

Regional Education for All Forum A road map toward 2015 and beyond Sharm El Sheikh, 15-16 October 2012

Executive Summary Report

Objectives of the meeting

Following on the EFA regional consultation meeting held in Sharjah in July 2011, UNESCO Beirut Office organized the EFA regional forum on 15-16 October 2012 in Sharm EL Sheikh, Egypt. The overall objective of the meeting was to encourage countries to plan and implement the 2015 EFA assessment and contribute to setting the post-2015 agenda. Specific objectives aimed at:

- Tacking stock of the country EFA monitoring in terms of coordination mechanisms and reporting, and progress toward achieving the EFA goals;
- Sharing the UNESCO review for global EFA coordination mechanisms: review of the new EFA coordination architecture based on UNESCO consultations with EFA partners;
- Setting the EFA regional road map toward 2015: launch of the national EFA in-depth assessment since 2000.
- Brainstorming for the EFA post-2015 agenda: identification of main EFA challenges;

Participants

Around sixty participants attended the EFA regional forum including:

- National delegations from 17 Arab countries, including EFA national coordinators;
- Representatives from EFA partners and regional agencies: UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, ABEGS, ALECSO, ISESCO, and the League of Arab States (LAS);
- Education specialists and experts;
- Representatives from regional NGOs

**See attached list of participants.*

Outcomes and recommendations of the meeting

Three plenary sessions, two working groups and an interagency meeting took place and came to the following outcomes:

Launch of the EFA assessment

- UNESCO will provide member States with technical guidelines regarding the preparation of the national EFA assessment in early 2013;
- The national EFA review will be undertaken from early 2013 and national reports should be developed before June 2014. A series of national dialogues will be carried

out to contribute this process, including full participation of all EFA stakeholders. National reviews should include disaggregated data to map out who has been left out from the progress on EFA. These reviews should not only present what has been achieved but also how it has been achieved;

- UNESCO will organize EFA Regional conferences between June and September 2014 to review the EFA national reports and draw on an EFA regional agenda;
- A Global Conference on Education will be organized in April 2015 hosted by the Government of South Korea.

Recommendations for implementing the national assessment

- Countries should launch the national EFA review in early 2013 by organizing national forum to explain the purpose and the scope of the assessment and to mobilize national stakeholders
- Countries should set up a national steering committee to guide and monitor the national assessment
- UNESCO and other agencies could be part of the national steering committee to provide guidance and assistance
- National working groups including all partners should be created to undertake the assessment
- The assessment is to be based on the existing data supported by thematic studies as appropriate
- UNESCO will mobilize technical and financial support when needed by countries that expressed this need

Ideas for EFA post-2015 agenda

Vision of society: The starting point for any discussion of education post-2015 in the Arab region must necessarily begin with the fundamental question of what type of society is being envisaged. What is the model of citizen that is desired?

The right to basic education: Reaffirmation of the principle of the right to (basic) education as a fundamental human right and need for strengthened implementation of national legislation.

Beyond the 'silo' mentality: Education and development cannot be considered separately. If education systems are to contribute to national development efforts in an effective manner, education reform needs to be closely coordinated with political, social and economic reform.

Regional cooperation and partnerships: There is need for more effective regional cooperation and coordination frameworks; Partnerships need to be strengthened and diversified to include NGOs, the private sector, as well as academia in educational development.

Continued validity of EFA goals: The six EFA goals remain valid as the basis for a framework for educational development beyond 2015. Equitable access to effective and relevant basic education for all will not be ensured by 2015 as reflected in the persistent challenge of youth and adult literacy, incomplete schooling and out-of-school children, and the generally low average levels of learning achievement.

Youth: Need to focus on the education of youth, whether in terms of skills development for work and life, technical and vocational education and training, or general secondary education as the crossroads between basic education and further education, training and/or the world of work.

Early childhood development: The importance of early childhood development for more equitable and effective education was reaffirmed.

Quality of education:

- Need for external bodies to monitor and assess the quality of educational outcomes.
- Need for increased focus on quality of results and their more equitable social distribution.
- Need to consider the role of private education, shadow education and private tutoring.

Flexibility: Need for flexibility and adaptability of any future international agenda to regional and national realities. There needs to be better articulation between the global, regional and national levels of any international agenda, perhaps through common 'aspirational goals' at the global level and more context-specific regional/sub-regional and/or national target-setting.

The Report

The opening session

Opening remarks, UNESCO Beirut Director

In his opening remarks, UNESCO Beirut Director, Mr. Hamed Al Hammami, welcomed the participants and presented the background and objectives of the Forum. He also reminded participants of the United Nations Secretary General's *Education First Initiative*, which was launched on 26 September 2012 and which aims at putting education at the heart of the social, political, and development agenda.

