in education, see: http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/focus/etico/etico1.html

personnel in the implementation of the codes. To ensure their credibility and ownership, teacher codes of conduct should be established through a participatory process involving the teaching profession itself.

Reforming teacher management: The city of Bogota in Colombia provided a powerful example of how a reform of teacher management could increase outreach and access substantially without incurring proportionately large costs (Peña and Rodriguez, 2004). Probably the most important of the six steps that were required was cleaning up the list of employed teachers. The conclusions of the study were that more transparency in teacher management entails setting clear and objective criteria and designing transparent procedures for the recruitment, posting and transfer of staff. Automating some of the personnel functions works against traditional habits of favours and replaces it with fixed, widely publicized procedures. Finally, combining the involvement of the trade unions with the provision of easy access to information by citizens can contribute to a transparent management system.

Regulating private tutoring: In some cases, supplementary private tutoring has become a major industry, which consumes a considerable amount of parents' money and pupils' time. It has also given rise to a number of abuses, which have in turn provoked a variety of strategies to suppress them – some successful, some ignored. Taiwan, for instance, has opted to reduce the incentives and demand for private tutoring by reducing the dominance of the examination system (Bray, 2002). At a more specific level, it has forbidden *buxiban* or tutories to enrol primary school pupils at all and banned secondary school pupils from having tutoring classes in the afternoons from Monday to Sunday. It has also drawn up regulations for private centres, with clear criteria for registration, and established an association of tutoring schools as a self-regulating body.

The IIEP study concludes that intervention by the state is necessary – and indeed is the only way – to minimize the abuses of private tutoring and to ensure that it complements mainstream schooling. Actions to reduce abuse in private tutoring should strengthen transparency in the system and should include setting basic norms (use of school buildings, fees to be paid, services to expect, a certification system for both tutoring centres and their tutors, and so on). That said, a degree of successful self-regulation is also possible through the education profession itself, but should be complemented by measures to maintain public awareness through providing adequate information to parents.

Concluding notes

Within the rubric of ethics and corruption in education, work on three strategic axes will help improve transparency and accountability in managing the sector. First, workable regulatory systems have to be created and maintained. This involves adapting existing legal frameworks to focus more closely on areas vulnerable to corruption, designing appropriate sets of incentives and penalties, as well as clear norms and criteria for procedures for procuring and allocating funds, developing codes of practice for the education profession, and defining well targeted measures, particularly for allocating funds.

The second axis is strengthening management capacities to ensure the enforcement of the regulatory system. Abilities to manage good information systems, to operate controls against fraud and to promote ethical behaviour are among the requirements.

The third axis is enhancing ownership of the management process by all the stakeholders. It involves developing decentralized and participatory mechanisms, increasing access to information, particularly with the use of ICTs, and enabling communities to exert stronger social control through informal and formal monitoring, questioning and calling officials to account.

These three axes and more specific measures should be components of a broader, integrated strategy for fighting corruption in education. The success of any such strategy in the longer term will of course depend on a number of complementary factors, such as strong and sustained political will, a sufficient concern on the part of the public to stem corruption, strengthening the professionalism of the various educational cadres through adequate salaries and enhanced social status, and the support of a free press to investigate and publicize reports of wrongdoing.

Governance, anti-corruption and education: an initial empirical approach

Daniel Kaufmann
World Bank Institute

This paper discusses the World Bank's experience in dealing with corruption since 1996. Before that year, the Bank took no official cognizance of the problem, even though it was fully aware of it. The main reason was that governments are the owners of the Bank, and officials and politicians of many governments were heavily implicated in corruption, which made it unmentionable. The change came in 1996, when the President of the Bank declared corruption a cancer. From being a prohibited topic, corruption moved into the mainstream of the Bank's work. A measure of that change is that in 1997, 12 projects included explicit anti-corruption components, whereas in 2002 almost three times that number of projects (31) addressed the problem.

The main components of the Bank's strategy for dealing with corruption are that: first, issues of good governance and anti-corruption are key in a given country's development and lending programmes; second, countries will get assistance in whatever reforms are necessary to reform governance and combat corruption; third, data, diagnostic tools and appropriate indicators will be developed to monitor situations and draw lessons for what needs to be done; fourth, partnerships with other international institutions will be pursued; and, fifth, the Bank itself must be free from corruption, so that there must be an internal system for ensuring integrity in Bank staff and in the projects that they help design, finance and supervise.

The Bank takes an empirical approach to governance and anti-corruption at three levels. At the 'macro' level, it has derived worldwide, aggregate indicators of governance from 200 countries. For the 'mezzo' level it uses cross-country surveys of enterprises, while for the 'micro' level it has a number of diagnostics to assess the quality of governance and institutional capacity. They include surveys of citizens as users of public services, of firms as the main agents who deal with government regulations and regulators, and of public officials as the agents who enforce laws and regulations. These sorts of measurements are important, for quality of governance matters in raising per capita incomes – there is a large 'good governance' dividend. However, there is no reverse causality in high per capita incomes being necessary to achieve good governance.

The quality of governance bears directly on the prevalence of corruption, which in turn bears directly on the quality of education. For instance, on the indicator 'diversion of public funds', the evidence shows a clear inverse relationship between the perceived degree of diversion and the perceived quality of public schools and their ability to contribute to a country's competitiveness. Similarly, the degree of reported bribery in a country's judiciary is inversely related to the perceived ability of a country's schools to serve competitiveness.

The evidence challenges a number of popular notions. For example, some suggest that corruption is a function of culture or historical legacy. The evidence on the contrary suggests that well conceived frameworks of incentives and sanctions have very strong influences on the presence or absence of corruption. Similarly, some question the efficacy of transplanting OECD criteria of honest governance to alien cultures, whereas the evidence suggests that there are indeed criteria and measures that are applicable to all cultures.

What deserves particular attention is frankness on what it takes to attain EFA and the MDG and a full grasp of the centrality of ensuring good governance with a firm intolerance of corruption. To ensure this, mechanisms of external accountability are required, as are mechanisms for transparency. There have to be incentives for desired behaviours: For example, clear meritocracy in public appointments and promotions has to replace systems that permit nepotism, favouritism and forms of social or ethnic discrimination. In addition, responses from leaders and public figures in 62 countries suggest that the five most powerful influences in reducing corruption would be a real example from the leadership, economic deregulation that removes opportunities for bribery and extortion, budgets that are transparent in both initial and final allocations, public sector reform and increased civil liberties that allow the public to demand and investigate information.

An excellent example of the power of the last reform comes from Uganda. The government's struggle to get its substantial education spending to the intended targets was for many years a frustrating exercise, until 1998 when the government made an important decision. As the new education budget was announced for 1999, details were given to the press about how much money was to go to each school district. Suddenly, when the public was armed with information, the results improved dramatically. In 1991, the percentage of funds intended to reach the schools that actually did reach them was just 6 per cent. By 1995, that percentage had been pushed up to nearly 25 per cent. After the information campaign, the percentage shot up to 82 per cent.

The OECD countries and international financial institutions certainly have some responsibility for encouraging and aiding countries to improve their governance and eliminate corruption. But they do need to approach the task with some modesty and a recognition that they face a difficult global challenge. Their attitudes need to be open to learning, willing to accept that approaches probably need to be interdisciplinary, and acknowledge that politics and political economy do matter. One example of what is possible is the joint experience of Indonesia and the World Bank.

The formulation in 2004 of the Country Assistance Strategy negotiated with Indonesia focuses on governance and harnesses the entire Bank lending portfolio to anti-corruption. The volume of borrowing is linked to progress in improving governance and reducing corruption, and each project in the strategy is linked to a particular challenge in governance and includes an explicit anti-corruption plan. The strategy of decentralization requires picking winners at the local level. The institutional arrangements to pursue these intentions include a resident advisor for governance supported by an Anti-Corruption Committee, which collaborates with organizations from Indonesian civil society. Within the Bank itself, a 'Fiduciary Team' of investigators and project advisers oversees disbursements and expenditures.

The anti-corruption plan for each project must include provisions for i) disclosure; ii) civil society oversight; iii) a complaints mechanism; iv) anti-collusion; v) sanctions and remedies; and vi) strengthened financial controls. While nobody can claim instant cure and perfection, some recent actions illustrate that the overall thrust by both Indonesian society and the Bank is successful: i) misprocurement has been declared and funds returned; ii) funds have been suspended or cancelled; iii) prosecutions: a number of consultants and civil servants have been prosecuted, fined and/or jailed.

Following Daniel Kaufmann's presentation, Deon Filmer of the World Bank's Development Research Group described an effort in Papua New Guinea to track public expenditure and service delivery (Filmer, forthcoming). The survey covered 214 primary and community schools in 19 districts in eight provinces and investigated the status of service delivery, its relationship to poverty and remoteness, the distribution of roles and responsibilities in service delivery, the actual funding that schools received and the behaviour of the teachers. Its interviews included grade 5 teachers and a sample of other teachers, parents, boards of management, district and provincial education advisors. Unfortunately, the data analysis was insufficiently advanced to warrant either conclusions or further publication at the time of the IWGE meeting.

Controlling corruption: lessons from the School Improvement Grants Program, Indonesia

Stephen Baines
Netherlands Ministry of Development Cooperation

This paper discusses lessons from the School Improvement Grants Program in Indonesia (SIGP; Baines, 2004). The programme ran from 2000-2004, included features and mechanisms to safeguard against corruption, but suffered from widely publicized[3] instances of it and caused serious tensions between the stakeholders. The experience thus has lessons to teach about the expectations of the parties involved in the programme and the effectiveness of the anti-corruption mechanisms that were tried.

SIGP was part of a larger programme of responses to the 1997 Asian financial crisis that set the Indonesian economy back and caused much hardship to the poorer people of the country. It provided US$60 million of the US$600 million Scholarships and Grants Program and, although funded by the Royal Netherlands Government, was managed by the World Bank through a trust fund. SIGP aimed to improve the quality of education in the poorest schools by providing single, non-renewable grants. A total of 8,001 schools in 130 districts benefited.

SIGP aimed to eliminate opportunities for corruption by channelling the money directly from the centre to the schools and thus avoiding filtering by intermediaries. It specified its procedures in comprehensive guidelines and

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[3] Encouragingly, part of the publicity came from local advocacy groups – the voice of civil society – and part from an independent monitoring unit.

made sure that the personnel responsible for implementation were fully trained. Further, it associated non-governmental people in selecting the schools: Key organizing committees had to comprise 50 per cent non-government representatives. The guidelines laid down requirements for the disclosure of financial information, public scrutiny and accountability. The programme also provided for independent, intensive monitoring.

Despite these provisions, at least five forms of corruption subverted the programme. One was charging the schools opportunistically for services that were supposed to be free. A second was arranging for officials and community members to share in the 'good fortune' of the schools. A third was officials extorting bribes from schools that wished to be selected to receive grants from the programme. In addition, officials colluded with contractors to overcharge for services and share the surplus. Some officials also arranged opaque and unaccountable central procurement on behalf of the schools.

In response to rumours and considerable press and NGO interest in specific cases, the independent monitors investigated 40 instances. They found that individual schools had indeed suffered significant losses. In mitigation, they also found that, although the corruption had been made more visible, it was not as extensive or as damaging as had been found in many other programmes.

The investigations drew lessons for five areas of operations. In the first place was the operating environment. In Indonesia, there was a range of perceptions about what constituted corrupt behaviour and what represented fair and adequate recompense for services rendered. What the financiers regarded as corrupt was not necessarily seen as such by people in the schools and villages. Further, in a corrupt system, there was no clear line between predators and victims, as everybody involved felt obliged to play what was seen to be the standard game. Third, corruption thrives where reliable information is lacking, where human resource capacity is weak and where a better system does not exist. Finally, conventional accounting practices coupled with lax attitudes to financial control can provide a cover for corruption.

The second area of operations was programme design. Anti-corruption measures cannot rely on written regulations alone. Rules have to be enforced. Enforcement requires political will. It also requires the availability of a mechanism for dealing with corruption when it occurs. Detecting corruption requires the capacity to provide the management information on compliance, performance and impact. Handling corruption requires competent capacity to follow up complaints and investigate whether corruption has indeed occurred. That capacity has to be embodied in persons with the specified responsibility for following up the complaint and managing the case. There has also to be a procedure for affording the alleged offenders due process as they are prosecuted. Finally, there need to be credible sanctions that in turn need to be impartially imposed.

The third area of operations was independent monitoring. While certainly a useful part of an anti-corruption toolkit, the function can be unpopular and criticized from all sides. It needs obvious and credible investigative capacity, as well as the capacity to communicate to practical effect – if its observations and recommendations are ignored, its deterrent power is of course undermined. A visible presence and intensive monitoring can certainly act as a deterrent, and can also help resolve matters when things go wrong. That said, independent monitoring is no miraculous antidote for immobilizing corrupt people in their efforts to benefit themselves. Nor is it cheap.

Constructing the foundations for the control of corruption is the fourth area of operations. There needs to be an overarching commitment to transparency, an agreed code of conduct, and a credible armoury of enforceable sanctions for breaches of it. These then need to be supported with a clear set of management hierarchies and jurisdiction with a willingness to enforce the rules. If these foundations are not in place, it is almost axiomatic that some people will find ways to benefit themselves illegitimately.

The final area of lessons is for the financiers or donors. The first lesson is that projects and programmes simply cannot be made corruption-proof. However, thoughtful safeguards can be progressively refined to reduce and contain corruption. Ironically, programmes that tackle corruption can become victims of their own success: Transparency and scrutiny will inexorably unearth some corruption. This should not cause surprise. If financiers do not want to find corruption, they should not look for it.

More positively, financiers should work to ensure that everybody working in the organization of a programme understands what the concerns are and the attitudes that underpin them. If some corruption is uncovered even then, financiers should not panic and cast about for scapegoats. They should rather have confidence in the safeguards and reinforce their application. They should also bear in mind the larger picture: Education programmes aim primarily to achieve educational objectives. Failure to stop corruption completely does not invalidate those objectives nor necessarily prevent their achievement. As it happened, SIGP substantially met its objectives of making significant improvements in the learning environments of the poorest schools.

Addressing corruption in non-trusting environments

Colin Bangay
British Council

This paper explores what programmes of technical assistance (TA) can do to support efforts to transform a cultural environment of mistrust and corruption into one of trust that a system operates as advertised (Bangay, 2004). What drives the growing focus on corruption in education is the recognition that corruption exercises a pervasive influence on virtually every level of the system. It begins with distorting policies, generates inefficient administration through non-meritocratic practices in human resource management, undermines confidence in public examination systems, affects the deployment and hence morale of teachers, encourages their absenteeism, and skews school admissions in favour of those families who can bribe the most. The Indonesians have an acronym 'KKN' (*Korupsi, Kollusi, Nepotisme*) to encapsulate the chief ingredients of what IIEP has defined as: "The systematic use of public office for private benefit whose impact is significant on access, quality or equity in education".

In any country, the civil service has the prime responsibility for ensuring good governance and is central to the effective delivery of public services. It thus underpins the success of any comprehensive pro-poor strategy. Where it is infected by forms of KKN and cannot be trusted to abstain from using public office for private benefit, the question for technical assistance (TA) programmes is how to achieve proportionality between direct spending on conventional initiatives, such as curriculum development or teacher training, and 'indirect investment' in enhancing good governance. Although single programmes cannot on their own radically change ingrained practices, they can certainly assume that any improvements they achieve in governance will have strong positive effects on the achievement of their educational objectives.

The tendency in earlier efforts to deal with corruption has been to focus on eliminating particular practices and on punishing the behaviour of the corrupt. A more productive approach is to take a long-term systemic view and aim to build a system that justifies its beneficiaries' trusting it to work impartially. Part of what that involves is building the confidence of citizens to challenge the misuse of civic office.

Of course, any programme of external assistance must recognize its limitations in attempting to change a host society. For one thing, it usually has a very finite time frame in which to operate. For another, it usually has a very constricted sphere of influence at the implementation level. Ideally, then, a programme that suspects that its effectiveness is vulnerable to corruption should seek allies both in other external agencies and, perhaps more importantly, in those sections of the local society, governmental and non-governmental, that also want to promote better governance. Such alliances may well take the programme beyond the boundaries usually associated with traditional education projects. They involve increasing commitment to good governance and strengthening resolve within the broader system to deal with lapses.

Some programmes have tried to insist on good governance through financial conditions. They have found them to be a blunt instrument, for their own project managers are under immense pressure to disburse funds and do not find financial sanctions an attractive option. However, there are possibilities of flexibility in using finance as an instrument to reward good performance and to apply pressure where performance is defective. They require arrangements that shift from a ‘single tap’ to a more responsive pattern of ‘multiple valves’; each valve can provide funds for components that are performing well (or withhold them from those that are not performing). The arrangements would also include a mechanism for releasing funds in tranches based on agreed performance triggers.

A vital ingredient in building perceptions of trustworthiness is the treatment of ‘whistleblowers’ and the seriousness with which their allegations are pursued. Failure to follow up will of course undermine the credibility of the mechanism, while failure to ensure that the whistleblowers are treated fairly will deter others from coming forward and damage the ability of the monitoring system to scrutinize operations. TA programmes that are trying to improve governance and stop, or at least minimize, corruption cannot afford to distance themselves from the issue of whistleblowers.

Ensuring good governance and minimal corruption involves a set of complementary goals, which are listed here as needs. The first need is an allocative system that is sensitive to the differing needs of different schools – through formulaic funding – and also transparent and accountable in its allocations. The second need is the nurture of discerning governing bodies that are capable of planning and effecting school expenditure for the benefit of the school community. The third is a body of schools that are accountable for the results of their students. Fourth is a civil society empowered to engage in all areas of education and able to scrutinize their operations. The final need and goal is a system that can collect, process and disseminate all the information that is required to keep educators at all levels honest.

In designing TA initiatives, it is worth reviewing the expected processes and outcomes against their potential contributions to the five goals.

In recent years in Indonesia, the focus has been on a ‘school-based approach’. It has revealed two risks. The first is the perverse effect of actually providing an incentive for corruption through a virtual competition for grants. Schools either get one or they get nothing – a zero sum game. The rules thus give the allocating officials an opportunity to auction the grants to the schools that offer the highest bids for them. The second risk arises through the efforts to minimize filtering and leakage and other ‘passive deductions’ as the grants move through the normal administrative and financial system. Bypassing the normal system does indeed reduce the losses to schools, but does nothing to foster better governance in the normal system. Indeed, it may have the perverse effect of challenging the operators of the normal system to devise ways of ‘recovering their rights’.

If a TA programme does decide to try to contribute to building trust through better governance and reduced corruption, it should attempt to weigh the costs of an effective effort. In the first place, it should assess the capacity of the institutions that will manage the money: ministries, district offices and schools. Can they absorb the new funds available without creating incentives for some forms of corruption? Then it might have to accept that appropriate regulatory procedures may reduce the speed of disbursement. Further, it must accept the perverse risk that enhancing trust through greater transparency necessarily involves increased exposure to allegations of corruption. It must also accept the need to engage with 'actors' in new areas and in new ways. Inasmuch as possible, the TA programme should be sensitive to the impact its arrangements will have on the system already in place; will bypassing it weaken it further? Will the arrangements support or undermine the development of more effective management information systems? What is particularly tricky is ensuring that efforts to balance the forces in the programme do not perversely result in acquiescence in the *status quo*.

Fighting corruption to improve schooling: evidence from a newspaper campaign in Uganda

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This paper illustrates the power of information to reduce misallocations of funds for schools and at the same time increase both enrolments and student attainments (Reinikka and Svensson, 2004). Put slightly differently, information can empower 'voice', improve accountability, promote access and raise quality. Less directly, the experience reported strongly supports the case for developing new tools to enhance accountability, since traditional approaches to improve governance have produced weak results in most developing countries.

The experience reported here was an unusual policy experiment: A newspaper campaign in Uganda aimed at reducing the illegitimate capture of funds intended for primary schools by other branches of the education and political systems. The intent was to provide head teachers, teachers and the parents of pupils with information to monitor how local education officials handled a large education grant programme. The programme in question – a capitation grant to cover the non-wage expenditures of primary schools –

appeared to work well when observed through the budget data of the central government and through a benefit incidence analysis by the World Bank. However, a public expenditure tracking survey (PETS) in 1996 revealed that the average school received only around 20 per cent of its entitlement. Most schools received nothing and the bulk of the grants was captured by local government officials and politicians in charge of disbursing the grants to the schools. The data also revealed large variations in the grants received across schools. Contrary to the findings of the benefit incidence analysis, schools in poorer communities suffered significantly more from the illegitimate capture.

To remedy the situation, the Government of Uganda decided in 1998 to avoid the usual route of reliance on the legal and financial institutions and adopt instead a bottom-up route of citizen enforcement. It began to publish data on monthly transfers of capitation grants to districts in the national newspapers and their local language editions, along with detailed information on the level of grant for each stage of primary education and the purposes of the grant.

A second PETS in 2002 found that public access to that information had proved to be a powerful deterrent to the diversion of the funds at the local level. Head teachers were now claiming their rightful capitation grants. The effect was that in 2001 the average school had received more than 80 per cent of its entitlement. Even more striking, while the median school received nothing at all in the mid-1990s, it received 82 per cent of its entitlement in 2001. However, capture remained a problem for many schools. On average, 20 per cent of the schools' entitlements did not reach the schools and about 30 per cent of the schools received less than two thirds of their entitlement.

