

# Paving the way to an all-inclusive "Knowledge Society"



By deciding to organise a global campaign on quality public education for all, Education International seeks to focus on three objectives: firstly, promoting education for all without exception; secondly, promoting a quality education which prepares young people to be actors in their future lives; finally, promoting public education which provides the only framework for welcoming and harmoniously integrating all young people, regardless of their origins and economic situation.

The objective of this dossier is to share our point of view with our readers on the issue of quality public education for all. We also would like to tell of what has been done to date.

We are not alone in this cause. This special dossier features contributions from non-governmental organisations, such as Oxfam International and ActionAid, which have also launched their own campaigns. It has already been decided that we will work together with these organisations on specific aspects of these campaigns, and more particularly on the occasion of the G-8 Summit held in Cologne last June. Other joint initiatives are planned: for instance, April 2000 sees the 10th anniversary of the Jomtien Declaration calling for the elimination of illiteracy by the end of the century, which was adopted by the World Bank, the UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF. At this time, EI will launch a joint initiative aimed at showing that this objective is far from being met and that it could have been achieved through a greater expression of will and courageous political decision-making.

It is a well-known fact that annual world expenditure on armaments today accounts for some US\$781 billion, and that, if only 1% of this expenditure was to be invested in education over a period of ten years, access to education would be guaranteed to all the world's children. Our claims are therefore not only just, but also achievable provided the will exists. The reduction and/or elimination of the public debt in the world's poorest countries, agreed at the recent G-8 summit in Cologne, is a step in the right direction, and we must use all the opportunities offered by this initiative. It would, however, have been possible to do much more and sooner, as we have shown.

We are currently entering a new age of the so-called "*knowledge society*". We are experiencing a revolution without being fully aware of it. From agricultural societies, where the possession of land was the sole determinant of social status, authority and

power, we moved into an industrial society in which ownership of physical and financial assets was important. New information technologies, creativity and innovation already occupy a central role in the emerging "*knowledge society*". Those who are able to master these tools and skills as a result of an increasingly diversified education will, in turn, acquire status, recognition and power. Those who do not will rapidly become the "*illiterate*" of the 21st century and will be excluded from society.

Indeed, education is becoming increasingly important in today's world. Wealth in tomorrow's world will not be limited to being rich in natural resources but rather will have a direct correlation to a society's wealth in knowledge.

This, therefore, is the major challenge facing all of us today. Provided adequate human and financial resources can be found, this could represent the greatest opportunity for teachers' trade unions to forge a role for themselves as these great changes take place before our eyes. Education International is highly conscious of the opportunities at stake. Our global campaign will provide an additional opportunity to explain, convince and ensure that education is considered, as soon as possible and by the largest number of countries possible, as a priority for the future. ◆

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Elie Jouen

Deputy General Secretary

# EDUCATION QUALITY

## The right to education, A matter of quality learning environments

**Implicit in the notion of having the right to education is having access to a quality learning environment of which quality teachers figure paramount in the equation. Without ensuring quality in education systems, even the most basic of skills will not be acquired.**

This, of course, puts the fulfilment of the right to education in peril. The right to education, enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, obliges states to take steps to realise education free of charge for all. In many places this translates to increasing school enrolment.

While increasing enrolment is "*the single most important indicator of progress towards the goal of universal primary education, it is not an end in itself and does not mean children will stay in school, still less does it mean they will receive quality education*" (Oxfam International, 1999). Seventy-seven percent of all children starting in primary education reach grade five, and in the least developed countries this figure is fifty-eight percent. (UNICEF, 1998). Indeed, while it is safe to assume children with five or less years of schooling will leave the system without even the most basic literacy skills, consider this: if all children of primary school age were to receive a good-quality basic education, the problem of literacy would be resolved in a single generation. (Oxfam International, 1999)

A relative and dynamic concept, quality education can be depicted as one that best fits the present and future needs of students in the global community, given their particular circumstances and prospects. As such, it should embrace the development of the potential of every member of each new generation and foster self-confidence in students that will enable them to adapt to an ever-changing world. Quality is therefore not static and is relative to things such as a time, a place, and to learners and their circumstances. Because it is ultimately a function of the interaction between teachers and students, quality education is also dynamic.

