Commercialisation of Public Services – Where to from here?

Trade officials in Geneva have expressed growing disquiet with campaigns being organised against the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The WTO has a new item on its website aimed at "*debunking the myths and falsehoods surrounding the* GATS".
In the lead-up to the WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Qatar in December 2001, the impression is that the wagons are circling.

Once the realisation dawned that the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) listed education and healthcare as services susceptible trade liberalisation, pressure was exerted on national governments to be open and accountable. In other words, to practice democracy. Any trade agreement that would make it possible for a government to liberalise trade in what are currently public services must be preceded by a full national debate. Transparency and accountability in government demand this. Education International and its member organisations must be part of this debate at all levels.

In Seattle[1] much of the protest directed at the World Trade Organisation resulted from a lack of transparency and openness in the workings of the organisation. Since Seattle, preparations for GATS negotiations have been continuing. A special session of the WTO Services Council[2] agreed on guidelines and procedures for the negotiations. A draft text had already been agreed to in Seattle but, when the Millennium Round fell apart, the procedures for negotiations went down too. The press release that followed the Services Council states that *Governments have unequivocally endorsed some of the fundamental principles of the* GATS: *Governments' right to regulate and to introduce new regulations on the supply of services in pursuit of national policy objectives; their right to specify which services they wish to open to foreign suppliers and under which conditions …*" The WTO insists that public services are safeguarded in the GATS agreement, because services supplied by governments on a non-commercial and non-competitive basis are outside the scope of GATS.

To be excluded from the scope of application of the GATS, the education system must be financed and regulated by the state and not have any commercial purpose. Very few education systems meet these criteria. The vast majority of countries have mixed systems where the private sector plays a role. There is legitimate concern among those who want a specific commitment to carve out public services from the GATS that the protection for domestic regulation is flawed. Concerns largely centre on fears that today's public policies may not be those needed tomorrow in a world of rapid technological change. Current regulation may in future leave public services vulnerable to challenge before dispute panels.

If the WTO wants to convince the sceptics, rather than demonise them, it should be prepared to amend the GATS by writing into it the right of countries to exempt public services from any agreement covering the services sector. Governments should also be able to enact the necessary domestic regulations to safeguard and develop public services in the future. In the education sector, it must be clear that all sectors of education – from pre-school to higher education – are now and will remain exempt from GATS provisions, no matter what convoluted mix of public/private partnerships is in place. Countries must have the right to make decisions in the future to increase public services if they so wish. At present, a new government could be brought to a dispute panel if it tried to make changes to sectors opened by its predecessor under GATS.

Since Seattle, a number of countries have submitted proposals for negotiations. The USA wishes to pursue an aggressive negotiation in the export of education services. Many industrialised countries indicate they have no intention of opening public education for negotiations. Many, however, are interested in exporting their expertise in distance education and virtual education. This has major implications for the higher education sector relating to regulation, qualifications, quality control and workload.

For developing countries, the implications are obvious. Rather than provide assistance to strengthen national systems of education, pressure to open the education system for business will become the order of the day. The African virtual university already provides an example of what this can mean. The courses provided for English-speaking African countries have been developed mainly in the UK and the USA. In French-speaking Africa, courses from Belgium, France and Switzerland are on offer. Enough said!

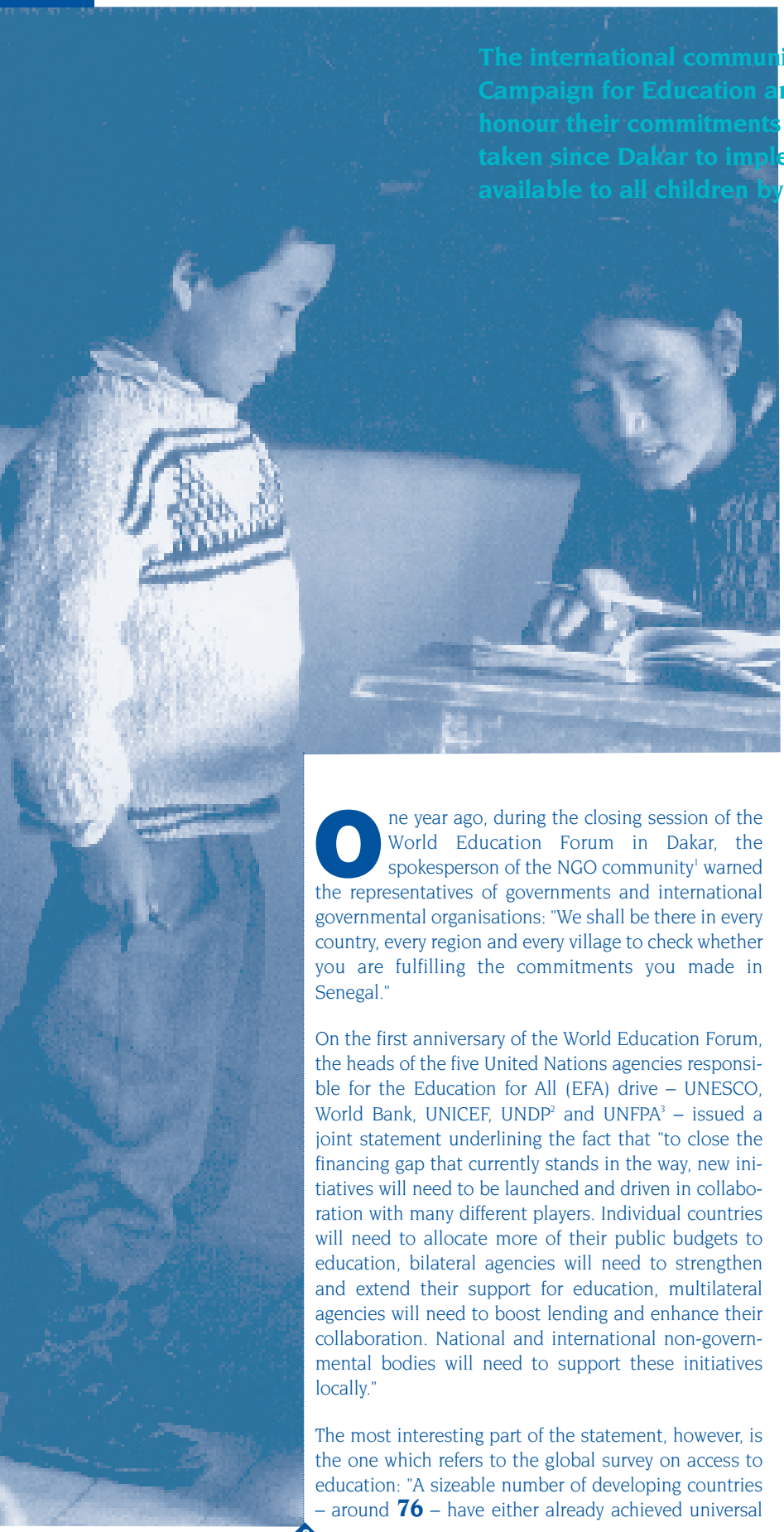
Education unions must remain vigilant and join forces with NGOs who support the provision of quality public services, particularly in education and healthcare. Governments must be open and let the population know what trade agreements are being planned. What is your country putting on the table for GATS negotiations? Do they plan to open any education sectors? Were education unions consulted before the government developed its position?

We cannot allow trade liberalisation to dictate the future of public services. Unless GATS is amended to take our concerns into account and provide us with what we believe are the necessary, substantive guarantees to protect public education both now and in the future, trade officials should get used to the pressure being exerted by trade unions and NGO's. ◆

Sheena Hanley
Deputy General Secretary

1. The third World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference was held in Seattle, Washington State, US, between 30 November and 3 December 1999
2. The WTO Services Council met in Geneva from the 28th to the 30th March 2001. The Services Council for Trade in Services operates under the guidance of the WTO General Council and is responsible for overseeing the functioning of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). It is open to all WTO members.

A Fourteen-Year Countdown



The international community of NGOs and, in particular, the Global Campaign for Education and its member organisations, including EI, honour their commitments by closely monitoring all the initiatives taken since Dakar to implement the objective of making education available to all children by 2015.

One year ago, during the closing session of the World Education Forum in Dakar, the spokesperson of the NGO community[1] warned the representatives of governments and international governmental organisations: "We shall be there in every country, every region and every village to check whether you are fulfilling the commitments you made in Senegal."

On the first anniversary of the World Education Forum, the heads of the five United Nations agencies responsible for the Education for All (EFA) drive – UNESCO, World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP[2] and UNFPA[3] – issued a joint statement underlining the fact that "to close the financing gap that currently stands in the way, new initiatives will need to be launched and driven in collaboration with many different players. Individual countries will need to allocate more of their public budgets to education, bilateral agencies will need to strengthen and extend their support for education, multilateral agencies will need to boost lending and enhance their collaboration. National and international non-governmental bodies will need to support these initiatives locally."

The most interesting part of the statement, however, is the one which refers to the global survey on access to education: "A sizeable number of developing countries – around **76** – have either already achieved universal primary education or are making sound progress towards getting all young children into primary school by the target date of 2015. In some **27** countries, progress has been made, but is showing signs of faltering." Leaders of the international agencies also underline that: "It is sobering that some **32** countries are unlikely to meet the target of universal primary education by 2015…unless their governments make education a key development priority, and donors and economically advanced countries provide significant support."

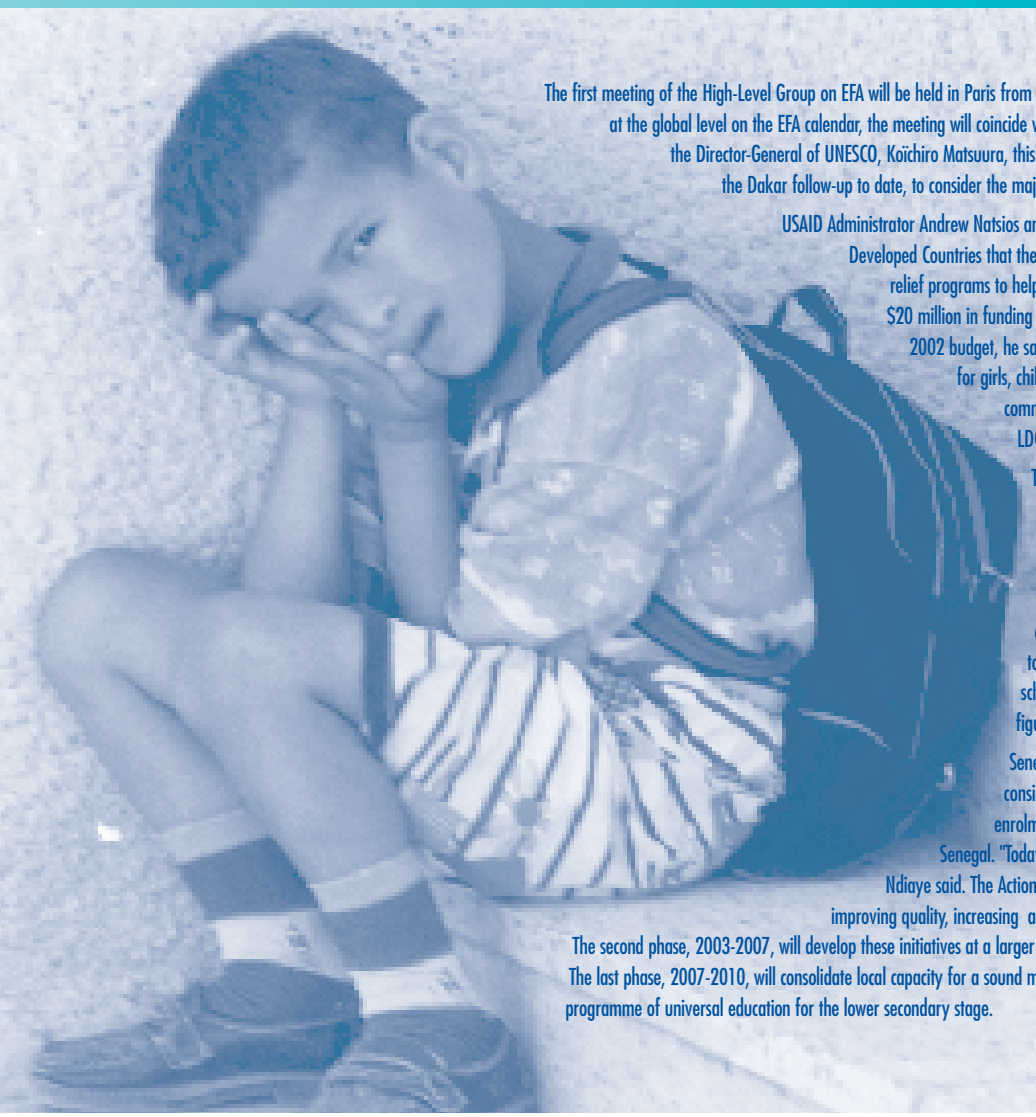
How should we interpret these figures which overall correspond to the reality of the situation? In a positive way, i.e. to emphasise the sheer magnitude of the task to be accomplished? Or negatively, i.e. to point out that if the target of universal primary education by 2015 is not achieved, the blame will lie with those countries that do not perform the necessary effort as well as with donor organisations and economically advanced countries that fail to provide the substantial aid required? Should we already point our finger at the potential culprits?