Welcome address, Minister of Education, Egypt

Mr. Reda Mosad, first undersecretary and head of the general education sector in Egypt, delivered the Minister's address to the Forum. The Minister stressed that real education is the education that prepares individuals for life. Given the lack of job opportunities for graduates, education programs and activities need to be rethought in a way to help students acquire life skills. The speech also highlighted the need to address the issues of literacy, out-of-school children, and ECCE in the Arab region.

Videoconference intervention, UNESCO Paris

The opening session included a short intervention from UNESCO Paris by Mr. David Atchoarena (director of the Division for Teacher Development and Higher Education) and Mr. Olav Seim (director of the EFA Global Partnerships Team).

Mr. Atchoarena noted that the three key objectives of the forthcoming EFA 2015 review is to assess the progress that has been made toward the achievement of EFA goals, review the various strategies to achieve EFA, and formulate a post-2015 education agenda on national, regional, and international levels. The Global Monitoring Report (GMR) provides a global, systematic monitoring tool. However, countries should also look at various disaggregated national data. In addition to that, the review should not only focus on statistics but also on policy elements and responses. Approaching 2015 constitutes a great opportunity to reflect on the way forward and to reshape the development framework taking into consideration the challenges and new goals identified at country level, while drawing experience from good practices and lessons learnt. UNESCO's role will be to facilitate this process at country level and coordinate it at the regional and global levels.

Mr. Seim's intervention stressed the new EFA coordination mechanism and the importance of establishing, or revitalizing, the national and regional EFA coordination mechanisms. Coordination is important within and among countries. Moreover, the *Education First Initiative* will help support and accelerate progress toward achieving EFA goals and convince ministries of finance increase the funding of EFA for social and economic advancements.

Keynote address, Mr. Sheldon Shaeffer, former director of UNESCO Bangkok office

In his keynote speech, Mr. Shaeffer raised many significant provocations and issues concerning the progress toward achieving EFA goals and the way forward. His presentation emphasized that in order to accelerate the progress toward 2015, education systems must expand ECCE programmes; facilitate the smooth transition of learners to primary school; be inclusive and serve excluded groups (e.g., girls, the extreme poor, children with disabilities, children affected by conflict); place greater efforts on the early grades (better teachers, smaller classes, longer hours) since successful learning in the early years is a foundation for lifelong learning; identify learners at risk of failure and provide them additional remedial support; and accelerate the expansion of secondary education, TVET, and literacy programmes especially for excluded populations. Mr. Shaeffer pointed out that that students labeled “drop-outs” are actually “push-outs” from the educational systems, which fail to keep them at school.

1. Regional overview on EFA monitoring mechanisms prepared and presented by Mr. Tayseer Al Nahar Al Noaimi, former Minister of Education in Jordan and current advisor to the Minister of Education in UAE

After the national presentations on national experiences and challenges and on how EFA coordination has been working, the regional overview was presented. The regional overview is based on the information collected from 19 Arab countries using the EFA Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms questionnaire specifically designed for this purpose. The questionnaire collected information on EFA national plans (general characteristics, involvement of stakeholders, and implementation requirements), monitoring and evaluation systems and mechanisms (technical characteristics, operational requirements, institutional structures, indicators and monitoring methods, dissemination of results, challenges, weaknesses, and gaps in monitoring systems).

The questionnaire results revealed that in the majority of Arab states there is no separation between the bodies involved in the implementation of the EFA plan and those concerned with follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation. In addition to that, there is no institutional structure responsible for the plan’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Overall, Arab states reported that monitoring and evaluation is part of their plans, however, it was noted that drawing up monitoring components and activities came at a later stage subsequent to the development of the EFA plans. Arab States differ in their national EFA plans and monitoring with some being confined to the Dakar Framework of Action goals, while others being part of more comprehensive plans for educational reform.

The questionnaire showed that monitoring plans take into account technical considerations such as clarity of goals and identifying data and indicators, but they mostly fail to fulfill elements associated with effective communication, coordination, and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation findings. Monitoring plans benefit from political support but suffer obvious shortcomings related to the efficiency of human resources, information systems, communication channels, coordination among all parties, and ongoing capacity building

programs. Quantitative indicators seem predominant in the monitoring plans and reflect to a large extent the global indicators framework. However, plans clearly lack indicators related to the impact of the programs included in the national EFA plans. The objectives of the monitoring systems are not very focused. Monitoring methodologies are predominantly self-implemented internal activities by the Ministries of Education. Monitoring activities rely on databases and available information and the analysis of reports and quantitative surveys. Qualitative methods are not as clearly prevalent.

Results also show weak and scattered institutional structures responsible for monitoring activities and poor coordination between national agencies and parties responsible for monitoring. Monitoring and evaluation systems face clear challenges in terms of adequate human resources, funding. Countries reported specific shortcomings in their monitoring plans such as poor capacity-building programs and inadequate institutional regulatory bodies to institute monitoring measures and activities, in addition to sustaining policies and support and partnerships. Two thirds of Arab countries reported that the sustainability of financial allocations for EFA plans is a major challenge.