Further research uncovered two findings, both with operational implications. One was that the closer a school was to a newspaper outlet, the higher was the proportion of its entitlement that it actually received. In parallel, head teachers in schools closer to a newspaper outlet were more knowledgeable of the rules governing the grant programme and the timing of the releases of funds by the central government than were head teachers in more remote locations. Evidently, the information equipped the head teacher either to demand the school's rights or to mobilize sufficient parental pressure to do so. While these findings are certainly notable for policy and strategy, they were associated with two even more striking findings. One was that there was a strong relationship between the distance to the nearest newspaper outlet and increase in school enrolment since the launch of the newspaper campaign (verification showed that being located near a newspaper outlet had had no impact on school enrolment prior to the newspaper campaign). One statistical test suggested that one more newspaper per school resulted in 20 more grade 7 students (Bjoerkman, 2004). Hence, enrolment increased significantly faster in districts with higher newspaper penetration and thus in those areas were more extensively exposed to public information about the grant programme, and thereby less subject to capture.

The second finding was that the newspaper campaign had had a large effect on student performance. On average, pupils in districts that were highly exposed to the information programme scored better in the primary leaving exam than pupils in districts that were less exposed.

The evidence indicates this possible causal chain: Information was more readily and more thoroughly available to schools with easy access to newspapers; head teachers with easy access informed themselves thoroughly about their school's entitlements and succeeded in claiming them (or at least a large proportion of them); they spent the entitlements on improving the quality and attractiveness of their school; the improved quality led to improved learning and higher success in the public examinations; that, in turn, attracted more students and increased enrolments.

This experience in Uganda suggests that improving 'voice' and accountability helps ensure that educational entitlements actually reach their beneficiaries. This enhances learning environments, attainments and enrolments. The inference is that experimentation with institutions and processes that improve 'voice' and accountability should be high on the policy and research agenda.

General discussion on governance, ethics and corruption in education

The meeting was very interested in the Indonesian SIGP and sought more detail about its experience with addressing corruption. It learned the following:

The programme had borrowed a mechanism to channel the funds for grants directly to the beneficiary districts. The mechanism was not wholly efficient but did manage to get the money out to the districts reasonably untouched. District committees had then to allocate grants to schools according to need as measured by a set of formulas. It was at this level that problems of siphoning off the funds arose. Part of the problem was that membership of committees in the civil service of Indonesia attracted allowances for attendance. This tends to generate patronage and loyalties, which tend to encourage committees to rubber stamp the chair's proposals rather than examine and discuss them. In the SIGP, that could put the chair in a position to auction off grants to schools that were willing to share their good fortune. There were also instances of local consultants accepting substantial 'thank you' gifts for services that were supposed to be given free of charge.

Local advocacy groups got wind of instances of such practices and shared them with Dutch NGOs, who had them published in the press in the Netherlands as the Dutch Government was a major financier of the programme. The press reports alleged that Dutch money was being embezzled in Indonesia and demanded independent auditing and accountability. These sorts of allegations of course have an impact in parliament and on the government's aid agency, as well as causing concern among 'development' NGOs that rely on public goodwill to support their work. The impact is all the greater when the allegations come from a country long reputed to suffer pervasive corruption and from which corruption is almost expected. As a result, a Central Independent Monitoring Unit was established with Dutch and Indonesian auditors to look into the allegations, monitor the processes more closely, and generally satisfy democratic accountability. The designers of the SIGP felt that they had instituted safeguards against corruption and were of course surprised when the auditors did find some.

The Central Independent Monitoring Unit, which pursued the instances of corruption, was not simply the creation of the Dutch donor, but a joint effort with the Indonesian Government. The auditors were at first concerned essentially with monitoring compliance. Later they investigated complaints, assessed impact and evaluated management formatively. In due course the government and donor broadened the terms of reference to advise on project management and to train district monitors and members of the regulatory bodies. It is possible that the monitoring unit undertook too many functions. In the early stages, the unit was treated with suspicion, but its constant presence over time gradually elicited respect, while close relationships with all levels of managers enabled the unit to avoid being regarded as mere faultfinders.

After this expansion of information on the Indonesian SIGP, general discussion resumed.

Mention of the 'thank you' gifts and 'sharing the grants' raised the question whether – in the conditions of Indonesia – 'corruption' was the correct word and whether lack of capacity and imperfect understanding might have given the appearance of embezzlement. Further, did the evaluation studies examine whether the actual design of the programme had missed out elements that would have made matters clearer and less liable to misinterpretation? The response suggested that a rigorous application of the IIEP definition of 'corruption' would help decide whether particular instances of grant money being used for purposes not covered by the programme arose from inefficiency or from other causes; the independent monitoring unit clearly found that some of the cases did fit the definition. Sticking to the definition would also help blunt the debate about whether centralized systems were more prone to corruption than decentralized arrangements. As regards the possibility of a faulty design, it is certainly possible that if the Indonesian and Dutch designers had both had a more thorough understanding of how some public servants might operate, their safeguards might have been more secure. If a government decides on a design, it is not necessarily donor-driven, although the donors should indeed help to get it right. One necessary quality in both governments and donors as they jointly try to get designs right is patience.

The Indonesian experience also raised the question of whether channelling money directly to schools was any less vulnerable to corruption than other methods of distributing money. Why should school principals be presumed to have the capacity and will to use money more wisely and efficiently than district officials? In Mali, for example, it became clear that head teachers and the chairpersons of the parent-teacher associations (PTAs) acquired a form of monopoly power over the use of resources for the school. Where the head teacher was not monopolistic, conflicts tended to arise with the teachers. In short, little empirical evidence existed that handing money directly to schools worked any better than handing it to provinces or districts, so that belief in the principle seemed to be simply an article of faith.

At the same time, it was important to recognize that in all school systems there would be a spectrum of behaviours from the ideal to the disgraceful. Where primary schools have governing committees with strong, direct powers of oversight, ideal behaviour would be more likely. Also, the experience in Uganda did suggest that a school-based approach does bring decisions closer to the community with closer scrutiny and accountability and that head teachers do on average – doubtless with much variability – apply additional resources to improving the quality of their schools.

Doubts over the wisdom of handing funds directly to schools arose on other grounds. Direct funding was a negative approach that implied distrust in the main system and undermined it. In addition, it retarded institutional development through diverting attention away from the equally serious issues of distrust in the examination system, the system of recruiting people for the civil and teaching services, and the processes of selecting people for promotion. A more constructive approach would work on the whole institution to make it more efficient and more trustworthy, so that it served the schools more effectively. The continuum between the school base and the system base needed to be watched in the interest of developing the whole system, not just one part of it, possibly at the expense of others. In any country where there is sufficient will, it should be possible to develop mechanisms for accountability at every point in the system, from the source of the funds through to the end user. It should also be possible for the end user to be able to check on the other points and to be subject in turn to check by them. Further, schemes of incentives for each level of the system to conform to the objectives and procedures might make for more trustworthy systems than a proliferation of negative regulations and checks.

Further, when thinking of how best to reform a system, designers need to take account not simply of the actors within it, such as the civil and teaching services, but also of the interactions between the system and the wider society. What are its relations with the elected bodies such as school councils or district councils with their education committees? Short-term contracts for technical assistance from consultants tend to be lucrative and therefore quite competitive, while publishers of textbooks have obvious business interests in the system: What opportunities do they open for forms of corruption? It is necessary also to consider NGOs that work in education and that are part of the educational inventory of a country: They have their own ways of operating that are not necessarily transparent or well explained. In short, to achieve a comprehensive and soundly-based reform that will effectively discourage corruption, it is necessary to understand the complete environment.

In relation to trust and accountability, there was an observation that Islamic *madrassahs* and other religious schools, although indeed subject to corruption, seemed to be less subject to it than state schools – an observation confirmed by the experience of the Aga Khan Foundation. It is possible that these smaller school systems were able to establish and maintain chains of reciprocal checks and accountability more easily than countrywide systems. Accountability could be partly a function of size.

In response to a perception that the policy of decentralizing decision-making and funding in education might have been forced on the Government of Indonesia, the point was made that, on the contrary, the government had already decided to encourage decentralization and to allow more school-based decisions. It was in fact in the process of developing a policy of formula funding. Thus, it welcomed assistance in making the policy a reality.

The discussion moved on to the topic of formula funding. It appeared to be a transparent and readily accountable method of distributing resources. Was it any less vulnerable to corruption than other methods? IIEP had undertaken a study on decentralization, formula funding and corruption in Brazil, Poland, the UK and the state of Victoria in Australia (Levačić and Downes, 2004). It investigated the conditions under which formula funding could aid the distribution of funds in transparency and accountability. Its main conclusion was that the method required guidelines that were easy to understand, so that the recipients could readily calculate what they were due and make sure they received it. If the conditions were satisfied, the method could indeed be useful in ensuring that resources did reach their intended beneficiaries.

However, an instance from Nigeria underlined the need for mechanisms to ensure that all parties in the system were honest and accountable; schools and districts inflated reports of their enrolments in order to qualify for larger grants. Thus, formula funding, like all other mechanisms, depends on institutional capabilities to fulfil all the conditions necessary to ensure honesty and accountability at all points in the system.

The discussion ended with the observation that the ultimate consideration must be the education of the pupils: How best can education systems promote ethical behaviour and the avoidance of corruption in support of greater access, greater equity and higher quality learning?

Theme 3
Decentralizing school systems

Efforts to decentralize the administration of education systems in the interests of better management and better education have been in train for several years. The first three papers on this theme report experiences respectively from West Africa, South Africa and Latin America, while the fourth attempts a general assessment of the help that the movement has been to education.

Improving schools in a context of decentralization: findings from research in West Africa[4]

Anton De Grauwe
IIEP

Discussions on decentralization have increased in complexity in recent years because of the deepened realization that the 'school' as an institutional unit is a core actor in ensuring educational quality. A growing number of studies demonstrate that the management of a school, the relationships between the different actors (the head teacher, the teachers and the community) and the school's own involvement in defining and evaluating its improvement have a profound impact on the quality of education. This 'autonomization' of the school, in combination with the more traditional forms of decentralization, has led to greater diversity in the policies implemented in different countries. They carry many names: deconcentration, delegation, school-based management, school self-governance, privatization, charter schools, and so on. The research reported here investigated what the term 'decentralization' meant in the context of schools in four francophone countries of West Africa:

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[4] For more information, see De Grauwe (2004).

Benin, Guinea, Mali and Senegal. The four teams that carried out the research comprised civil servants from the respective ministries of education, professional researchers from a local national institute, and an education programme officer from Plan, an international NGO. They examined the functioning of samples of district offices and of samples of schools within the selected districts.

The research identified three trends in decentralization. One was the increasing responsibility of elected local authorities to administer schools. In Benin, the municipalities have only recently taken over the construction, equipping and maintenance of schools, whereas in Mali they have been operating for more than a decade and are supposed to take charge of education within their boundaries. Senegal has made its municipalities responsible for nine competencies and in principle transfers funds to them from the central government. This form of devolution is least visible in Guinea.

The second was the increasing responsibility of the regional and district education offices: Some are allowed a greater say in the use of their budgets and in the nomination of head teachers. Mali had taken the reform furthest so far.

The third trend, less prevalent than the first two, was allowing head teachers somewhat more autonomy in managing the resources available to their schools. They now have a larger role in evaluating the performances of their teachers. Most significant is Benin's decision in 2001 to transfer funds directly from the central level to the schools. A 'bottom-up' development in all four countries has seen head teachers take initiatives of their own. Faced with a lack of teachers, as well as a lack of finance, the heads have taken to recruiting teachers from their local communities and paying them small stipends out of contributions requested from the parents through the PTAs and from other fees.

The trends arose in part from policies of larger administrative reform and, perhaps less desirably, from the incapacity of central governments to finance public education. National governments are at present incapable of ensuring expansion and improvement in the quality of the education service and other actors, by default, are taking over that responsibility.

The research also identified four core themes within which the dynamics of the trends are evolving. The following paragraphs will first report the difficulties that the education systems confronted under each theme before then proceeding to describe the measures that the governments have been introducing to deal with them and to make decentralization less of a *de facto* improvization in the face of a lack of both capacity and resources and more of an effective policy in support of better education.

The first theme concerns the relations between four partners: the education offices, the elected local authorities, the schools, and the parents and communities of the students. In the main, the elected local authorities or municipalities tended to play a small role, although this varied, from some which took a fair interest to those which took no interest at all, even in Mali where municipalities took over responsibility for schools in the early 1990s. Where they do take a stronger interest, their relationships with the district education offices can be marked as much by conflict as by co-operation. At the root is a clash of legitimacies: Education officials refer to their professional legitimacy, while local authorities emphasize their political legitimacy.

At the school level, the relationship between the school and the community was much closer than that between the local education office and the municipality, but was not without problems. The relationship between head teachers and chairpersons of the PTA was especially strong, but unfortunately tended to be exclusive in that the pair tended not to include other teachers and other members of the PTA in their decision-making. On the whole, both teachers and PTAs did not question the arrangement, partly because of the generally hierarchical nature of the education system and the composition of the teaching cadres, and partly because many members of the PTAs were unschooled and illiterate, did not know in any detail what their functions were supposed to be, and were often selected because of their possible usefulness as, for example, mechanics or plumbers. It has to be said also that few members of the PTAs seemed to show much interest in the workings of the schools. In an effort to make the schools more accountable to their communities, Mali and Senegal are creating school management committees, but what their relationship to the PTA will be has not yet been fully worked out.

Relationships between schools and district education offices were at times not close. Instead, in quite a few cases there was a *de facto* decentralization, with the head teachers being left to run their schools with only sporadic direction and guidance from the district offices, which did not have the resources to reach out to these schools.

The second theme concerns monitoring the quality of education in schools. District education offices are supposed to help ensure that schools do provide education of adequate quality. However, the research confirmed what was already clear to most observers. Many district offices were uncertain of their mandate, not knowing precisely what they were supposed to do. Even if they did know, many of their officers were not really qualified to fulfil their mandate. In Benin, several were teachers who had become unable to continue teaching in classrooms, but needed to be given some work to do. There was little sense in being able to plan strategically for the development of the education system in their districts. Most actions were either responses to administrative requests from higher up or to emergencies from further down.

Most did not have the resources to undertake their most basic task in maintaining quality, which is to help ensure that teachers teach competently.

The ratio of district officers to teachers was often as high as 1:200, but there was insufficient transport to enable them to visit even a small fraction of them. Further, when the district officers did manage to visit a school, they tended to behave as inspectors and assessors, rather than as supports for better teaching. Few organized workshops to discuss pedagogical quality or assisted schools to evaluate themselves. On the more administrative side, they had few resources to enable them to keep the schools adequately supplied with the materials necessary for quality, i.e. textbooks and other teaching and learning materials.

Such situations meant that monitoring and maintaining quality were *de facto* decentralized to the schools. However, analogous situations prevailed within the schools. Few of the head teachers were well qualified or prepared for their function of monitoring and promoting quality among their teachers. Many had to cope with a corps of teachers, only a minority of whom were trained. The rest were either volunteers or on temporary contracts. Helping them to teach better was scarcely a possibility, as many head teachers had heavy teaching loads themselves. Textbooks and other learning materials were often in short supply, as was money for purchasing them, maintaining buildings, sports and other school activities.

The third theme was managing financial resources. In all four countries, money was scarce. However, the degree of severity varied from country to country. What funds were provided by the governments were generally tied to strict budgetary lines. Switching them to areas where the needs were more urgent required permission from higher authorities and obtaining such permission was too time-consuming for most head teachers or district offices to bother. An associated problem was that the funds provided often did not reflect the characteristics and needs of the districts and schools. For instance, two districts received identical budgets. But the total primary school enrolment of one was equal only to the sixth grade enrolment of the other. Finally, at the school level the rules governing the uses of funds collected by the PTA mostly failed to encourage transparency; rather, they encouraged the monopoly of power by the head teacher, sometimes shared with the chair of the PTA. Accountability was virtually non-existent.

In brief, the situation was paradoxical. Where autonomy was needed, it was lacking because of rigid controls that were inefficient and counterproductive. Where control was needed, as in the use of parents' contributions, it was lacking. Resources were scarce, but those that were available were not optimally applied to improving education.

The fourth theme concerned the management of teachers. In nearly all schools, there were four categories of teacher: public servants; employees of the community; temporary contracts; and volunteers. The last three were local recruits. This had in some cases the advantage that the person belonged to the community and felt a strong commitment to that community. But there were also disadvantages: Recruitment was often based on personal relationships; qualifications tended to be less than standard; and performance less than satisfactory. Further, their relatively low salaries and unfavourable terms of service promoted not only dissatisfaction and low morale, but also rapid and continuous turnover. The problems of management facing the head teachers were obviously considerable. Each of the four governments attempted to regulate the situation but had not the wherewithal to impose its rules. In effect, there was a *de facto* decentralization in the management of a large proportion of the teaching force.

With the teachers who were public servants on relatively favourable terms of service, the head teachers had some influence in terms of performance assessments, but had virtually no control over postings in, transfers out or promotions. Similarly, local communities and PTAs had no control over the postings in and out of the head teachers of their schools. These movements were in the hands of the central authorities.

The findings under these four themes suggest that the official centralization of education systems is relatively ineffectual because of the lack of resources and capacity and that forms of *de facto* decentralization have developed that partially fulfil the vacuum, but do not assure access, equity or quality in the education that the schools actually provide. On the other hand, the research did reveal, or confirm, a number of positive aspects in all four countries.

First, parents generally show a strong commitment to their children's education. The days when the demand side could be blamed for low enrolments do seem to be at an end. The willingness of parents to contribute to school funds – despite the general lack of accountability among the head teachers and PTA chairpersons – is evidence of that.

Second, all parties in the communities, the PTAs, the teaching cadres, district education offices and municipalities shared a strong belief in the value of decentralization as a means to promote better education for the children. All parties were well aware of what decentralization should entail and what the existing weaknesses were. The feeling expressed most was: "If only everybody would play their role fully".

Third, each of the four countries has launched a number of initiatives to make decentralization less of something that happens for lack of something better and more a means of allowing schools, communities and local authorities to make sure that their children receive an education that is relevant and satisfactory to them. The most notable is the reform of the inspection services. In Mali, the district education offices are now called Pedagogical Animation Centres, with a mandate to offer advice for better teaching and no longer to inspect. Senegal has followed the example of one district in grouping schools into clusters, with the directors meeting regularly and visiting neighbouring schools to help teachers. In Benin, such clustering in 'pedagogical units' has teachers from neighbouring schools meeting nearly twice a month to discuss pedagogical and other matters. Every district office has a few advisors to support these units.

Perhaps even more encouraging was the fact that several schools and local offices had taken innovative initiatives of their own. Arguably, the lack of support from the central level obliges them to do so, while the absence of a regulatory framework makes room for such initiatives. Nevertheless, the fact that these initiatives occur demonstrates a desire for better education and a willingness not to depend solely on the government. The commitment to education and to decentralization and the occurrence of local initiatives provide fertile ground for the successful implementation of decentralization.

The challenge is to transform these initiatives into national policy and practice. This demands strong and concerted effort on the part of the governments. The research in the four countries indicates the following guides to constructing a sound policy of decentralization:

All the stakeholders need to grasp fully that decentralization is not an objective, but a strategy to serve the objective of helping educators provide better education. It does not imply abandonment by the state, but only a change of role for the state. Where the state's supervision and support are weak and where its absence is not neutralized by strong local accountability, mismanagement might well be repeated, even multiplied.The success of the strategy depends on observing the principle of complementarity, which requires reciprocal support between actors with different roles in a common task; they need to complement each other. The schools that function best are those where there is a good relationship between the community and the teachers and where the PTA assists the head teacher. Complementarity requires of course that all the actors know and are certain of their roles.

Success depends also on a proper balance between autonomy on the one hand and, on the other, a feasible framework of monitoring, evaluation and accountability. One of the more disappointing findings of the research is that in none of the four countries has much attention been given to monitoring the actions taken at lower levels. The absence of transparency in the local management of resources is probably the clearest expression of the challenges of decentralization.

Mandates must be linked to resources and assets. If the mandate for parents requires them to provide resources, it should also empower them to require an adequate accounting. If the mandate for head teachers requires them to supervise teachers, it should allow for the time and the training to do so effectively.

Linking mandates to resources and assets obviously requires education systems to build up the latter before they lay down the former. The research confirmed and underlined the deficiency of resources – intellectual, administrative, material and financial – in all four systems examined. Introducing forms of decentralization before the resources to support them are to hand may simply undermine their credibility and reinforce the suspicion that decentralization is another name for the abdication of responsibility by the state. Flexibility in implementation is required to meet varying conditions and varying capacities satisfactorily.

Fiscal decentralization of education in post-apartheid South Africa: any lessons for other countries?[5]

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Background – In 1994, the ethnic white minority of South Africa's population – some 10 per cent – yielded political power to the majority in an election with universal adult suffrage. The transfer brought to an end a regime of systematic and legalized discrimination against the majority, and particularly against the major ethnic group, the Africans, who constituted 78 per cent of

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[5] This paper reflects on the personal experience of an 'insider'. It does not involve a project of the World Bank or a typical donor project.

the population. In educational expenditures, the discrimination entailed a ratio of 10:1 in favour of the minority whites,[6] while pupil:teacher ratios were 15-20:1 in white schools and 40:1 in African schools. The results were that, while 95 per cent of white pupils completed secondary education with a pass mark, only 30 per cent of the African pupils did so.