Financially feasible

The cost of achieving the Dakar objective is well known: **5 to 7** billion US dollars per year between now and 2015. This would enable all school age children worldwide to attend a primary school. No doubt, this overall figure represents a lot of money, but in actual fact it is based on an estimated cost of only twenty dollars per child per year.

The question is quite simply whether the international community can raise this amount every year, it being understood that players should contribute to the general effort according to each one's ability to do so. The NGO community and the Global Campaign for Education are firmly convinced the answer is "yes".

To place the issue in perspective, let us point out that the money required represents 0.6% of the 225 largest private fortunes in the world. Let us recall, furthermore, that global military expenditure amounts to a stagger-



The first meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA will be held in Paris from October 29-30, 2001. By far the most important forthcoming event at the global level on the EFA calendar, the meeting will coincide with the deliberations of UNESCO's General Conference. Convened by the Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, this inaugural meeting will provide a timely opportunity to take stock of the Dakar follow-up to date, to consider the major constraints, and, most importantly, to discuss future strategies.

USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios announced on the sidelines of the Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries that the United States would increase spending for its education and debt relief programs to help the world's poorest countries. USAID has requested an additional $20 million in funding for education initiatives in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the fiscal 2002 budget, he said, noting that the funds would provide more schooling opportunities for girls, child labourers, HIV/AIDS orphans, ethnic minorities and those in rural communities – a move which Natsios said would eventually help bolster LDC economies.

The President of Tanzania has announced plans to abolish fees in government primary schools. This measure has been possible due to the availability of funds recently freed from debt repayments through the Debt Initiative for the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC). Mr Mkapa also promised to increase the number and quality of teachers in government schools. Schools currently call on parents to pay a standard contribution of some US$8 per year and primary school enrolment is currently about 57 per cent, according to official figures.

Senegalese launched the National Action Plan of Education for All considered a powerful steering instrument toward achieving 100 per cent enrolment in primary school and improving the standard of learning in Senegal. "Today, one out of three children are not in school," Education Minister Ndiaye said. The Action Plan comprises three phases: Phase one, 2001-2003, will focus on improving quality, increasing access, and decentralising the budget and management of education. The second phase, 2003-2007, will develop these initiatives at a larger scale, and ensure that all children are enrolled in Grades 1-4. The last phase, 2007-2010, will consolidate local capacity for a sound management of finances and administration to pave the way for a programme of universal education for the lower secondary stage.

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ing US$780 billion annually, which means that assigning less than 1% of this amount to education every year for 15 years would be enough to provide primary education for all; and to finish on a lighter note, let us recall that the United States – and Europe too, for that matter – spend 8 billion dollars annually on beauty and body-care products.

The need for exemplary transparency

However, it should be stated very clearly that systematic corruption and mismanagement of public funds and/or foreign development aid – two problems found in many countries – do little to encourage the international community to perform the financial efforts required by the situation we have just described.

A blanket condemnation of developing countries, some of which are making courageous efforts to manage their limited resources effectively, would of course be absurd and pointless, but the financial scandals that regularly break out in this or that developing country – and indeed in economically advanced countries – often undermine the impetus of the initiatives in favour of universal education.

We believe an effort is required to devise and implement transparent methods for the management of any funds raised for the above-mentioned purposes. The community of non-governmental organisations and the Global Campaign for Education must undertake this creative task and put forward proposals as soon as possible to reassure all potential donors.

Universal primary education by the year 2015: a realistic objective

The Dakar conclusions provide for the development, by the end of 2002, of national plans to achieve education for all in the countries concerned by the problem. Although the Dakar target date is 14 years from now, these countries have only 18 months left to draw up their national plans of action in partnership with civil society.

The forthcoming congress of Education International will provide a unique opportunity to call on all our affiliates, and on all international governmental and non-governmental organisations as well as all national NGOs active in the education sector, to make their voices heard and remind the relevant governments of their commitments.

The preparation of national plans of action is an essential step to achieve the Dakar target and ensure that universal primary education becomes a reality by 2015. ◆

The financial effort required is therefore perfectly feasible, provided there is a minimum of political will.

Élie Jouen
Deputy General Secretary

1 Tom Bediako, Education International Chief Coordinator for Africa
2 United Nations Development Programme, http://www.undp.org
3 United Nations Population Fund, http://www.unpfa.org

Changing the Global Fate of Education: Only Rights Can Halt

by Katarina Tomasevski

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Primary school children cannot form a political party, get elected to parliament and secure budgetary allocations for their education. The proportion of children in the northern part of the world is small and their parents can secure funding for education, combining their political voice with paying tax. In many developing countries, children constitute the majority of the population but obtain a vote only after becoming adults; hence they have to rely on their parents and their teachers. Few of their parents pay tax, many because they earn too little, and their vote seldom affects budgetary allocations because there often is simply too little to distribute. Their teachers habitually have to battle to get their rights recognized and their salaries paid so that they could teach. Children thus need to have their right to education fully recognized, and this right necessarily goes beyond national and regional borders. There can be no universal right to education unless the corresponding governmental obligations - both individual and collective - are also universal.

The global commitment to education as a right has recently weakened and it may disappear altogether unless public pressure remedies the collective reluctance of governments to accept their human rights obligations. The collective voice of governments is supportive of education, but not of the human right to education. The main reason is avoidance of corollary duties and responsibilities.

The right to education entails governmental obligations on two levels: domestic and global. Individual states are held responsible for ensuring that human rights are effectively safeguarded, but global economic and fiscal policies can constrain both the ability and the willingness of individual governments to guarantee the right to education. The identification and elimination of obstacles - especially financial - to the realization of the right to education is the key to redressing the increasing substitution of governmental human rights obligations by the market logic.

The collective voice of governments continues promising education for all, but references to the right to education are becoming conspicuously absent. The difference between *education* and the *right to education* is epitomized in post-war history. An international commitment to universal primary education for all children in the world was made once per decade. Each betrayed pledge was followed by a similar pledge, which was also betrayed. Human rights were invented to prevent betrayals of political commitments by translating them into legal obligations. Thus, education as a universal human right entails corresponding obligations for all governments and the right to challenge its denials and violations. Human rights are defined as governmental obligations because they do not materialize spontaneously through the interplay

and Reverse Wrongs

of market forces or charity. The mobilizing power of saying that a betrayed pledge is a human rights violation is immense and legal enforcement of human rights obligations makes violations expensive - governments have to remedy them, compensate the victims, and ensure that similar violations never happen again. Resort to legal enforcement requires, however, pre-existing individual and collective commitments to the right to education which is increasingly avoided.

The turn of the millennium has been marked by attempts to forge consensus within the international community on diagnosing problems and devising solutions. Ten years after the Jomtien Conference in 1990 had instilled optimism by forging a set of global commitments, the Fourth Global Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All took place in Dakar on 26-28 April 2000. That meeting was dubbed *Jomtien*+10 in popular parlance, because it was based on the acknowledgement that commitments made at Jomtien in 1990 had not been met. The 1990 commitment had been to achieve universal primary education by the year 2000; the target year was subsequently postponed to 2015. Nothing could be done to challenge that betrayal because no mechanism had been established to hold those making promises accountable for their performance - or the lack thereof. No significant improvement was achieved in the year 2000. The final document resulting from the Dakar Forum repeated the same noble ends but failed to specify the means needed to attain them, as well as the mechanisms necessary to challenge failures to attain the agreed ends. The collective voice of inter-governmental agencies and governments confined itself to defining the goals - asking others to deliver them.

The key formulation of Jomtien, pledging that "every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs," was repeated ten years later in Dakar: "all children, young people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs." There was silence on the corresponding governmental obligations; there was silence on the fate of education in resource allocation - from global to local. In September 2000, the Millennium Declaration affirmed the target year 2015 for all children to complete primary schooling, without mentioning how that goal would be attained. There was no mention of governmental obligations, and this time, not even of the right to education.

This unanimity about the goal for all children to complete primary education reduces the global targets to the first phase of schooling, thereby negating the right to secondary and university education. These are, indeed, at risk of becoming fully transformed into services that are sold and purchased against a price. Moreover, retrogression affects even primary education. The 1990 Jomtien Conference was convened against the diminishing coverage of primary education, especially in Africa, where the proportion of the primary-school age population in school had declined by 10% in the 1980s. A similar process of retrogression has subsequently taken place in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Between 1989 and 1997, educational enrollment of 15-year olds diminished by 20% or more in Georgia, Moldavia or Tajikistan. The causes have been similar - diminished ability of the state to generate revenue and to finance all-encompassing and free-of-charge primary education, thereby replacing the right to education as an individual entitlement by access to education which is governed by the purchasing power of families, communities, and countries.

Rather than focussing on the necessity to affirm and reinforce universal governmental human rights obligations, the current global strategies abundantly use the term *partnership* to depict relations between donors and recipients, creditors and debtors, governments and NGOs. *Partnership* does not reflect the relationship between a creditor (or donor) holding a chequebook and a government which desperately needs that cheque, nor does it fit a truism shared amongst human rights NGOs whereby one cannot do human rights work and be popular with governments. Human rights are safeguards against abuse of power and require the identification of those who hold power, so as to be able to prevent and remedy its abuse.

As adults, we have the power of affirming or negating the children's right to education. We can accept that children can have rights only if we comply with our individual and collective duties. Governmental human rights obligations are based upon the premise of governments - individually and collectively - funding public services, which implies their ability and willingness to raise revenue and accord priority to human rights in its distribution. Domestically, solidarity is enforced through the duty to pay tax from which education is financed. Lower taxes may seem popular until they translate into ruined public schools, whereupon the voters' anger will alter governmental policies or turn into apathy and cynicism if generation and distribution of revenue is beyond their reach. Globally, the universality of the right to education is predicated on international cooperation, so as to equalize opportunities for the enjoyment of the right to education by supplementing the insufficient resources of poor countries. Constantly diminishing aid jeopardizes the universality of the right to education, thus challenging the very *human* in the definition of human rights. Human rights activism emerged in the 1960s with the slogan that people whose rights were protected should act for those who were less fortunate; exposing denials and violations of human rights was seen as the first step towards opposing them.

What is needed today is globalization of *human* rights activism in education. The adjective human implies everybody's duty to defend the rights of all fellow humans so that denials of the right to education cannot continue un-exposed and un-opposed. ◆

Qualified Teachers for Quality Education

The inauguration of World Teachers' Day by the International Conference on Education in Geneva in 1993 marks the modern realisation of the important role teachers in society. On October 5, we annually commemorate that recognition by celebrating the contribution of teachers.

Today over 100 countries observe World Teachers' Day. The efforts of EI and EI member organisations have contributed to this wide spread recognition. Over the past eight years EI has launched major efforts to promote the contribution and status of teachers through World Teachers' Day.

EI's on-going campaign (supported by UNESCO) for the issuing of commemorative stamps for World Teachers' Day, helped launch 20 commemorative WTD stamps from six countries.