### Standards of Quality

There has been much work done the world over to measure standards of quality in schooling. One attempt to find out more about the real quality of education has been the Criterion Reference Testing (CRT) that has been organised in Ghana. The first tests were administered in 1992 and repeated annually. Each sample has corresponded to about five percent of all students in grade six in primary school. The performance has been very poor. There has been some qualitative improvement in English, but the results are still poor. Also in mathematics there seem to have been some improvements, but the trend is not really clear. The mastery level in English was to solve sixty percent of the test items and in mathematics fifty-five percent of the test items. A very small number of students reached mastery level in the two subjects. In 1992 two percent reached this level in English and in 1996 five and one-half percent. In mathematics the percentage that reached mastery level in 1992 was one percent and in 1996 close to two percent (Quansah, 1997). The situation in Ghana is comparable to that in many other countries.

Another example can be taken from Chile where the government has decentralised and privatised the education system and introduced a voucher system. Student achievements in mathematics and Spanish were controlled in national examinations in 1982, 1988 and 1990. The result of this evaluation was that the reforms contributed to greater inequalities without improving the overall quality (ILO, 1996).

### Alarming issues in the North

Problems of low-quality education are also the concern of industrialized countries. An alarming factor is the high number of pupils leaving education without a certificate. Between ten and twelve percent of pupils in the EU countries in the age group of 15-16 year olds

did not obtain any certificate at the end of compulsory schooling or did not complete their education in a normal way (European Commission/Eurydice, 1994). Another alarming factor is the insufficient level of reading comprehension among large groups of populations in several industrialized countries. In a 1997 OECD report it is suggested that more than twenty percent of adults in some of the world's richest countries are unable to read or write except at the most elementary level (OECD/Human Resources Development Canada, 1997).

In many countries investment in school equipment and buildings has been neglected during recent decades. This is specifically true for many developing countries. To improve the quality of education, it is essential to improve basic teaching materials and the general school environment.

An additional and fundamental prerequisite for students to learn is that they are properly nourished and benefit from a general good level of health and wellbeing. Too often in Africa, Asia and Latin America, children come to school malnourished and ill. This so, even if the students come to school, they cannot concentrate on their studies. Introducing school meals would be a step towards reducing dropout due to malnutrition and ill health.

Teachers' working conditions are closely related to their students' learning conditions. A school environment allowing teachers to do a good job will automatically improve the learning conditions for the students. Moreover, the teaching profession has to be made more attractive so that it competes for able candidates against other professions. Similarly, it is not enough to have satisfactory recruitment results; it is equally important to see that teachers decide to stay in the profession. To help insure this, three of the main issues are education and training, working conditions and the working environment.

### Teacher training imperative

Teachers must be well prepared for their professional duties. Their education is of paramount importance in improving the quality of education which is why in-service training is so important. Teaching is a lifelong commitment. Because human knowledge continually expands and environments are constantly evolving, quality in-service teacher training is fundamental to providing current and appropriate instruction. Not only is continuous professional development of crucial importance in maintaining the level of teachers' knowledge, it also serves as an incentive. It encourages teachers to remain in the profession. So, to improve the

quality of education, teachers must be supported in their efforts to develop professionally.

Steps have to be taken to introduce new technologies into schools on a much broader scale. During the last decade or so, we have witnessed explosive technological progress in the world. Unfortunately, its effects have not been sufficiently reflected in schools. Investment in computers, software, video equipment and so on, in most schools is very limited in comparison with work places in commerce and industry in Europe and North America. Used properly, new technologies are a powerful aid in developing students' capacity for logical thinking and problem solving. Information and communication technologies can and should be used as educational tools in all subjects.