Putting these injustices right in education followed the new government's general national policy of decentralizing power through what might be called semi-federalization, with a central government and nine strong provinces, each with its own parliament and its own cabinet. These provincial governments took over responsibility for running the schools and employing the teachers. No role was foreseen for the more local municipalities. However, decentralization went further by giving the schools considerable autonomy. Each school now has its own juridical personality, can enter into contracts, can use its funds to hire extra teachers and has some say in accepting or rejecting state-funded teachers assigned to it. On the less positive side, decentralization came during a period of sharp economic austerity.[7]

Some of the challenges in education were obvious. Organizationally, the previous 19 ethnic ministries of education had to be reorganized and absorbed into 10 ministries: nine provincial and one national. The issue of equity in access and quality demanded to be addressed urgently. The entire curriculum and portfolio of instructional materials had to be overhauled to eliminate racism and to bring them up to date. However, there were problems that the government had not been aware of. One of these was inefficiency of the system: Repetition and dropout rates turned out to be higher than anybody had suspected. Equally serious was the low average quality of education:

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6. By 2003, a policy of levelling-up had shrunk the ratio of expenditure per pupil in the formerly 'white' schools to just 3.5 times that in the formerly 'African' schools.
7. The apartheid Nationalist government had operated a huge budget deficit. The new African National Congress Government decided – without prompting or pressure from IMF or the World Bank – to reduce it by introducing a home-grown austerity programme.

The findings of international assessments like the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Southern and Eastern Consortium for the Monitoring of Educational quality (SACMEQ) shocked the nation, for South Africa had believed that its education was the best on the continent. On quite another dimension was the shock of ascertaining the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the professional ranks of the system.

Improving financial equity – The national government tackled financial equity with more than fair success, as measured by the provincial average expenditures per pupil. In 1991/1992, the national mean expenditure was 1,554 Rands (ZAR), with the difference between the highest spending province (Western Cape) and the lowest spending province (Eastern Cape) amounting to ZAR1,496, almost equal to the mean itself. Ten years later, in 2001/2002, the national mean expenditure per pupil was ZAR3,600, with the difference between the highest spending province (North Cape) and the lowest spending province (Kwazulu Natal) amounting to ZAR1,434, less than 40 per cent of the mean. In statistical terms, the coefficient of absolute variation between the nine provinces was 0.31 in 1991/1992. Ten years later, that coefficient had shrunk to 0.10. In other words, inter-province equity had improved by 60 per cent. The new government had managed this improvement within six years of taking power. Within each of the provinces, equity had also improved, but not to the extent achieved inter-provincially. Explaining the achievements requires looking at the way the central government funds the provinces and the way the provincial governments fund the schools.

The central government provides the provinces with blocks of funds, in which education has a weight of 40 per cent. The block fund for education is formula-based, but the formulas are derived not from the costs that prevail in each province, but from the share that considerations of equity indicate that a particular province should receive. The aim is to achieve fiscal neutrality within the framework of austerity. Within the block fund, actual enrolment has a weight of 33.3 per cent, while the provincial population has one of 66.7 per cent; the idea is to decrease the incentives for repetition and has been effective. There are additional weights for the level of poverty and for the backlog of apartheid in each province. Some 98 per cent of the funding for education is determined through this extremely simple formula. The centre leaves the provinces to decide which sectors they wish to prioritize, and over the past 10 years they have tended to allocate between 36 and 49 per cent of their budgets to education.

The central government tries to balance its concern for equity with its wish to respect the responsibilities of the provincial governments by setting norms for the distribution of the funds for non-personnel items. The norms in effect force the provincial governments to allocate these funds on pro-poor criteria that are based on shares, not absolute amounts. Thus, 35 per cent of non-personnel expenditures are to go to the poorest 20 per cent of schools; 25 per cent to the next poorest 20 per cent; 20 per cent to the middle 20 per cent; 15 per cent to the next richest 20 per cent; and just 5 per cent to the richest 20 per cent of schools. The policy explicitly requires the actual incidence of expenditure. However, whether or not a school receives funds to spend as it finds fit rather than have to apply for physical items, such as desks or textbooks, depends on an assessment of its management. If a school passes the management test that a province applies, it can dispose of its own funds. If it does not, it has to make specific requests for whatever it needs.

There was argument about whether similar criteria should apply to the funding of teachers, as well as to non-personnel items. What was finally settled was a set of formulas that were not pro-poor and also not as funding: The provinces would provide ‘physical provisioning’ – that is actual teachers. It is possible that practical problems, such as opposition from the teacher unions or teaching service, prevented direct funding for schools to hire their own teachers and deploying teachers on a pro-poor basis. In 2003, after six years of policy discussion, a solution was reached: In recognition that not all schools in rich areas have rich children, only the best 20 per cent of the teachers would be allocated on the same pro-poor criteria as non-personnel items.

Private schools – The issue of private schools had a characteristic that was peculiar to South Africa. Although they accounted for – and still account for – only 2-3 per cent of all enrolments, many were non-racist, so that members of the African leadership sent their children to these schools. Also, many were pro-poor and already very much in tune with the new government's policies. They were seen as progressive, innovative and supportive, and thus as assets that could not be wasted. The combination of alumni among the political decision-makers and of general public appreciation and goodwill resulted in the continuation of the subsidies they had previously received. However, a revised policy for subsidies followed the pro-poor thrust and explicitly disadvantaged them *vis-à-vis* public schools – no private school would receive more than 60 per cent of the cost of a pupil in a public school. Further, public schools would be allowed to charge fees for specified purposes. As can be seen from the illustrative figures below, these two measures meant that private schools with the lowest fees could be worse off even than public schools that introduced no fees at all.

Private schools that charge less than half the per capita cost of a public school would receive a subsidy equal to 60 per cent of the latter. Private schools that charge between 50 and 99 per cent of the per capita cost of a public school would receive 40 per cent of the latter. Private schools that charge between 100 and 149 per cent of the per capita cost of a public school would receive 25 per cent of the latter; between 150 and 249 per cent would attract 15 per cent of the public per capita cost; while fees of more than 250 per cent of the public per capita cost would attract no subsidy at all.

Thus, if the per capita cost of a public pupil was ZAR3,000, a private school that charged only ZAR1,000 would receive an additional ZAR1,800 in subsidy, yielding a total of ZAR2,800, ZAR200 less than a public school that charged no fees.

Remaining problems – Despite these efforts at increasing equity through explicitly pro-poor measures, problems remain. The most obvious is the decision to permit public schools to charge fees; this can clearly be perceived as a disincentive for poor families to keep their children in school. Second is the uneven performance of the provinces in targeting poverty. Third, the earlier differences between the provinces in wealth and income meant that six of the nine provinces had stocks of buildings and infrastructure that were seriously sub-standard and required substantial investments to make them acceptable. Progress in addressing these backlogs has been insufficiently fast. Finally, there is the issue of quality. It has become clear that redistributing funds and giving more money to provinces and schools does not automatically generate improved results. Quality demands a specific focus and active management. The national and provincial governments are all aware of these issues and are addressing them, but with varying energy and speed.

Education decentralization and accountability in Latin America

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This paper describes a programme focused on the decentralization of education in Latin America, 'Education Quality Improvement Program: Policy, Systems and Management' (EQUIP2). Funded by USAID, the programme uses a consortium of institutions[8] in the United States to undertake technical research and to provide project support for efforts to improve the quality of education through appropriate forms of decentralization. It has recently been examining accountability and governance under decentralization from the points of view of policy-makers, schools and parents.

[8] Academy for Educational Development (AED), American Institutes for Research (AIR), Research Triangle Institute (RTI), Michigan State University and the University of Minnesota. The consortium also works in partnership with the World Bank and PREAL (Programa de la Reforma de la Educación en America-Latina).

One of the more obvious requirements of accountability in successful decentralization is the clear assignment of functions between the stakeholders. However, experience in Latin America shows somewhat ironically that in the short-term there tends to be less clarity on who is to do what and thus a greater risk of confusion, crossed purposes, conflict and frustration. The inference for planning and implementation is plain.

A second requirement is that the clients should not only have 'voice' but should have as direct access as possible to the decision-makers. 'Shorter distance' between the two parties needs to be engineered. In addition to access to the decision-makers, the clients also need access to the relevant kinds information, when they know what to look for, what questions to ask and whom to address. The Latin American experience suggests that one of the effects of information for accountability in decentralization is that it strengthens the incentives to obtain and use more information.

A factor that affects accountability is the consequence of being called to account and being found wanting. If appropriate consequences follow, accountability is strengthened and the probability is increased that decentralization will succeed in improving education. If nothing happens, accountability loses credibility, and so does decentralization. Here much seems to depend on whether the ministry of education is an effective watchdog. Management structures and styles will also affect accountability. Decentralizing management will probably lead to less hierarchy, but spreading managerial responsibility may well run into the problem of less managerial capacity being available.

One of the problems encountered in managing decentralization in Latin America is the difficulty of making information flow downwards and outwards to the clients, for such a flow runs counter to the established custom of passing information upwards and inwards towards the key decision-makers. Part of the difficulty of reversing custom lies in a form of the chicken-and-egg conundrum: People at the local levels have weak capacities to use information, and because they have weak capacities, they express a low demand for it. Thus the key to improving information and its use is building capacity at the local level to use it. Then helping to raise the demand for it will begin to reorient the flow of information towards the client.

The kinds of information that have proved useful in promoting the accountability of schools in Latin American education systems are the results of tests of cognitive achievement. Their use is now almost ubiquitous and courses in how to prepare them are available. In this connection, the instrument of 'school report cards' is of interest. So far they have been tried only in the Paraná experiment in South-Eastern Brazil and are an attempt to increase voice as well as provide information. They include measures of inputs, cognitive test scores and parents' opinions. The paradox with the Paraná experiment was that it produced report cards only on schools run by the state of Paraná and not on schools run by the more local, decentralized municipalities.

Generally in Latin America there is little tradition of citizens exercising voice in the matter of their children's education and there are few associations to express a collective voice. On the side of the authorities, school officials are not accustomed to being called to account by lay people and are not always receptive to the experience. Indeed, there is a surfeit of advisory councils at municipal and higher regional levels, the advice of whom is mostly ignored. If decentralization and strengthening governance in the region are to take the form of making the schools and education system accountable to parents and communities, a good deal of cultural reorientation and training will be required on all sides. If school councils are the instrument selected, their constitutions will need to incorporate real powers of oversight over items like school grants and the high percentage of school funds that are provided by parents in some countries. School council members will need to be trained to understand those powers and how to exercise them most productively. They will very likely need to open strong lines of communication and form associations with PTAs and with municipal and other education officials.

Some Latin American countries have already introduced innovations in the governance of schools. El Salvador has empowered rural parents to manage school budgets. The state of Minas Gerais in Brazil has empowered school councils to select the school directors, and elsewhere in Brazil associations of municipal and state education officials have been formed.

Currently, donors are helping processes of improving governance by building capacity at all levels, assisting with training courses, financing school grants and advising on the development of sound management information systems. They could do more to build knowledge, disseminate information more thoroughly, support the efficacy of associations, facilitate learning and re-engineer ministries of education.

Decentralization and EFA: help or hindrance?[9]

Jeremy Greenland
Aga Khan Foundation

This paper explores some unresolved questions in discussions on decentralization. It focuses particularly on four main topics: curriculum; finance; the deployment of teachers; and the provision of private education.

Curriculum – Much recent literature on EFA endorses the principle of decentralizing the curriculum, but restricts itself to advocating the use of local languages for initial literacy. Even here it tends not to press the issue on the number of local languages a country might afford to support, or the issue of whether only languages with an existing script should enter the school curriculum. Nor does the literature treat in any depth the problem of the urban areas of African countries where a teacher may be faced with several 'mother tongues' in the class. The question of what to do with communities that do not want local languages and that are willing to pay for their children

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[9] For more information, see Greenland (2004).
See the tribute to Jeremy Greenland in the *Preface*.

to learn the official – possibly foreign – language also attracts no attention. The possibility that starting children in their home language and transferring them to the official language towards the end of the primary cycle may result, intentionally or unintentionally, in marginalizing them in the official examinations to qualify for secondary school, is left out of analysis. The issue of decentralizing the curriculum and language of instruction is clearly in need of more thorough examination.

The balance between national and local control over the curriculum also demands closer attention. In Morocco, local communities are resisting the prescribed 'secular' basic education on the ground that the curriculum pays too little attention to Islamic values and religion. In Uganda, an NGO has extended 35 Islamic pre-schools into the primary cycle as private schools that add their own subjects to the national curriculum. More than half of them have declined a government subsidy for fear of reducing their ability to determine their own curriculum. When science is introduced, will the parents expect creationism to be taught alongside evolution? The situation is analogous to the problem faced by Christian schools in the UK and the USA, where the majority secular establishment is opposed by the minority Christian lobby. Similarly, in the early 1980s the Muslim majority population along the coast of Kenya tended not to participate in pre-primary schools, regarding them as Christian, or at least 'up-country' institutions. However, the shortage of Primary 1 places has moved schools to set their own entrance exams that favoured children who had been to pre-school. In response, Muslim leaders asked AKF to fund and implement a pre-school programme in premises that were part of their mosques and that would instil knowledge about Islam and Muslim values, as well as give the children better chances of qualifying for a place in a government primary school.[10] In a decentralizing context, what sort of policy response should such initiatives invite?

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[10] The problem became moot in 2003 with the introduction of free UPE.

The question then – ignored by most international aid agencies – is whether curricula and education shaped by a particular faith, whether privately organized or government-sponsored, will stimulate in economically poor countries a wider demand from parents to send their children to school. The UNESCO EFA report does not record within-country differences in enrolment and completion rates for the basic education cycle. These are enormous in many countries, particularly those in West Africa which have mainly Muslim populations in the north and Christian or other non-Muslim populations in the south. In Cameroon, for example, about 90 per cent or more of urban boys residing in the provinces of the centre, the coast, the west or the south have at least completed primary school, whereas this is the case for only about 40 per cent of urban boys in the north and the extreme north, 15 per cent of rural boys from the same two provinces, and only 5 per cent of their sisters. Would decentralizing the curriculum to accommodate a range of value sets and religious beliefs help narrow these differentials? Would it facilitate UPC more effectively? The discussions of UNESCO, ADEA and other organizations do not address this question.

The literature on decentralization and the curriculum seems also to have missed an ironic development since the 1960s. Then several countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and elsewhere set up national curriculum development centres. Since that time, these centres seem to have declined and donors have lost interest in them. The first generation of their leaders who trained in the UK were surprised at the absence of a centrally prescribed curriculum in Britain; primary school teachers seemed to be a law unto themselves, following schemes of work that they had written themselves. Now, while the donor community encourages decentralization of the curriculum, SSA officials, on visits to the UK, hear teachers complaining about the imposition of Key Stages x to y, the teaching of citizenship and the volume of form-filling that these reforms involve. Had decentralization gone too far in the UK? What is the balance to be sought between central standards and local autonomy?

There is also a political perspective on the issue. Where countries are fractured socially and possibly unstable, many governments fear that decentralization may be a cloak for political secession. There are numerous examples, old and current. Perhaps the literature ignores the problem because it is soluble only by local negotiation.

Financial arrangements – The EFA and ADEA literature does not refer explicitly to the decentralization of financial arrangements. In at least one instance where a small amount of funds could be given directly to the schools, its release was contingent upon receipt by the local district education office of a satisfactory school development plan drawn up by the school committee. Most of the schools of the district were in poor communities and most of their school committees had no members who had completed more than a primary education – and that of questionable quality. Their plans left a lot to be desired, so they had difficulty in qualifying to receive their entitlement. Another issue with local control of finance is that the dominant member of the school committee is often the head teacher. He or she may be used to receiving 'benefits' from pupils' families, for example vegetables delivered to the back door, or pupils being obliged to work on her or his garden. Any voucher or per capita subsidy scheme is a huge temptation for further exploitation of this sort, because the other members of school committees either cannot or are reluctant to question the head's accounting. Indeed, in the experience of AKF, several committees are reluctant to take on these new financial responsibilities and actually prefer the old centralized system, where they at least could not be blamed for misappropriation of funds. The literature on decentralization, governance and accountability seems either to ignore or to underestimate the sheer magnitude of capacity building and training that needs to be undertaken to enable poor communities to obtain, use and account for their funds.

Deployment of teachers – In the experience of AKF in Africa, resistance to a 'secular' curriculum can be accompanied by resistance to teachers drawn from outside a particular community and a refusal to allow children to be taught by persons of another faith. A community can go as far as declining a government subsidy precisely in order to retain its authority to hire and fire its own teachers. That is one side of the story. On the other side, experience in Pakistan raises the question whether communities want or are able to cope with the pressures of deciding which teachers they want to recruit. A third side comprises the teachers themselves: Examples from Pakistan cite their resistance – possibly violent – to being assessed on their performance; while examples from East Africa show that teachers are unwilling to work for varying salaries, but press with the support of their unions for the central government's scales of pay to be observed everywhere and by all agencies. How might a policy of decentralization find a balance between the three sides?

Private education – The UNESCO report *EFA: is the world on track?* and the literature produced for the ADEA Biennale in December 2003 are largely silent on the issue of private education provision and thus on its implications for decentralization, which is invariably discussed only in the context of government provision. The closest the UNESCO report comes is a table, hidden in the voluminous appendices, listing the proportion of private education by country. However, the ADEA Biennale, with its focus on 'striving for quality', does not mention private education in its list of 'seven fundamental pillars' for the improvement of quality. Yet the lack of quality is a major reason for parents preferring to opt for low-cost private schools. Tooley (1999) describes the mushrooming of private schools in India, while in the Punjab province of Pakistan virtually all the schools opened in recent years have been private. The obvious inference is that numbers of parents are willing to help pay for the kind of education – even primary education – they think their children should have.

One of the EFA movement's principles is that basic education should be free. However, none of the countries that have introduced free UPE has yet managed to enrol all children of school-going age, and many countries have little prospect of doing so by 2015. A corollary of this observation is that parents who are in a position and prepared to help pay for their children's education and the low-cost private schools they use are together making it easier for governments to provide schools for those who cannot pay anything at all. Should governments then promote the spread of such low-cost private schools with subsidies on a per capita or school basis as part of their drive for UPC with quality? There are few countries where this nettle has been grasped.

Part of the nettle is the issue of faith or religious belief, as many – perhaps most – private schools are faith-based. The ADEA newsletter describes 'Relevance' in terms of "preparing children for integration into their environment and into the labour force" and "the environment, demographics, health, nutrition, peace, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, democratic citizenship, and information and communication technologies". It does not mention faith. How is the absence of attention to the issue of faith-based provision to be explained? The first reason is inertia. Faith-based schools have existed in most developing countries since colonial times, a tradition that independent governments have not bothered to challenge. Expanding their own provision has been difficult enough.

The second reason is that donor agencies either act as if faith-based provision did not exist or they actively exclude it from their aid programmes. The current President of the World Bank has initiated a process called 'inter-faith dialogue', but so far this seems to have had little effect either on the Bank's policy documents or at the level at which Bank staff negotiate their massive grants or loans to governments. The UK maintains an even more paradoxical stance. The current UK Government is reinforcing long established support for faith-based schools at home by advocating their expansion with promises of subsidies and vouchers. Yet its representatives in Eastern Africa take the view that the needs of government-run schools are such that they deserve priority and that UK taxpayers' money should not be spent on programmes which might be perceived as favouring one religious community over another. In this they stand with the majority of international aid agencies in not accepting the proposition that providing faith-based education in economically poor countries will stimulate an additional stream of demand from parents to send their children to school.

Conclusion – This paper has argued that a policy of decentralization can help countries to advance towards EFA, but only if governments and the aid agencies that support them develop more detailed and enforceable guidelines on how such a policy affects curricula, financial arrangements, the deployment of teachers and the provision of private education. In all four areas, what is the trade-off between considerations of equity and affirmative action?

General discussion on decentralizing education systems

The discussion on the four presentations on decentralization in education began with an echo of the concern that it was still discussed as though it were a single concept, despite 20 years of experience with different forms and dimensions. Decentralization was complex, as it involved many elements, many levels and many stakeholders. It tended to take two main forms, handing more responsibilities to the schools and/or devolving more responsibilities to lower levels of government. As there seemed to be general agreement that decentralizing a particular element was not a good or goal *per se*, but rather a step towards more efficient or better quality education, the debate should be couched not in general terms but in terms of precisely what aspect of education would benefit from what kind of decentralization. Was it the curriculum and the choice of textbooks? Was it the raising of funds? Was it the more equitable allocation of funds between schools? Was it the spending of funds by schools or district offices? Was it the recruitment, selection and remuneration of teachers? Each of these items needed to be discussed on its own terms. Particular forms of fiscal decentralization could, for instance, put poorer regions at a disadvantage: In Ethiopia the lack of capacity in some regions had rendered them unable to absorb all the funds allocated to them, so that they had to return some of the resources to the central government. Decentralizing the curriculum could mean that local preferences for content could put some students at a disadvantage in meeting national assessments of knowledge.

The countries of Central Europe had tried various types of decentralization, but deconcentrating power from the centre and passing it down the line to regional and lower-level offices had been the path taken by most, as in Hungary. The financial reforms had tended to give more power to the ministries of finance in overseeing the use of the funds. There had been concerns over equity – one of the steps to rectify inequity had been the desegregation of schools for the Roma population. On the whole, it had proved difficult to ensure that the local levels actually implemented national policy, as mechanisms and resources to assess and enforce implementation were usually lacking.

