Why this evaluation? Entrusted to continue leading and coordinating the global Education Agenda, SDG4-Education 2030, UNESCO commissioned this evaluation of EFA coordination mechanisms. The analysis focused on UNESCO’s leadership and coordination role in the areas of Advocacy, Knowledge Sharing and Dissemination, Resource Mobilization, and Progress Monitoring across three historic phases (2000-2004, 2005-2010, and 2011-2015). Its main purpose is to assist UNESCO in refining and improving the coordination structures and processes established (both within the Organization and internationally) to facilitate the implementation of the SDG-4 Education 2030 Framework for Action.

What have we learned about ‘EFA Advocacy’?

UNESCO’s advocacy efforts have been successful in influencing the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda and garnered support among its partners to introduce otherwise neglected aspects of education in the global sustainable development agenda. However, the lack of clarity of the role of each EFA partner and convening agency at global, regional and country level, aggravated by the absence of a clear internal strategic framework and a well-defined accountability mechanism, made UNESCO’s advocacy work more challenging than expected.

Among the EFA convening agencies (UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank), UNESCO was the international organization that demonstrated the steadiest commitment to the coordination of the holistic EFA agenda, which focused on ensuring the quality, social equity and inclusiveness of education systems, while considering otherwise neglected - and yet relevant - areas such as early childhood care and education, adult literacy, as well as skills development of youth and adults, within a new and more encompassing lifelong-learning perspective. Furthermore, UNESCO ensured that the voice of other key stakeholders be better heard, through the more active involvement and more equal representation of civil society in the global
education discourse. However, the lack of a clear division of coordination tasks and responsibilities within UNESCO and between convening agencies, along with the paucity of resources allocated at the country level, often weakened the relevance of UNESCO’s coordination with other development partners on the ground. Furthermore, the global efforts and guidance did not always translate into action at the national level.

What have we learned about ‘EFA Knowledge Generation and Dissemination’?

UNESCO’s strategies for effectively promoting the EFA-related knowledge were successful. However, the proliferation of compelling research produced by well-resourced global education initiatives, universities and private foundations gradually undermined UNESCO’s leadership.

UNESCO strategies of capitalizing on its specialised Institutes, organizing regional and global meetings to facilitate the dissemination of UNESCO knowledge products in EFA-related areas, fostering regional exchanges on EFA-related good practices, and coordinating the development of technical publications proved successful. In-house production and wide dissemination of cutting-edge research work, thematic series, and specialized literature on education topics, further enhanced the credibility of the Organization’s intellectual leadership, amply recognized in fields such as youth and adult literacy, educational planning, teachers and statistics. Nonetheless, the proliferation of well-resourced global education initiatives and the strengthening of analytical research capacity on education-related issues within universities and public foundations gradually destabilised UNESCO’s effectiveness in generating and disseminating EFA-related knowledge.

What have we learned about ‘EFA Resource Mobilisation’?

Given its own increasingly limited resources, UNESCO strongly advocated for increasing funding for education and promoted a more effective use of the existing education funds at national level. However, these efforts were not steadily supported by other convening agencies and globally only fewer of the resources that were hoped to feed into EFA goals were dedicated to the Education for All movement.

At the global level, UNESCO successfully pushed for public-private partnerships and an increase in extra-budgetary support for EFA-related programming and coordination. To call for a more effective allocation of existing resources for education purposes, the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) and other technical publications provided funders and national policy-makers with the strongest evidence available on what education areas and topics needed to be addressed the most. However, the varying levels of engagement among other EFA Convening Agencies over time, the divide between the six holistic EFA Goals and the Millennium Development Goals, and the emergence of parallel funding mechanisms for education established outside of UNESCO and supporting only a few specific goals of the broader EFA agenda, posed significant challenges to EFA resource mobilisation.

What have we learned about ‘EFA Progress Monitoring’?

The GMR has been recognized over the years as the most comprehensive statistical publication on national education systems’ progress in relation to the six EFA goals, and the provision of education indicators and statistics through the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) emerged as a distinguished comparative advantage of the Organization.

EFA progress monitoring at the global level was ensured through the production of the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), and at the regional level through statistical capacity-building conducted in close cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics’ regional advisers. As a result, UNESCO could claim a leadership role in the tracking of EFA goals at the global and, partly, at the regional level. UNESCO, together with UNICEF played a pivotal role in the discussions on the post-2015 education agenda at UN-level. Through the Education for All Steering Committee and the World Education Forum 2015 it played a decisive role in establishing the SDG4 - Education 2030 targets.

The Way forward:

Key Message 1: Effective global and regional coordination of the SDG 4-2030 Education agenda will require a shift from ‘traditional leadership and coordination’ to a more cohesive ‘Shared Coordination Model’, based on dialogue and a well-articulated strategy, clear allocation of roles and responsibilities and a mutually accepted and agreed accountability mechanism within and among all Convening agencies and partners. A stronger and more authoritative SDG 4-Education 2030 Steering Committee will be a crucial ingredient.

Key Message 2: Strong and unified advocacy for investing in education among all partners will be a precondition to ensure that the allocation of funding for education from development partners and Member States will be fully aligned with the holistic and inclusive SDG4-Agenda 2030 targets.

Key Message 3: There are opportunities for UNESCO to clearly position its contribution to the 2030 Agenda, such as a) by strengthening its intellectual leadership through the generation of cutting edge research and dissemination of knowledge and good practices as well as the through the development of indicators and b) by assisting countries in setting up relevant and effective Education Monitoring Information Systems.