Also a working session was organized to discuss ways of improving the national monitoring mechanisms. National EFA plans should adopt a monitoring and evaluation framework that include the national needs, priorities, and characteristics and be characterized by a participatory approach. National monitoring mechanisms should be based on a comprehensive, reliable, and regularly updated information system, which includes data in various disaggregated levels rather than having many indicators without in-depth information. In this regard, Arab countries call for UNESCO and its partners to prepare a guiding manual for a global monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework.

M&E activities should be institutionalized while providing a margin of flexibility. It is important to develop feasible and sustainable national M&E framework that efficiently and properly utilize existing and available resources. Along with government, it is vital to involve other EFA stakeholders in the EFA monitoring process for ensuring transparency and quality of data, as well as full coverage of monitoring scope on EFA. Linkage and cohesive collaboration between statisticians (data producers) and planners (data users) should be enhanced.

Strengthening national capacity to ensure the sustainability of the monitoring systems is vital. There is a need to develop capacity building programmes in monitoring, evaluation, and planning on a national level and to conduct a regular analysis of national policies. There is also a need to implement national awareness campaigns that include all stakeholders in order to promote the culture of monitoring and evaluation and mobilize community support for it.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation efforts and activities must be documented and available to all stakeholders. Moreover, there is a need to improve experience sharing between Arab countries regarding monitoring and evaluation systems and how to benefit from their results.

2. The revised global EFA coordination mechanisms: Strengthening linkages between national, regional, and global levels

UNESCO's role as the EFA global coordinator has evolved since 2000, influenced by changes in the global context surrounding the EFA movement. A review process of the global EFA coordination mechanism took place as a response to the Addis Ababa Declaration adopted at the Ninth Meeting of the High Level Group (HLG) on EFA (Ethiopia, 23-25 February 2010) and the Jomtien Statement adopted at the 10th Meeting of the HLG on EFA, (March 2011) requesting UNESCO to propose concrete measures to improve EFA coordination. The raised issues and concerns regarding the EFA coordination mechanisms included the insufficient linkages at national, regional, and global levels; the lack of evidence-based advocacy outside the education community; the uneven involvement of the EFA convening agencies and the lack of ownership of the Member States; and the difficulty to institutionalize clear lines of accountability in terms of participation and monitoring the follow up commitments.

In order to overcome these shortcomings, UNESCO has critically reviewed the EFA coordination mechanisms in collaboration with its EFA partners. The new coordination mechanism is designed to offer a strategic platform to revitalize the EFA movement by increasing support to EFA and to enable UNESCO to fulfill its mandate as the global EFA coordinator. Stronger linkages will be developed between the national and regional EFA activities and global EFA coordination. Under the new mechanism, UNESCO's priority areas are: creating better synergies between national, regional, and global EFA coordination; monitoring closely the delivery of commitments made by EFA constituencies; providing more strategic direction to the global EFA movement; strengthening knowledge-base and further promoting knowledge-sharing; and scaling up advocacy at the global, regional, and national levels.

To mobilize high-level political support for EFA beyond the education community, an EFA High-Level Forum (HLF) will be organized annually on the sidelines of major Head of States meetings. The HLF will contribute to raising the profile of education on the international development agenda. There will also be a single annual Global EFA Meeting (GEM) merging the present High Level Group and Working Group. The main purpose of the GEM will be to critically assess progress toward EFA based on the GMR and the regional and national reports and to agree on tangible actions for follow-up. The outcomes of the GEM will guide the agenda of the HLF. Finally, the EFA Steering Committee (SC) will provide strategic guidance on all aspects of EFA and will meet on an ad-hoc basis. The SC includes 18 members: 7 countries (1 from each UNESCO region and E-9 Initiative); 7 representatives from EFA convening agencies, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) plus OECD; 3 NGO and private sector representatives, and one voice of teachers – Education International. A participatory process for selecting Member States' representatives will be introduced to increase country ownership. Representatives will also be invited from bilateral agencies, United Nations and regional organizations, research institutes, and foundations.

3. Road map toward 2015

The regular and systematic monitoring of EFA progress constitutes a central strategy for achieving EFA by 2015. Arab countries still have to enrol more than 5 million children of primary school age, of which 61% are girls. The number of illiterates has been reduced by only 1.5 million (from 51.8 to 50.3 million). The 2005 gender target has been missed and will most likely be difficult to achieve by 2015. Education quality in the Arab region remains very poor.