### Variations in educational tools

Of course, this discussion is less appropriate in countries where textbooks, pens and paper are rare. There is a risk that the introduction of new technologies will further increase the gap between the North and the South. A sincere effort to avoid this must be made and is the joint responsibility of governments globally.

Important issues such as environmental problems, AIDS/HIV, violence, the threats against democracy through increasing racism and xenophobia must be reflected in today's education. There are too many contemporary examples of curricula that do not appropriately reflect life's realities. To maintain and develop quality in education means increasing knowledge about the needs and demands of societies today.

Along the same line, much research on factors affecting student achievement has pointed out that family habits influence school achievement more than the school environment does. Family practices such as reading, discussing, and participating in cultural activities affect a child's school experience. A family's economic situation, the education and profession of the parents and such, are also influencing factors. Teachers must therefore find ways of enriching co-operation between schools and the home environment. Methods of supporting parents could be established to help their children with their schoolwork.

In conclusion, to improve education quality and to face today's new challenges, governments must move education up a few notches in their list of fiscal priorities. An all too common explanation for a country's failure to offer quality education is its lack of financial ability. While in some countries this points to a large-scale public debt crisis, in many other countries, it merely points to a lack of political will. ♦

### Related literature

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# PUBLIC EDUCATION

## An immeasurably valuable public good

**While the act of learning is an incontestable advantage to the individual, it is society as a whole that benefits from having an educated population. Families live healthier, communities stronger, and nations wealthier. Therefore, it is the society at large which should ensure that everyone has access to quality public schooling.**

Yet with the current trend to privatise much of the public sector, public schools and their raison d'être have been scrutinised. Should the provision of basic education to the masses be left to the public or private sector? Whatever the answer, this debate has led to growing awareness of the significance of public education as an underlying foundation of our societies.

### A public good

The establishment of publicly controlled, service-oriented education systems has provided school access to millions of children and adults who would otherwise have been deprived of basic education and training. Today, 1 billion students -one fifth of world's population- have access to learning institutions. Of course, as we enter the "*knowledge society*", further development of free public education is required to meet the needs of millions more in several countries.

In nations where public schools have become available for all, free universal access has meant, beyond having the individual benefit of gaining knowledge, a better chance for equality of opportunities between rich and poor. Having universal access to education is also a significant step towards the elimination of discrimination on the basis of social or ethnic origin, gender, religious belief, race.

Public school systems are the locus of common value systems. They teach basic life skills, offer intercultural education, and provide an arena for promoting notions of democracy. Societal issues such as racism, sexism, violence, peace, AIDS education, human rights, civic virtues, sustainable development, and democracy can be debated in them.

No other institution has contributed so much to social cohesion. In many countries, schools have become multi ethnic microcosms where children of different communities learn to play, work and live together. Only a few decades ago these institutions were under ferocious attack for opening their doors to ethnic minorities and immigrants in many countries.

Indeed, public education as a public good is founded on a systemic perspective based on public responsibility, pluralist social values and common principles. It differs significantly from the private sector 'consumerist' approach. In most cases, private schools are market-oriented and aim to satisfy the individual needs of their 'customers.' In short, their ultimate goal is securing the individual a place in the workforce. By preparing their 'customers' so, private schools

### What can you do?

Show your support by speaking up and speaking out for children:

WRITE the Minister of Education.  
URGE your government to support the actions proposed.

TALK to friends and neighbours about the need to support public education.  
CONTACT the media about your concerns.

Source: The Alberta Teachers' Association (Canada)

ensure delivery to future employers of a customised workforce.