This summary of experience in Central Europe resonated elsewhere. There were worries that targeting the poor turned out more complex in practice than it appeared on paper and was often beyond the capacity that was actually available on the ground. Funding formulas were certainly a way forward, but ensuring that actual allocations were made in accordance with them depended on effective mechanisms of monitoring. Designing and establishing such mechanisms had proved problematic, even in South Africa where the central government could show improved equity at the level of the nine provinces, but found it less easy to demonstrate for the 30,000 schools of the country. Despite the difficulties, however, the attempt was finally made. It involved re-centralizing the national assessment system, because equity in funding was not enough to bring about equity in quality. Quality is an issue that demands separate address and redress.

The terms 'accountable' and 'accountability' occurred quite frequently in discussions on decentralization, but there was often less than full clarity on who was accountable for what and in particular accountable to whom. In countries where even centralized systems lacked the capacity to hold their component parts fully accountable, creating sufficient capacity in the wider society to hold the education system accountable was likely to prove a lengthy task. In South Africa, for example, settling what the policy should be on capacity building for decentralization had taken two years of discussion because of the range and numbers of people and functionaries who had to be included. An intensive, phased programme of training then followed over the next two years as the beginning of what has to be a long-term and sustained effort in updating those already in the system and training those new to it. In all, designing and launching capacity building and getting it to a point where the system could operate with some reliability took four years.

One participant enquired whether there were any innovative, sustainable institutional responses to capacity building for decentralization that donors did not support? No example was forthcoming, possibly because the members of IWGE are all donors.

The discussion took up the question of evaluating and measuring the impacts, both positive and negative, of particular forms of decentralization. Assessing the impact of efforts to decentralize had proved too complicated to handle in many countries. For example, reports of improved transparency in applying funds to their intended purposes were mainly based on perceptions, as the financial officers responsible for accounts were almost always absent from meetings. The marked decline of inequality in per pupil expenditures between the provinces of South Africa was encouraging. Were similar data available for other countries and for other aspects of education, like the impacts of decentralization on inequalities in access, quality and attainments? Decentralization might be good for managing an education system, but what were its effects in the classroom? Did it encourage greater or less individualization among students? Did national standards make it more difficult to derive learning from the immediate environment? Did they tend to be more content-based, whereas more locally determined standards might emphasize competencies more?

For Latin America, there was a lack of information on the outcomes of decentralizing different components of the education system. There was, however, positive news of the increasing role of the media in forcing the system to be more transparent and accountable. In the past, the media used to support the teachers in their demands for better salaries and conditions – although they occasionally criticized the profession – but are beginning to help parents with information on the actual working of different parts of the system and enabling them to bring pressure to bear on the managers. This development has encouraged donors to take more responsibility for providing information to the media, as it is a very positive tool. However, it is also true that the media are not always impartial and not always fully truthful. Their biases are not necessarily controllable – there have been instances where they have put an anti-minority gloss on the information supplied.

A participant commented: "You see what you know." Efforts to decentralize education tended to focus only on the education system itself and to pay insufficient attention to its context. Within the larger society there might well exist levers to guide the system. The experience with the media reported from Latin America, for instance, suggests the question of whether parents could be coached in planning how to keep the press and other media apprised of developments, so that they could have more of a role in setting the agenda and influencing the management of the system. Thorough decentralization required widening the scope of what the reforms addressed.

Decisions on whether to decentralize, what to decentralize and how to decentralize are political and therefore carry political costs. In this light, donors should help governments to think through how to make such decisions soundly in the light of the best and latest information available, and, having made them, how to make them work well and then how to build on them to affect improvements in classrooms. Accepting such an obligation, donors should determine what they themselves need to learn, especially about the relationship between the capacity available and the real scope for improving quality.

The discussion took up an issue mentioned in the presentation on South Africa: the matter of permitting public schools to charge fees. On the one hand, such a measure certainly decentralized an important decision that could affect the quality of education for the better and put it into the hands of local people (head teachers, PTAs, school councils) who would best know the local conditions. On the other hand, how could such a policy be reconciled with pro-poor policies? If the fees were standard for all students, their effect was to require the poor to pay higher proportions of their incomes for a public education, which was tantamount to regressive taxation. Such fees might well work in the special case of South Africa, where enrolment and the level of such fees were not problems, but where quality was indeed a problem, so that even the poorer families were prepared to pay the fees to afford their children a better education. But in other countries fees and charges had been found to deter poorer families from sending their children to school and the abolition of fees had helped raise enrolments. Permitting public schools to charge fees was then a policy that could not be recommended for unconditional universal adoption. Decentralizing such power could create inequities within schools and could lead to a situation where schools, as agents of the state, were generating wider inequalities between richer and poorer communities in the quality of education.

South Africa's policy of subsidizing private schools also drew comment. If the special history of the private schools in South Africa were set aside, could the policy be defended on grounds of access or equity? It was true that much private or fee-paying education was provided by religious organizations that had a pro-poor bias: They often used part of the fees paid by the better-off families to offer free places for poor students. The Islamic *madrassahs* in Pakistan and Uganda provided examples. Even so, whatever the concessions made to attract talented poor students, fee-paying education was normally perceived to be the province of the less poor, so that any state aid for private schools would seem at first sight to run counter to pro-poor policies. Even if the subsidy were less than the full per-pupil cost of a government education, the step would seem justifiable on only one essentially temporary ground: the overcrowding of existing government schools, so that the private places were additional to what the government could provide physically at any given moment, even if it had the financial resources to do so.

Of course, subsidizing private schools to provide some free places would in principle not be objectionable from the point of view of access, under the conditions that: [a] such places were allocated to poor students; and [b] mechanisms and capacity were in place to ensure that the fortunate students were in fact from really poor families. There might be more questions from the point of view of equity, as a popular perception is that private schools are of higher quality than public ones. Would there need to be additional criteria to ensure that the poor students chosen to attend private schools are capable of taking full advantage of the superior facilities?

The discussion ended with a call for more comparative research on the different patterns of decentralization, their requirements – particularly in terms of capacity building – and outcomes. An especially helpful set of comparisons might be made between the experiences of the Anglophone and Francophone countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Theme 4
Participation and human rights

Rights-based programming and education governance: a UNICEF work-in-progress

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UNICEF

UNICEF has been re-examining whether approaching education from the perspective of the international conventions on rights and the universal declaration of human rights would help clarify the criteria for assessing educational policies. The approach accepts a number of axioms: Rights are the keys to choice and to enabling people to develop their potential:

- rights are universal and indivisible;
- people have rights and are entitled to demand them. They are not objects of charity;
- states exist for the good of their citizens and have duties and obligations to fulfil;
- certain avoidable and remediable disparities within and between societies constitute a denial of rights.

In this light, society can be seen to include people who have certain rights (rights holders) and others who have a duty to see that those rights are respected and met (duty bearers) – while between them is a relationship of accountability. If this perspective is applied to education, it yields:

- children as rights holders in education;
- parents as rights holders on behalf of their children, although many of them have been denied their own rights through the disparities of access

and quality that have long existed and still exist in their societies – their legacy of Rights Denied;

- families and communities as duty bearers in that they have the prime obligation to see that their children do enjoy an adequate education;
- teachers and managers as duty bearers in that their acceptance of their roles and salaries obliges them to set up and implement adequate conditions for teaching and learning;
- policy-makers and planners as duty bearers obliged to create the frameworks and mobilize the resources to enable the managers and teachers to fulfil their obligations;
- an 'accountability chain' in education that runs reciprocally between the various groups of duty bearers. For example, the policy-makers can require the managers to show that resources have been properly applied, while the managers can call on the policy-makers to make the resources available. Or parents can demand that the policy-makers create proper frameworks to help them educate their children, while the policy-makers can require parents to ensure that their children make proper use of the schools.

Programming basic education within a framework of human rights would take as the key guiding principle the best interest of the child. In the contexts of whole countries, 'the child' would necessarily be embodied in groups of children clearly defined by their geographical, demographic, social, economic and possibly ethnic characteristics. Programming would begin by identifying areas where the denials of the right to education were most severe; they would likely lie where disparities in access and quality were widest. Such a step obviously requires a lot of very detailed information, which underlines the importance of disaggregated data; gross totals, national percentages and averages would be of little use. On the side of obligations, programming would start with identifying gaps in the capacities of the different groups of duty bearers in terms of their attitudes to the tasks at hand, the skills they possess, the numbers available and the resources at their disposal: Are those available willing and actually able to fulfil their duties? Are there enough of them to satisfy the rights of all the rights holders? And do they have the resources to carry out their obligations to a satisfactory standard? The next step would involve advocacy in all appropriate quarters to assemble the resources necessary to remedy the gaps in capacity. In effect, the programme would work to empower the various layers of duty bearers with the means to meet their obligations in full. It would also need to develop ways to intensify partnerships between duty bearers at all levels in efforts to eliminate denials of rights.

As the title of the paper makes clear, developing the rights-based approach is a work in progress. UNICEF is still grappling with the entire complex of rights, accountabilities and governance in basic education. A simple list of the issues that remain to have their place worked out within the general framework will serve to indicate the scope and direction of the work:

- state parties and legal frameworks – which sections of the state are to be most closely involved in clarifying rights in education and in constructing the necessary supporting legal frameworks?
- education provision and access issues;
- school governance and quality issues;
- education policy and investment issues;
- policy-makers, planners and teachers – what approaches would be most effective in winning these key people over to appreciating and implementing a rights-based perspective?
- new programming indicator – developing a grade appropriate net enrolment ratio (GANER) would enable governments to monitor more precisely the on-time entry and progression of children through a school system. It would answer such questions as whether all six-year old children had entered grade 1, and what proportion of eight-year old children were in grade 3, repeating grade 2, or had dropped out. This would not only give a more precise measure of the efficiency of a system; it could also point to the prevalence of child labour or other impediments to education in different parts of a country.

Role of civil society in educational change in transition countries

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The countries that have used the past decade or so to move from a socialist, closely controlled form of society to more open forms – the so called 'transition countries' – have seen the increasing influence of civil society. In December 2003, the main organizations that mobilized the 'rose revolution' in Georgia were what we now call civil society. On 1 May 2004, eight countries completed their 'transition' by acceding to the European Union: Their civil societies had become well established, but were facing problems of sustainability. In other countries, political instability and the Georgian rose revolution had provoked reactions that began to threaten the open society; in some, the governments had begun attacks on civil society and on NGOs with relations with the Open Society Institute (OSI).

OSI had begun offering support to NGOs active in education in the early 1990s. It saw them as sources of innovation, new approaches to teaching and learning and alternative methods. As the decade moved on, OSI shifted its focus to making systemic impacts, encouraging NGOs to support national education reforms. It even built partnerships with a number of state institutions. In the past two years, it has continued to promote strong, active and viable national civil societies. At the same time, it has expanded its work to the international plane: It now offers support to international NGOs concerned with promoting human rights and more open societies and has begun to foster transnational advocacy networks.

There are several reasons why OSI supports civil society's work in education. In the first place, civil society is not monolithic and brings several streams of thinking to bear on education. It thus encourages policy-makers, managers and educators to explain themselves and justify whatever they are doing, as well as to listen to other ideas. Civil society in effect works to democratize education. It also tends to diversify education systems, opening up processes of reform and making them more transparent. This promotes public accountability and stimulates more effective measures to discourage and prevent corruption. NGOs can also act as sources of innovation and front-runners for new ideas. Because they tend to be very action oriented, they are well suited to piloting new programmes and testing new methodologies. They make for relatively rapid linkages between policy and practice. They also make for changes that are rooted in actual local conditions and are thus more likely to be sustainable. For all these reasons, OSI believes that civil society and its NGOs constitute a force for improving the quality of education.

OSI's support to civil society takes several forms that can be readily listed:

- establishing and supporting NGOs, spinning-off OSI programmes to them;
- capacity building;
- building partnerships and networking;
- supporting coalitions of NGOs at national level;
- supporting international NGOs and transnational advocacy networks; and
- advocating for qualitative participation of civil society at all levels;

OSI takes the concept of networks seriously and has invested in a number of them. First, there are the Soros Foundations that have been established in a number of countries. Then there are more than 90 NGOs and their spin-offs that the OSI has helped get on their feet, along with a number of international associations. OSI has also linked up with a number of education policy centres and formed regional education co-operation networks in South-East Europe and Central Asia.[11]

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[11] See the web sites www.see-educoop.net and www.educasia.net for more details.

OSI perceives that these policy centres are highly valuable in promoting educational improvement for several reasons: They provide voices that are both independent and thoughtfully critical of reforms that are proposed; they help compensate for the lack of policy analysis skills in the state's educational institutions; they help reflect the diversity within a society and 'pluralize' policy making; through their monitoring and systematic assessment of effectiveness and impact they can identify good practices, disseminate their lessons and bring them forward for incorporation in reformed policies; they often focus on underprivileged and unrepresented groups and make policy-makers aware of gaps in policies and programmes.

To keep these policy centres at the cutting edge of reform and innovation, OSI promotes their membership of 'regional education co-operation networks'. Using the Internet as a mechanism for sustaining the flow and circulation of information across boundaries – institutional, cultural and national – OSI aims to broaden the public debate on the goals for reform and approaches to it, and at the same time increase the level of expert involvement in discussing the findings of international reviews. To make these networks maximally inclusive, OSI operates them not only in English and Russian, but also in the local languages of the region.

As OSI sees it, those sections of civil society that are concerned with education face four current challenges. The first is sustainability. Within the transition countries there has been no recent tradition of private philanthropy, so that local private funding for all branches of civil society is very limited. On the international level, after the early flush of enthusiastic and plentiful support, donor organizations are turning their attention and priorities elsewhere, which means that opportunities for attracting funds for projects and programmes are shrinking. And in this field, of course, the NGOs of the transition countries are in competition with the international NGOs that tend to be larger, more experienced and more skilful in adapting to the donors' shifting priorities.

Associated with financial sustainability is the challenge of human resources and capacities. Civil society does not yet have a long history in the transition countries, so that those who participate in it actively still tend to be few, with their capacities and energies stretched. That means they have as yet achieved a relatively limited outreach to the range of educational stakeholders, cannot yet hope to reach the whole educational population and have so far had not a substantial impact on educational policy and practice. Unless the NGOs concerned with education can attract wider and more numerous efforts from all the relevant stake-holding groups, their sustainability will be precarious.

The third challenge comes from the political environment of many transition countries. In some, the government views this sector with reserve, if not overt hostility – after all, who elected civil society? For whom do the organizations of civil society actually speak? In others, the state tolerates civil society, but its invitations to participate in policy dialogue tend to be formalities with little real intent to listen seriously to other views.

This poses the fourth challenge, which is learning to work with governments at all their levels – national, regional and local. Civil society needs to build up its credentials and credibility in education and then to improve its strategies in public relations. The chief art the NGOs need to master is how to balance an independent and critical approach to proposals for reform with collaboration in promoting, and possibly helping to implement, whatever is agreed.

Community participation in alternative basic education: the case of the Oromia Region, Ethiopia

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This paper describes an effort to offer poor rural children an adequate education through institutions other than the normal primary school. The locus is the Oromia Region of Ethiopia. A sketch of the situation in Ethiopia will help understand why alternatives to primary school need to be used. According to the 2005 Global Monitoring Report, the country has a net primary enrolment rate of just 51.5 per cent for its boys and 40.8 per cent for its girls. The school life expectancy in the eight-year basic education cycle for a boy is 6.1 years, while that for a girl is only 4.2 years. That is the national picture. Ethiopia now has a quasi-federal constitution, which has decentralized much authority and responsibility to its constituent regions, so that, as would be expected, there are substantial differences between the regions on many dimensions. In education, these differences show up not only in the gender ratios, but also on the rural-urban axis, by ethnic group and by religious affiliation. The Oromia Region, which is the focus of this paper, covers about 28 per cent of the country's area and contains about 35 per cent of the country's people. It is mainly rural, with both agricultural and pastoral areas, and is sparsely populated. Precise statistics on its school system are not available, which is in itself an indication that the region is more than likely worse-off than the national average.

Ethiopia runs an eight-year cycle of basic education divided into two phases, each of four years. Most unfortunately, progression from the first phase to the second is not yet automatic, although everybody recognizes that four years of schooling are entirely inadequate. Entry to the second phase is selective, in that children completing the fourth grade must pass an exam to qualify for entry to grade 5. But selection in a sense operates also for entry to the first phase: The conventional primary schools have relatively high standards for minimum numbers of pupils, numbers of classrooms, facilities like proper toilets, security measures, fees, textbooks, uniforms and other items. The costs involved are too high to allow the regional government to finance schools in sufficient numbers, or the smaller and poorer rural communities to qualify to have schools, or the poorer urban and rural families to enrol their children. In effect, the standard system rules out universal access to primary education.

On the other hand, there is a strong demand, even among rural communities, for affordable basic education for their children. In response, an alternative system of basic education has emerged in Oromia. It aims to use better organization, better curricula and better teaching to enable pupils to complete the four-year first phase in three years and to learn enough to pass the selection exam for the second phase. However, the alternative system has not given up on the standard system: It aims gradually to upgrade its centres to the point where they finally qualify for registration as proper primary schools.

The characteristics of the alternative basic education in Oromia include first of all a flexible or non-standard school calendar to accommodate the different agricultural seasons of different communities, when children's help is important to families in a range of tasks. Second, the school curriculum is also flexible or non-standard to cater for what different communities see as important for their children to learn. Third, unlike the standard primary school, the alternative centres tend to be small with relatively few pupils, as they are deliberately located close to the comparatively small communities they serve. Fourth, the communities that want the centres have to build and maintain them for themselves. This can result in fairly low standard, makeshift structures and facilities. Finally, the teachers or facilitators who agree to work in the centres come from the communities and are remunerated by them. This is a form of decentralization that includes virtually every element of education: finance; construction; curriculum; scheduling; and control of the teaching force. The support that comes from the Regional Education Bureau may not appear to be much, but it does include the important issues of official recognition, assistance with ensuring that equivalence is maintained with the standard schools, and help to enable them to be eventually upgraded to an official primary school.

The challenges that face communities that try to set up their own alternative basic education centres are obvious. Do they have the capacity to build, manage and maintain the centres? Are they capable of producing the facilitators, getting them trained for the job, making sure they receive their remuneration regularly and on time? Are the facilitators up to the job of not simply teaching a standard curriculum, but also adapting it to the interests of their communities, and of operating on a flexible schedule of classes? Do the district education offices have the capacity to guide the alternative centres in maintaining consistency of policy with the regional and national levels? How will each of these levels cope with shortages of resources and deficiencies of expertise?

So far there has been no systematic evaluation of the development and operation of the alternative education centres. However, the indications seem to be that the demand for education and the willingness to work for it are indeed high, but several communities just do not have even the meagre resources or capacities to take part in the movement. It does seem essential to help communities build a consensus about what education means and to see their school as part of a wider framework of comprehensive development. And it does seem that it is essential to win the participation of the women of a community to get things moving.

JICA has been providing technical and financial assistance to a number of communities in the Oromia Region to establish their alternative education centres. It plans to document successful examples and draw out their lessons. It will need to verify their impact as well as analyze 'what works', 'when it works' and 'how it works', so that these experiences can be disseminated and adapted by other communities in other regions and possibly other countries. If these community initiatives work, JICA could promote their scaling-up with policy support, capacity development and of course financial support.

General discussion on participation and human rights

Spelling out the implications of a rights-based approach to education was thought to be useful, especially in its identification of 'duty bearers' – it made for a practical, ‘implementable’ perspective. Rights-based education necessarily involved the state at least as the guarantor of the right to education and at best as the agency that ensured that every child and adult had unhindered access to an education of good quality that she or he needed or wanted. Most discourse, particularly that on Dakar and the MDGs, proceeded on the assumption that the state does in fact do its level best to fulfil that obligation. However, given the actual conditions in many countries, a rights-based approach needs to emphasize the roles that players other than the state could take. NGOs are often the voice for communities to pressure their governments into installing permanent solutions to replace temporary expedients that the communities have devised to pursue their rights. It is NGOs who can press governments to explain the principles by which they spend money educating some children, but provide no money for the education of others. On the other hand, NGOs sometimes have to be careful about inadvertently perpetuating inequities through their practical expedients to fill gaps on what is intended to be a temporary basis. Governments can use these as excuses to delay their own action.

On the international plane, however, it is the donors who need to drive the rights-based approach, simply because the present situation shows so many rights denied. Equity is necessary and the donors need to engage in policy dialogue on what the implications of equity are. Also, in view of the very long and continuing evolution of equitable policies and practices, donors should be leaning much more than they already are on long-term funding of programmes and moving more rapidly away from the customary form of project funding that is tied to short budget cycles.

However, in some countries and regions, as the Oromia experience illustrates, governments are simply not in a position to assure every child and every adult of their right to education. So initiatives with alternatives become necessary – the spread and success of ‘non-formal’ schools in countries like Bangladesh and India demonstrated that locally based expedients that mobilize the interest and energy of small communities can be better than doing nothing at all for the education of children. The argument could be made that without such ‘non-formal’ initiatives, EFA would not be attainable by 2015 – the drive for EFA had tended to emphasize the standard school and to do some injustice in ignoring the contributions of these initiatives. However, for these initiatives to be sustainable, quality is vital. Although it is still early days for the Oromia initiatives, it has become clear that the new centres are not just a cheap and inferior alternative: Some of the centres are providing better education than the standard primary schools, as indeed they must, since they aim to do in three years what the schools are supposed to achieve in four (this observation raised a question about the training that Ethiopia’s primary school teachers receive: How was it that untrained teachers in the alternative centres taught more effectively? But that question could not be pursued).

