

# EFA Global Monitoring Report's Recommendations for the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative

*Draft*

September 2012 to August 2013



**Global Education First Initiative**

The UN Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education

This draft document is intended to gather further feedback on the achievements and potential of the Global Education First Initiative. Please send your feedback to Kate Redman: [k.redman@unesco.org](mailto:k.redman@unesco.org); or complete the on-line survey available [here](#).

1. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) has been tasked with undertaking an independent, light-touch review following the inaugural year of the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), from September 2012 to September 2013. GEFI is a five-year Initiative led by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. It gathers a broad spectrum of world leaders and advocates who all aspire to use the transformative power of education to build a better future for all.
2. From the outset, GEFI established three priorities: every child in school, quality of schooling, and global citizenship. In its strategic action plan, GEFI has set three main goals:
  - a. Rallying together a broad spectrum of actors for the final push to meet the 2015 Education for All (EFA) goals and education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
  - b. Putting education right at the heart of the social, political and development agendas; and
  - c. Generating additional and sufficient funding for education through sustained global advocacy efforts.

## **Overview of responses**

3. The review consisted of an online survey, made available in three languages (English, French, and Spanish), complemented by **eight more in-depth** face-to-face or telephone interviews with key actors of the GEFI initiative. These interviews included representatives from the Steering Committee, the Secretariat, the United Nations Secretary General's office, the Youth Advocacy Group, and the Technical Advisory Group. Requests for interviews were also made to the **Champion Countries**, but responses were not available in time for this paper.

4. The on-line survey received 162 responses in total, including 66% from Europe and North America, 20% from Asia and the Pacific, and 6% from sub-Saharan Africa. Of the respondents:

- 10% work for GEFI, representing all the different actors in the initiative.
- 36% have supported GEFI in some way
- 11% have participated in GEFI activities
- 54% have had no involvement with GEFI at all.

5. Consultations with various stakeholders have revealed a set of constructive recommendations for GEFI which aim to help build on the Initiative's role in bringing benefits for global education in its subsequent years. There was a great deal of commonality in the perspectives provided by different respondents, both via the on-line survey and interviews.

6. In general, feedback about GEFI's contributions to global education in its first year has been positive, recognizing that time has been needed to set up the initiative in its first year - including forming the shape of its management structure, and defining its membership. This phase is similar to other SG initiatives.

7. In its first year, comments from many respondents showed that GEFI has provided much-needed 'glue' for the multiple activities of the international education community. This combines the strengths of different partners, which has not happened in recent years, giving the initiative the potential to have real impact at a global level. The Learning for All Ministerial and Malala Day were two distinctive moments associated with GEFI which are commonly recognized as bringing attention to the sector at a time when its profile has been waning. Part of the reason for their success is that they brought together different partners.

8. There is a common view that a large part of GEFI's impact on the international stage has been thanks to the United Nations Secretary General's (UNSG) endorsement of education, giving it international legitimacy at a moment when it was slipping down the agenda. The UNSG's commitment to education is further exemplified by his appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Education, the first time the sector has had such a representative.

9. The vast majority believe GEFI is on track for achieving its three goals. Respondents to the on-line survey were most positive about the headway the Initiative is making in achieving its first two goals: putting education at the heart of development agenda, and being able to rally a broad cross-section of actors to the sector. Opinions were more divided about GEFI's success in raising finances to date. More broadly, there is a great deal of enthusiasm amongst education partners who are keen to collaborate to ensure GEFI's success in achieving its goals.

10. Opinions converged over the key recommendations for GEFI's coming years. There was an over-arching sentiment that, now the structures of the Initiative are in place, made up of an impressive network of partners that are united in their support for education, GEFI has huge potential to have a marked impact in the future. The way forward must build on the momentum experienced over the Initiative's first year, and seize the huge opportunities it has before it to put Education First.

### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Three opportunities for GEFI to make a difference:

1. Of the three priority areas identified by the UNSG when GEFI was launched, the **global citizenship** strand is identified by many as being 'the big opportunity' for GEFI's future. GEFI could lead the way by defining the term 'global citizenship', and identifying concrete actions associated with it. This could be achieved by bringing together a specialist 'Technical Advisory Group', including representatives from outside of the education community, for example, to include those who work on conflict/peace, employment, ICTs and climate change. GEFI should also benefit from the insight of the Youth Advocacy Group in devising this term and actions associated with it in order to build momentum behind the cause in the years to come.
2. The **Youth Advocacy Group (YAG)** is one of GEFI's key assets that sets it apart from other movements in education. The strengths of the YAG originate from the way it has been formed organically, by young people themselves. This energy should be drawn upon in the years to come, ensuring even greater involvement and cooperation with young people in the education sector. Identifying one or two signature activities, contained within a revised YAG action plan that links their activities with the broader aims of GEFI, would help to mobilise youth in taking action in support of GEFI's goals.
3. The **Champion Countries** have real potential which is currently unrealized, partly due to a lack of clarity over their role and responsibilities. Strategies for their involvement should be devised in the next year. Their involvement and commitments should be tailored to their individual strengths. These commitments could be defined by the champion countries themselves, perhaps in conjunction with the champion countries as a group identifying a common theme which draws them together in ways that they believe they can facilitate change. There should also be encouragement for the group of champion countries to expand, with any new champion countries providing a clear statement of what they intend to bring to GEFI when signing up. Civil society organizations within these countries could then help to hold them to account for commitments made.

Building on GEFI's momentum:

4. In the coming year, GEFI needs to set **a clear, simple agenda** selecting a small number of key moments behind which all the GEFI actors can rally, drawing on the strengths of all its members. This would be based on a review of GEFI's initial strategic action plan via in-depth consultation with key partners. Proposals made by respondents for GEFI's key moments in 2014 centred around positioning education at the heart of the post-2015 agenda, and mobilizing finances for education. An opportunity for this could be via support to the GPE replenishment fund, for example. In order to develop the agenda for the strategic action plan, the Secretariat should engage champion countries, the Youth Advocacy Group, together with the Steering Committee 'sherpas' (ie. the technical experts of the agencies represented on the Steering Committee). The Steering Committee needs publicly to endorse the plan and help drive the actions, in order to give it visibility beyond the education sector.
5. **The Secretariat** should continue to ensure that it provides a neutral information-sharing hub for all its partners in order to enhance and pave the way for continued smooth collaboration. Given the size of the Secretariat and expectations of SG initiatives more broadly, the Secretariat is not expected to design or implement projects on its own. One of GEFI's key strengths is that it can provide an advocacy umbrella via its Secretariat, giving common branding with which all education activities can be associated. This can promote a more cohesive framework for the sector both internally and externally.
6. There are considerable benefits to aligning GEFI directly with the **UN Secretary General** rather than to individual partners. This key advantage must be emphasized to its full in the next few years in order to draw in new partners and funds behind education. The UNSG's endorsement can be used to engage education in high-level development events and with influential bodies, such as the G20, BRICS and post-2015 leaders. Coordinating an even broader spectrum of players behind the importance of education would not only provide a strong argument for education's place in new development goals after 2015, but also pave the way for substantial financial commitments to be made in support of education.
7. Until GEFI, education has been in need of **high-profile spokespeople** to bring attention to the sector. The UNSG's recently-appointed UN Special Envoy for Education has played a key role in giving visibility to GEFI, for example via the Learning for All Ministerial at the World Bank spring meetings and Malala Day. There is scope for appointing additional UN Special Envoys for Education from different backgrounds. Health, for example, has seven Special Envoys who have helped to drive forward the Every Woman Every Child SG's initiative. Malala has also helped to give visibility to the education sector. In the words of one respondent: 'we need 10 more Malalas'.