In a 1997 interview, Colin N. Power, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, compared the social outcomes of public and private education:

*"The evidence would suggest that privatisation increases the gap between the rich and poor within countries... and prevents social cohesion, which is the whole point of a public education system. The more you privatisate the more unequal and divided your society ultimately will become. So we think it's very important that we defend public education as a public good."*

It is not that private education - when it is privately funded - necessarily does a disservice to society at large; rather, it simply cannot be considered a replacement for public schooling and should not be publicly funded. Bill Ratterree, Senior Programme Officer at the International Labour Organisation, expressed the following view on the fundamental role of public education services:

*"Privatisation can offer an opportunity for expanding education but it should not be viewed as a substitute for the role of governments and the state in providing public education."*

### Cost of public education excludes poor

Fifty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, public education has become a high-cost service that is unaffordable by the poor. Oxfam International, a partner in the EI campaign for Quality Public Education For All, (See article p. 18) cites direct costs as the single highest barrier to basic education for poor households in the developing world. Other constraints observed include barriers such as distance from school, gender discrimination, child labour and armed conflicts.

Even in countries where primary education is officially free, families face a wide range of direct costs in sending a child to school: tuition or exam fees levied by government, levies imposed by schools for registration and school improvement; unofficial or 'informal' school fees; payments for uniforms, textbooks, pencils, transport, meals, etc. In effect, says Oxfam, "*the financing of public education has been privatised, with households absorbing a rising share of costs*", a trend towards privatisation also seen in industrialised nations.

In the Philippines, about one third of total elementary school spending is now directly financed by households, rising to 50% in countries such as Zambia, Vietnam and Tanzania.



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diverse demands and expectations by parents, students, educators, and prevalent neo-conservative ideologies. And one cannot ignore the negative impact of corporate interests attracted by the possibility of turning a public good into a lucrative market through various forms of privatisation.

In a 1996 publication entitled "*Is There a Public For Public Schools?*", U.S. educationist David Mathews reported on the deterioration of the relationship between the public and public education, suggesting that the historic commitment of Americans to their public schools is in danger of disappearing. He goes on to argue that fundamental, lasting improvement of the schools will be achieved only when citizens reclaim them and take responsibility for their well-being. Mathews proposes a strategy based on the assumption that healthy community life is essential to good public schools.

An encouraging note is that - in the USA as in most countries - while they are troubled by obvious difficulties in the system, most parents and communities still support their local public schools and recognise that these institutions are overwhelmed by social problems not of their making.

### Restoring confidence in public schools

Worldwide, the declining confidence in the authority and legitimacy of the state has had an impact on citizens' confidence in public education.

Proponents of market ideology have spurred the popular belief (or misconception) that services provided by the state are usually less effective and efficient than those of the private sector.

For decades, teacher trade unions have been struggling to improve the quality of education provision, to demonstrate the social relevance of publicly funded schools, and to restore public confidence in the education systems in which their members work.

Efforts to improve and reform public schools have often encountered serious roadblocks: lack of financial support, misunderstandings about education goals,

### What are the challenges facing public education?

- More children need special attention.
- Teachers have less time for each child because class sizes are too large.
- More children arrive at school unable to learn because they are hungry, lack sleep or suffer from emotional stress.
- Less time is spent on teaching and learning because teachers are busy meeting the medical and social service needs of children.
- Support services such as teacher-librarians, counsellors and specialists have been reduced.
- School fees and fundraising activities have increased to make up for inadequate funding.
- Schools lack the personnel and equipment needed to integrate technology into the classroom.
- "Have" and "have-not" schools are being created.

### What should be done?

- Increase professional and support staff to help ensure that all children, especially those with special needs, have a genuine opportunity to learn and succeed at school.
- Increase funding to school boards so that they can reduce class sizes and ensure that students get more individual attention.
- Provide necessary teachers and equipment to implement technology in schools.
- Eliminate the need for students and parents to pay for curricular support materials.
- Arrange for the delivery of non-educational services for children so that schools can concentrate on teaching and learning.