Chosen jointly by Education International and UNESCO, the slogan for this year's World Teachers' Day, is "Qualified Teachers for Quality Education". It encompasses the dual themes of teachers as indispensable to providing quality education and teachers as fundamental in helping governments meet their commitments to the follow up of recent world conferences in education (i.e. Dakar Forum, UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education).

This years focus on quality in education indirectly recognises the importance of education and that every discussion on quality has to relate to teachers. Education is to a large extent a matter of a learning process, which takes place through the interaction between teacher and student. When this process works well, real learning takes place. The clear conclusion is that quality education requires quality teachers. This highlights the significance of acknowledging teaching as a profession, rather than as something anyone can do. To provide high quality education as everyone hopes to, there is obvious need to attract the best students to teacher education and to maintain qualified teachers in the education system.

OCTOBER 5 HISTORICAL MARKS THE SIGNING OF THE RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE STATUS OF TEACHERS IN 1966 BY A SPECIAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY UNESCO AND ILO. THE 150 GUIDELINES CONTAINED IN RECOMMENDATION ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY, CURRICULA, TEACHER TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS AND TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING ARE STILL VALID TODAY. IN 1997, A SEPARATE RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL WAS ADOPTED ADDITIONALLY.

Increasingly teacher organisations must focus on quality education in order to protect and to improve the situation of their members. The question is how quality education can become an integral part of teacher unions' strategy.

Union strategy should clearly establish the link between the investment made in education and the quality you get. Quality can only be achieved through increasing resources allocated to education. For governments to achieve quality, they must realise the investment required. But it is not enough just to invest in education, it is also crucial to make the right investments.

The **professional freedom** of teachers is of crucial importance in developing quality in education. Professional freedom does not mean that the teacher can do whatever he or she likes, but that the teacher, who knows the students, is the person best equipped to decide which methods to use in order to create an optimal learning situation.

Teachers' working conditions are also closely related to their students' learning conditions. A school environment allowing teachers to do a good job will automatically improve the learning conditions of the students.

Reviews of the factors affecting academic achievement of school children conclude that the education level of the teacher is of great influence. The significance of improving **teacher education** and the importance of teacher qualification and training cannot be overemphasised.

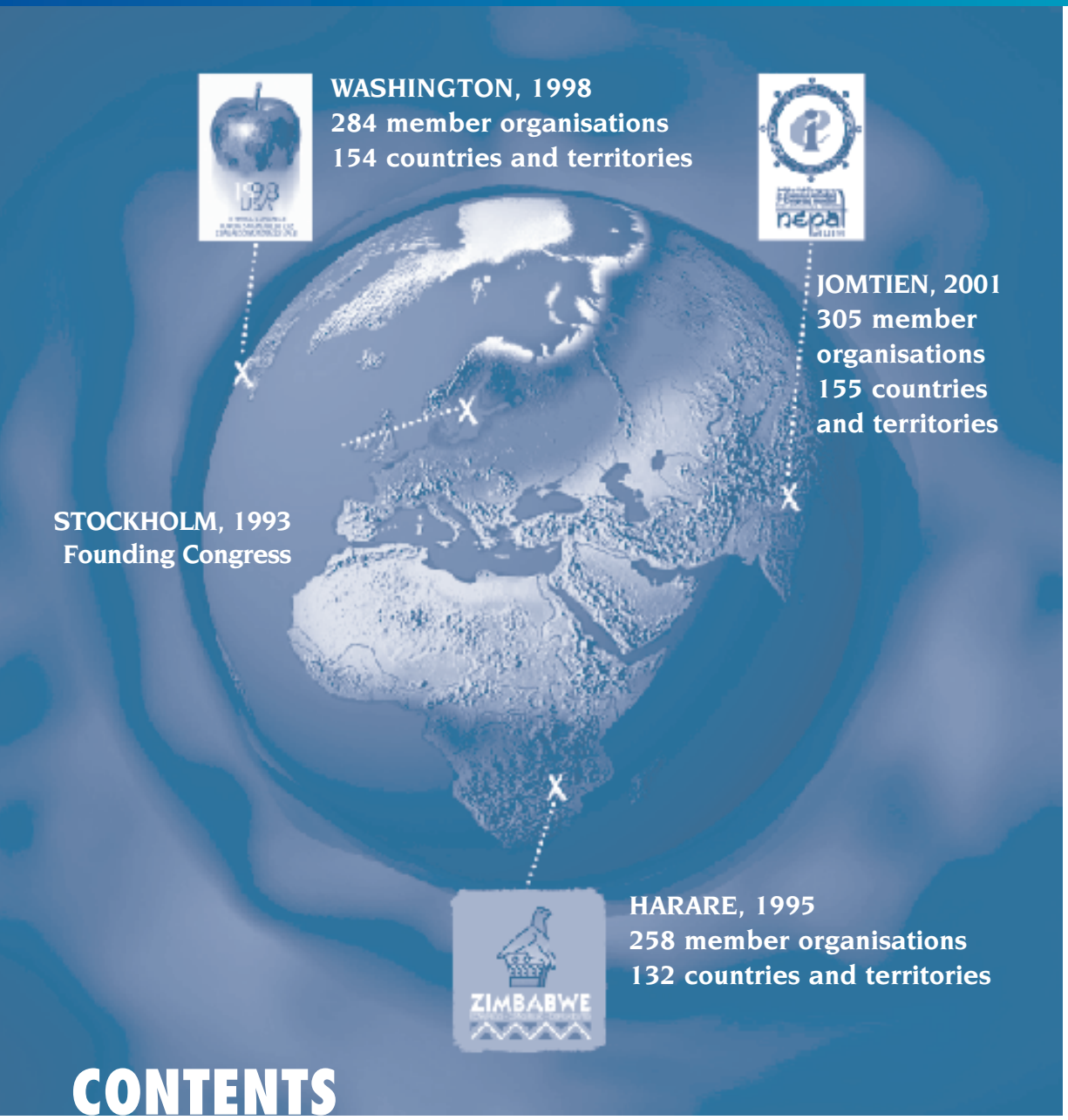
Continuous professional development is invaluable to maintaining the level of teachers' education, retaining them in the profession and avoiding 'burn-out'. To improve the quality of education, teachers must be supported in their efforts to develop themselves professionally.

Important issues such as **environmental problems, AIDS/HIV, violence,** the growing **threats against democracy** through increasing **racism** and **xenophobia** must be reflected in today's education. ◆

Lisa DuMouchel
EI Press Officer

EI THIRD WORLD CONGRESS

JULY 2001 - Dossier of Education International Magazine



When the EI World Congress convenes in Jomtien, Thailand this July, up to one thousand delegates will decide on the future direction and priorities of this major Global Union.
They will represent 24.5 million EI members - teachers and other personnel - who work in all sectors of education, from pre-school to university, belonging to 305 national member organisations in 155 countries and territories.

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DOSSIER

Globalisation and the Rights and Employment Conditions of Teachers

Education reforms have been accompanied by unrelenting attacks on educators' working conditions, employment rights and pay. But also on the way education is provided.
© UNHCR

In the globalisation process that has been the political priority for over twenty years we have seen a move from the welfare state to the competitive state. The language that grew up around this phenomenon has promoted re-organisation, re-structuring and structural adjustment requiring de- and re-regulation. The accompanying turbulent political changes have not left education unscathed.

Education reforms have been accompanied by unrelenting attacks on educators' working conditions, employment rights and pay. But also on the way education is provided. Market based changes, whether through structural adjustment, consumer choice, or uninhibited implementation of neo-liberal policies, have been accompanied by an avalanche of criticism of education.

These attacks, both practical and ideological, have been justified by the same sort of argument: change is necessary because we now live in a highly competitive global economy. Competitiveness itself is seen as a social value, a social good to be applied to schools, students and those who work in them.

We are asked to believe that powerful forces are sweeping the globe, carrying all before them. But the forces that are changing our world are shaped by human activity and can equially be changed by human endeavour. The current trend is motivated by political choices. Recent events, such as the protests at the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999 and elsewhere, show that there are large numbers of people who do not accept there is only one road map to the future. Our challenge is to influence current debates so that the approach to globalisation is replaced with one where people come first.

Education goes beyond the purpose of serving the market

Once education is viewed in terms other than an end in itself, it becomes merely a means to other ends. This allows the implementation of a concept of 'human capital' to education that portrays education as a means to structure the supply of qualified people to meet economic requirements. Education unions must show that education has other goals – of equality, of opportunity, of democratic development – and is not just to serve the market.

Neo-liberalism views education as an area where there are opportunities for profit. This is seen in the expansion of market relationships into what was once considered a fundamental public service. Efforts to commodify education and turn it into a product to be offered to 'customers' and acquired as a private good, rather than the bedrock of a healthy democratic society, are evident.

Problems arise when a system built on the premise of the right of all students to achieve their potential is changed through competitive pressures into a system where for every individual winner there must also be losers. A neo-liberal market-led philosophy in education may offer greater choice but it leads to greater inequality, with poorer and less powerful members of society losing out, as do poorer countries and regions.

Challenging GATS

Globalisation is indeed a feature of many aspects of life: trade, financial investment, culture, entertainment and even crime. The mandate of the nation state is changing. This in turn is having an impact on those working in education. Education unions must look to where they can best influence decisions that have an impact on their members.

The adoption of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), where education is part of a long list of services, encourages the implementation of market principles to virtually all sectors of society (see article page 1). Through GATS, WTO member countries are invited to open their home markets to international competition for various types of service provision. The WTO Director-General has said that the negotiation of GATS *'was really only a starting-point'*. It is clear that the objective of the GATS agreement is the promotion of trade liberalisation of services.

At first sight, GATS might seem to offer some reassurance for public education, since it specifically excludes services provided under government authority which do

GLOBALISATION and Education Personnel

not have a commercial purpose. Nevertheless in practice, few if any public education systems would be deemed to be entirely free of commercial purposes. States choose to sign up to different service sectors, and some forty countries have done so in whole or in part for educational services. EI is clear on the need to advocate the exclusion of basic social services, particularly education and healthcare, from agreements which national governments may reach in the framework of the GATS.

We cannot turn our backs on an increasingly inter-related world, but instead we must campaign for a different sort of globalisation, one where people are put first. Trade unions have put the need to include guaranteed basic employment and labour standards in international trade agreements on the agenda of the WTO, but this has become a very controversial issue.

Transparency of international agencies

There is a democratic deficit in the workings of some international organisations. The International Monetary Fund, for example, has chosen to intervene in education issues in the conditions it imposes on client nations. In Mexico, the IMF decreed compulsory national standardised testing in higher education as part of its bailout package for the economy. In Kenya, the IMF tried to persuade the government to renege on teachers' salary increases agreed through negotiation between the Kenyan government and the Kenya National Union of Teachers. In Croatia, IMF conditions would have required non-implementation of a negotiated collective agreement.

The World Bank's role in education in developing countries has also been controversial. Even if the Bank is now more aware of criticism than it once was, its record in practice still remains patchy. That decimation of education in developing countries, but most particularly in Africa, is a direct result of structural adjustment policies cannot be overlooked. There is no doubt that in some countries adjustment was necessary, but the ideology that determined that the necessary adjustment was that of deregulation, privatisation and less government funding has stripped education to the bone.

Deterioration of working conditions

The impact of liberal measures on the working conditions of education personnel has been devastating. Austerity measures have led to a steep decline in terms and conditions of employment, loss of employment, a lowering of qualifications for entry to the profession. This was accompanied by a concomitant lowering of salary and unbearably difficult living conditions. While demands for improved quality increase, the recruitment of non-qualified "volunteers" is on the increase. These developments have been accompanied by attacks on - and removal of - acquired trade union rights. All of this has resulted in education personnel working at other jobs in addition to what should take their energy and attention. Women were particularly hard hit since their work and family responsibilities make it difficult for them to add additional paid employment to their teaching duties. Questionable practices arise such as the tuition of pupils outside of school.

Education costs are downloaded from the government to parents and, when the parents are teachers whose salaries are in arrears for long periods, their children join the ranks of child labourers.

Short supply or non-existence of education materials requires teachers to buy the supplies needed for teaching. When all of this is combined with a loss in support personnel, whose jobs disappear in the process of restructuring, the overall effect is totally disheartening for many. Teaching is becoming a stepping stone to other careers rather than a career in itself.