Part of the discussion of the Oromia experience seemed to suggest that some of the communities of the region not only lacked resources, but were also not resourceful in the sense of being willing to devise new ways of dealing with problems. It is possible that the communities concerned needed an alternative system of education, but also needed to be convinced that the alternative was at least equivalent to the standard system. If people felt that they had a fair shake, they tended to become resourceful in securing what they wanted. Here again, as noted above, quality is vital, for if the alternative fails to deliver a decent education, support from parents and communities will dwindle and vanish.

In contradiction to the earlier assumption about the state, the experiences of the OSI in Europe and Asia and the experience from the Oromia Region of Ethiopia show the state either as an enemy of progress and reform in education or as an absentee, benign but apparently out of touch or out of sympathy with what poor families and communities can afford for their children’s education. How should international donors act in such situations?

For its part, OSI recognized that the state does have responsibility, so that it supports NGOs that talk to the state but do not take over its functions. At the same time, it enables the NGOs to deliver lots of training for teachers and students through such devices as student parliaments. Steps to ensure quality in education and teacher training were beginning – for example through the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) – but they had had to be fostered by NGOs, as no state had assumed them.

There was a query about the role of OSI in encouraging and funding NGOs to begin work on educational reform, then withdrawing at the end of a project but before the NGOs could develop more diversified bases for funding from national sources and budgets. OSI faced a difficult dilemma here. As an international donor, it could not fund particular organizations in particular countries indefinitely, so it did hope that its beneficiaries would develop new and more diverse sources of support within what had been judged a reasonable project period. However, in some countries this had proved a good deal more difficult than expected. OSI certainly did not want the organizations that it had assisted to fail, for that would of course undermine its overall mission, so it was still grappling with finding the right balance within the conditions of each country where it was operating.

On the more positive side, many of the teacher training institutions that it had supported had now been taken on by the state, despite the risk that their ability to develop and try out new ideas might be suffocated. OSI had tried to ensure some diversity by promoting a market in teacher training through offering vouchers to schools to select what kind of training they wanted their teachers to have.

On the issue of competition for funds between international and local NGOs, it had to be borne in mind that there were several levels of NGOs even within countries, for some of them were very local indeed. There were opportunities for the larger, more experienced NGOs to help train the smaller ones and offer them assistance in other ways. OSI had found that the most effective NGOs have broad portfolios of interests, rather than specializing in single areas such as teacher training only.

OSI had found that other donors tended to prefer easier projects, like building primary schools, to the more difficult tasks of building capacity for more intellectual exercises, such as policy analysis. Thus, it had been virtually on its own in supporting a number of institutes for policy analysis in education, a function that OSI had found useful. At the outset, the policy centres it supported promoted collaboration with governments on the basis of offering independent analyses of situations and the likely effects of proposed reforms. That required a careful balance between offering necessary criticism and keeping the government disposed to consult. In most, possibly all cases, the arrangement did not work out fully. However, as in Tajikistan, some national compacts were reached for a policy analysis institute to be financed by OSI, while other donors undertook the training of students, local officials and regional authorities. In other cases, although the governments spoke the rhetoric of welcoming independent voices, they actually preferred NGOs to be supportive rather than politically active. In a couple of instances, for example in Uzbekistan, OSI and a number of other NGOs that questioned the governments' proposals and judgements were refused re-registration.

As an endnote to the discussion, there was a welcome for the new educational indicator that UNICEF was developing, the grade appropriate net enrolment ratio (GANER). It was felt that it should be additional to, not a replacement for, the usual gross enrolment ratio (GER) and net enrolment ratio (NER), which are helpful in particular contexts.

Theme 5
Following up on Dakar and improving data

Education for All: the monitoring challenge

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A comment at the launch of the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) for 2004/2005 in Mali observed that a prime benefit of monitoring progress is that it "brings home the fact that a number of problems are not specific to one country but are widely shared. Knowledge of progress in other regions enables countries to evaluate national results and to assess where they stand. It provides an opportunity to envisage a concerted search for solutions through sub-regional activities". It also serves to hold the global community to account for its undertakings, as well as to chart progress against the six Dakar goals and targets, including the MDGs, and highlight effective policies and strategies. Monitoring can alert the global community to emerging challenges and promote international action and co-operation.

Monitoring progress: the big picture

As regards the goals of universal primary education, gender parity and literacy:

- 83 countries have achieved the three goals or have a good chance of doing so by 2015;
- 43 countries are likely to miss one goal. This group includes Bangladesh, China, Egypt and Indonesia;

- 28 countries are at serious risk of not achieving any of the three goals – India, Pakistan and many sub-Saharan African countries feature here.

Specifically on gender parity, even though the goal of parity in all countries by 2005 has not been met, some of the world's poorest countries have achieved dramatic increases in girls' enrolments over the past few years. Nevertheless, no fewer than 54 countries are still at risk of not achieving gender parity even by 2015. The largest gender gaps are in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and some of the Arab States. As in the past, gender disparities continue to be overwhelmingly in favour of boys.

The 2004/2005 report adopts a 'rights' framework to analyze the reasons why girls are held back. Household poverty, traditions that discourage education for girls, child labour and school fees all infringe the right to access education. Unfriendly environments, such as the lack of satisfactory toilets for girls or inadequate safeguards for their safety, and gender biases in teaching and curricula breach and threaten rights within education. Job segmentation and the lack of women in faculties of science and science-based jobs reflect unequal rights throughout education. To insist on girls' rights to education, the report recommends incentives to poor households (bursaries and school-feeding programmes, for example), fee-free primary education, gender-sensitive curricula and teaching materials, training teachers to be gender sensitive in their teaching styles, and ensuring safe schools.

The 2005/2006 EFA-GMR focuses on quality in education. It concludes that EFA cannot be achieved without improving education quality and effectiveness. In many countries, a significant cohort of children drop out before grade 5, while assessment tests show very weak performance in basic literacy and mathematics, even for full primary education in many low and middle-income countries. The report reviews research evidence on multiple factors that determine quality and then maps out key policies for improving the teaching and learning process, especially in low-income countries. It also, of course, monitors international assistance in support of progress towards achieving the six goals.

Producing the GMR over the past four years has brought out a number of tensions, as well as a number of opportunities, all of which are worth a glance. The first might be called the balance between statistical integrity and political clout. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) collects the basic data. But these data are not its own, they are taken from the statistical services of UNESCO's member countries. Not all of these services are comprehensive, nor are all of them fully reliable. The 2002/2003 GMR noted serious data gaps: For instance, more than 70 countries did not have data for primary school net enrolments, while in some countries the data from the ministry of education were not consistent with those from the census or social surveys. Checking the data, 'cleaning' them and finally reporting them consumes a full two years. The effective two-year lag between current reality and publication undermines the political clout of the data, which can always be discounted as out of date and not reflecting significant improvements.

Further, monitoring early childhood care and development, the formation of life skills, or even quality in education, raises methodological challenges that can call the validity of inferences into question. Similarly, creating a composite 'EFA Development Index' is very attractive for policy-makers and educators, but, as with all summary indices, runs the risk of masking as much as it reveals.

A second tension occurs between monitoring all the goals in detail and picking out a particular theme for exploration. The time lag between the collection of the data and the release of the report, coupled with the slow year to year evolution of the situations of the countries, could reduce the usefulness of the report. On the other hand, a thematic focus permits the exploration of a goal in both its local and global contexts and its evolution over time. It also offers a framework for understanding the multiple dimensions of each goal.

Then there is the issue of the balance between the Dakar goals for EFA and the MDGs, which include but go well beyond education. Are the global initiatives reciprocally complementary to the efforts for EFA or are they on the contrary actually competing for attention and resources? The UN Millennium Project, which produced its first report early in 2004, is to recommend the best strategies for achieving the MDGs as a coherent, balanced package. However, there is a risk of losing the 'expanded vision' of education as a lifelong entitlement and process and having it whittled down to just UPC. There is, on the one hand, wide recognition that EFA is essential for achieving the goals of reducing poverty, hunger, the major diseases and gender discrimination. On the other hand, the MDGs contain no mention of literacy, early childhood care and development or quality in education.

Quite apart from the questions of balance is the matter of monitoring aid to education and getting the picture right. There have been steady improvements in reporting to OECD-DAC, but current international reporting arrangements do not always capture education aid, which is sometimes masked under the title 'unspecified' aid or as support through other channels. It would be useful also if donors could improve on the gender dimension of their reporting aid for education. Recent evaluations suggest that the effectiveness of aid to education could be considerably enhanced if the donors and receiving countries could form stronger partnerships and help each other identify aid instruments that are sensitive to local contexts.

The purpose of the GMR has generated discussion of the tone it should adopt in presenting its contents. The report is indeed a technical and reference document. Should it be presented simply as that or, as it is an integral part of the drive for EFA, should it be also a tool for advocacy and present itself in a form that facilitates that role? It has a range of target audiences: policy-makers; planners; researchers; advocacy groups; and media in all the countries that have subscribed to the MDGs and EFA. Getting the balance of the tone right between them requires thoughtful and comprehensive packaging. There is the main report: The last one ran to 416 pages, the next one will be slightly longer at 430. There is also the much more manageable summary of 20-30 pages. In addition, there has to be substantial support for translations, regional overviews and the now obligatory web site. Overall, the GMR is moving towards a stance of advocacy based on the evidence it amasses and through using that evidence to heighten the sense of accountability that governments and their partners should feel for the goals of EFA.

That aim of course provokes the question of whether governments and agencies actually use the GMR and, if so, for what purposes and how? Do the agencies that fund educational projects, programmes, SWAp and budget supports promote the GMR among their own staff and the personnel of the governments they work with? At present, not enough is known to answer these questions with any confidence. However, it is clear that, if the GMR is to achieve the kind of impact that it should have in making people take the EFA goals seriously and in stimulating and sustaining action in support of EFA, everybody involved should be concerned with creating more effective partnerships in using the GMR as a tool for EFA.

As regards the Dakar goals specifically, it is salutary to recall that April 2005 will mark the fifth anniversary of the Dakar Framework of Action. Seven points are worth making in this connection. The first concerns the definition of basic education. The MDGs emphasize only the completion of the primary cycle (UPC), but Dakar takes a wider view: It includes early childhood development, the quality of education, literacy, and opportunities for youth and adults to learn both in general terms and for skills development. The GMR will follow Dakar rather than the MDGs here.

The second point is on the national action plans that Dakar urged countries to produce by 2002. About 120 such plans probably exist, but it is not clear just how new they are in their strategies and proposals, how supportive they are of additional action, or whether they have been costed. Most of them contain too little information for analysis and, in the worst cases, they run parallel with the existing sector plans, in the sense that they are separate and appear to take no account of what is already planned.

Third, Dakar underlined the need for a global initiative to ensure that there would be no shortage of resources for education. It would entail increasing and accelerating the flow of aid, along with improving co-ordination between governments and donors and making sure this time that progress towards the goals was better monitored at the international level. UNESCO produced a plan to meet the need, but it was not much noticed. The FTI was the first real response to the need, but many bilateral and multilateral agencies do not find it easy to engage with global initiatives and the initiative has been slow to gain momentum. The current net situation is that aid for EFA and education generally is lower than it was in 1990 after Jomtien, and this is despite some upturn since Dakar. Current calculations suggest that annual aid to basic education is running at some US$1.5 billion, somewhat less than one third of total aid for all levels of education.

Co-ordination is the fourth point for consideration. At Dakar, UNESCO was given a strong mandate to co-ordinate efforts for EFA so as to sustain momentum. EFA was to be partly the product of a close-knit partnership across agencies that would give consistent support to governments in forms that would facilitate rather than slow down action and implementation. The current strength of that partnership is a matter for debate. Admittedly there is the High Level Group that will be meeting in Brasilia and there are other forums for co-ordination. But what does the word actually mean on the ground? It seems at present to involve exchanges of information and some joint decisions on desirable action. But the actual impact of those exchanges and decisions is uncertain and debatable.

Effective co-ordination depends partly on effective monitoring and reporting, which constitute the fifth point for comment. Regular monitoring was not an important issue after Jomtien, even though there were two meetings to discuss it. Now, after Dakar, it is a growth industry. Quite apart from the GMR, which is annual, there are international movements, not necessarily official, to keep the world alive to the demands of EFA. Perhaps the most prominent is the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) with its novel annual initiatives: In 2004 it scored prime ministers on a ten-point scale for their efforts to make sure their governments supported EFA as energetically as possible. Analogously, the Economic Forum at Davos awarded education just 3 on a scale of 10 for effectiveness of effort. While this growth in monitoring is a positive development, it is as well to be aware that monitoring reports do not always say the same thing. For instance, despite the perception of the Economic Forum, global monitoring shows that there has been a dramatic reduction in the numbers of out-of-school children.

The impact of the drive for EFA on the development debate has been less than might have been expected – this is the sixth point of comment. Education seems to be relatively insular, with a poorly articulated position on precisely how it stimulates or contributes to wider social, economic or political development. In this, it seems to miss a trick in arguing the case that education is more than just universal primary schooling and that a broader interpretation would contribute to the attainment of the MDG for reducing poverty, promoting better nutrition and health, achieving gender parity and so on. In this wider sense, education is part and parcel of the development debate.

Finally, it is true that at the global level progress towards EFA and UPC has been modest and that the goal of gender parity by 2005 will not be attained. On the other hand, it is also true that some countries have made dramatic progress in raising school enrolments and improving the effectiveness of their schools. If they can do it, can the world's efforts at monitoring, co-ordinating and fast-tracking not be brought to bear to move the more laggardly to follow suit?

Task Force report on achieving the MDG of UPE

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The Millennium Project is an exercise commissioned by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and led by Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. It draws together hundreds of policy-makers, practitioners and experts in ten Task Forces to map out strategies to meet the MDGs. The Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, as its name suggests, focuses on Goal 2 (to achieve universal primary education) and Goal 3 (to promote gender equality and empower women). The Project evaluates and issues periodic reports on the progress of each country towards achieving the MDGs. It also mobilizes political support for the MDG by promoting locally led national campaigns and co-ordinates the activities of UN agencies as they help countries to achieve the MDGs. Specifically, the Project works with governments to align their poverty reduction strategy papers with a long-term, needs-based strategy for achieving the goals in the context of the ten-year planning horizons required for the 2015 deadline. To date, the Project has prepared a total of 83 MDG country reports on 73 countries.

In education, the focus is on Target 3 of Goal 2, i.e.: “Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling”. The indicators are what might be expected:

- the net enrolment ratio in primary education;
- the proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5; and
- the literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds.

For gender equality, the focus is on Target 4 of Goal 3, i.e.: “Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015”. The ‘preferable’ target has clearly been missed, so the efforts for 2015 will need to be all the stronger. Again, the indicators that the Task Force will be watching are fairly obvious:

- the ratio of boys to girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education;
- the ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old;
- the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and
- the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

Clearly, the education system cannot attempt to satisfy all these indicators on its own; it will need allies and supports from the political system, the cultural system and the economic system. The macro-economic context will influence the patterns of employment, and labour market demand for skilled labour will affect demand for education. And, of course, as the East Asian financial crisis of 1997 reminded the world, macro-economic shocks affect the ability of families to keep their children in school.

One hundred and twenty-one million children are out of school, 65 million of them girls and a disproportionate number of them in Africa, Southern Asia and the least developed countries. Despite the figures, there is of course good news. A number of developing countries have made a lot of progress, in many cases faster than the historical trends in the industrialized world. Even more encouraging, the movement towards gender parity is one of the fastest moving development indicators in many countries over the past 20 years. On the other hand, the not-so-good news is that sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Oceania experienced little increase in their primary net enrolment ratios between 1990 and 2001 and are also characterized by particularly low levels of girls' participation in school. In many countries, the actual average levels of attainments in reading, writing, maths and science are well below the official standards, which of course raises worries about the quality and effectiveness of much of the teaching and learning. In addition, there are worries about the governance of the system and the management of the schools.

Currently, only 37 of the 155 countries classed as developing have achieved universal primary completion and, if the trends of the 1990s are a guide, another 32 are likely to achieve the goal by 2015. That would leave 86 countries – more than half – possibly falling short. Some 70 countries need to accelerate their progress or risk not reaching the goal. However, in several of them completion rates have stagnated or even fallen in recent years, so that hopes need to be restrained. At least 20 African countries have 70 per cent primary school enrolment or less. Even the best case scenarios in the historical record did not sustainably raise enrolments quickly enough to go from that level to 100 per cent in 11 years. Most countries, including today's rich countries when they were developing, progressed much more slowly.

As is well known, the hardest challenge is reaching the poorest and making sure that the 'last 5 per cent' have access to education and stay in school. They mostly include rural people and ethnic minorities, as well as disabled people and those caught up in conflict or post-conflict situations. In all these groups, females tend to be represented disproportionately. In Western and Central Africa, the median grade completed by the bottom 40 per cent of the income distribution is zero, because fewer than half of the poor children complete even the first year of school. In contrast, the wealthiest quintile has a median of four to six years of completed schooling. Even in countries with high enrolments – that include some of the middle-income ones – there can be major problems with dropout, especially in the Latin American region.

As already mentioned, there is a problem with average levels of academic achievement. Major gaps exist between students' attainments in developing countries and OECD countries. Even the best-performing students in most developing countries rank far behind their counterparts in OECD countries. To illustrate: In Bangladesh, two thirds of primary school leavers could not manage the minimum competencies in all four basic skill areas, while in Tanzania, as recently as 2000 only one fifth of primary school leavers could pass the exams in language and arithmetic.

There are also well recognized problems with the management and governance of the systems and individual schools. Very large classes may not be avoidable, but they do make the jobs of teachers much more difficult and lead to increases in dropout rates. Lax management and perhaps pressure from teacher unions allow much absenteeism on the part of teachers – rates of 27-28 per cent have been observed in Kenya and Uganda and can be found in other countries also. Political patronage in hiring and deploying teachers add to the difficulties of management, along with bribery either to get passes in exams or to gain school places for children who have not done well on the selection exams. There are all manner of informal payments for favours and fees for unspecified purposes, not to mention the abuses that can arise from private tutoring.

Despite these situations, the Task Force has felt able to offer some recommendations that should help to reach higher enrolments and longer retention. First of all, governments, civil society and donors should focus on specific interventions to target hard-to-reach children, such as:

- eliminating school fees and making sure they are not replaced with 'informal' local fees;
- instituting conditional transfers;
- school feeding programmes – breakfast or lunch – either for poor pupils or for schools situated in poor localities; and
- school health programmes.

Second, as there is a strong and consistent relationship between the educational attainments of a mother and the education of her children, educational opportunities – both formal and non-formal – should be increased for girls and women.

Third, as one of the reasons for drop out during primary school is the difficulty of qualifying for secondary education, there is a need to reduce the competition and difficulty and simultaneously raise hopes of success by increasing access to post-primary education.

Recommendations that should help to improve quality and responsiveness to parents include devising ways to increase the accountability of the schools and the system to parents and communities and to arrange for basic information about resources and performance to be accessible to parents and other interested citizens. Alongside this, there should be measures to allow civil society organizations to advocate for children and parents and hold both governments and international organizations accountable to their commitments.

To be able to work realistically on quality, the education system should measure and analyze learning outcomes more rigorously and develop sound data at the national level to be able to plan realistically for the sector.

Although the majority of the work is up to developing countries, the Task Force urges donors to support positive and progressive change, by:

- living up to and increasing the financial commitments they have made;
- reporting on their performance through a transparent accountability framework; and
- investing in genuine evaluation.

As regards the Fast Track Initiative (FTI), the Task Force has observed its difficulties in obtaining the necessary funding commitments from donors, which has naturally created something of a crisis of credibility among the countries that took the initiative seriously and developed sound plans for attaining the MDG. The Task Force believes that the FTI should disclose basic information regarding the decisions of its secretariat, the actions of the partners and the compositions and decisions of the Working Groups. Donors should invite the governments and civil societies of the countries applying to the FTI to review the proposed framework for accountability on the one side, and on the other they should increase their investments in impact evaluation, emphasizing learning outcomes. They should make the findings of the evaluations available to all interested parties through electronic and other vehicles.

During January 2005, the Millennium Project will submit its final report and recommendations to the UN Secretary General and will wind up its work by the end of June. In September 2005, the UN will convene a summit to review the world's progress since the Millennium Declaration.

World Education Chart: making sense of the world by having fun with statistics

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Gapminder AB

The 'Gapminder' firm had had the support of Sida in working with the UN on the design and production of free software that illustrated the world's development statistics in forms that were dramatic and could be explored at several levels, from the most globally aggregate down to local detail. The CD-ROM, distributed free of charge, contains eight sets of data laid out in time series: Human Development and Economic Growth (2004); Millennium Development Goals (2003); Human Development Trends (2003); World Income Distribution (2002); World Development Chart (2003); World Education Chart (2003); World Health Chart (2001); and Dollar Street (2002). It is obtainable free from www.gapminder.org.

Data capacity building: EFA, statistics and UIS

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The first question to be asked of any set of statistics is whether it reflects reality. To do so, it needs to be mechanical, in the sense of being 'untouched by a biased hand', accurate and objective, an indisputable reflection of what is happening on the ground.