With less than three years remaining until the 2015 target date, the national EFA 2015 review process is considered at the center of the roadmap toward 2015. The key objective of this review is to provide input to defining the national and international education agendas beyond 2015. This collective evidence-based review by national stakeholders aims at assessing the progress achieved toward the six EFA goals (what) and the implementation strategies employed in achieving EFA (how), in addition to determining the relevance of the EFA framework for the future (relevance of EFA within the MDG, ESD, and regional education development frameworks). The road map milestones are as follow:

- UNESCO will provide member States with technical guidelines regarding the preparation of the national EFA assessment in early 2013;
- The national EFA review will be undertaken from early 2013 and national reports should be developed before June 2014. A series of national dialogues will be carried out to contribute this process, including full participation of all EFA stakeholders. National reviews should include disaggregated data to map out who has been left out from the progress on EFA. These reviews should not only present what has been achieved but also how it has been achieved;
- UNESCO will organize EFA Regional conferences between June and September 2014 to review the EFA national reports and draw on an EFA regional agenda;
- A Global Conference on Education will be organized in April 2015 hosted by the Government of South Korea.

4. The EFA Post-2015 agenda

According to the regional survey mentioned above, Arab states do not stand at a same distance from achieving EFA goals by 2015. It appears that eliminating gender disparity in access to basic and secondary education is the most likely goal to be achieved, followed by universal access to primary education. As for goals associated with quality, early childhood, illiteracy, and life skills they are not likely to be achieved. Nevertheless, more than half the Arab states reported that ensuring accessibility to and retention of all students from all social strata in the educational system is still a major challenge. In general, it appears that the most pressing challenges are those related to meeting the demand for pre-school education and low demand for vocational education. Moreover, it seems clear that the quality of education poses the biggest challenge in all Arab countries.

Recommendations from the overview show that the six EFA goals are still valid as a basis for a framework for action beyond 2015, with special focus on early childhood development and the marginalized and disadvantaged groups. There needs to be a shift from Education for All (access) to Learning for All. Focusing on the first years of primary education, adopting a holistic concept of quality of education, providing quality training for teacher, reconsidering the concept and content of secondary education, focusing on equality and inclusion, are all themes that need to be included in the post 2015 EFA agenda.

Also a working session was organized to conduct a brainstorming for the post-2015 agenda. It came out again that more efforts should be concentrated on early childhood and life skills development. In addition, Education in emergency needs to be addressed with effective methods of reaching displaced population. Participants also suggested the following recommendations:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Vision of society: The starting point for any discussion of education post-2015 in the Arab region must necessarily begin with the fundamental question of what type of society is being envisaged. What is the model of citizen that is desired?

The right to basic education: Reaffirmation of the principle of the right to (basic) education as a fundamental human right and need for strengthened implementation of national legislation.

Beyond the 'silo' mentality: Education and development cannot be considered separately. If education systems are to contribute to national development efforts in an effective manner, education reform needs to be closely coordinated with political, social and economic reform.

Regional cooperation and partnerships: There is need for more effective regional cooperation and coordination frameworks; Partnerships need to be strengthened and diversified to include NGOs, the private sector, as well as academia in educational development.

SCOPE and SHAPE of POST-2015 EDUCATION AGENDA

Continued validity of EFA goals: The six EFA goals remain valid as the basis for a framework for educational development beyond 2015. Equitable access to effective and relevant basic education for all will not be ensured by 2015 as reflected in the persistent challenge of youth and adult literacy, incomplete schooling and out-of-school children, and the generally low average levels of learning achievement.

Youth: Need to focus on the education of youth, whether in terms of skills development for work and life, technical and vocational education and training, or general secondary education as the crossroads between basic education and further education, training and/or the world of work.

Early childhood development: The importance of early childhood development for more equitable and effective education was reaffirmed.

Quality of education:

- Need for external bodies to monitor and assess the quality of educational outcomes.
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- Need to consider the role of private education, shadow education and private tutoring.

Flexibility: Need for flexibility and adaptability of any future international agenda to regional and national realities. There needs to be better articulation between the global, regional and national levels of any international agenda, perhaps through common ‘aspirational goals’ at the global level and more context-specific regional/sub-regional and/or national target-setting.

5. Inter-agency meeting

An inter-agency meeting was held in parallel of the EFA regional forum. The meeting was attended by representatives from UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, ALECSO, ABEGS, ISESCO, and LAS. The meeting focused on discussing the cooperation of these agencies at national and regional levels to assist countries in their national EFA 2015 assessments and to prepare regional events.