Decentralisation and new methods of management have also changed the working conditions of education personnel. In some parts of the world, it has resulted an increasing politicisation of education, with local politicians involved in hiring, firing and promotion. Whatever the reason for decentralisation, the implications for education personnel are wide ranging, particularly when funding is decentralised and local communities have to bear the bulk of the education costs.

The introduction of the flexible model workplace to education is in direct contradiction with the codification of tasks in negotiated collective agreements. In some instances, the response has been to remove issues previously negotiated and place them outside the realm of negotiations. The introduction of new technology without adequate training and planning also has an impact on working conditions as has distance education and the virtual university.

The picture presented may seem gloomy but these issues can be addressed through collective organisation and action. This gives us the strength to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy. The weakening of collective organisation in the education sector would allow the commercialisation and commodification of education. Strong, representative participatory education unions are needed now. ◆

Trade unions have put the need to include guaranteed basic employment and labour standards in international trade agreements on the agenda of the WTO, but this has become a very controversial issue.
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December 1999 in Seattle. Much of the protest directed at the World Trade Organisation resulted from a lack of transparency and openness in the workings of the organisation.
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Large numbers of people do not accept the idea that there is only one road map to the future. Our challenge is to influence current debates so that the approach to globalisation is replaced with one where people come first.

1 The third World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference was held in Seattle, Washington State, US, between 30 November and 3 December 1999

Partnerships to Achieve

In April 2000 the ministers of education reaffirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All at the World Education Forum in Dakar with a deadline: 2015.

The most recent available statistics from 1998 show that the net enrolment in primary education is 84%. In total there are about 113 million primary-school-age children not going to school. Among those children recieving education, many do not get an education that meets basic quality criteria. It is not sufficient for children to be given lessons in overcrowded classrooms by unskilled teachers without any pedagogical training. Such activities might be helpful in achieving good figures in the educational statistics, but they do not contribute to the objective of giving all children useful knowledge and skills. Research reports from several countries show that many students have not reached a sufficient level in reading, writing or mathematics.

113 million primary-school-age children are not going to school

How to achieve education for all?

All governments have a responsibility to ensure that by 2015 all children- particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities- have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality in accordance with the promise made in Dakar.

If education for all is to be achieved, the strong link between enrolment and quality education has to be recognised and the resources necessary to provide quality education for all must be mobilised.

Partnership is in this context a key concept. Four partnerships could be strategically orientated for teachers' unions in their work to achieve education for all. They are the partnerships between:

- teachers and the ministry of education;
- schools and local communities;
- teacher unions and NGOs; and
- the industrialised countries in the North and the developing countries in the South. ◆

Teachers and the Ministry of Education

The concept of partnership has often been used in international resolutions adopted by governments, but the relationship between governments and teachers is often forgotten in this context. Ministries must start to consider teachers not as objects that can be moved around and mobilised but as partners with whom they have to work together.

A partnership must be based on mutual commitments. There are things governments can do, and initiatives that teacher unions can take.

Government responsibility

The government must first of all put in place a mechanism for information, consultation and negotiation between the teachers' unions and the ministry of education. Without appropriate channels for discussions and mechanisms for conflict resolution it will be very difficult to maintain an on-going dialogue. Other crucial measures are needed to solve basic problems concerning teachers' salaries and school equipment and improving teacher education.

Teacher union initiatives

If governments take the necessary steps to improve their partnership with teachers for education for all, unions on their end could consider different options. Given the link between quality and enrolment, there are several initiatives unions can take in order to improve the quality of education. Unions could also negotiate transitional arrangements for recruitment of teachers that will solve existing and up-coming emergency situations in such a way that will benefit the long term development of the education system. Finally, unions could also play a role in mobilising teachers for literacy programmes on a voluntary basis. ◆

Education for All

Schools and the Local Community

If governments are to be convinced about the need to invest more in education, pressure from the citizens needs to be built up. Broad support for education can only be received if people are convinced that the education system provides an education of high quality and if there is an "ownership" and involvement in education by the citizens, i.e. parents and other stakeholders. There is a need to find structures for democratic participation of, and accountability to civil society in education decision making at all levels.

Decentralisation: a way of achieving democratic participation and accountability?

In most parts of the world steps have been taken to decentralise the education system. This has often been done with arguments about the need to increase the local involvement of the citizens in the education institutions. In reality many of the decentralisation trends have been finance-driven, often in connection with structural adjustment packages.

Decentralisation of education raises two main issues: First is the decentralisation of fiscal policy in education: the collection and distribution of education spending. The other is related to the decentralisation of decision making about the use of funds and other school matters.

When financial responsibilities are moved from national level to regional or local levels, this means in most cases that education costs are supposed to be financed through local taxation. There is a fear that decentralisation without sufficient financial means will increase inequalities in society, between schools, communities, and regions.

A "bottom-up" approach to budgets, with local districts involved in drafting and contoling budgets, is desirable in principle. Decentralised decision making with respect to the use of funds is an appropriate model for a democratic state, although it has inherent dangers. Under a fully decentralised system the central state is unable to intervene to ensure equity within the system.

Based on experience it has to be noted that decentralisation will work best when central government provides the regulatory framework and retains overall responsibility for ensuring the adequacy of funding levels and the equitable distribution of funds. A process of decentralisation will work when there is careful preparation, widespread consultation with all partners, in service training for teachers and school administrators and considerable opportunities for exchange of information and feedback.

Co-operation with parents and students

It is obvious that parents are major stakeholders in education and that they could represent powerful allies for teachers. There are good reasons to specifically discuss how parents and teacher can work together.

In this context the students should not be forgotten. Students have a right to express their views and to be involved in a earnest exchange of views with the teachers. How this should be organised depends to a large extant on the age of the students. Older students may even have their own organisations which should considered important partners.

Co-operation with local business

Schools also have good reasons to maintain contacts with the business community. Such contacts can facilitate study-visits to companies to give the students a better idea of the infrastructure of the community. For older students there might also be possibilities to organise apprenticeships. Continuous good contact with the local business community may prove very helpful when schools need to ask for the support of local, regional or national authorities.

Co-operation with trade unions

In communities with many companies, numerous workers will be members of the local branches of trade unions. In the same way schools invite the managers of companies to the school, the local trade unions could also be invited. Teachers' unions have to cultivate an interest among other unions in educational questions.

North and South

TEACHER UNIONS AND NGOS

During recent years NGOs (non-governmental organisations) have come to play an increasingly important role in many areas of society. There are many good reasons for teacher unions to further develop co-operation with NGOs. Such co-operation has to be based on:

- non-formal education as a supplement to formal education, but not as a substitute, which could support formal education;
- non-formal education as a transitional solution to gradually integrate certain groups in society into the regular education system and allow the formal education system to make the adjustments needed to meet specific needs;
- working together to mobilise people to demand their right to education; and
- establishing broad national alliances working for Education for All.

The Framework for Action adopted by the World Education Forum in Dakar contained a promise that "*no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources*". This must be regarded as a promise by the industrialised countries to transfer the resources necessary to the South to realise the objective of Education for All.

Reform of International Monetary Fund and World Bank structural adjustment policies

The World Bank and the IMF have introduced a number of programmes for "economic reconstruction" and "structural adjustment", often referred to as SAP (Structural Adjustment Programmes). Structural adjustment programmes have been hard on the public sector and in virtually every country, education is an important part of the public sector. Consequently, attacks on the public sector have led to cuts in spending on education in many countries.

Gradually the World Bank has realised that the structural adjustment programmes in many countries have contributed to the crisis in education and in other sectors. It has been understood that the problems facing many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America can not be solved through "a quick fix". What is needed is a long term program and in all long term programmes education plays a significant role.

Debt relief

The debt-to-GNP ratio for most developing countries corresponds to about 50%. A group of 41 poor and heavily indebted countries, often referred to as HIPCs (The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) have a debt-to-GNP ratio of 130%. The large amount of resources these countries need to spend on servicing and repaying loans are effectively blocking investment in education.

A special HIPC initiative has been launched by the World Bank which will reduce the debt on the condition that money not used for servicing loans will be utilised for poverty reduction, including investment in education. This initiative marks an important step in the right direction, but does not go far enough. Many countries will continue to face unacceptably high levels of debt servicing. At the same time, creditors have failed to indicate how they intend to finance deeper and broader debt relief. The central challenge to be met in the next phase of HIPC reform is maximising the resources available for education for all, while at the same time ensuring that the resources which are released are efficiently used.

In middle-income countries, debt swap arrangements could be developed to finance education initiatives. Where governments can demonstrate a clear commitment to investment in education, in conjunction with a capacity to absorb savings from debt relief in a way which accelerates enrolment and improves the quality of education, they should receive early debt relief.

Development co-operation

Debt relief should be seen as one element in a broader financing strategy for achieving the education for all goal. Even after receiving debt relief, concessional development assistance will remain vital to poverty reduction and economic recovery.

The amount allocated to development co-operation in the industrialised countries has decreased. The slight increase in resources allocated to education within the development co-operation budget has not meant that the real amount of money to education has increased. Currently around 2 percent of OECD aid budgets are allocated to basic education.

If the industrialised countries could allocate 8% of their aid budgets to basic education, as suggested by the Global Campaign for Education, that would mean that an additional $3 billion would be given to education.

International trade and investment policies

Debt relief and development co-operation are important elements in a policy for helping countries to achieve education for all, but there is also a need to include other elements. Many of the current economic operations on international markets are based on short term advantages and quick gains. Governments, especially in small countries and in countries depending on foreign investors, are forced to play along with these market forces. Investors like to pay low taxes and favour policies of tax reduction and public sector cuts. If one country were to try to implement a policy leaning in another direction, the risk is obvious that investment would be made elsewhere. This creates a kind of "negative competition" where it is difficult for countries to collect the taxes needed to improve the education system. This problem is difficult to deal with nationally and there is an obvious need for an international approach. These matters have been raised in the discussions about tax harmonisation and the so called Tobin tax, an international tax on financial transactions. ◆

Education and Information Technology

Information and communication technology brings new challenges and opportunities that may be decisive for the future of public education. It will be necessary to explain matters, clarify the issues and arouse interest with a view to humanising this technological revolution.

With the exception of research and pilot experiences in certain primary and secondary schools, information and communication technology (ICT) has not yet been integrated into the organisation of private- or public- sector learning systems. Unlike other professional sectors, education has remained on the sidelines of this almost global trend towards a greater use of new technology. Participants in Education International's World Congress will have to analyse the causes and identify avenues for international action to "control " this technological revolution.

Unavoidable evolution

Leading inter-governmental organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank and the OECD – to name but three – with which Education International has developed strategies on the use of ICT in education, all share the same opinion: the use of technology is unavoidable and must be managed in the most appropriate manner to facilitate access to quality education – within the budgetary limits imposed on all governments.

UNESCO takes the view that "*governments and communities all over the world are trying to boost the effectiveness and impact of their services in order to meet citizens' expectations, while at the same time taking account of the financial constraints facing the public sector. The information technology revolution is providing big opportunities for meeting those needs.*"

Article 12 of the Declaration of the World Conference on Higher Education organised by UNESCO in 1998 states that "*rapid breakthroughs in new information and communication technologies will further change the way knowledge is developed, acquired and delivered. It is also important to note that the new technologies offer opportunities to innovate on course content and teaching methods and to widen access to higher learning.*"

The World Bank, which takes an equally clear position on the matter, aims "to educate and train for the knowledge economy by supporting excellence in education from basic schooling up to higher education, and to foster the development of new skills with which to embrace new information and communication technology". The Bank also says it will strive "to continue enabling schools and classes to access libraries on the Internet, and to promote new approaches to accessing education and training through distance learning, the training of grassroots communities and networking with educational institutions".

Highlighting the importance of ICT for education, the OECD points out that "*many people hope that the new information and communication technology will transform schools and the learning process.*"

For its part the European Union has recently taken steps to promote the use of ICT in the education systems of its member countries. At the Lisbon European Council on 23-24 March 2000, the participating heads of state and government set the objective of turning the European Union into "*the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world*" through e-Learning.