Once the statistics are at hand, they can be used to construct indicators. Good indicators are a powerful means to communicate messages about progress in an area at both national and international levels. At the present time, unfortunately, indicators for describing economic phenomena are much better developed than those for social concerns. Also unfortunate is that all indicators come with risks attached: High stakes in terms of reputations, careers or resources can, as is only too well known, lead to perverse performance indicators and other misuses.

The UN has formulated a set of principles for national official statistics. They aim to promote:

- relevance for policy-makers, planners, managers, researchers and the media;
- accessibility for all who want to know or use them – they are a form of 'public good';
- meeting and on occasion even setting professional standards for validity and accuracy;
- transparency and accountability in the conduct of public policy and business; and
- the prevention of misuse.

While observing these principles should make statistics more valuable for planning at the national level, it would of course also add to their value for constructing indicators that are comparable across nations and useful at the international level for at least two quite obvious sets of purposes, again on two levels. On the international plane, such indicators provide a global picture of the progress of different sections of the human race along agreed dimensions of human development and delimit more clearly the accountability of the community of nations and the international organizations for appropriate action. On the national plane, comparative data enable countries to see the larger picture of the state of the world, to appreciate more concretely what progress is possible, to benchmark their own status and progress in comparison with their neighbours, and to identify where they might try to learn from each other.

However, precautions are naturally necessary in constructing global indicators. The quality of the data used has to be ensured, but with some awareness of the possible tradeoffs between the time required for rigorous incontestability and timeliness for the purposes for which the data are needed. Next, a minimum of 'metadata' must supplement the indicators, if only to enable users to judge their 'fitness for purpose'. This involves selecting qualitative and contextual material to integrate with the data, so that users can make *informed* use of what is available.

In monitoring progress towards the Dakar targets for EFA, one of the challenges that UIS must meet is the increasing demand for education data coupled with the heightened expectations of the users: People want more data, better data and data delivered more rapidly. Along with this is the growing complexity of the operating environment, as new players, each with slightly different needs, begin to demand education data. A third challenge arises from the need to integrate data sources from beyond the education system into the total picture; child nutrition and health, for instance. Alongside these emerging challenges is the old one of the chronic and ongoing weakness in statistical capacity at national levels: Despite many years of programmes of scholarships for international training, in-country training, focused workshops and the like, statistical offices have difficulty in increasing and retaining their trained staff long enough to raise their performance to the levels that planners seem to be demanding.

However, challenges also arise on the side of the users, for data do seem to be under-utilized. There seem to be several reasons for this. On the supply side, data can be criticised for not being timely, or being irrelevant to policy or simply of poor quality. On the users' side, researchers in many countries lack the resources to access the data – in some countries, they do not have any access to them – and often lack the skills to make use of what data is accessible.

The need, then, is to build national statistical capacity along two tracks: one to identify, collect and process the data, the second to help specify the needs and make use of what is produced in response. On the first track, countries seem to fit into three broad categories: those that lack any infrastructure for collecting and processing data and have governments that do not value and are not committed to either collecting or using statistics for guiding or formulating their policies and planning; those that have basic data channels in place and have some commitment to using data for policy and planning, but have the data sources fragmented across ministries, incomplete coverage and questionable relevance; and, thirdly, those that might be termed 'self-sustaining', where the information systems are stable, good links are maintained between the users and producers of data, and the latter are responsive to policy issues. In this third group, the actual uses of data tend to have made the demands for it more complex.

Those who want to promote wider and better-informed uses of data need to consider taking five steps. First of all, they should examine the nature of the barriers to collecting, processing, disseminating and accessing data and see what they can do to support systems for access. Then they should work to ensure that what data are available are properly archived and accessible for later processing and re-processing. At the same time, forms of support for the users of data need to be designed and promoted. Alongside these steps, they should be creating the contextual descriptions and 'metadata' that will aid policy-makers in interpreting the data accurately, as well as moving to have the training of researchers integrated with training in how to access the range of data sources and capitalize on them as fully as possible.

To play its part in these five steps, the UIS has six streams of action in train for the rest of 2004 and 2005. With financial support from the European

Union, it has programmes of direct capacity building in statistics in 11 countries that have qualified for the FTI. With financial support from the World Bank, UIS is conducting primary school surveys in 14 countries and, in the course of that, training local staff in how best to design and implement such surveys. In partnership with StatsCan (the Canadian department of statistics) and the Educational Testing Service of the USA, UIS is conducting a Literacy Assessment Monitoring Project in five countries, with the usual component of training local statisticians, researchers and planners. Simultaneously, UIS is doing analytical work with UNICEF on how best to measure out-of-school children, and with the American Institutes of Research (AIR) on how to measure and monitor educational equity within countries. In addition to these five sets of partnerships, UIS is on its own piloting an effort in rapid data collection as part of the current education survey, and is also conducting a consultation on redesigning the education survey with the intent of securing more accurate and more comprehensive information.

Results-based evaluation of USAID education support

Greg Loos
USAID

Annababette Wils
Academy for Education Development

Like most other organizations that are spending taxpayers' money and are answerable to public forums, USAID is continuously trying to improve the evaluation of its programmes, along with the availability and accessibility of the information that issues from them. What follows here is a description of its current effort to improve the way it meets two needs: the need to be objective and the need to be transparent. USAID aims to use the objective findings of results-based evaluation as evidence to justify the government's and agency's budgetary support for the education sector, and also to assist in revising strategies and planning afresh. Results-based evaluation should also make what the education sector of USAID is trying to achieve – and is actually achieving – more readily transparent to wider publics.

The broad approach uses the well established categories of both 'formative evaluation', which looks at inputs, processes and activities, assesses their sustainability and points to adjustments of course, and 'summative evaluation' that documents outputs, identifies outcomes, traces impacts and assesses possibilities and options for scaling up. The vehicle for making the information available to anybody interested will be an interactive data portal, due to come on stream towards the end of 2005 or early 2006. It will be sited in an Education Policy and Data Center that will be stocked with information from USAID projects during 2005, country data profiles and a 'rapid assessment calculator', which will be described shortly.

The country data profiles will contain information on all development sectors, offering a wide coverage that will be easily accessible and updated three times a year. National data will be taken from 2004, while data on sub-national, more disaggregated levels will be used as they become available between now and 2006. A reliability index will indicate the degree of reliance that planners, researchers and others can place on them.

The 'rapid assessment calculator' will offer the possibility of assessing the overall state of a number of sectors in a country. Using the regional – African, Asian, Latin American – average as the comparator and a scale of 0 – 1, the calculator will enable the user to choose variables from the available data, assign weights between them and work out a composite indicator of their status. With tabular and graphical presentations, the rapid assessment calculator will derive human resource needs – i.e. the demand for ranges of skills – and the response likely to be required from the education sector – i.e. the supply of education that should meet the demand. 'Human Resource Needs' will include five areas: governance (with eight variables); poverty (with six variables); economic performance (with nine variables); workforce (with seven variables); and infrastructure (with five variables). 'Education Sector Generation' will also include five areas: access (with 13 variables);

quality (with eight variables); performance (also with eight variables); investment (with four variables); and non-formal education (with six variables).

The information on USAID education projects will come directly from USAID contractors and will be entered quarterly. It will contain both qualitative and quantitative assessments. A key word thesaurus will govern the qualitative assessments, while the quantitative data will issue in automated and standardized reports that will include expenditures, numbers of beneficiaries in different activities, and the percentage distribution of beneficiaries across the target categories. By the end of 2005, all USAID contractors will be supplying project data in this form.

The Education Policy and Data Center will merge the information streams from the country profiles and USAID projects and will manage the interactive or 'quierable' data portal. It will be independent of USAID and operate as far as possible on a value-neutral basis. Overseen by an advisory board of recognized educational authorities, the Education Policy and Data Center is expected to become fully self-financing by 2007. Its web address is www.epdc.org.

The final product of this effort, the interactive data portal, will provide:

- quantitative and qualitative data on countries and USAID projects;
- tabular and graphical presentation of data;
- geographic and topical analysis;
- over-time and by-target analysis;
- development of expected and observed project data ;
- formative and summative evaluations;
- historical capture and post-intervention analysis; and
- moving-average surrogate for annual data.

General discussion on following up on Dakar and improving data

Data and actual learning – Interesting and useful, as are all the data disseminated by UIS, USAID, the World Bank and other organizations, they are still disconnected from and give no clue as to the actual learning achieved in schools and other forms of education. Much attention is given to the environment of learning – good teachers, teaching based on local resources, good quality instructional materials, supportive mothers – but not so much on learning itself. What is needed now is a composite indicator that combines years of schooling with what students have actually learned. Developing such an indicator will doubtless be complex, difficult and more than a little contentious, but a good product could be very useful to policy-makers and planners.

Associated with this is the need to monitor not only the goals, but also the strategies for reaching them: Are there data on how measures such as abolishing primary fees and providing feeding programmes for breakfast or lunch actually work and what their effect is on progress towards EFA? In relation to this, early childhood development programmes have been shown to help not only with increasing primary enrolments and reducing primary dropout, but also with increasing the incomes of their beneficiaries, quite apart from preventing common childhood diseases and reducing the needs for medical treatment. Should they not be monitored as part of the strategy to achieve EFA?

EFA and broader development – Perhaps the most surprising or most recent finding was that following up the progress of EFA offers a handle on development more broadly. It forces people to look at the fine print about what is actually happening in actual classrooms and about how donors are actually honouring their commitments. It has also shown that accountability is not unipolar in the sense of tracking only expenditures, but is a useful tool also for looking at how plans are being implemented and with what degree of quality.

Further, following up EFA has shown that, while education is indeed central, it is also dependent for its attainment on the attainment of the other MDGs. There is no competition or battle between UPC and the other MDGs; on the contrary, they depend on each other, so what is needed is the kind of more closely integrated approach that the 2004 *World development report* advocates.

Sources – There was some feeling that data from household surveys tended to be more comprehensive and more reliable than data from other sources. Also, the Latin American region seemed to be producing more of them, though the number was increasing in Africa also. They were valuable not just for what they revealed about household education, but even more for the links they showed between education and the poverty quintiles. However, even household surveys have some problems; for example, during a repeat visit for verification, one household in Uganda gave information that differed widely from what it had reported during the first visit. Therefore, statistical offices do need to capitalize on several sources, such as the various forms of administrative data that governments and local authorities collect.

Timeliness – The tension between timeliness and assured reliability in data and statistics is well illustrated by the OECD, which published data from 2001 only in September 2004. The data for the 2004/2005 GMR also came from 2001/2002, so that there is a gap of some 18-24 months between collection and publication. The data chain that begins with collecting the data, then collating, cleaning, analyzing and finally disseminating the findings does take a lot of time. However, if any one of those links is weakened in the interests of speed and timeliness, the entire credibility of the information delivered could be undermined.

Reliability, accessibility – Gapminder and the Education Policy and Data Center had demonstrated the power of visuals in bringing the macro and micro pictures together and Gapminder had shown a way to communicate more effectively and more dynamically. However, statistics and their visual representations are of use only if they are reliable, trustworthy and accessible to those who need to mine them. UIS, like many statistical offices in UNESCO's member states, has had problems with losing staff and with them a proportion of its institutional memory and capacity, so that sustaining the trustworthiness and accessibility of the data it generates is a chronic challenge. Low income countries seem to be the worse affected. For example, one country has had no fewer than five projects to improve its management information systems for education, but has made little progress since its capable staff are creamed away by better paying employers. On the other hand, there are many success stories among middle-income countries – Brazil is exemplary – while the higher income countries appear to suffer fewer problems. Since these problems seem to be endemic for statistical offices, a solution may lie in adapting the models demonstrated by Gapminder and the Education Policy and Data Center; i.e. statistical offices, like those of Sida and USAID, focus on the comprehensiveness and reliability of the data collected and contract the dissemination and presentation of the statistical output out to specialist firms in the private sector, like Gapminder and the Academy for Educational Development.

One of the requirements additional to, but associated with, reliability and accessibility in ensuring that data are not misleading is disaggregation to the appropriate level. The EFA GMR treats all countries as though they were identical. The indicator on completion rates is misleading. The report should train a stronger focus on poor countries and on those which are lagging. It might also look at the trends between 1960 and 1980 to identify longer-term patterns of behaviour, not just the most recent.

Co-ordination and duplication – Although the Education Policy and Data Center that USAID was developing was interesting and may well offer facilities not available from other portals, was it not also something of a duplication of what UNESCO and the World Bank provided? Did it not resonate with the observation that the recognition of the need for co-ordination did not correspond with the actual situation in co-ordination? Might it have served the global education community better to have had the information and admirable expertise that USAID had invested in its own portal invested instead in upgrading a portal supported by a partnership of appropriate organizations? Might it not be possible to combine all these separate databases productively? Technically, developing the software to compare sources of data and to derive useful indicators could well prove difficult as the data are not standardized, but the effort would be worthwhile.

Projections – There was a question as to whether Gapminder had done any projections towards 2015 based on past trends. Gapminder responded that projections would present no technical problems, but there was already so much data available that was not used that Gapminder preferred for the moment to put its emphasis on capitalizing on current situations. It undertook global comparisons annually, but produced comparisons of neighbouring countries more frequently and was working on comparisons for very local levels. The most difficult problem was that data tended to be fragmented and have so many gaps, so that comparisons were difficult to construct.

As for composite indicators, they and their implications can sometimes be hard to understand, so that Gapminder has to work on simplifications.

A major issue facing Gapminder in making its software more interesting and more useful for its users was developing an interface that would enable users to insert their own data to create and explore comparisons of their own.

Theme 6
Modalities of development co-operation

The sector-wide approach in education

IWGE has been monitoring the development of sector-wide approaches to planning for the education sector (SWAp) for the past several years. At its previous meeting in Helsinki, it had discussed the cases for Cambodia and Tanzania, as presented by observer-participants from the donors' side. On this occasion, the group invited a representative from a ministry of education that had entered the process to discuss the experience from the point of view of the ministry. The country in question was Namibia.

The sector-wide approach in the Namibian education sector

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This presentation gives the perspective of an insider and does not pretend to a high degree of objectivity. The study on which this presentation is based ended in November 2003, two months after the agreements for a SWAp were signed, so that developments later than that date do not feature here. The presentation focuses on the practical aspects of developing a SWAp, enters into no theoretical discussions and attempts to answer six questions: How long did it take to prepare the SWAp? What difficulties were encountered in preparing the SWAp? Did the process change practices in the two ministries of education? Did the SWAp strengthen capacity to implement policies? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the SWAp? What are the training needs for undertaking a SWAp competently?

How long did it take to prepare the SWAp? The two ministries of education in Namibia (the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education and Technical Education) had their introduction to the concept of a SWAp in December 1998. Moving from that point to the signing of a funding agreement in September 2003 consumed nearly five years. The reasons were humdrum: The officials of the two ministries had to continue with their ordinary duties and so were elusive for meetings; involving officials from the Ministry of Finance and other ministries was easy in principle, but equally elusive in practice; the donors involved were numerous and, though willing, again elusive to assemble for discussions. The steps involved in the process were many and required a number of studies: an Education Strategy Planning Study, a Scoping Study for the European Union, and a sector appraisal.

What difficulties were encountered in preparing the SWAp? There were four sets of difficulties. The most basic was grasping the concept of the SWAp itself and of others implied in a SWAp. What was the definition of the sector? What did it include or exclude? What was meant by macroeconomic constraints? These notions were unfamiliar to most officials of both ministries of education. What was meant by the 'medium term expenditure framework', by 'additionality' and by 'indicators? Working through these with the staff of the several ministries involved and fleshing them out in terms of the conditions and customary processes of Namibia required a good deal of discussion and, of course, substantial amounts of time.

The second set of difficulties concerned the human resources available. Staffing in a ministry of education is relatively inelastic and most staff have duties that keep them fully occupied: the more senior they are, the more occupied they tend to be. Developing the SWAp required the attention and time of an unexpectedly large number of already busy people, which naturally caused some strain. Apart from the numbers was the question of the seniority of the staff. The data and basic information needed for a SWAp may well be assembled by junior personnel, but the strategic thinking and guidance that must go into it have to come from officials with greater authority and thus higher seniority. Securing the time and attention of such officials in two separate ministries over extended periods was more than a little challenging.

Quite apart from the availability of people who were actually in office was the problem of absence. It came in two forms: non-continuity and vacancy. It is a frequent characteristic of ministries that staff are transferred or promoted at regular intervals of two to three years. The ministries of education of Namibia were no exceptions, so that officials who had launched a process were often no longer in office when the time came to take it forward. There were thus frequent needs for new orientations and new learning. It is also a frequent characteristic that ministries have slots and budgets for particular posts, but nobody to fill them; the vacancies are left unfilled, which means that there are fewer people available than planned to undertake the functions for which the posts were created. These features of rotation and unfilled vacancies contribute to the slowing down of the development of the SWAp for education.

These shortages of human resources were exacerbated by the demands for technical assistance for counterparts. Finding suitable counterparts who were not already fully engaged was a problem.

Further, the human resources that were notionally available to help with the SWAp were often not fully equipped for the task. Their capacities in financial matters, organizing and analyzing data and in writing up reports of studies and meetings were not of the standard that might be found in a ministry of a high-income country. Producing the required estimates, reports and studies was then also a factor in slowing processes down.

The third set of difficulties comprised the processes themselves. They included the Education Sector Programme Support, the Strategic Planning Advisory Group and the Education Strategic Planning Advisory Group, four Strategic Plans – one each for the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, the Ministry of Higher Education and Technical Education,

Education For All and HIV/AIDS – the Scoping Study of 2001, the Sector Appraisal of 2002, the Joint Advisory Review also of 2002, a second Sector Appraisal and Joint Advisory Review in 2003, and, finally, a World Bank study of Namibia's education sector, which was still in process at the end of 2003. Managing all these processes with their many meetings and minutes of meetings, getting the minutes read, finalized, approved and signed, and getting the resultant agreements drafted, approved and signed all absorbed capacity and time. Alongside these processes were those involved in seeking technical assistance for various new tasks and waiting for it to arrive, and at the same time dealing with and adjusting to donor partners, who changed their minds as they changed their local personnel. Finally, from time to time there were the audits: to deal with them and their natural requirements for documents and information, normal work had to slow down or even on occasion be suspended altogether.

The fourth set of difficulties concerned information: producing it accurately from the minutes of meetings and from reports; disseminating it in a timely fashion and making sure it reached the right people; arranging succinct briefings both upwards to senior management and downwards to all the support staff involved; maintaining a due balance between 'the wood' or big picture and 'the trees' or the supporting details; and making sure that all involved were kept apprised of the planning calendar and of the succeeding adjustments to it.

The interactions between these four sets of difficulties help explain why agreeing on a SWAp, even for a country as small as Namibia with its population of fewer than 2 million people, absorbed nearly five years.

Did the experience of the process change practices in the two ministries of education? Overall, it is too soon to draw any firm conclusions, as the final agreements were signed only in September 2003. However, it is clear that the processes for the SWAp did involve many more senior staff than the customary planning processes of the two ministries. The SWAp also involved them in discussions on a wider range of interests and concerns – the ministries of finance and health, for instance – than the customary process would have done. These interactions, as well as those with the donor partners, could well have expanded their knowledge of policies, practices and possibilities and altered their perceptions of what strategic planning involved. Given that processes for decentralizing the education system and for medium-term expenditure planning were also in train, the staff involved in moving the SWAp forward are more than likely capable of undertaking more comprehensive and coherent strategic plans.

Did the SWAp strengthen capacity to implement policies? Although this question is important, not enough time has elapsed since the final agreement on the SWAp to be able to judge how its provisions are being implemented.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the sector-wide approach? There are several clear strengths in the sector-wide approach to education. First of all, it compels participants to take a broad and comprehensive view of what the education sector includes. Second, at least as it was developed in Namibia, it encourages a focus on outputs and outcomes and the means to achieve them. Third, in the Namibian context, the approach required considerably more continuous consultation and co-operation between the two ministries of education than had been customary. More than that, it compelled the two ministries to develop more intensive liaison with the central ministries of finance and development planning than had been customary, which helped the staff involved to develop a much broader perspective on the role of education within the national context. And it was an undoubted strength that so many of the senior education officers were drawn to participate in, contribute to and learn from the entire process.

There are unfortunately some weaknesses to offset the strengths. The first is perhaps the relative newness of the SWAp. Many staff of the donor partners themselves are not completely certain of what the approach involves or of what defines a sector. Their uncertainty makes it more difficult for the ministries that are undertaking the approach to clarify their own thinking or to know what the partners expect. It also entails ambiguity about who means what when 'putting the country in the driver's seat' is discussed. If the country is in the driver's seat, should the partners be doing any back-seat driving? If they feel they must, but are not completely sure of what they should be telling the driver, only confusion and paralysis result.

Connected with this is that only two of Namibia's many donor partners took a real part in developing the SWAp. Alongside this was the failure to incorporate the findings of the World Bank's study of the education system into the final agreement for the SWAp. How these findings will be integrated into the process that is now ongoing is an issue still waiting to be resolved.

The duration of the process (five years) was certainly a weakness and exacerbated another one. That was the level and intensity of the involvement of ministry staff in the process. While there are certainly benefits from this, the costs include diverting time and attention away from more ordinary routine, but nonetheless important, tasks to keep the education system running smoothly. The diversion might not be so damaging in ministries which were not understaffed and where senior and junior staff were not already fully loaded. In Namibia, however, the ordinary system did have to pay a price in some disruption to its routines over a very long period.