Source: The Alberta Teachers' Association (Canada)



# EDUCATION FOR ALL

## Guaranteeing learning communities to one and all

***"Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs".<sup>1</sup>***

### ARTICLE 26, UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

### ARTICLE 28, CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD\*

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;  
(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

\* extract

Education for all, by all and throughout life: that is the objective to which governments committed themselves at Jomtien. This commitment was to remain valid throughout the ensuing decade in order to mobilise additional resources, create new partnerships, thereby maintaining the priority of Education for All on the international development agenda.

Unfortunately, the growing proportion of funding allocated to basic education from both national budgets as well as those of donor organisations has been overshadowed in the last decade by a regrettable tendency towards stagnation, even a global decline in the level of official development aid. Furthermore, this decline has been frequently accompanied by an increase in loans destined for military research and the purchase of arms.

### A right for all: from childhood to adulthood

On the eve of the 21st century, 145 million children between the ages of 6 and 11 (of which 85 million are girls) do not receive any education, despite the commitment undertaken by all the governments present at Jomtien, to achieve universal access to basic education by the year 2000. In addition, some 800 million adults are illiterate (more than 80% of whom are women).

If Education for All is a reality in industrialised countries, this is not the case in other regions of the world, where the situation still gives great cause for concern and where the right to education is still largely flouted. This can be seen, for example, in the decisions taken by the Afghan authorities regarding the education of girls and in the increase in child labour. The situation is equally worrying in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in the Russian Federation. As shown in a recent UNICEF report, we are witnessing a rapid decline in the number of children in full-time education and a widespread increase in the number of children for whom a place in school cannot or will not be found.

### From rights to implementation

What is a right if the conditions for its implementation and achievement cannot be guaranteed? How can a child fully exercise his right to education if there are no books, pencils, desks or chairs or if the minimum

conditions of hygiene do not exist? How can a child benefit from education when she has to walk great distances on foot in order to reach the school, and often on an empty stomach? Why go to school if the teaching provided is not of good quality and doesn't correspond to the needs and challenges of our societies? The right to education only has value if all children have access to quality education which is free and democratic. It is time to guarantee schools for our children which are communities of learning where they can acquire the necessary tools for understanding and resolving the challenges they will face, both in their professional lives and as citizens.

### From basic education to learning throughout life

There was a time when the skills and knowledge acquired through education and training would remain valid throughout one's entire life. How things have changed! Now, at the end of the 20th century, the evolution and globalisation of technology, changes in the organisation of work, the development and dissemination of information mean that people must be constantly prepared to adapt. Tomorrow, the success of individuals will depend entirely on their capacity to evolve, adapt, acquire new skills throughout life.

For developing countries, the main challenge with regards to adult education remains a problem which, for many, goes beyond the simple question of literacy. Indeed, it will be not only a question of helping adults acquire certain basic, essential skills, but also of improving the living conditions of several populations by giving them the technical means for undertaking revenue-generating activities. It is now vital that this new approach to literacy take into account both these fundamental needs and the context within which lives the population concerned.

A large number of national and international reports emphasise the importance of investing in adult education and training. The UNESCO report from the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century stresses that *"the concept of learning throughout life is one of the keys for entry into the 21st century"* while the European Commission White Paper *"Teaching and learning: towards a knowledge-based society"* clearly believes that European countries have no other choice.

### Reducing inequalities or creating new ones?

In order to succeed in this process of learning throughout life, all the experts seem to agree that the quality of basic education is a significant factor. Indeed, numerous studies and statistics show that, when initial training has been of high quality, it has awakened a desire to continue learning and acquiring knowledge and skills. We therefore risk seeing a widening gap between those who have acquired a sufficient level of education in order to benefit from further learning experiences and those who haven't. There is an equally great risk of growing divisions between a small élite capable of evolving and adapting to change and an increasingly marginalised majority.