A specific platform of demands for Education International

The increasingly marked globalisation of our economies will gradually lead to a certain degree of globalisation of education as far as its organisation, content and objectives are concerned. In this context, information and communication technology is both a challenge and an opportunity. But we need to identify avenues for global interventions that will make it possible to keep this technological revolution under control.

Without wishing to limit debate in any way, we would like to submit for consideration by EI's World Congress four avenues for priority demands at international level.

1. Campaigning against super-concentration in the e-Learning industry

The importance that education software will have in future means that the super-concentration of its design, production and dissemination could lead to the existence of industrial monopolies unable to promote the cultural diversity of our societies. In all market sectors, national and international legislation has put "anti-trust" laws in place in order to place a statutory ban on monopolistic groupings of this kind.

8 major challenges for education employees and their unions

The introduction of innovative technologies in education can be said to pose two kinds of challenges: 'macro' and 'micro'.

Four "macro" challenges:

- The commercialisation of education;
- The accreditation of qualifications;
- Intellectual property rights; and
- The future place of public education in this major process of change.

Four "micro" challenges:

- The organisation of education systems;
- Staff training;
- Education content; and
- Access to knowledge from the point of view of the ability to interrelate all the various kinds of data and information that will become available.

All inter-governmental institutions and all the main international meetings have come down unambiguously in favour of a more widespread use of ICT in the organisation, curricula and teaching strategies of education systems in the 21st century.

It might be appropriate to draw up an inventory of international software-producing companies, to assess the dangers of industrial concentrations and, in association with UNESCO, the OECD and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), to draft legal measures outlawing the future existence of production monopolies in the e-Learning industry at world level.

2. New roles for governments

The "world education market" currently taking shape is placing the private and public sectors in sharp competition with one another more than ever before. The outcome of this contest is anyone's guess. However, the "deregulation of education" phenomenon still needs to be examined very closely. EI believes the liberalisation of the education sector, which is what a majority group in the WTO would like, is completely unacceptable. The State must continue to be responsible for education and, indeed, at a time when major changes are taking place, national and international governments must assume new responsibilities.

In the future, governments will be called upon to play a key role in controlling and regulating the education market, ensuring the quality of curricula and education software, preserving cultural diversity, establishing exceptions to copyright law in favour of education and training, guaranteeing the accreditation and recognition of certificates and diplomas, and safeguarding intellectual property rights and academic freedom for education employees and researchers.

3. Placing technology at the service of an equitable access to knowledge

Today, ICT and its application in the education sector mainly concern the industrialised and the emerging nations. Developing countries are not affected by this technological revolution, except perhaps in the area of higher education and in certain very specific fields.

Access to knowledge, which is already problematic for some countries, is likely to become even more inequitable, leading to even more injustice. The trade union movement, and teachers' unions in particular, cannot accept such a scenario. Projects like the launch of an education channel in Africa transmitted by satellite radio are currently at the design stage. Such projects can also help to organise teachers' basic and continuing training in these countries within the framework of programmes supporting public quality education for all. Initiatives need to be taken as part of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) in partnership with governments, international financial institutions and organisations of civil society.

4. Developing the technological skills of all teachers

All teachers, present and future, in all educational establishments and whatever subject they teach, should receive adequate training in the use of ICT. This training should be publicly funded.

Trade unions must be able to conclude agreements with employers on the provision of ICT training for teachers and the introduction of ICT in education, particularly in relation to employment conditions, work organisation, working hours, and occupational health and safety.

Bringing civil society together and raising awareness

For many years now, education has been a strategic issue. ICT offers young people and workers new opportunities in the context of lifelong learning. It is an issue that affects everyone individually and collectively. However, outside education, ICT is in the process of fashioning new ways of working, a new concept of leisure and of personal development – in short, a new way of life.

In dealing with this key social issue, teachers' unions must create the conditions for new alliances with the organisations of civil society in order to ensure that people remain in control of their lives and are able to use technology to fulfil their needs instead of becoming subservient to it. ◆

If we examine information and communication technology and its application in the education sector, we can identify four types of teachers:

1. **Pessimists:** These teachers see the increasing introduction of ICT in education as yet another trend that will continue to discredit classical education by changing its role and modus operandi;
2. **Optimists:** These are most frequently at the forefront of pedagogical reform and like to see themselves as pioneers of innovation;
3. **Realists:** These have woken up to the general developments taking place in our increasingly technological societies and acknowledge that in a global economy we must come to terms with these unavoidable changes that affect everyone;
4. **Unconditional opponents:** Such people are to be found in all walks of life, including teaching. They do not think that technology can replace human intervention and they see the use of new technology as a process leading unremittingly to a productivity race and to education becoming a commodity.

Digital Divide or Digital Opportunity

Who gains access to ICTs and who does not in virtually every country can be linked to gender, geography, income, ethnicity and race, age, education, and occupation. Poor, illiterate females in rural areas have the least access to ICTs.

by Mary Hatwood Futrell, President Education International

The digital divide (also characterized in the literature as the technology chasm or technological apartheid) has major social, political, and economic implications for every citizen, every nation in the world.

Lloyd Morrisett, who is credited with coining the phrase "Digital Divide," describes it as a "phenomenon of technological segregation and inequity." In short, the divide refers to the differences in access to information and communications technological (ICT) enjoyed by the richer, more-developed countries and the poorer, less developed countries. Many people believe that the digital divide has divided us into a world of technological "haves" and "have nots," and the gap between the two is growing. Opportunities exist within the ICT revolution, of which the digital divide is a part, however, to open doors to the millions of disenfranchised peoples of the world.

While society undergoes one of the most profound revolutions in recorded history, billions of people primarily the poor are being left behind. Until and unless these access issues are addressed, the digital chasm between developed and developing countries, men and women, young and old, and those who are educated and those who are not will continue to grow wider and deeper. This divide will further exacerbate by the growing global economy, which is also creating a huge North-South chasm in the world. These two phenomena are inextricably linked: the ICT revolution and the globalization of the economy. Both are predicated on every nation understanding and committing to guaranteeing quality education for all of its citizens.

Access to learning, especially technological literacy, across a lifetime may become one of the essential civil rights of the 21st century. A nation's level of economic and political will to make free quality, public education a right of every citizen today will determine its role on the global playing field tomorrow. A national government's decision not to invest in the infrastructures described herein, especially education, means a dire future for that nation.

Some believe that efforts to include poorer developing countries, especially those in the southern hemisphere, in the digital renaissance are a hopeless cause. Some would say we should simply forget or write off those who live in these countries. Education International (EI) and its 24 million members do not agree with the hypothesis that some countries should be written off. We believe that we can reverse the seemingly irreversible. Such a reversal will occur, however, only if governments and governmental organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and others implement policies of inclusion rather than policies of exclusion.

Unless we act decisively, the digital divide will simply further exacerbate what is already a worldwide educational crisis. The markets for education and for technologies surpass all others and will always exist. Technologies can provide greater prospects for students to have access to learning opportunities here-to-fore thought to be unreachable, if not impossible. Making the least educated among us technologically literate is investing in humanity, investing in all of our futures.

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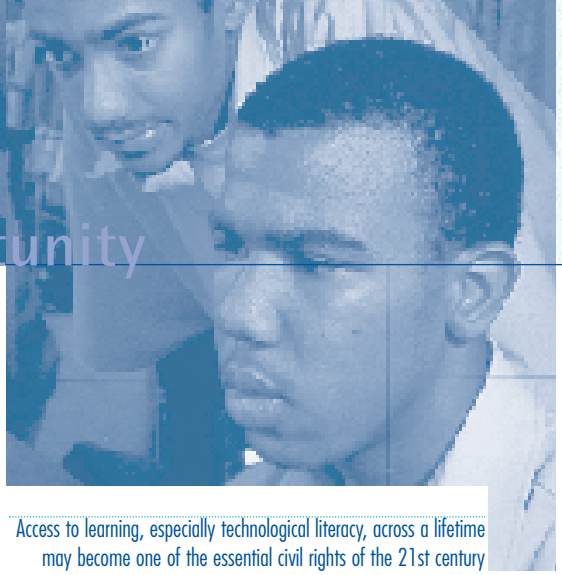
Technology and globalization have led to a global economy based on knowledge, work and innovation. Due to the convergence between work and learning, increasingly, employees will need to train themselves. As a result, workplace learning will no longer be fixed in time and location. It will be implemented on a what's-needed, when-needed and where-needed basis. And all of this will take place in an environment in which the technologies we use are constantly changing. If we act now and do so determinedly, more people regardless of location will be able to participate in this technological renaissance, and instead of a digital divide assure digital opportunities for increasing numbers of peoples and nations.

EI's commitment to the global campaign, ***Education For All,*** is a major step in closing the digital divide. Our commitment to work with governmental and non-governmental agencies to guarantee that every man, woman, and child, regardless of where they live is well educated, is reflective of our acceptance and appreciation of the critical role education will play in shaping the future in our increasingly information-oriented, technological, global society.

But these new learning opportunities are also challenging our philosophy of education. Age-old philosophical questions once again emerge, such as who should be educated, what is the purpose of education, what are the social and political commitments to education, and what is a quality education?

Digital Divide or Digital Opportunity



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Access to learning, especially technological literacy, across a lifetime may become one of the essential civil rights of the 21st century

- 42% of the world's adult population has never heard the dial tone of a telephone;
- 50% do not have access to electricity;
- 95% has never used the Internet;
- Many countries lack the physical infrastructures, economic capacity, and/or political will to take advantage of the technological revolution that is sweeping the globe;
- In many countries, including those that are developed, individuals lack the intellectual capacity and training to find and process information via the Internet or other technological means;
- The seeming dominance of the English language as the primary way to communicate via the Internet may result in the subjugation of other languages and cultures;
- Often, the information available on Internet does not relate to the user's cultural needs.

We believe there is a direct correlation between education for all and closing the digital divide. The digital divide coupled with the educational divide, which we have always had, underscores the depth of the problem facing governments everywhere. Today, almost a billion people in the world (1/6th of the population) are illiterate. Two-thirds are women and girls, who have no access to formal schooling. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that 250 million children, according to the International Labor Organization, are out of school working as laborers. They, too, do not have access to formal schooling. If these children (and adults) are not formally educated and do not understand the technological renaissance, they will fall through the divide! Investing in these men, women, and children by educating them will be investing in the future of each nation. In other words, educating all children is no longer an option; it is a matter of national survival.

Further, governments need to do more to invest in infrastructures within in their countries; such as producing sufficient levels of electricity so that all schools have access to electricity, thus, enhancing their ability to access such technologies as telephones, computers, radio, and television. We must keep in mind, however, that technologies are tools (e.g. computers, television, radio, telephones, CDroms, palm pilots, cameras, calculators) for us to use whether we are surfing the Internet, participating in video-conferences, sending e-mail messages, or conducting distance education. What is important in this entire process is defining why and how we use technology to ensure that the content of the programs is designed to improve the quality of education for all citizens. Providing training to prepare people to use their knowledge and skills will enable them to become more technologically literate. By doing so, more people will have greater access to the technologies that are increasingly defining how we live, work, and govern. Thus, improving their quality of life.

To enable our world neighbors in their efforts to bridge the global digital divide, faculty members, and administrators within North American, European, Japanese and other colleges and universities can help by sharing their expertise and experiences. This is particularly true as it relates to preparing teachers and training personnel to use technology. Colleges and universities can also help by offering more of their courses via distance learning (protecting their intellectual property rights, of course). Today, more than 30,000 courses are on-line. Thus, students and faculty in less-developed parts of the world, if they are technologically connected, will be able to avail themselves of these programs. By making these programs available on line, we breakdown the information hierarchies and make more information available to more people easier and faster. We also create learning communities where teachers, administrators, higher-education faculty and students can learn about and from each other.

Formal education and life-long learning are at the core of any strategic effort to bridge and to eventually close the digital divide. How effectively educators' respond to the technological transformation of the classroom and of society in general depends to a large degree upon how comfortable they feel using technology as part of the teaching and learning process.