Main decisions/recommendations:

- Creation of a regional interagency coordination committee/ a concept note will be prepared and a first meeting to be organized in December 2012
- Development of an EFA regional report by 2014: thematic studies will be launched on main regional education challenges (i.e. quality, literacy, ECCE, secondary education, TVET);
- Organization of the EFA regional conference in mid-2014.
- Participation of agencies in national steering committees to prepare the EFA national review

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Countries should launch the national EFA review in early 2013 by organizing national forum to explain the purpose and the scope of the assessment and to mobilize national stakeholders
- Countries should set up a national steering committee to guide and monitor the national assessment

- UNESCO and other agencies could be part of the national steering committee to provide guidance and assistance
- National working groups should be created to undertake the assessment
- The assessment is to be based on the existing data supported by thematic studies as appropriate
- UNESCO will mobilize technical and financial support when needed by countries that expressed this need

Annex 1: Agenda of the meeting

Day 1

15 October 2012

8:00 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 10:00	Opening & Welcoming <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opening remarks: UNESCO Beirut Director- Welcome remarks: H. E. the Minister of Education, Egypt- Keynote speech: Mr. Sheldon Shaeffer, former UNESCO Bangkok Director- Introduction of participants
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee Break
	Session 1: EFA coordination mechanisms Chair: Mr. Abdelsalam Al-Joufi, ABEGS Representative and Former Minister of Education in Yemen
10:30 – 11:30	Global and regional mechanisms: UNESCO reform Presented by: Mr. Said Belkachla, UNESCO Beirut <i>Discussion</i>
11:30 – 12:00	Outcomes of the EFA Steering Committee Meeting Presented by: Mr. Mansour Al Oseimi, Saudi Arabia Permanent Delegation to UNESCO
12:00 – 13:00	National experiences & challenges: national presentations on how EFA coordination has been working (following the national reports guidelines) Presented by: EFA national coordinators
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 16:15	National experiences & challenges: national presentations on how EFA coordination has been working (continued)
16:15 – 16:30	Coffee Break
16:30 – 17:00	Wrap up (Chairman)

Day 2

16 October 2012

Session2: Emerging EFA challenges for post-2015 agenda

Chair: Mr. Rida Mosad Al-Said, First Undersecretary – Head of General Education Sector - Ministry of Education, Egypt

- 9:00 – 10:00** **Regional overview of EFA monitoring mechanisms and prospects for post-2015 agenda**
Presented by: Mr. Tayseer Al-Noaimi, Former Minister of Education in Jordan
Discussion
- 10:00 – 10:30** **Coffee Break**
- 10:30 – 11:00** **Post-2015 Education: Between EFA and MDG logics**
Presented by: Mr. Sobhi Tawil, UNESCO Paris
- 11:00 – 12:30** **Parallel sessions**
- 1. Working groups:**
Group 1: Improving national monitoring mechanisms
Facilitator: Mr. Tayseer Al Nahar Al-Noaimi
- Group 2: Brainstorming on post-2015 agenda
Facilitators: Mr. Sobhi Tawil and Mr. Sheldon Shaeffer
- 2. Interagency coordination meeting**
- 12:30 – 13:00** **Working groups reports and wrap up**
- 13:00 – 14:30** **Lunch**
- Session 3: Road map towards 2015**
Chair: Mr. Hamed Al-Hammami, UNESCO Beirut Director
- 14:30 – 15:15** **The way forward: Launch of the end period assessment**
Presented by: Mr. Said Belkachla, UNESCO Beirut
Mr. Nyi Nyi Thaug, UNESCO Paris
- Discussion*
- 15:15 – 16:15** **Round table:**
1. What should be assessed (scoop, baseline, etc.)?
 2. What kinds of interventions are needed to accelerate progress?
 3. What priority for post-conflict countries?
 4. Country-level activities to be undertaken
 5. Regional and global-level activities
 6. Role of EFA conveners agencies
- 16:30 - 17:00** **Wrap-up and Closure (Chairman)**

Annex 2: List of the participants

National Delegations - الوفود الوطنية							
No	Country البلد		Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
1	Algeria الجزائر	Mr السيد	Abdelmagid Hedouas عبد المجيد هدواس	EFA Coordinator المنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	213.21.606529 213.771.835735	213.21.694205	mochehed@yahoo.fr
2		Mr السيد	Lounas Touati لوناس تواتي	Central Inspector مفتش مركزي	213.21.605562 213.791.733068		touatilounes.igpprimaire@yahoo.fr
3	Bahrain البحرين	Ms السيدة	Latifa Isa Bunoodha لطيفة عيسى البنوذة	Director- Directorate of Planning and Educational Projects مديرة إدارة التخطيط والمشاريع التربوية	973.39450103		latifaa20@gmail.com; labaiassa@yahoo.com
4		Mr السيد	Hassan Jassim Abdulla حسن جاسم عبد الله	Chief of Educational Statistics رئيس الاحصاء التربوية	973.392473; 39247303	973.686296	h_abdulla@moe.gov.bh
5	Egypt مصر	Mr السيد	Rida Mosad رضا مسعد	First Undersecretary – Head of General Education Sector Ministry of Education وكيل أول وزارة التربية والتعليم - رئيس قطاع التعليم العام	20.227946451 20.1001812108		moege2011@hotmail.com rmaser2002@yahoo.com
6		Mr السيد	Rida Hegazi رضا حجازي	Responsible of Monitoring and Evaluation/ Head of Regional Centre For Adult Education (ASFEC) مسؤول عن الرصد والتقييم في التربية ومدير المركز وزارة الإقليمي لتعليم الكبار	20.483351596; 20.1001987053	20.4833512	hegazyreda@yahoo.com