What are the training needs for undertaking a SWAp competently? Although undertaking a SWAp requires training in a number of skills, these skills are more in the nature of general competencies and are not specific to the needs of a SWAp. They include an understanding of what macro-economic considerations are and what they entail; what strategic planning means and how to undertake it and also do the costing that it requires; what indicators are and how to interpret and use them; the skills of communication, like taking and writing up minutes, drafting reports, composing and delivering succinct oral reports; and using electronic media to communicate rapidly and efficiently.

Questions and comments on the SWAp in Namibia

Question: Did Namibia learn any lessons about conducting a SWAp from any other countries in Southern Africa? *Response*: Not directly. There were no study visits to such countries as Malawi or Zambia, nor were there advisory visits from any of them. The ministries of education in Namibia had feedback on the experiences of those countries only from the donor partners.

Question: In some countries, 'putting the country in the driver's seat' has meant consulting with civil society, school boards, PTAs and the like. Did the Ministries of Education in Namibia undertake similar consultations? *Response*: Namibia had a Presidential Commission on Education and Training, which held hearings and consultations on a countrywide basis. The two ministries capitalized on the considerable information that the commission amassed. In addition, the Strategic Planning Advisory Group did try very systematically to involve several NGOs in the many meetings and discussions that went into the SWAp, but the latter were unfortunately never available.

Comment: Involving the central ministries of finance and development planning is a prudent move. In Afghanistan, the plan resulting from the SWAp was adopted, but then other government policies were discovered that counteracted and overrode the plan. The result was that the money for the education plan went as usual directly to the Ministry of Finance and from there into the usual political economy. The Ministry of Education thus learned that it would pay to stay with the project mode, rather than try any more sector-wide planning. Namibia's approach should serve to uncover such conflicting agendas and have them resolved as part of the comprehensive planning process.

Following the discussion of the experience with SWAp in Namibia, the meeting divided into three groups, each of which undertook to consider a particular question about the SWAp in the light of the experiences and policies of the donor agencies represented in the group. The responses to the questions are summarized below.

Question 1. Under a SWAp, would your agency provide pooled funding and/or budget support?

This is a discussion that has been under way for the last few years and has included many different, very heterogeneous situations. Therefore, more detailed clarification would be required on the terms of the SWAp before any decision could be reached on whether and how to provide the funding needed. The SWAp is, after all, only another instrument, like a Sector Investment Plan or a National Education Development Plan, aimed at achieving greater coherence and consistency and better outcomes from an education system. The one major difference is that funding for a SWAp has to be conceived within a medium term expenditure framework.

The main reasons for selecting a SWAp are of two kinds. One is moral, in the sense of encouraging a government to develop a stronger sense of ownership of the process and final plan, since it is able to use its own regulations and standards in designing the sets of measures for the sector rather than having to accommodate the requirements of a heterogeneous set of donor partners. The second kind of reason is administrative. Instead of having to manage an array of disparate projects and deal with several donors, each with its own procedures and requirements for accounting, supervision and reporting, countries can now have the donors following a single pattern and thus reduce their transaction costs substantially.

From the donor partner's point of view, agencies that provide pooled funding or budget support run the risk of appearing insufficiently responsive or accountable to their governments, boards of overseers or parliamentary committees for the use of taxpayers' money. However, satisfactory arrangements can usually be managed for monitoring and performance auditing. In addition, a technical assistance facility can always be built in to help ensure quality.

Question 2. Is your agency able to harmonize procedures with those of other development partners in a SWAp?

The answers to this question were ready and positive. Agencies found the issue relatively easy to resolve through silent partnerships and appropriate memoranda of understanding. All the agencies, except for USAID, had already participated in basket and pool funding for at least one country and had encountered no difficulties of principle. In actual experience, arrangements for pooled funding were more common than budget support.

The main problem was usually agreeing on arrangements for monitoring and accountability that would satisfy overseers and auditors in the home government.

Question 3. Is your agency able to harmonize procedures and regulations with those of a recipient SWAp country?

For a SWAp to achieve one of its main objectives – that of making co-operation with international partners easier and less costly in terms of the demands made on scarce human capacities – is the most important and key question. The answer from the agencies represented in the group was a unanimous 'Yes!'. However, there had been cases where some of the donor partners had agreed to adjust their requirements to the procedures of the recipient country, but others had not. A form of stalemate had ensued, which was helpful neither to the recipient country nor to the donor partners. By and large, however, most donor agencies were willing to work with other partners on aligning their requirements with the procedures and regulations of the recipient.

The Fast Track Initiative

IWGE had its introduction and first discussion of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) at its meeting in Helsinki in June 2003, about a year after the initiative had been agreed on. The overall impression was that, despite the haste in setting up the FTI with the resultant loose ends and imperfections, and despite the huge financial challenge, the outlook was promising. The discussion reported here began with four assessments of progress since June 2003, three from group members who had direct dealings with the FTI through their agencies and one from a member of the FTI secretariat, which is supplied by the World Bank.

John Grayzel
USAID

Three questions require answers. First, is the FTI really there? Second, is it really fast? Third, is it value-added?

Is the FTI really there? The short answer is: "Yes, the FTI is launched and functioning". There is real interaction between all the parties involved – the World Bank as the originator of the idea, UNESCO as the co-sponsor, Sweden and the USA as the current chairs, Canada and France as past chairs, the UK as a future chair, and the Netherlands as a very supportive member. There has also been real action on clarifying the criteria and rules for participation and advancing the plans of a number of the countries that have applied for assistance. Engagement with people has in fact been at an unusually high level.

Is the FTI really fast? The progress the FTI has to report over the last 18 months or so may give the appearance of slow movement. However, back in 800 A.D. the emperor Charlemagne told the Catholic Church to teach everyone to read. In the perspective of what has happened about literacy since then, what the FTI has accomplished in its short life is fast work. This is a realistic view.

Is the FTI value-added? Yes, real value has been added through the formation, discussions and products of the working groups and through the simple fact of mobilizing a committed membership, even though there are indeed degrees of membership. There is a strong sense of purpose in mobilizing the funds to make the attainment of EFA realizable, even though it is true that there is still a very long way to go. It is also true that international funding for education is still below the levels of 1990, but the fact is that the turn-around has begun and the FTI has been a factor in reversing the decline.

At the outset, the initiative was to have included only five countries. By June 2003, that number had increased to 18, with five other countries in the ‘analytical track’. Now the FTI has shifted to a more expansive stance about the number of countries that might benefit and has also attracted more potential financing partners. Whereas it had earlier emphasized the educational goals of the MDG, it has moved to stronger support for all the Dakar goals for EFA. It has taken particular note of the need to help pursue UPC in terms of both numbers and quality.

The FTI is also tailoring its support to be more commensurate with national plans and more country-driven. However, in this area it needs to maintain a balance between the tendency to fissure in supporting a plethora of possibly inconsistent or contradictory initiatives and the tendency to homogenization in supporting standard formulas for universal application. The keys to success lie in getting the countries and the donors to ‘sing from the same sheet’, in the sense of having a national plan endorsed by all the donors. This requires a qualitative change in the behaviour of the donors; they need to be willing to accommodate ideas other than their own and to work for a more harmonized approach between themselves, governments and civil society. Reciprocally, governments and civil society need to accept that perhaps the single most important key to success is having assistance tied to performance.

The FTI certainly needs to continue listening to all the stakeholders and to be aware of and accommodate new ideas and developments. At the same time, it has not done a good job of telling; it has not communicated as effectively as it might have what it is about, how it has evolved and is evolving, and what it has accomplished. It needs to do all this more effectively if it is to retain credibility, not only in the eyes of the donor partners and the participating countries, but also in the perceptions of civil society and the wider public.

Mercy Tembon
FTI Secretariat
World Bank

The two main objectives of the FTI are to mobilize much larger volumes of funding for education and to channel those funds more efficiently and effectively in support of EFA. In contrast to its original concept of supporting only a few countries, the remit of the FTI has been expanded to include all low-income countries, under the reaffirmation of the original criteria of their having submitted a PRSP and a plan for the education sector that had been endorsed both in-country and by the donor community.

The FTI has set up a Catalytic Fund to encourage work to continue going forward by covering gaps in the finance mobilized. Launched in December 2003, it undertook to provide US$35 million to six countries. Although it unfortunately took some time to become effective, most of the six countries now have the funds they were promised. The FTI has also set up a Facility Fund to support countries in preparing more detailed plans.

In April 2004, the Development Committee of IMF and the World Bank returned to the subject of education and stressed the need for the FTI as a means of sustaining the priority and momentum of EFA and ensuring that countries were able to secure the additional funds they needed to achieve the

EFA goals on time. It also called on the regional development banks to collaborate in the global effort for EFA.

The FTI secretariat has held several teleconferences with the next batch of countries in line for the Catalytic Fund. It has also used the medium to inform several other countries about what could be available and under what conditions. These activities have underlined the need for the FTI constantly to make its objectives clear to its publics and to do the same for the endorsement process and for the apportioning of roles between countries and their partners.

The current chief challenges lie in mobilizing the necessary resources from the donors and in expanding the FTI to cope with a much larger number of countries. In addition, there is the challenge of making sure that the FTI communicates to all its stakeholders just what value it is adding to the drive for EFA. Deciding what the role of a co-ordinating agency should be in a given country and which agency should act as co-ordinator has also proved challenging. Finally, the role of civil society in the FTI remains to be settled; so far only the official donors have been involved. In short, two years into the FTI, the secretariat is learning as it goes along, but it is making progress.

Scott Walter
CIDA

Canada has been involved from the outset in developing the FTI, as Canada held the chair of the G8 and its Task Force on Education in early 2002 and had the advantage of having as President of CIDA a person very knowledgeable about the importance of education and the workings of education systems. The latter fact made a huge difference to the resources and time that CIDA was able to allocate to help fashion the FTI. The initiative still needs such high-level support from the governments of all its donor partners.

The name ‘Fast Track Initiative’ actually belied the huge amount of front-end work that was necessary under the leadership of the government of each participating country. It was also a bit misleading in giving the impression that the train was ready to leave the station at high speed, and thus caused disappointment to the beneficiary countries through its apparently slow operations. But due diligence and proper risk assessment had to be done in the donors' home countries. Now that it is all done and all the creases seem to be ironed out, the initiative is at a point where it can begin to work. So implementation should quicken to a really fast pace.

In the implementation, there will be a single preparatory process to be followed in each country, but this will not mean that the policies, plans and programmes for education will be shaped so that 'one size fits all', as was misconceived in the earlier conceptual stages.

The issue of communications about the FTI is really important. Even within CIDA, despite its intimate involvement with the process, there have been and still are many misconceptions about the FTI and what it means. Making sure that at least key persons, agencies and departments in both donor partners and beneficiary governments and countries fully understand what is being attempted will be crucial to the success of the initiative.

The issue of harmonizing the procedures and requirements of all the donors is also crucial to keeping the initiative on a fast track. A meeting between the EU and DAC hammered out a 'donor indicative framework' that cleared that particular path and Canada was happy to adopt the common pattern. There has in fact been good collaboration between the donor partners.

One of the features of many low-income countries, which are all now eligible to take part in the FTI, is that they lack the capacity to take on board and utilize extra resources. To help them build that capacity, the Facility Fund will support project and programme preparations that will include the necessary training and mentoring. Two examples are Honduras and Nicaragua, neither of which was a priority country for CIDA either for development generally or for education in particular. However, the FTI moved CIDA, with Denmark and the Netherlands, to offer to collaborate with them. Nicaragua was once a donor orphan, but is now a donor darling for the FTI, as it is clear to the donors how their contributions fit in to support the national plan.

A final point of interest is that the FTI has facilitated the development of audited fast track plans for incorporating in education the issues of preventing and dealing with the consequences of HIV/AIDS.

Marjan Kroon
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The Netherlands

The Netherlands gave its support to the FTI from the beginning and continues to maintain its commitment to the initiative. Also, the commitment to allocate 15 per cent of the total aid budget to education remains firm. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commitment to the FTI forced the education specialists to enter into sustained discussions with the departments for economic and financial policy in order to work out how best to harmonize their requirements with those of other donors, as well as with the procedures and regulations of the countries that would be benefiting from the FTI. This has resulted in two benefits: The FTI has become very well known around the Ministry, while the departments have learned to work well together.

All three previous presentations on the FTI have mentioned the challenge of communication. This affects the Netherlands too, as major efforts are required to ensure that the network of field offices understand the initiative and its demands, that they are kept up-to-date on its development and aware that they need to keep doing something locally to spread awareness and understanding of what is involved. Some field offices have grasped the needs well, but others still need to have the initiative and its requirements explained to them. The Ministry has therefore engaged a Communications Officer to help with the task. Political commitment to the initiative remains solid.

General discussion on the FTI

The general discussion on the FTI was relatively brief and revolved around the five themes that appear below.

What's in a name? If the name of the initiative has tended to give a misleading connotation of speed in securing funds, thought should be given to creating a substitute that would suggest strengthened co-ordination between the donor partners in their support for beneficiary countries.

EFA, MDG – The group welcomed the decision to broaden the scope of the FTI beyond the goals for education included in the MDG to the broader range of educational targets set out under EFA. Literacy, for instance, is a key educational need, especially for mothers and other women who have never had the opportunity to go to school, and would also be very helpful in combating HIV/AIDS.

Communication – A two-step process of communication seems to be required to get the FTI known and understood. The first is making sure that the agencies and governments are internally aware of what is going on. The second is communicating with the wider publics of both the donor and beneficiary countries. A communications strategy will be proposed at the meeting of the High Level Group in Brasilia, but the basic information is already available. A question of strategy is whether communications should be couched in the form of a campaign for more support or in a form that might catalyze wider and deeper support.

Absorptive capacities – The mention of the absorptive capacity of countries and the need to build such capacity raised a question on whether there had been any assessment of the extent to which countries are actually making the extra money work at country level. There had been some experience of difficulty in getting money used and put to work in combating

HIV/AIDS. However, funds are not the only issue, for resources are more than just financial. Modes of working need to be reviewed to ensure that they do make the most of the capacities that are available. More co-ordination and harmonization between donors could well enable countries to make more productive use of the capacities at their command. In this connection, difficulties and delays in accounting for money have often slowed down disbursements and the implementation of programmes. It might be helpful if donors could agree among themselves and with governments on ways to balance the need for continuous and timely implementation against the need to ensure that funds are properly spent and accounted for.

Maximizing funds – The difficulties that the FTI was meeting in mobilizing the funds required to support all the applications to participate prompted suggestions about strategy. Most of the discussion of the FTI assumed only funds from official sources, ODA in the case of the donor partners, national budgets in the case of the beneficiary countries. Strategically, however, there was the possibility of complementarity, i.e. of identifying and tapping into additional sources that could complement the resources mobilized by official means. A common donor approach might well provide the flexibility to bring in the private sector in various forms of partnership.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Françoise Caillods announced that IIEP was considering two new studies on the implementation of SWAps and the maintenance of accountability in countries participating in the FTI and invited co-operation from agencies involved in the FTI.

Briefing

Update on the World Bank's strategy for education

The World Bank is the largest provider of funds for education in the developing countries – mainly in loans and credits, but also in grants. Its current education portfolio amounts to US$9.5 billion distributed among 96 countries. In terms of education sub-sectors, the portfolio has the following distribution:

Sub-sector	Per cent
Primary education	39
Tertiary education	25
Secondary education	15
General secondary	14
Vocational training	3
Pre-primary education	3
Non-formal education, adult literacy	1
	100

Lending has grown from a low point of US$0.7 billion during 1999/2000 to US$2.3 billion and US$1.7 billion in 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 respectively. In this context, the World Bank needs to review its strategies in the sector every five years or so. It is currently completing a review of developments since 1999/2000 and offered IWGE a briefing on its latest proposals for the education sector as a whole and on secondary education in particular.

Broadening our perspective, focusing our assistance: education sector strategy update[12]

Jamil Salmi
World Bank

Four considerations justify the present review and update of the World Bank's strategy for the education sector. First, Dakar and the MDGs have rendered the always-daunting educational needs more urgent still. Equity, sustainable finance and relevance to changing labour markets remain challenges for most countries. Second, the intensified momentum for EFA since 2000, the trend towards decentralized education management and financing, the imminent explosion of demand for secondary education, the importance of economic competitiveness, the persistent ravaging of education systems by armed conflict and HIV/AIDS are all changing the world with which the Bank must deal. Third, more is known about what works; efforts to improve quality must go hand in hand with expansion and must target the points closest to students and teachers. What drive quality are systems of incentives and accountability. Fourth, more is known about what does not work.

The main strategic themes deriving from these considerations include sustaining the momentum for EFA by addressing areas of past weakness, while building on new elements of support enabled by the FTI – a focus on completion, mobilizing new resources, performance-based aid in line with the 'Monterrey consensus' and donor harmonization. There will be support for preparing sound plans emphasizing equity, quality and learning outcomes; targeting disadvantaged populations through 'demand-side' approaches, through working beyond the school system and across sectors with linkages to education; paying more attention to early childhood development and language of instruction; mobilizing new resources for EFA by increasing IDA support, leveraging higher amounts of co-financing and urging DAC donors to shift more ODA to primary education.

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[12] For more information, see World Bank (2004).

A second strategic thrust will work to have all education interventions in a country grounded in a comprehensive sector-wide analysis. Multidimensional progress across educational levels and crosscutting areas such as governance will not be possible without country-specific knowledge of linkages and complementarities within the education sector. It will be essential to develop sound knowledge of demand and supply trends, approaches that have and have not worked, particularly in improving equity and quality, labour market outcomes, frameworks of incentives and accountability and of the impact of interventions in one part of the sector on the rest of the sector. Equally essential will be to involve countries in preparing such sector-wide analyses and using them to build national consensus on strategic priorities to identify needs for just-in-time policy advice.

An education system necessarily works in a larger context. Therefore, a third strategic element will be to adopt a countrywide perspective to clarify the linkages between education, the macroeconomic situation and other sectors. Articulating these linkages in the Country Assistance Strategies is vital to ensuring that education interventions are well embedded in broader policy dialogue and adequately resourced. The Bank's education staff will participate actively and systematically in all the diagnostic work on a country's situation – the Country Assistance Strategy, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the Periodic Economic Reviews – and in all non-education or multi-sector operations in which education has – or should have – a role (such as health, water, transport, community development initiatives, post-conflict reconstruction). This stance will entail strengthening an education system's responsiveness to labour market needs and its role in the national response to HIV/AIDS.

The Bank's Operations Evaluation Department and Quality Assurance Group has found that the education sector's culture for monitoring and evaluation is deficient. That finding, coupled with the general shift among donors towards performance-based aid, argues strongly that a fourth strategic thrust should foster a strong orientation towards results, outcomes and impacts. There will have to be a systematic inclusion of key education indicators in country assistance strategies and poverty reduction strategies, systematic attention to monitoring and evaluation in preparing and supervising projects, and systematic impact evaluation to sharpen knowledge of what works.

A final strategic theme is focus. The Bank will strive to maximize the effectiveness of its work in education by focusing its lending and non-lending support in line with its comparative advantages and complementarity with other partners' strengths and contributions to a country's specific needs. It will be guided by the potential magnitude of impact on poverty reduction or economic competitiveness.

The strategic update has the following implications for the Bank's assistance to education:

- active policy dialogue will be required in all countries, stressing the centrality of education to overall development and the key policies needed to promote efficient education systems capable of delivering education services for all that are of high quality and relevant to the labour market;
- increased analytic and advisory services will be required in all countries to develop sector-wide analyses, consensus-building efforts and just-in-time analyses to fill information gaps;
- increased lending adding up to about US$2-3 billion a year – compared with the US$1.7 billion between July 2003 and June 2004 – will be required to support EFA, secondary education in low-income countries and sector-wide operations in middle-income countries;
- the Bank's own education staff will need to be reinforced to carry out extensive analytical work, translate that analysis into policy dialogue and operations, contribute effectively to discussions of poverty reduction and economic management with country teams, and support improvements in monitoring and evaluation;

- there will need to be an invigorated learning plan for the Bank's education staff and for building the capacities of the Bank's clients;
- the Bank's education staff will need to collaborate closely with country directors in planning work programmes so as to ensure a central role in country diagnosis, multi-sector operations and to secure adequate funds for supervision, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge sharing; and
- a significant research programme will be required for a global analysis aimed at taking the Bank's education assistance to a new level with the benefit of new knowledge and thinking.

The predominant risk to implementing the updated strategy relates to support from the Country Directors. Strong efforts and well articulated arguments may be needed to secure the centrality of education to development and to ensure commensurate staff skills. A second risk relates to inadequate sector staffing and the uncertainty about recruiting or training staff in the measures needed to implement the broader agenda and develop a 'results orientation'. Other risks arise from the inability to acquire adequate resources to preserve the credibility of the FTI, to carry out sufficient supervision, to meet the needs of middle-income countries and, very importantly, to build the capacities of the Bank's clients and transfer skills to them.

Secondary education in the twenty-first century: new directions, challenges and priorities

Ernesto Cuadra
World Bank

Over the last two decades, the World Bank strategy for the education sector has given less attention to secondary education than to primary and tertiary education. If anything, secondary education was considered a priority only in middle-income countries, provided they had already accomplished universal access to primary education. A substantial turn in this long-standing trend came in 1995, when the strategic focus shifted from 'primary' to 'basic' education, which in many cases included the lower secondary school grades.

This entailed a major change in the way secondary education was to be approached from the point of view of operations and of lending priorities and practices, as the extension and upgrading of basic primary education more than as the preparation of an elite to access higher education.

