



Feb 16, 2007

High-Level Education Event, April 30, 2007
“Keeping our promises on education.”

Leadership Meeting

KEY MESSAGES

Despite education being a human right and the overwhelming evidence that investing in education— particularly for girls—can spur economic growth, slow the spread of HIV/AIDS, and reduce poverty—there are still **77 million children out of school - including 44 million girls¹** – and at the current rate of progress at least **75 countries will not achieve universal primary completion by 2015, the key MDG and EFA target.** Even more will not achieve all six EFA goals.

Urgent action is needed now. If all children are going to complete their primary education by 2015, they **must be enrolled in school by 2009** at the latest. This means that plans to increase access and improve the quality of education provision must be finalized this year and the necessary resources mobilized quickly.

Commitments and promises have been made before. It is nearly seven years since the Education for All Dakar conference and the Millennium Summit where the EFA and MDG goals were set. It is five years since agreement was reached on the Monterrey Consensus to increase aid as part of the compact with developing countries. The time for talking is over - **2007 is the year for keeping our promises on education.** The high-level education event will call on all partners to make concrete and specific commitments to provide **more, better and faster** support for education.

Remarkable progress has been made, but huge challenges remain. Many countries – particularly in sub Saharan Africa - have achieved unprecedented growth in enrolment and in the number of teachers being recruited and trained. But, with continuing population growth, these same countries are struggling to reduce the large numbers of children who remain out of school and to recruit and train sufficient teachers. Many other countries – particularly those affected by conflict or with weak governments – are

¹ UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007

facing even bigger challenges to raise their enrolment rates and get on track to reach the MDG targets.

The fact that millions of children throughout the world continue to be denied their basic right to a decent education is a scandal. The peace and security of our world depends on the creation of stable, democratic societies committed to open government – education is the foundation stone for effective states **building national identity and promoting tolerance and respect for others.**

Experience has shown that, with firm political will and effective collaboration between all partners, progress can be made even in the poorest countries. **The education goals are within reach.** Ours could be the first generation in history to provide primary education for every child, everywhere. **If ever aid can make a difference – it is here.**

More long term predictable financing is essential. Many donors – and their partner countries – have made a significant effort to increase financing for education. Aid for basic education in low income countries has more than doubled since 2000 reaching a total of **\$3.4 billion in 2004.** If we are going to help developing countries provide primary education to the almost 80 million children who are still out of school – more finance is required. The Global Monitoring Report estimates that **US\$9 billion external aid is** needed per annum in order to achieve the primary education goal and US\$11 billion to achieve all the EFA goals – this would require a **tripling in aid for basic education** in low income countries over the next 2 -3 years.

This is a challenging but not impossible target. **The total aid required is equivalent to around \$ 13 per child in the developing world.** This is a small price to pay for an investment that will last a lifetime. Many donor countries have already committed to substantial increases in their aid budgets by 2010. Delivering these promises and ensuring that basic education gets a higher share would provide the resources needed to achieve the goals.

Donors will need to re-align their aid for education – more aid for basic education, and more aid for low income countries. Aid for basic education still represents less than 4% of all aid. Donors could mobilize significant additional resources by re-aligning aid from middle income countries and by giving greater priority to primary and basic education in their overall education programmes. There is currently a gap between the policy rhetoric of commitment to the UPE and EFA goals and the reality of aid allocation decisions.

Developing countries also need to increase domestic investment in education. Typically, developing countries pay 70 – 80% of the costs of delivering basic education services. Domestic financing is mostly used to pay teacher salaries; cover the costs of books and materials; and in many cases to build and maintain schools. The FTI uses a benchmark of **20% of all government expenditures for education** overall and, of that, **50% should be allocated to primary**². Many countries are making progress towards this benchmark – but some appear to be reducing domestic investment in education. All countries should demonstrate their commitment to delivering a good quality education to all children by ensuring **a fair share of the national budget for the education sector.**

It is not just about money. Governments will also need to put in place policies to ensure that resources are used effectively and that poor and marginalized communities are given an equal chance to a decent education. Many countries will still need to develop targeted policies to ensure that more girls complete their education. Improving the quality of education will be just as important as increasing the quantity. And countries will need to take urgent steps to train more teachers, strengthen the skills of their education managers, and over the long term build capacity at all levels.

Governments need to take a holistic, sector-wide approach. The high level meeting will focus on the urgent actions needed to achieve the primary education goal. But countries will not be able to achieve the UPE goal unless they are also investing in the other parts of the education sector, in the Education for All goals as a whole. Secondary education is essential to provide opportunities after leaving primary school. Investment in early childhood also shows positive impact on enrolment and learning in primary schools as do programmes to raise the literacy levels of parents and young adults. Universities and colleges provide the teachers, managers and researchers of the future. A good quality primary and basic education provides the foundation for life long learning.

Aid needs to be delivered more effectively. Aid for education needs to be more predictable and provided over the long term. It is very difficult for ministries to plan strategically to build schools, train teachers etc if they do not know from one year to the next how much support they will get from donors. Aid for education also needs to be delivered in support of a single, country-led education sector plan to maximize impact and minimize transaction costs for the government. **More, better and faster support for credible education sector plans will be needed to achieve the Education for All goals.**

The Education for All - *Fast Track Initiative* (FTI) has developed into an important global partnership to help countries move faster towards the education goals. The FTI provides a framework for donors to work together with partner countries to prepare and implement a single national education sector plan. The principle is **one country, one plan for the education sector.** There are currently 28 countries with FTI endorsed education plans – an additional 18 countries are expected to complete the endorsement process in 2007 and a further 14 may do so in 2008. The FTI is helping to strengthen

² This benchmark is derived from a sample of ‘good performing’ countries who have made rapid progress towards the education goals (Bruns et al 2003).

planning and implementation processes and provides an assurance of quality for education sector plans and their budget proposals.

The FTI is helping countries to deliver results in the education sector. Recent evaluations have shown that many FTI endorsed countries have made remarkable progress towards the UPE goal. Burkina Faso increased its enrolment by 55% between 2000 and 2004. Niger enrolled an additional 400,000 children and recruited more than 10,000 additional teachers in the same period. In Yemen nearly 200,000 more girls started school in 2004 than in 2002.