الوفود الوطنية - National Delegations

No	Country البلد	Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
7	Egypt مصر	Mr السيد Safwat Salem صفوت سالم	Secretary General NATCOM أمين عام اللجنة الوطنية لليونسكو	201.2244057695	202.227941	safwat_m_salem@yahoo.com
8	Iraq العراق	Mr السيد Abdelkarim Mohamed عبد الكريم محمد	Head of Guidance and Counseling Department- EFA Coordinator رئيس قسم الإرشاد والتوجيه والمنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	964.771279231077 12792310		Kar_a2010@yahoo.com
9		Mr السيد Idrees Taher Younus ادريس طاهر يونس	Director General of Education in Nienevah مدير عام التربية في نينون	964.813418 964.7901109117		nenwaeduc@yahoo.com
10	Jordan الأردن	Ms السيدة Intisar Kahyawi انتصار القهيوي	Secretary General- EFA Coordinator أمين عام اللجنة الوطنية لليونسكو والمنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	962.4160254 962.777513645		aleghawe2007@yahoo.com
11		Mr السيد Mohammed Abu- Ghazleh محمد ابو غزله	Director of Planning and Educational Research مدير التخطيط والبحث التربوي	962.6.615607181 962.797519955 962.796811058	962.6.5657425	m_ghazleh@hotmail.com
12	Kuwait الكويت	Ms السيدة Dalal Al Balol دلال البلول	Planning and Monitoring Unit إدارة التخطيط والرصد	965.994011		babalol@gmail.com
13		Ms السيدة Wadha Al Zafiri وضحة الظافري	Senior statistical analyst محلل إحصائي أول	965.99814335		w_hanim@yahoo.com
14	Lebanon لبنان	Ms السيدة Buchra Adra بشرة عدره	Advisor for Educational Affairs and International Cooperation مستشارة شؤون التربية والتعاون الدولي	961.3.228204	961.1.705551; 772792	
15		Ms السيدة Vera Zeitouni فيرا زيتوني	Head of Mount Lebanon Educational Region مديرة منطقة جبل لبنان التربوية	961.5.923747 961.3.204535	961.5.923747	zeitounivera@hotmail.com

الوفود الوطنية - National Delegations

No	Country البلد	Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
16	Libya ليبيا	Ms السيدة	Aziza Mehdi Bashir عزيزة مهدي بشير	Head of Basic Education Department رئيسة قسم التعليم الأساسي	218.7254799 218.92.5074076	info@natcom.org.ly
17		Mr السيد	Abdulla El Magtouff عبد الله المقطوف	Programme Specialist NATCOM أخصائي برامج في اللجنة الوطنية لليونسكو	218.21362060215 218.92.4460651	218.2136206 libunesco53@yahoo.com
18	Mauritania موريتانيا	Ms السيدة	Emy Zeinebou Bint Mohamad Abdelrahman ايمي زينبو محمد عبد الرحمن	Vice Director of Strategies, Planning and Cooperation نائب مدير التخطيط والاستراتيجيات والتعاون	222.45251222 222.36315248	222.4525122 zeineboumintcheikh@yahoo.f r
19		Mr السيد	Kane Mohamedou Elimane كان محمدمو اليمان	Assistant Secretary General مساعد أمين عام اللجنة الوطنية لليونسكو	222.45253885 222.36306984 222.46426414	222.452528 elimanek8@gmail.com kaneelimanema@yahoo.fr
20	Oman عمان	Mr السيد	Mohamed Bin Salim Alyaqoobi محمد بن سليم اليقوبي	Secretary General- EFA Coordinator أمين عام اللجنة الوطنية لليونسكو والمنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	968.24759449 968.9938092	968.24759555; 24759555 malyaqoubi@moe.om
21		Mr السيد	Suleiman Bin Zaher Alruishidi سليمان بن زاهر الرويشدي	Director General of Planning and Quality Assurance مدير عام التخطيط وضمان الجودة	968.9938904	968.24773235; 24759555 s.ruwaisdi@moe.om
22		Mr السيد	Badar Alharby بدر الحاربي	International Relations Specialist أخصائي علاقات عامة	968.24759216 968.99469070	968.24759555; 24759555 badarharthy@moe.om
23	Palestine فلسطين	Mr السيد	Basri Salmoudi بصري السلمودي	Assistant Undersecretary of Planning and Development -EFA Coordinator وكيل مساعد للتنمية والتخطيط - المنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	970.22983254 970.599671666	970.229833 basrimoe@palnet.com