Many schools are already models of how technology can enrich teaching and learning. These schools have been transformed into virtual learning communities. Others are making steady progress in this direction. Still others have not yet begun to respond to the technological demands society is placing on education systems. We, as educational leaders, must help communities respond. We must provide leadership to help transform teaching and learning through traditional and technologically mediated means.

A country's capacity and willingness to take advantage of the knowledge economy depends on how quickly it can become a "learning economy". Learning means not only using new technologies to access global knowledge. It means using these technologies to communicate with other people about innovative ideas, more effective ways to guarantee that all of the world's people have access to formal education, and, therefore, help shape a more democratic, global society.

In summary, the profound changes of the 21st century are transforming the world into what must become a learning society. We enter the century in the midst of a bewildering mix of opportunity, uncertainty, challenges, and change all happening at an unprecedented pace. If we are to navigate the change successfully, minimize the risks, and participate in shaping new and stronger civil societies, all of the world's citizens need access to education and learning throughout their lifetimes. This goal can best be achieved if we ensure that the digital divide is permanently bridged to become a digital walkway for all of us as we define the 21st century. ◆

Making Globalisation Work for Poor People

Countries that apply policies predictably, ensure law and order, invest in human capital –particularly education and health– and protect property rights, are likely to attract higher levels of investment and trade and to generate faster economic growth.

by Clare Short,
Secretary of State for International Development, United Kingdom

The term globalisation is used in different ways by different people. And the contested nature of the concept is part of the explanation for the passion and fury of so much of the public debate. For me, globalisation means simply the growing interdependence and interconnectedness of the modern world. The increased ease of movement of goods, services, capital, people and information across national borders is rapidly creating a single global economy. The process is driven by technological advance and reductions in the costs of international transactions, which spread technology and ideas, raise the share of trade in world production, and increase the mobility of capital. But it is also reflected in the diffusion of global norms and values, in the spread of democracy and in the proliferation of global agreements and treaties.

That's why it is absurd to say that one is 'for' or 'anti' globalisation. Globalisation is here to stay; the political challenge is to manage it well. This is the focus of the UK Government's White Paper, Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor - launched on December 11 last year. While this paper covers a very wide range of issues, here I want to touch on just three: governance and human rights, education and trade.

In recent years we have learned a lot about the appropriate balance between state and market. While the market fundamentalism of the 1980s has been thoroughly discredited, it is now almost universally accepted that efficient markets are indispensable for effective development. But equally important are effective governments - which are both competent in carrying out their basic functions, and more accountable, responsive and democratic, with a bigger voice for poor people in the determination of government policy.

Globalisation gives added urgency to the task of strengthening government systems in developing countries. Private capital is highly mobile and will go to where business can be carried out safely and where it can make the best return. Weak and ineffective states, with problems of corruption, inadequate infrastructure and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, are not an attractive destination for these flows.

The White Paper sets out how the UK Government will support developing countries with political reform, in ways that respect the human rights of the poor and give poor people, particularly poor women, a bigger voice in government policies. It also strongly reaffirms our support for core labour standards, including the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and for action against child labour.

Knowledge-based systems of production

Globalisation is both increasing the rewards for education and the costs of exclusion from it. If globalisation is to work for poor people, increased investment in education, lifelong learning and skills is essential. One of the ways in which globalisation could help to eliminate poverty is by speeding up the diffusion of knowledge and technology to developing countries. But for countries to make use of modern technology, they must improve education and skills training. And that starts at the primary level. Where countries invest in high-quality primary education for all - particularly for girls - the development dividends are enormous. But huge numbers of children do not take even this initial step.

In the White Paper the UK Government reaffirms its commitment to provide increased resources for countries with clear commitments to universal primary education. Where appropriate, we also propose making greater use of the new information and communications technologies to share skills and knowledge and assist with teacher training and distance learning.

In the White Paper the UK Government reaffirms its commitment to provide increased resources for countries with clear commitments to universal primary education.

Better access to trade

The reduction in barriers to trade, particularly in the areas of agriculture, textiles and clothing, provides real opportunities for developing countries. But to maximise these opportunities, we need to improve the capacity of developing countries to take advantage of better trade access.

In the White Paper, we announced the establishment of a new Africa Trade and Poverty Programme, to help African countries pursue their interests more effectively within international trade negotiations. We also propose reforms to the work of the World Trade Organisation to give poorer countries a bigger voice. And we call on the WTO to commit itself, with the rest of the international community, to achieving the International Development Targets. This would send a powerful signal that trade is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

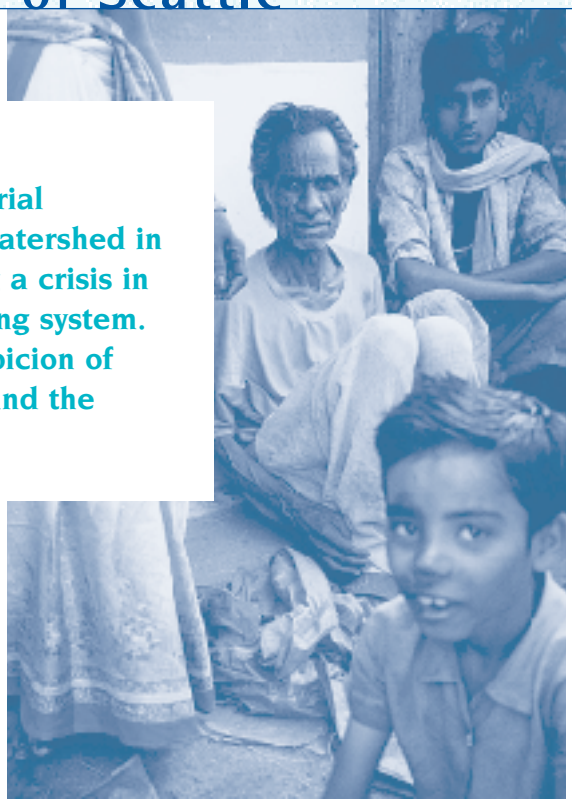
In these areas - and in many more - the UK Government, in co-operation with others, is working to help shape the forces of globalisation with greater equity. Making globalisation work for the world's poor is the greatest moral challenge facing our generation. But it is also in our common interest. There can be no secure future for any of us without greater global social justice. ◆

CLARE SHORT IS THE BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.
A new ministry, created after the 1997 General Election, the Department for International Development promotes policies for sustainable development and the elimination of poverty and manages Britain's programme of assistance to developing countries.

Learning the Lessons of Seattle

by James Howard
Director of Employment and
International Labour Standards at the ICFTU

The collapse of the third WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle in 1999 was a watershed in the short lifetime of the WTO, marking a crisis in the legitimacy of the multilateral trading system. It demonstrated an overwhelming suspicion of globalisation, both in the developing and the industrialised countries.



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Little of substance has changed to indicate that any of the underlying reasons for the failure of the 3rd WTO Conference have altered. What is needed to regain public confidence is a reorientation of the multilateral trading system to promote sustainable world economic growth and development, thereby creating decent jobs and a broader spread of the benefits of globalisation in the interests of all people in both developing and industrialised countries.

As part of that process, a major effort is needed to boost the development of developing countries, in every area of the multilateral system. This must include greatly enhanced debt relief and a substantial increase in development assistance; special and differential treatment for developing countries at the WTO; further moves to provide improved market access for developing countries; review of the TRIPS agreement to incorporate developing country concerns, particularly in the area of HIV/AIDS medication; and mechanisms to promote the respect of democratic principles and human rights (including fundamental workers' rights).

The urgency of the need for action on core labour standards is shown by the fact that the number of export processing zones has all but doubled in just five years while China, a huge country that systematically violates fundamental workers' rights, is generally expected to become a member of the WTO in the near future. It is therefore a priority to protect the fundamental rights of workers in developing countries and elsewhere against unscrupulous governments or employers who seek to gain an unfair advantage in international trade through the violation of core labour standards.

Accordingly, the WTO must set up some form of formal structure to address trade and core labour standards, with the participation of the ILO. Such a body should also address wider issues of social development, with particular attention to the impact of trade policies on women. Regardless of its exact format, any such structure must be set up with official endorsement from the WTO and include a reporting back mechanism to the WTO's decision-making bodies. Clearly, such discussions must not result in any arbitrary or unjustified discrimination or any form of disguised restriction on trade. The reports and recommendations should be tabled for consideration no later than the fifth WTO Ministerial Conference in 2003.

Increased transparency and financial assistance is needed to ensure that all members (particularly the least developed) are able to take part fully in all WTO activities and procedures, including its disputes settlement mechanisms. A closer link and co-ordination between the WTO and other international institutions, including the ILO, is essential.

The Seattle Conference saw an outstanding degree of criticism of the WTO's internal and external transparency and democracy, which must be addressed urgently. Increased transparency and financial assistance is needed to ensure that all members (particularly the least developed) are able to take part fully in all WTO activities and procedures, including its disputes settlement mechanisms. A closer link and co-ordination between the WTO and other international institutions, including the ILO, is essential. Reciprocal observer status and specific consultative structures for trade unions need to be established at the WTO, including for the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM).

In the current General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiations, it must be clarified that countries can maintain the right to exempt public services (for example, education, health, water and postal services), and socially beneficial service sector activities from any WTO agreement covering the service sector, including at sub-national levels of government.

The Qatar 4th WTO Ministerial Conference in November 2001 must address this wide range of issues. The lesson of Seattle is that failure to do so will further reduce the WTO's legitimacy and intensify the backlash against globalisation. WTO members must seize the opportunity they now have to address the need to build a new consensus around a social, environmental, development-oriented, democratic, accountable, transparent and fairer rules-based world trading system. ◆

James Howard
Director of Employment and International Labour Standards at the ICFTU

Two Nepali School Teachers

Mr. Padam Bahadur Gharti is a primary school teacher at Bhagawati Lower Secondary School in Madanpokhara VDC in the Western part of Nepal. At the age of 53 he has been teaching for 18 years. After being forced to quit school at the age of 14, he worked in a factory to put himself through school till he completed his bachelors degree in 1980.

He owns a house with a cattle shed. He has a small piece of land where he grows various seasonal vegetables and crops. He lives with his wife and three children. His wife looks after the home and children. His two oldest children are in grade 10 and his youngest is in the 6th grade. His basic monthly salary is 4100 NR (55 US$ or 62 Euros). He collects nearly the same amount of money from his farming. Thus enabling him support his family.

His day begins around 5 a.m. He takes tea and a light breakfast while he prepares lesson plans, and listens to the radio news. By 8:30 he sets out for school which is 4 km away. Since there is no public transportation, the walk takes about an hour. He arrives at school by 10 a.m. He teaches till 4 p.m. Friday is a half a day and Saturday is the only day off.

The public school he teaches in has 9 rooms and a small play ground. It lacks a library, pure drinking water and proper number of teaching staff. The government funds up to grade 5, while grades 6 and 7 are supported by the community. There are 350 students, both boys and girls, but only 8 teachers and a helper.

He gets back home about 5 p.m., then takes a little rest after a light meal. He works on his vegetable farm till sunset. After dinner in the late evenings, he reads and helps his children with their studies. He goes to bed about 10 p.m. and sleeps soundly. He says proudly that his daily life is normal – neither easy nor boring.

He points out that there are both advantages and disadvantages to being a teacher. He finds teaching very rewarding, but financially challenging. His job is often made more difficult by the working conditions: lack of teaching materials and over crowded classes. As an active member of the National Nepal Teachers Association (NNTA), he works to make things better.

Another glimpse...

Mrs. Shanta Dhital is a primary teacher of Mahankal Jan Jagrit School which is situated at the North-end of the Kathmandu valley near Budhanilkantha. It is considered a suburb.

Mrs. Shanta Dhital is 25 years old. Her family is a traditional joint family. She lives with her husband and two children together with her husbands parents; three brothers, their wives and five children. All seventeen members live together in the same house sharing a single kitchen.

She gets up at 4 a.m., cleans the house and prepares tea and breakfast. She helps the children, who range in age from one to fourteen, with their homework. Then she gets ready for school.

At school she teaches almost any subject as per need of the school. She teaches six periods out of seven a day. Saturday is the official day off in Nepal, but on Fridays the school usually runs extra-curricular activities after the 4th period. On other days her single preparation period is sometimes used to replace absentee teachers or checking students work. She rarely has time to prepare any lesson plan. She has had some short term training, but has not yet been certified as a trained teacher.