This inevitably brings us to question of equal opportunities. Inequality of access to basic education, inequality of access to continuous training, cases of academic failure. It is essential that these inequalities be reduced through the implementation of voluntarist measures which give a true 'second chance' to those who were not given a first chance, particularly girls and women, as well as children and adults living in rural areas or belonging to minority or marginalised groups.

### Strengthening human resources and recognising the role of teachers

Within this context, the active participation of teachers and public education systems is crucial. Indeed, teachers and all education personnel have a major role to play at all levels of education. Scholastic achievement depends to a great extent on the qualifications and capacities of teachers. All of our societies need good teachers. African Ministers of Education clearly recognised this during the Durban Conference (April 1998) when they declared *"at the heart of this matter is our concern for the teacher, to whose role, status and career-long development we resolve to give the highest priority"*.

For this to happen, the emphasis must be placed on quality initial training of teachers, but also on in-service training to enable them to update their knowledge and skills or to explore new teaching methods. Society must recognise their efforts and give them all the tools necessary for fulfilling their mission. It is under these conditions, as underlined by the report from the International Commission on Education for the 21st



© S. Nowak  
A Chinese woman learns her three Rs with the help of radio transmitted lessons.



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## Education's progress report since Jomtien

For nearly a billion people, or one-sixth of humanity, the right to education remains nothing more than a mirage as it did a decade ago. Worse, despite the fact that over the past ten years the world's governments have met regularly and signed legally binding obligations to address the issue of providing quality public education for all, the number of illiterates grows<sup>1</sup>. Yet, the Jomtien conference on Education for All, EFA, had its *raison d'être* and can be viewed as a move, albeit small, in the right direction.

Coming after a decade plagued by a world-wide economic crisis, the Jomtien EFA conference took place at a crucial time. The financial climate for most of the world's population at the end of the 80s was dismal. Following suit, public education delivery systems everywhere took a hit, a brisk slap in the North a crippling blow in the South. This was at a time when development cooperation was bottoming out, the 80s increasingly referred to by analysts and academics as "*the lost decade*." Compounding matters, rapid population growth spelled catastrophe magnified in many already debilitated economies. Given this setting, the Jomtien conference and its plan of action generated new hope, even if it was over-zealous.

Many see it now, almost ten years later, as a composite of empty promises, a dismal failure. Yet as mentioned above, EFA can be viewed in some respects as a move in the right direction. For example, while EFA's focus was on providing basic education – generally equating to a level of knowledge attained from six years of schooling – other related priorities were also outlined:

- *expanding early childhood education, particularly for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children*
- *improving learning achievement (improving quality of already existing education delivery systems)*
- *decreasing disparity between men's and women's rate of literacy*
- *expanding basic education opportunities for youth and adults (providing literacy and life skills)*
- *using all available communication channels to promote knowledge, skills & values for better living.*

*(EFA Framework for Action, 1994)*

With EFA's "*expanded vision*," the above-cited goals shift from the singular notion of increasing global school attendance records and embrace a more comprehensive, diversified approach to delivering basic education to those currently excluded. "The focus of basic education must be on actual learning acquisition and outcomes, rather than exclusively upon enrolment, continued participation in organised programmes and completion of certification requirements" (World Declaration on Education for All, Article 4, 1994). Consequently and in effect, the EFA Jomtien confer-

ence and the subsequent related initiatives represent a departure from policies and approaches of the past because their strategies were more comprehensive.

However, the novelty of EFA resides essentially in the realm of policy creation; it has had little real effect on who is schooled and who is not today versus a decade ago, for example with regard to South-Asian and sub-Saharan African girls (See figure 1). The gap between policy creation and implementation is discussed further. EFA conferences and their outcomes are part of a series of conferences which have put education on the international policy map, which is another example of how EFA contributed positively to the plight of public education for all.