الوفود الوطنية - National Delegations

No	Country البلد	Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
24	Palestine فلسطين	Mr السيد Youssef Hammouda يوسف حموده	Director General of Educational Planning (Monitoring and Evaluation Division) مدير عام التخطيط التربوي (قسم الرصد والتقييم)	970.2298329 970.599816	970.2298321	saadehhammoudeh@yahoo.com
25	Qatar قطر	Mr السيد Abdul Aziz Al – Tamimi عبد العزيز التميمي	Director of International Education Affairs Office - EFA Coordinator مدير مكتب الشؤون التربوية - المنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	974.4404455 974.55506452	974.44835245	a.altamimi@sec.gov.qa
26		Ms السيدة Mona Al Kawari منى الكواري	Senior researcher باحث أول	974.44044627 974.55861931	974.4404462	mona.alkuwari@sec.gov.qa
27	Saudi Arabia السعودية	Mr السيد Ali Al-almaey علي الألمعي	Director General of Planning & Policy - Secretary-General of the National Forum on Education For All مدير عام السياسات والتخطيط - أمين عام المنتدى الوطني للتعليم للجميع	966.14038755 966.559955559	966.14021989	almaey@hotmail.com
28		Mr السيد Fahad Abdullah Altayyar فهد عبد الله الطيار	Supervisor of Policies and Planning Assistant to the Secretary General of the the National Forum on Education For All مشرف السياسات والتخطيط - أمين عام مساعد المنتدى الوطني للتعليم للجميع	966.55423079		F209f@hotmail.com
29		Mr السيد Mansour Al Osaimi منصور العصيمي	Education consultant مستشار تربوية	33.145683406 966.542966900		osaimimd@hotmail.com

الوفود الوطنية - National Delegations

No	Country البلد		Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
30	Sudan السودان	Mr السيد	Al Taher Al Taher الطاهر الطاهر	Director General of Educational Planning- EFA National Coordinator مدير عام التخطيط التربوي - المنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	249.183779888 249.912391958	249.183776	Altahir40@hotmail.com
31		Mr السيد	Musa Al Moubarak موسى المبارك	Director General of Educational Statistics مدير عام الإحصاء التربوي	249.9249012	249.183776	mobarkmusa@yahoo.com
32	Tunisia تونس	Mr السيد	Ahmed Ben Abdallah احمد بن عبد الله	Assistant Secretary General of EFA Forum أمين عام مساعد مندى التعليم للجميع	216.71.889704	216.71.889706	ahmed.benabdallah@minedu. edunet.tn comnatu@edunet.tn
33		Ms السيدة	Chedia Mhirsi شادية المحيرصي	Director - Department of Evaluation مدير قسم التقييم	216.71.566964 216.22980909	216.71.561284	chdiamhirsi@yahoo.fr
34	UAE الإمارات	Mr السيد	Ahmad Saeed Al derei احمد سعيد الدرعي	Vice President for Directorate of Evaluation - EFA Coordinator نائب رئيس مديرية التقييم - المنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	971.5066228		AhmedD@moe.gov.ae
35	Yemen اليمن	Ms السيدة	Insaf Qassem انصاف قاسم	National EFA Coordinator المنسق الوطني للتعليم للجميع	967.1.540952 967.777403928 733212838	967.1.540950	insaf.qassem@gmail.com

الخبراء - Experts

No	Country البلد		Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
36	Jordan الأردن	Mr السيد	Tayseer Alnahr Alnoaimi تيسير النهار النعيمي	Advisor to the Minister of Education in UAE - Former Minister of Education in Jordan مستشار وزير التربية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة والوزير السابق للتربية في الأردن	962.6.5233922 962.0799076400 971.508471079	962.6.5850159	t.alnoaimi@mobadarat.org
37	Thailand تايلند	Mr السيد	Sheldon Shaeffer شيلدن شايفر	Consultant - Former Director of UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Bangkok مستشار - المدير السابق لمكتب اليونسكو الإقليمي للتربية في بانكوك			s_shaeffer@hotmail.com

المنظمات الإقليمية - Regional Organisations

No	Country البلد		Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
38	ALECSO الألكسو	Mr السيد	Nejib Ayed نجيب عياد	Education Expert خبير في الشؤون التربوية	216.71.905334 216.95.657103	216.71.909065	nejib.ayed@gmail.com
39	ABEGS مكتب التربية لدول الخليج	Mr السيد	Adelsalam Aljawfi عبد السلام الجوفي		966.5653568		aaaljoufi@yahoo.com
40	ISESCO الإيسيسكو	Mr السيد	Salaheddine Elgafrawi صلاح الدين الجعفرأوي	Consultant مستشار	202.22704884 20.1067017335	202.2271292	dr.salah@elgafrawi.com
41	League of Arab States (LAS) جامعة الدول العربية	Ms السيدة	Noha Sobhi Ayad نهى صبحي عياد	Assistant مساعدة	202.25750511202. 2572966	202.25740331; 202.25761017	noha.aiad@las.int