Since the mid-1990s, several factors have prompted a rapid rise in the share of lending to general secondary education. First, as primary completion rates have been rising, the demand for secondary places has grown. Second, a major challenge, especially in low-income countries, has been the equitable and sustainable financing and management of secondary education. Third, in the context of globalization and competitiveness in the information age, the role of secondary education in economic and social development is being reassessed. Fourth, changes in secondary education are being driven by rapid changes in technology and labour markets.

The 1999 education strategy reflected a more holistic conception of education as a sector of the Bank's activities. The need for more analytical work in secondary education has thus been felt at the Bank for some time, along with the need to relate structural, curriculum, financing and governance policy and reform options to specific development objectives – human, social or economic – in the different regional and country contexts.

Current objectives of World Bank-supported secondary education projects can be grouped under six categories: [a] expanding access; [b] alleviating poverty and promoting equity; [c] supporting gender equality in access; [d] focusing on qualitative improvements; [e] rehabilitating physical facilities; and [f] improving efficiency and management in secondary education.

Lessons from World Bank secondary education projects suggest that:

- the outcomes of secondary education projects are sensitive to country income level;

- national ownership, government commitment and implementation capacity are needed to bring about sustained change in secondary education;
- policy reforms are possible and effective where governments are committed to equitable, diversified and sustainable financing, including the promotion of private secondary schools, combined with cost recovery and selective scholarship schemes at upper secondary level in public schools;
- detailed analysis of sub-sector expenditures, unit costs and/or effectiveness form the bedrock for promoting a variety of measures to increase efficiency of the secondary education system. Internal efficiency measures such as cost recovery, double shifting, measures to reduce student dropout and repetition, consolidating schools to support economies of scope and/or scale, reducing the share of boarding places, and changes in teacher utilization are important. However, project-financed activities and policy measures should be implemented as planned, and the results analyzed on the basis of sub-sector expenditures, unit costs and/or cost effectiveness;
- the combination of top-down initiatives (curriculum and assessment, supply of inputs) with bottom-up, demand-driven interventions such as school-managed improvement funds and book selection are important factors in improving secondary education quality and promoting equity in access;
- education outcomes or impacts must drive the assessment of performance in the area of quality improvement objectives;
- there is a lack of good evaluation of the achievements of secondary school graduates;
- this poses a major challenge in improving the overall quality of secondary education;
- general secondary education programmes aiming to meet changing labour market needs by improving the quality of secondary education must

analyze labour market trends in relation to the skills of secondary education graduates;

- evaluating every project or programme activity during the course of implementation, using test results to monitor equity and target at-risk schools, and facilitating mid-course refinements have proved to be model monitoring and evaluation measures.

The forthcoming report on secondary education aims to use these lessons to propose policy options for adapting secondary education systems to meet the twin challenges of 'expanding access' and 'improving quality and relevance'. The document carries six main messages.

First, secondary education has a distinctive mission of its own. It is necessary to the attainment of the MDGs for reducing poverty, ending hunger and improving health; its expansion is in fact a powerful incentive for students to complete their primary schooling and thus promote the goal of UPC. It provides the knowledge and skills that enable students to adopt and adapt, innovate and improve new technologies. It contributes substantially to civic participation and social cohesion. Evidence on the links between education and economic growth points to the need to ensure that a balanced expansion of the secondary and tertiary levels accompanies universal primary education. Cases like Finland, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan have demonstrated that it is possible to expand secondary education sustainably over a relatively short period: Between 1990 and 2000 they increased the average number of years of schooling of their populations by more than 4.5 years. On the other hand, uncontrolled expansion can lead to increased inequity and inequality, particularly along the axes of gender and ethnicity.

Second, access to secondary education cannot be expanded without addressing the dimensions of quality and relevance. Quality here includes not just effective teaching and high average academic attainments, but also diversified institutional responses to an increasingly diverse demand. Major changes in service delivery are also required. However, there is no single best formula: Multiple and simultaneous strategies are needed to target an increasingly heterogeneous school population, while access must be ensured for those social strata who may be excluded through gender, poverty, ethnicity or other related factors. The new information and communication technologies offer fresh avenues for expanding access to quality secondary education. They can, however, introduce new forms of inequity, as the significant 'digital divides' in many countries attest.

Third, the explosion of knowledge and technologies and changing patterns of work are leading to radically new approaches in the ways that curricular knowledge is selected, organized and sequenced. There is a gap between what is currently taught in secondary schools and the knowledge and skills that individuals and countries need to be competitive in local and world markets, so that new subjects need to enter an already overloaded curriculum; the challenge is to determine how best to enrich the curriculum without worsening the overload. This development is helping to dissolve the traditional boundaries between general and vocational education.

Fourth, high quality and motivated secondary school teachers are critical for secondary education reforms to succeed. There is a profound mismatch between the competencies and skills demanded of students in the knowledge society and the teaching skills that secondary school teachers learn in colleges and in-service training. School-based training and mentoring for novice teachers have proven to be more effective and less costly than traditional pre-service training, so that reallocating resources from pre-service to school-based training could yield positive returns. Shortages of teachers will slow the expansion of access and affect the quality of secondary education negatively; therefore comprehensive incentive policies need to be devised to attract and retain high quality teachers. Issues of professional development, deployment, class size and accountability all need to be factored in.

Fifth, traditional modes of state intervention and management need to be reformed in order to promote high quality secondary education. Changes in conditions have not made the state's presence less significant. On the contrary, governments increasingly need to steer, monitor and support service delivery to ensure equity and also quality. They also need to create the conditions for alternative providers to complement the state's provisions. Clear, achievable goals and a transparent system of incentives and accountability that offers guidance are preferable to rigid prescription or coercion. There is no convergence towards a single model of governing secondary education. Country-specific institutional, socio-cultural and economic factors contribute to the development of the most appropriate governance structures.

Sixth, multiple sources of funding should be considered to cover the substantial financial investments required to expand access and improve the quality of secondary education. Developing countries are investing more today in secondary education than OECD countries did when they had achieved similar levels of income, and will encounter serious problems in sustaining the full financial burden. While they will certainly need to deploy demand-side mechanisms, such as stipends or scholarships, to attract and retain children – particularly girls from poor families and minority communities – in secondary education, they will also need to complement financing from the government with a range of demand-side contributions from families, communities and the private sector. And to these efforts will need to be added contributions from their multilateral and bilateral partners.

To support these six messages, the World Bank plans to raise the volume of its lending for secondary education from US$250 million in 2004 to US$400 million in 2006. In parallel, it will be doing much analytical work on education, skills development and employment in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia.

General discussion on the World Bank's strategy update and report on secondary education

There was some uncertainty as to whether a thirty-page document could adequately address the situations, approaches and challenges of 160 countries (the strategic plan for USAID's efforts in education had to conform to an even stricter limit of 24 pages). Did the spectrum of states not predicate a spectrum of treatments, particularly in the perspective of SWAp, which implied a long-term engagement in a step-by-step process? Further, what was the connection of a single strategy paper with the additional reality of a spectrum of donor partners, each with its own approach to assisting with education and EFA: How much room was there for accommodating the partners? Perhaps even more important was the issue of implementation; most staff working 'in the trenches' did not refer to strategy papers every day or even frequently, so how would the Bank ensure that its strategy was truly operational?

In response, it was argued that a strategy paper embodied a number of principles that had to be applied in particular situations. The paper does offer guidance on tailoring assistance to the state of a given country. Assessing how to apply the principles as a balanced programme within a given set of conditions and a given political economy was the way to make the strategy operational. As regards relations with donor partners, the Bank is committed to working with them in a joint, co-ordinated effort to support the country's programme, with each partner playing a role in line with its own comparative advantage.

On the question of how hard-pressed operational staff would actually incorporate the new strategy in their work, the Education Department had been careful to involve such staff in continuous and iterative consultations with the precise aims of rooting the strategy in the realities that the staff faced and building ownership among them of the final product. In addition, the Education Department is already planning not only to disseminate the strategy thoroughly, but also to organize special training for field staff on the key themes of the strategy.

It was noted that the strategy paper adopted a global view and did not seem to distinguish between the different regions of the world, unlike other agencies that had formulated regional strategies. The Bank's view on the issue was that, while regional and sub-regional strategies are indeed possible – there are in fact Regional Action Plans that clarify how ESSU will be implemented at the level of reach Region – the differences between countries within a region, or even neighbours within a sub-region, made it more realistic to adopt generally valid principles and to treat the country as the unit of focus within which the relevant principles had to be applied.

There was unanimous acceptance of the objectives of the updated strategy paper and of the principle of working with countries to develop sector-wide plans for which they felt full ownership, rather than have to deal with a collection of disparate projects. What was also welcome was that, while the 1999 strategy review had perhaps focused more exclusively on basic education, the present review encompassed the entire sector. However, the modalities for achieving the ends in view remained unclear. Would budget support combined with technical assistance mean in reality managing education through economists rather than through educationists? The issue of the ideal skill-mix for developing sound sector plans for education was difficult to manage, for the sector does need a properly balanced mix of sector specialists and 'integrators'. Training educators in integrative skills combined with more deliberate efforts to integrate education into countrywide efforts and processes, such as public expenditure reviews, would be helpful, as education specialists did need to learn how to bring educational and macro-economic issues together and to work with ministries of finance and development planning. Otherwise, there would be repetitions of the embarrassment in Zambia, where negotiations for Zambia to benefit from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme concluded that the governments would have to reduce the numbers of both the civil servants and teachers; whereas planning for the SWAp for education had concluded that the system needed an increase of 9,000 teachers! The agency to spot the discrepancy was neither the World Bank education team nor the Ministry of Education, but the international NGO, Oxfam. A key thrust of the revised strategy then is to integrate better and more systematically education issues into the countrywide context; this would reduce the scope for such inconsistencies in policy recommendations.

A question was raised about the data available for guiding the shifts in emphasis in the Bank's strategy: Had new data gaps now become evident that had not been important before? Better data are of course useful to the process of developing a global strategy, but are even more important to the process of developing a detailed country plan. Data gaps unfortunately remain comprehensive and affect information on enrolments, completion, pupil:teacher ratios, financing, learning outcomes, and other aspects. There is room for improvement at every point of the spectrum. However, it must be recognized that the problem is not always a matter of technical or administrative capacity: Political sensitivities also play a role in obstructing the collection and dissemination of data. Nevertheless, one of the three main themes of the strategy has to do with invigorating the focus on results, and therefore on data, monitoring and evaluation.

As regards teaching-learning processes, although the summary presentation had given the impression that the strategy had not questioned the efficacy of the practices that were currently prevalent in most countries, the full document does in fact address the matter. In relation to this issue, the growing acceptance and introduction of the concept of 'lifelong learning and education' had tended to soften the customary distinction between formal and non-formal education.

In relation to non-formal education, the introduction of the Adjustable Program Loan had seemed a very helpful support for work that was not as predictable as building roads, bridges and other infrastructure. This lending instrument was, however, under review because there had been some resistance to the concept from members of the Bank's Board of Executive Directors and there had also been some difficulties in actually managing the instrument. Changes of regime in some countries, for instance, had caused complications in application and disbursement. However, the review was not yet complete and no evaluation was available.

Secondary education – As regards the particular sub-sector of secondary education, there was especial concern that the Bank's efforts should stress that school was no longer the only channel for such education. In addition to the alternative channels of distance learning, there could be links to appropriate features in the transformation of an economy, such as the outsourcing of work. There was the opportunity also of ceasing to apply the word 'terminal' to levels of education and instead to view them as only stages in lifelong education.

Since secondary education is so often associated with preparation for the world of work, as well as for the world of further learning, the Bank's strategy needs to take account of the fact that in many countries the ministry of education is not the only government agency concerned with educating and training the age group mainly associated with secondary education: Ministries of agriculture, public works, transport and the like often ran their own schools and vocational training programmes. In parallel, there was concern that the Bank should be consulting and partnering with other international agencies, like FAO and the International Labour Organization (ILO), in planning secondary education for rural people – especially poor rural groups and poor rural women – and other disadvantaged groups, some of whom were urban residents. It may well be that access will be the major concern for these people, because the demands of technology for a set of foundation skills common to a broad spectrum of vocations may well mean that the educational needs of rural and urban people will not differ much.

The Bank might consider treating the lower and upper levels of secondary education separately, because they often had different characteristics: Lower secondary could be simply an extension of primary schooling – in some cases a form of remediation for the poor quality of the primary course – whereas upper or senior secondary tended to be more rigorous and specialized.

While it was certainly true that the demand for secondary education was exploding and that expanding access to it was necessary, it was also true that many young people did not complete their courses at either the lower or upper levels. So the Bank is right to emphasize quality and the need to devise curricula attractive and diverse enough to keep youth in school.

Evaluation and future programme

Evaluation

The meeting opened its evaluation of the presentations and discussions of the previous two-and-a-half days with an effort to answer three radical questions: 'why IWGE?'; 'what is IWGE?'; and 'does it provide value for its participants and its sponsors?'

Since its inception as professionals in education exchanging information, ideas and experiences in practice, the group had operated on three main planks. One was the 'show and tell' session that permitted members to bring each other up to date on changes in their organizations' structures, policies, directions or practices. The second was to take a topic of particular or urgent interest and examine the latest research on it. The third was to follow up developments in earlier topics and learn about new practices in international assistance. The secretariat, IIEP, tried to ensure that the agenda of each meeting responded to the interests and demands of IWGE sponsors and other professionals in education and development. All that said, the question remained whether in the light of other forums and pressures on budgets the IWGE should continue organizing its meetings.

Members were unanimous in appreciating that IWGE was unique in not requiring its participants to present only the views of their organizations and in encouraging them to speak in their personal capacities as professionals. While common courtesy had naturally to be observed, participants did not have to be careful to be politically correct, but could focus on constructive professional investigation, probing and comment. Participants who had had longer experience of IWGE noted that it had always been able to shift its agenda to respond to current developments. It had been useful in observing pendulum swings in the ways agencies organized themselves, in detecting emergent trends, monitoring their development and indeed in initiating new ones. In addition to the ambience of informality and openness, the meetings were indeed informative, did help participants keep abreast of development and over time did cover the entire education sector.

The unanimous view was that IWGE should continue convening its meetings. However, there was some discussion on whether the current pattern of conferring at intervals of 18 months should give way to intervals of 24 months. The group concluded that the current pattern should continue, at least for the next meeting.

There was also discussion about the reach of the meetings; some felt that they did not appear to include a large enough number of organizations or a large enough number of people. Should IWGE remain a forum of only donors? Would it not be enriching to invite NGOs like Save the Children and others with strong programmes in education? They could offer insights on, for example, improving the quality of education. The secretariat was asked to consider this possibility.

The participants were on the whole satisfied with the agenda and structure of the meeting. However, there were suggestions that the agenda should be less crowded, so as to allow for more group work and more intensive discussions after the plenary sessions.

Future programme

Topics for the next agenda – The invitation for suggestions for the agenda of the next meeting evoked the following proposals:

- capacity building was felt by many to be an important topic to examine;

- capacity building and secondary education in Eastern Europe and Central Asia;
- the state of research and analytical capacity in education;
- the threat from lack of budgetary support to the stocks of specialist expertise in agencies;
- the move beyond basic education into progress in lifelong learning;
- the relationships between education and poverty and the contribution of education to poverty reduction;
- experience with partnerships: Why is there not more support for the potential synergies of partnerships?; and
- experience with efforts to harmonize donors' procedures with those of developing countries and to achieve closer co-ordination between donors.

Date – May-June 2006.

Venue – The offer from FAO to host the next meeting in Rome was gratefully accepted. The meeting agreed that the topics on the agenda should include a resumption of the discussion of 'Education for Rural People' that had been launched at the meeting in Lisbon in 2001, that it should not be focused on basic education only but also look at post-basic and higher education, and that a special theme should be that of building capacities.

IWGE Planning Committee
Planning meeting, 21 October 2004

Summary record of the Planning Commitee's meeting, 21 October 2004

2006 Meeting – The Planning Committee endorsed the proposal to hold the next meeting in June 2006 in Rome and expressed its thanks to FAO for the invitation.

2006 Lead focus – The main focus would be on poverty reduction, with a particular emphasis on rural issues and using education for rural development within the frame of sustainable development. The clear connection with the MDGs and the Dakar EFA goals should be maintained.

2006 Format – The meeting should aim for a workshop format to promote stronger discussion and wider exchange.

Future strategy paper – Members of the Committee felt that it would be useful to circulate a strategy or discussion paper on the purpose of IWGE; what comparative advantages it possesses; its style in handling issues; the possibility of running the proceedings more as a workshop, so as to bring people to the same page; possible different frequencies of meetings; its approach to identifying and selecting participants; and possible future directions.

The Secretariat would consider this proposal, but would need to take account of its own very limited capacity to undertake further work on behalf of IWGE.

Budget – The Committee reviewed the budget for the period 1 January 2003-31 December 2005. It agreed that those members that had not yet sent in their subscriptions for the three years should do so as soon as possible.

Subsidiary topics – While it was important not to overload the agenda of meetings, the secretariat might bear in mind a number of topics to supplement the main focus of the 2006 meeting. Suggestions included: [a] capacity building in developing countries, as it intersects with governance; and [b] capacity-depletion in donor agencies through the rundown of technical expertise under the excuses of budget support to developing countries and partnership with other donors (the EU, for example, has money but no expertise of its own to guide its allocation, while Sida recognizes the need for its field staff to build capacity, but neither its education department nor the agency itself has the skills to do so. For its part, USAID obtains the technical skills it needs through contracts with partners in the private sector. Also in this connection, the FTI steering group has discussed possibilities of common training to maintain the knowledge and skill bases of donor agencies on current issues in education and EFA).

The Secretariat or IIEP itself might commission a study of how agencies have been developing instruments to monitor and manage money through flexible partnerships. It might also develop a statistical survey of the status and trends in the technical capacities of a range of bilateral and multilateral agencies.

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Appendix 1
List of participants

I. MULTILATERAL AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

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III. OTHER INVITEES

Ms Ketty TOBIN
Program Associate, Center for Global Development

Appendix 2
Programme
IWGE, Washington, 19-21 October 2004

Tuesday, October 19

9:00 am to 9:15 am	Opening G. Hernes (IIEP) R. Kagia and J. Salmi (Education Department, Human Development Network, World Bank)
9:15 am to 10:30 am	**Recent trends in education aid, policies and practices** – Show and tell (agencies representatives)
10:30 am to 11:00 am	*Break*
11:00 am to 11:10 am	Welcome address J.W. Adams, Vice President and Head of Network, Operations Policy and Country Services
11:10 am to 12:30 pm	Show and tell (contd.)
12:30 pm to 2:00 pm	*Lunch*
2:00 pm – 2.30 pm	**The 2005 monitoring report** S. Packer: *Education for All. The monitoring challenge*

2.30 pm – 3.45 pm	**Ethics and corruption in education: panel 1** M. Poisson: *Ethics and corruption in education: an overview* D. Kaufmann: *General World Bank approach to corruption or governance* D. Filmer: *Funds tracking exercise case study Papua New Guinea* Discussions
3:45 pm to 4:15 pm	*Break*
4:15 pm to 5:30 pm	**Ethics and corruption in education: panel 2** S. Baines: *Controlling corruption: lessons from the School Improvement Grants Program in Indonesia* C. Bangay: *Addressing corruption in non-trusting environments – experience from Indonesia* Discussions
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm	**Reception and choral music**
6:00 to 6:10	Welcome by Francois Bourguignon, Sr. Vice-President and Chief Economist, World Bank *Venue: World Bank, MC Building, 12th Floor Gallery*

Wednesday, October 20

9:00 am to 10:30 am	**Panel on decentralization in education** A. De Grauwe: *Decentralization and school improvement in West Africa* L. Crouch: *Financial decentralization in South Africa*

	D. Winkler: *Accountability under decentralization: lessons from Latin America* S. Bouchie for J. Greenland: *Decentralization: help or hindrance to EFA* Discussions
10:30 am to 11:00 am	*Break*
11:00 am to 12:30 pm	**Panel on participation and human rights** C. Wright: *Capacity building for a human rights approach to governance* J. Huttova: *The role of civil society in promoting educational change* Y. Yokozeki: *Participation in non-formal education in Ethiopia* Discussions
12:30 pm to 2:00 pm	*Lunch*
2:00 pm to 3:30 pm	**Panel on data and EFA** A. Rosling: *World Education Chart* A. Motivans: *Data capacity building* G. Loos, A. Wils: *Data for results-based management*
3:30 pm to 4.00 pm	*Break*
4.00 pm to 5.15 pm	**Panel on educational SWAp: point of view of countries and of agencies** R. West and C. Lien: *Education and sector-wide approaches (SWAp) in Namibia* Discussion

5:15 pm to 6:00 pm	M. Gotur: *Presentation of WB education strategy update*
7.00 pm	*Dinner hosted by the World Bank*

Thursday, October 21

9:00 am to 10:00 am	**Millennium Development Goals and EFA** R. Levine: *Millennium Development Goals follow-up* Discussion
10:00 am to 10.15 am	*Break*
10:15 am to 11:15 am	**Round table on FTI** J. Grayzel; M. Tembon; M. Kroon Discussion
11:15 am to 11:45 am	E. Cuadra: *The WB policy paper on secondary education*
11:45 am to 12.30 pm	**Evaluation and closure**
12:30 pm to 2:00 pm	Planning Committee

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