It is prestigious in Nepali society to hold a government job and it allows her to escape traditional and hard agricultural work. It raises her status in society and with her family to be income earner. She earned the appointment from the D.E.O. after being a successful candidate in the temporary teachers exam, both written and oral interviews in 1995.

She does not have any spare time to do any other kind of social service, but she is satisfied that she provides a service to society by educating her communities children with love and affection. She is regarded highly by her students and community.

As a member of the other Nepali teacher union, the Nepal Teachers' Association (NTA), she realises that the unions are struggling hard for the rights of the teachers, but she is still a temporary teacher even after teaching continuously for more than 5 years. Some of her colleagues are not permanent even after 10 years of regular teaching service. ◆

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Sagar Nath Pyakuryal
Coordinator
EI Regional Office
for Asia Pacific

Self-Help Expertise in Teachers' Unions

Every year, Education International members receive special requests for humanitarian assistance: not long ago, support was given to teaching communities struck by earthquakes in Gujarat (India) and El Salvador, and a recent mission to Central America provided deeper insight into the role of the unions and the impact of international support on the teaching community.

"In the first few days and weeks after the disaster hit us, the teachers' union distributed school materials like pencils, writing blocks, and sometimes books," explains Arnoldo Vaquerano, General Secretary of ANDES 21 de Junio, El Salvador's largest teachers' union. This was greatly appreciated, not because our members had received a gift, but because the teachers felt that they were no longer isolated. Somewhere, outside their disaster area, people cared."

All primary teachers In India donated a day's salary to help rebuild houses after the earthquake; in Turkey, teachers collected clothing and tents; and in Honduras, teachers used their "caja social", the social funds to which they contribute every month, to donate two million Lempiras (130,000 US$).

Wouter van der Schaaf
Coordinator Development Cooperation

For the first few days after Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras, the people were in shock. They had somehow survived, but they were surrounded on every side by debris and ruin. Houses had been washed away, family members had been injured, and neighbours had died. Some had simply disappeared. Teachers – everyone – asked themselves: "Who can you turn to after you have survived such a disaster?" In developing countries, that question is on everyone's lips in times of crisis, during wars, and after natural disasters.

"Our first needs were shelter, food and clothing. Almost 600 of our members had lost their homes, which had been washed away in seconds. Nothing was left. They turned to us, their union, for assistance," says Pinto Arnaldo, President of COLPROSUMAH, the largest teachers' union in Honduras.

In industrialised countries, the State takes it upon itself to address a disaster of national proportions. It has enough "buffer" funds to meet immediate needs. Moreover, most people in industrialised countries have covered themselves one way or another against calamities through individual insurance schemes. In the developing world, trade unions are part and parcel of the social security system. And in case of need, teachers step in to help through their union, both in individual cases and when a disaster affects the whole community.

In Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador, people could not expect fair, systematic assistance from their government. Instead, the State rather focuses on large-scale reconstruction of the infrastructure, which is no doubt necessary, but is also the type of project that can generate the highest profit, and opportunities for fraud. In Nicaragua, the government channelled large amounts of support through the Church, and as a result only Church members benefited. On top of that, political considerations also play a part, and government assistance is first and foremost given to party loyalists. CGTEN-ANDEN Nicaragua noted that post-Mitch support was highly politicised.

In many countries, the teachers' union is one of the few organisations to have a network reaching into the remotest areas. In Nicaragua, teachers were members of "comisiones de emergencia" (Emergency Committees) in all local and regional structures. A representative teachers' union, deeply rooted in the teaching community, is the best guarantee that funds will be spent appropriately.

"In the trade union movement, we never 'simply' send money," stresses CGTEN-ANDEN Treasurer Brigida Rivera. "We only provide assistance on the basis of research done at local level." The visit to the three countries in Central America, and experiences in Turkey and elsewhere, show how meticulously teacher unions operate. In Nicaragua, a case-by-case assessment was made of needs, and building materials were purchased accordingly. Later, the union checked to see that all the materials had been used, and that the money had been well spent."

The hardest part of the aid process is to set criteria and apply them. "We focused on the teachers who had been hit hardest, who had lost all their property and were left only with the clothes on their back. We also tried to prioritise families where the teacher had died, but it was difficult to turn down requests for help. People's needs are tremendous, and you simply can't give assistance to everyone," says CGTEN-ANDEN's Brigida Rivera.

In Central America, the main focus of international assistance is on the reconstruction of houses. "But let us be clear," says Brigida, "in Nicaragua, a teacher's salary of US$80 does not mean you can build a nice house. When we say rebuilding, we mean providing shelter. Four walls and a roof. That's all. By using clear criteria, we managed to help a lot of our members." ◆

At this time, 22 countries have managed to have their external debts cancelled. This easing of financial constraints – and as condition of the arrangement – is designed to enable them to spend more money on health and education.

22 countries (they are all African except for Bolivia, Guyana and Honduras) will benefit from a reduction in their external debt worth 20.3 billion dollars at current net value, that is to say a little under half of their overall external debt. True, it only represents less than 1% of total Third World debt, but if we add in the effects of additional reductions promised by certain countries (which, like France, plan to cancel the whole of their bilateral debt), the debts of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs) will be reduced by about two thirds. Not bad at all. But this time, the international institutions have played ball, and contributed 10.6 billion dollars to the 20.3 billion dollars' worth of cancelled debt – 4.8 billion dollars coming from the World Bank, and 1.7 billion from the IMF.

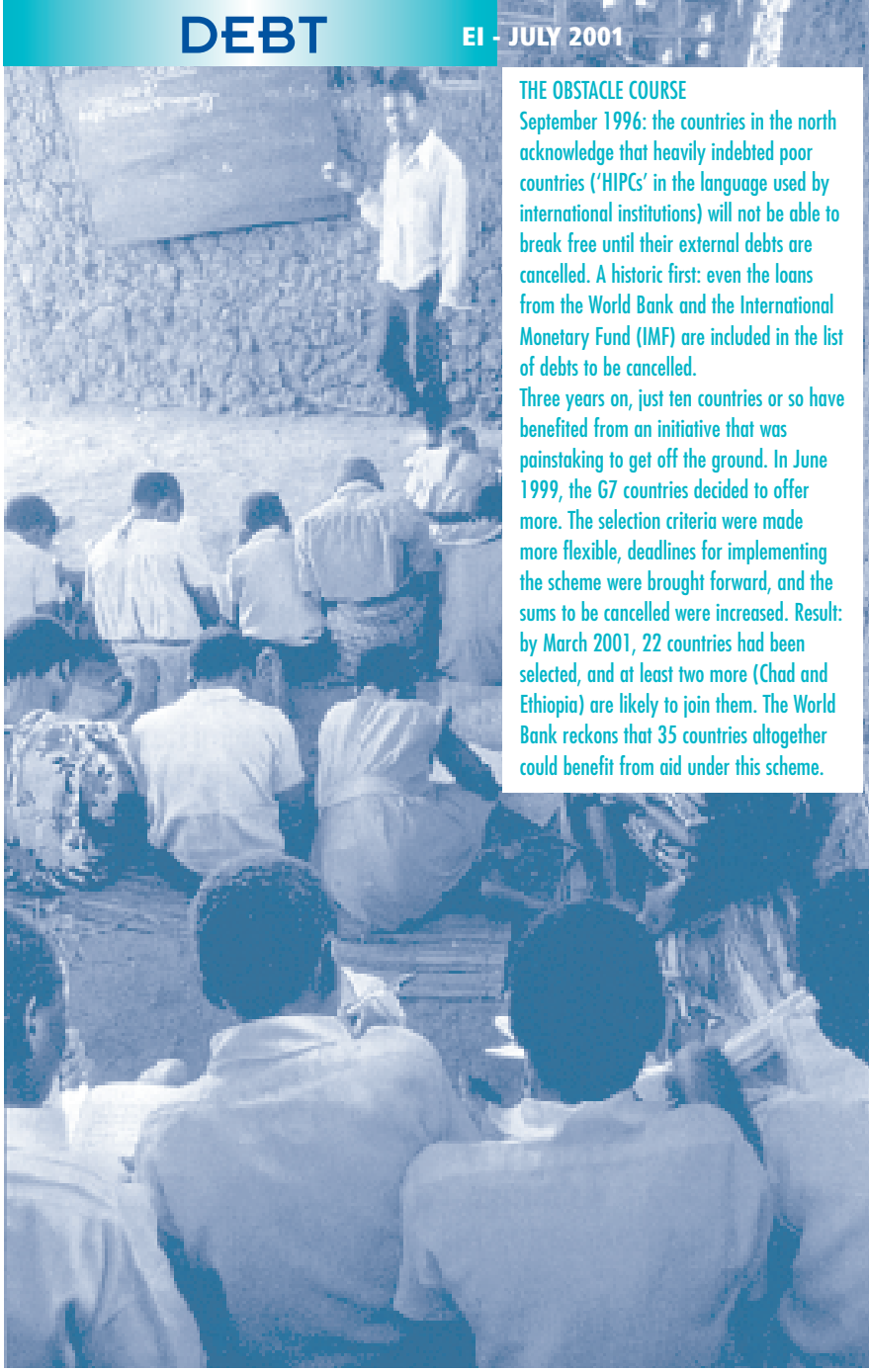
Savings on social expenditure

The HIPC plan procedure obliges all countries to allocate the equivalent of saved funds to social expenditure. This is what has turned this approach into a quite new mechanism: to derive tangible benefits from the cancellation of their debts, governments have to draw up a long-term 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper' on the basis of a broad-based process of democratic discussion within each country.

From the content of these documents, we can begin to forecast the social impact of this debt cancellation: 1.2% of GDP saved will cover 39% of education expenditure, and 25% of health infrastructure costs, an additional amount will be allocated to combating AIDS, with the rest being divided into funds for rural development, water supply, road construction and institutional development.

Uncertainties and constraints

The HIPC plan does not aim to cancel all the debts of poor countries, but to make them sustainable, that is to say to restore them to a level compatible with the ability of these countries to pay them back. However, as these tiny economies export raw materials whose prices can fall dramatically, a sustainable debt today may not be one tomorrow. If that were to come about, countries in the north would have to be able to increase their financial transfers in the form of gifts to poor countries to help them. There is no guarantee that they will do so, particularly as international institutions do not yet have all the funding necessary to cope with the announced debt reductions. Rich countries have promised to give it to them, but who is to say that the incoming US government will not welsh on its agreement? Another danger is that the sums allocated to these cancellations may replace public aid earmarked for the development of new projects. ◆



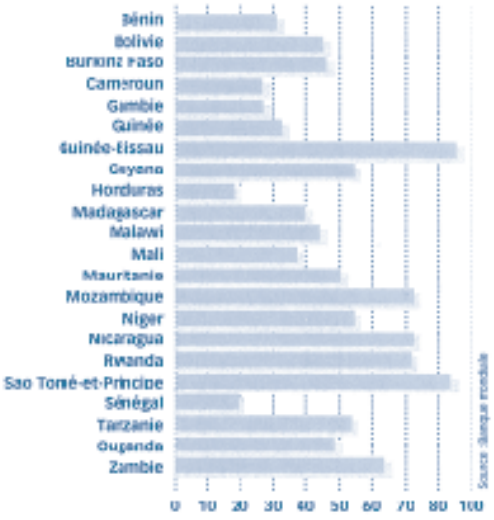
THE OBSTACLE COURSE

September 1996: the countries in the north acknowledge that heavily indebted poor countries ('HIPCs' in the language used by international institutions) will not be able to break free until their external debts are cancelled. A historic first: even the loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are included in the list of debts to be cancelled.

Three years on, just ten countries or so have benefited from an initiative that was painstaking to get off the ground. In June 1999, the G7 countries decided to offer more. The selection criteria were made more flexible, deadlines for implementing the scheme were brought forward, and the sums to be cancelled were increased. Result: by March 2001, 22 countries had been selected, and at least two more (Chad and Ethiopia) are likely to join them. The World Bank reckons that 35 countries altogether could benefit from aid under this scheme.