المنظمات الغير حكومية - NGOs

No	Country البلد	Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
42	The Arab Network for Literacy & Adult Education	Ms السيدة Seham Negm سهام نجم	Honorary Chairperson رئيسة فخرية	202.7311007 202.017741077	202.7295042	women_society@yahoo.com
43	The Arab Network for Literacy & Adult Education	Ms السيدة Amal Fayad امل الفايد	Development Expert خبيرة التنمية	20.100543	20.02257464	amal16fayed@yahoo.com
44		Ms السيدة Ikbal Al Samalouti اقبال السملوطي	President of Hawa' Al Mustaqbal Association- Former Dean of Higher Institute of Social Work - رئيس جمعية حواء المستقبل - عميد المعهد العالي للخدمة الاجتماعية سابقاً	20.1000028880	20.33451223; 33035506	esamaloty@yahoo.com
45	Arab Resource Collective (ARC)	Mr السيد Ghanem Bibi غانم بيبى	Advisor مستشار	961.1.742075	961.1.742077	gb@mawared.org ghanem.bibi@gmail.com

منظمات الأمم المتحدة - UN agencies

No	Country البلد	Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
46	UNICEF اليونسيف	Ms السيدة Dina Craissati دينا قريساطي	Regional Education Adviser مستشار التعليم الإقليمي	962.6.5502410 962.679.5894140	962.6.5538880	dcraissati@unicef.org
47	World Bank البنك الدولي	Mr السيد Mourad Ezzine مراد الزين	Education Sector Manager مسؤول قطاع التربية	1.202473229		mezzine@worldbank.org

اليونسكو – UNESCO

No	Country البلد		Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
48	Amman مكتب عمان	Mr السيد	Claude Akpabie كلود اكبابي	ED Programme Specialist أخصائي برامج التربية			c.akpabie@unesco.org
49	Beirut المكتب الإقليمي للتربية في بيروت	Mr السيد	Hamed Al Hammami حمد الهمامي	Regional Director مدير إقليمي	961.1.850013/4/5 ext 161	961.1.824854	h.alhammami@unesco.org
50		Mr السيد	Said Belkachla سعيد بلقشله	Senior Programme Specialist Education policy, planning and management & Education for All أخصائي برنامج التخطيط التربوي والسياسات والتعليم للجميع	961.1.850013/4/5 ext 131	961.1.824854	s.belkachla@unesco.org
51		Ms السيدة	Rana Abdul-Latif رنا عبد اللطيف	ED Programme Assistant مساعدة برامج التربية	961.1.850013/4/5 ext 143	961.1.824854	r.abdul-latif@unesco.org
52	Cairo القاهرة	Ms السيدة	Ghada Gholam غادة غلام	Director ai - ED Programme Specialist مدير مكتب القاهرة بالإنابة - أخصائي برامج التربية			g.gholam@unesco.org
53		Ms السيدة	Nadeen Quablawi نادين قبلاوي	Intern متدربة			nadeen.qablawi@gmail.com
54	Doha الدوحة	Ms السيدة	Faryal Khan فريال خان	ED Programme Specialist أخصائي برامج التربية			f.khan@unesco.org
55	Iraq مكتب العراق في عمان	Mr السيد	Alberto Biancolli البرتو بيانكولي	ED Programme Specialist أخصائي برامج التربية			a.biancoli@unesco.org
56		Mr السيد	Enrique Pinilla Martin انريكيه بينيلا مارتن	ED Programme Specialist أخصائي برامج التربية			e.pinilla-martin@unesco.org
57	Rabat الرباط	Mr السيد	Philippe Maalouf فيليب معلوف	ED Programme Specialist أخصائي برامج التربية			p.maalouf@unesco.org

اليونسكو – UNESCO

No	Country البلد		Name الاسم	Position Organization	Tel/Cell	Fax	Email
58	Ramallah رام الله	Ms السيدة	Marina Patrier مارينا باترييه	ED Programme Specialist أخصائي برامج التربية	972.5431312		m.patrier@unesco.org
59	Paris المقر - باريس	Mr السيد	Nyi Nyi Thaug ني ني تونغ	Programme Specialist Section for Teacher Development & Education Policies أخصائي برامج في قسم تطوير المعلمين والسياسات التربوية			nn.thaug@unesco.org
60		Mr السيد	Sobhi Tawil صبحي الطويل	Senior Programme Specialist Education Research and Foresight أخصائي برامج أول - قسم الأبحاث			s.tawil@unesco.org