In Uganda, the only country already using the procedure, the introduction of a programme to make access to primary education free has doubled school enrolment figures in next to no time.

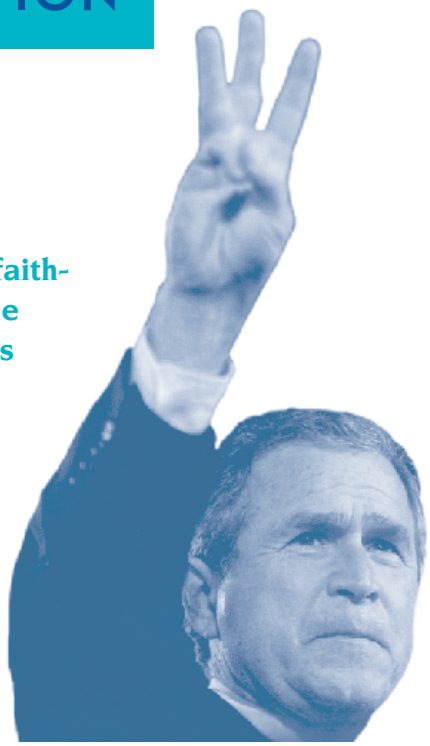
22 BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES, DEBT REDUCTION AS A PERCENTAGE OF CURRENT NET VALUE



1 © Coup de canif dans la dette, Christian Chavagneux, Alternatives Economiques No 192, May 2001, pp 26-27

Should Faith-Based Institutions Provide Education?

President Bush's proposal to inject government-sponsored faith-based initiatives into social services and education heats the debate on the separation of church and state when it comes to education.



Ninety percent of American children are educated in public schools, and many sectors of our society - from business to private interest groups - have taken part in the debate on how to strengthen education in this country. While most Americans report that they are happy with their public schools, there is concern at the national level that public education needs improvement. Yet, there is little consensus about which proposals might prove most effective in achieving this goal. A particularly problematic issue in this debate is the role that religion plays in American education. The U.S. Constitution bans federal funds from going to support religious institutions, including schools.

While many see the value of religion in their personal lives, Americans as a whole remain wary about putting religion into their public institutions. A recent survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life[1] indicates that Americans are open to the idea of giving government money to religious groups that provide social services only if those groups are Christian or Jewish, do not proselytize the poor, and do not use religious guidelines in deciding whom to hire. Polls also indicate that the public is interested in maintaining this kind of separation when it comes to education.

The separation of church and state is deeply rooted in this country. While many see the value of religion in their personal lives, Americans as a whole remain wary about putting religion into their public institutions.

Nevertheless, a portion of the American population believes private and religious schools do a better job than public schools in educating children. A number of legislative proposals have sought to provide incentives to make private education easier to afford. In doing so, they raise serious constitutional issues concerning the separation of church and state.

Voucher programs are perhaps the most visible legislative effort to broaden the relationship between government funding and religious education. So far the success has been limited – both legislatively and in practice. Voucher proponents advocate using the power of the free market to improve education, asserting that public schools do not improve because they have no real competition. By giving parents vouchers that could be used for students to attend either public or private schools, they argue, parents could choose the school that is best for their child, and public schools would be forced to improve in order to compete.

In several elections and ballot initiatives, the public has repeatedly voted down voucher programs and those who support them. "School choice" programs are operating in a number of school districts, but only a few have attempted to include private and religious schools. A federal appeals court declared Cleveland's school voucher program unconstitutional, ruling that government funding of private school tuition crosses the line separating church and state by promoting religious education. The U.S. Supreme Court has not yet addressed this specific issue. Last year the Supreme Court ruled that a student-led prayer before a school-sponsored sporting event was a violation of the Constitution, thereby upholding the separation of church and state in public schools.

Another ongoing legislative effort to break down the barrier between church and state is President Bush's proposal to inject government-sponsored faith-based initiatives into social services and education. The president has established a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives[2], and has ordered government institutions to work more closely with religious and secular community groups. In addition, he is seeking legislation that would allow religious organizations to get federal funds for programs they operate, such as afterschool care. The dangers of proselytizing or otherwise having a coercive effect on school-age children are significant, both institutionally and constitutionally.

Judging by criticisms that organizations from across the ideological spectrum have leveled upon faith based-initiatives, particularly as they pertain to education, it is clear that the public views these plans with considerable reservation. Many religious organizations have expressed concern that increased government funding and support would lead to more government oversight of their religious activities. On the other side of the spectrum people are concerned that, because religious organizations do not have to conform to certain civil rights laws related, for instance, to hiring and firing of employees, increased discrimination would result.

The debate will surely continue. What is clear is that every parent has the right to educate their children as they best see fit, whether it is through a public or parochial education. What is equally clear, however, is that the U.S. Constitution and simple common sense confirm what most Americans already believe: that the first amendment of the constitution – which mandates that congress shall pass no law supporting religion – has served this nation well and should not be tampered with. ◆

Sandra Feldman
President
American Federation of Teachers

1 The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, in collaboration with the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, presented pn April 10, 2001 a polling data regarding faith-based social services and other issues relating to religion and public affairs. http://pewforum.org/

2 http://usgovinfo.about.com/newsissues/usgovinfo/library/weekly/aa012901c.htm

Part of a Global Movement that Works to Change the World

October 1998, hurricane Mitch hits Central America. Novib -Oxfam Netherlands- offers help to its partners in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. In Afghanistan a partner of Novib illegally organises education for girls and women. In Uganda, a Novib partner succesfully lobbies the government to give women legal right to own land. In The Hague, thanks to Novib's advocacy department, parliament unanimously passes a resolution: more accent should be placed on stimulating basic education in developing countries.

Novib (Netherlands Organisation for Development Co-operation) was founded is 1956 and was the first Dutch private organisation aimed at helping poor people in developing countries. In spite of objections raised by the Roman Catholic Church, powerful civil servants and some vested interests of business enterprises, Novib grew and became stronger. In more than forty years of experience, Novib developed its own ways of working: we do not send people (ex-pats) to developing countries but we help non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that work for the poor with money and advice. Also we try to link NGOs from different countries and continents so they can learn from each other. In the Netherlands we are engaged in fundraising, advocacy and stimulating public awareness about problems and solutions in development co-operation.

At Novib's headquarters in The Hague about 300 staff are employed, most of them in the projects department, that is subdivided in six regional and two supra-regional desks. Our annual turnover is about 340 million guilders (= 150 million euro), of which more than half consists of subsidies from the government. Nonetheless, Novib in its policy is independent of the government and has membership of all kinds of organisations like trade unions, political parties, consumer organisations, etc. Novib has more than 900 NGO-partners in over 60 countries, including parts of the former Soviet Union.

As a member of Oxfam International (OI) Novib joined the Global Campaign for Education and holds a seat on the GCE Steering Committee. Within the framework of the GCE in the Netherlands we work closely together with the AOb, the Dutch member of Education International.

In the Netherlands Novib is not the only private organisation aimed at development co-operation. There are many of them, but only five are heavily funded by the Dutch government: Cordaid (catholic), Icco (protestant), Hivos (humanistic) and Novib (general) have been joined last year by Foster Parents Netherlands. The co-financing organisations together receive 10% of the national Dutch budget for development co-operation. That is to say, 0.08% of the Dutch national income.

Novib's scope is a broad one. It consists of emergency responses, direct assistance to the poor, institutional development, advocacy and networking, fundraising among and education of the Dutch public, while there are also thematic priorities: human rights, gender, sustainability and environment. Oxfam International's approach to development co-operation is a rights-based one. People, all people, have certain rights. Being poor keeps those rights from people. That's the main rationale of our work. Although we acknowledge that development co-operation seems less en vogue among politicians, journalists and opinion leaders, we do see that more and more people, organisations and businesses are involved with the future of the world. Globalisation means chances and threats, but it also makes people all over the world more aware of the lives of other people. We now know more than ever that the way we behave makes a difference to other people's lives. That's why more and more companies feel that their policies should be transparent to stakeholders and the general public, that consumers long for fair trade, that tourists are aware of the consequences of their travel. And most of them do mind!

n(o)vib
OXFAM NETHERLANDS

Novib is not afraid of the future. We seek alliances, we want to be an active part of a global movement that works to change the world of all for the best. For poor people education, learning to read and right, is not only a basic right. It probably is the most important key to a better future. With Education International, OI, ActionAid, the Global March against Child Labour and other NGOs, we are committed to basic education for all by 2015. We have to keep governments, the UN and its agencies committed. We cannot not fail. ◆

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Novib and Education International worked closely together in Kosovo, where Novib funded training courses for teachers among other things.
© ei

Sylvia Borren
Director General
NOVIB

EI's headquarters are based in Brussels, in a building shared by the ETUCE, the ICFTU, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and other international and national unions.

When the EI World Congress convenes, this July, up to one thousand delegates will decide on the future direction and priorities of this major Global Union. They will represent 24 million EI members - teachers and other personnel - who work in all sectors of education, from pre-school to university, belonging to 305 national member organisations in 155 countries and territories.

Here is a summary of **EI's principal aims,** as formulated in the Congress papers :

- The fundamental right to quality education for all persons … publicly funded and regulated systems of education … equality of educational opportunity
- Improvement of the welfare and status of teachers and education employees … full application of their human rights, trade union rights and professional freedoms
- Eradication of all forms of discrimination in education … building of understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity …
- Promotion of democracy, sustainable development, fair trade, basic social services, health and safety … solidarity and cooperation …
- Strengthening of EI through the participation of all affiliated organisations … promotion of unity in the education sector.

The task of the World Congress will be to translate these aims into action. The Congress will debate **strategic objectives** suggested by member organisations and the Executive Board, adopt **resolutions** and approve the **program and budget** for the years 2002 -2004. Delegates will also elect the **Executive Board,** charged with the direction of EI affairs and activities during the next three years.

But before addressing these important tasks, the representatives of EI member unions will have heard the **President's address,** will have considered the **progress report** presented by the **General Secretary,** and will have received the **audited financial report.** The Congress is also the occasion for evaluating the work of the organisation, while drawing on experience to build the future.

The Founding Congress in 1993 in Stockholm. From l. to r. EI's President Mary Futrell and General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen, AFT's Albert Shanker and Bob Harris.

Whether you will be attending the World Congress for the first time - as a delegate, observer or guest - or whether you simply want to know more about the basics of EI, here are some key features of our International:

Membership

EI is composed of national organisations of teachers and education and research personnel that subscribe to EI aims and principles. Member organisations must be independent of political authorities, be self-governing and practice internal democracy, and pledge to fulfil the obligations of membership. A **Committee of Experts** has certain responsibilities, defined in the by-laws, to enquire into membership matters and report to the Board.

The World Congress

The World Congress is EI's supreme authority and meets every three years. Member organisations send delegates and exercise voting rights according to their membership. Committees on credentials, elections and resolutions facilitate work. The Congress agenda, draft resolutions, the progress and financial reports, the program and budget and other papers are sent to member organisations in advance so that they can be examined and delegates can be instructed. The Congress is the occasion for member unions from all regions to inter-act in a representative and democratic forum.

The Executive Board

The Executive Board is elected by the member organisations at the World Congress. There are six officers – President, Vice-Presidents and General Secretary, two members from each of the five regions, and seven members who may come from any region, making 23 members in all. At least two of the Vice-Presidents and at least one member from each region must be women. In order to meet the requirements of regional and gender balance, ballots are conducted in a logical sequence throughout the Congress.

Regional structures

EI is organised in five regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America and the Caribbean. Member organisations in all except the latter have decided to establish regional structures with Regional Conferences, which meet at least once between World Congresses, and Regional Committees. These structures have by-laws approved by the Executive, advise the Board on policies and activities in each region, and develop and advocate policies in relation to regional intergovernmental bodies. In the case of North America and the Caribbean, member organisations meet in a Round-table. In addition, EI has established agreements or co-operates with sub-regional councils and groups of education unions. In the case of the European Union, a trade union committee on education has been established for representation purposes.

1 For the full statement of Aims and General Principles, see Articles 2 and 3 of the EI Constitution, http://www.ei-ie.org