### EFA Principles Applied Since 1990

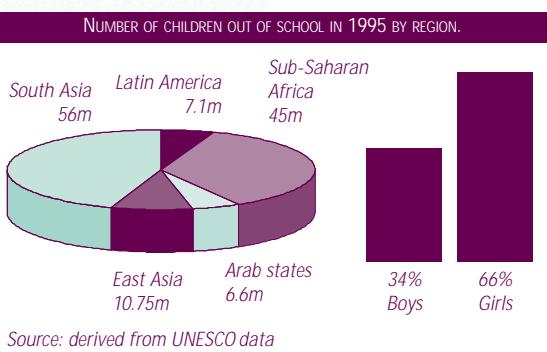
Many EFA goals and targets set in 1990 were ambitious, and during the mid-decade EFA meeting in 1996, this became evident. (See figure 3 for resume of statistics). Progress was declared, but how much and where is difficult to decipher from the 1996 conference literature. Supplied in Figure 2 are illiteracy trends in 1990 compared to like figures in 1995. Essentially, primary school enrolment increased between 1990 and 1995, but females remain two-thirds of the illiterate population according to the UNICEF 1999 report on the status of children. The EFA mid-decade review told of what obstacles remain: progress has been slow, not to say non-existent in closing the gender gap; in providing adult education; in providing early childhood care and development centres and in seeing the issue beyond increasing enrolment. (*EFA Forum Final Communiqué, 1996*)

Conflicting reports exist on the actual amount of "progress" made toward EFA goals. "New partnerships have emerged, new resources tapped, and new energies and ideas created," all to make EFA a reality, says the mid-decade review. Yet, a study conducted by EI at the request of UNESCO shows teachers think differently in the "nine giants," where more than half the world's population resides.

*The most striking conclusions from the answers given by EI member organisations in Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Pakistan to the questionnaire on the evaluation of EFA are: a) the feeling among most of the organisations that no major changes have taken place in governmental educational policy since the 1990 Jomtien conference;*

The novelty of EFA resides essentially in the realm of policy creation; it has had little real effect on who is schooled and who is not today versus a decade ago.

5/5



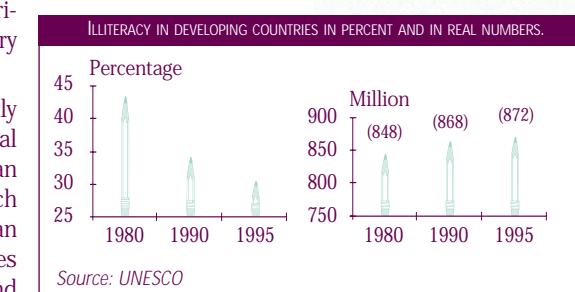
proper funding for the reforms for reasons such as having the burden of debt service; may choose to spend funds available elsewhere; or may be too corrupt effectively to implement policy changes.

With such variables at play in national education policy reform, it is no mystery that good ideas for policy reform resulting from international initiatives such as EFA are likely to meet their demise at the national government level. Yet, on a more optimistic note, where there's a will there's a way.

For example, in many cases, governments need only to commit to re-allocating already existing funds and make education a budgetary priority over such things as military spending.

To ensure EFA, there is evidently much to be done at all sectoral levels, and EI members have an important role to play which cannot be neglected. There is an enormous strength which comes from being in the profession and even larger is the power wielded from belonging to a global network such as EI. Using this to help promote EFA is vital to the initiative's success. This type of collaboration is appraised in the Delors report as "*crucial*" because teachers' organisations "*have built up a fund of experience*" that once shared with policy makers, constitutes a first, essential stage in broadening access to education and improving its quality... for "*no reform can succeed without the cooperation and active participation of teachers.*"<sup>3</sup>

Figure 2



b) the minimal or complete lack of consultations between governments and teacher organisations.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the EI report concludes with a call to establish a new partnership between governments and teacher organisations. Yet, absence of teacher/policy maker partnerships in the process of policy reform, while crucial, is only one of the reasons for the unmet EFA goals.

### Reasons abound for broken promises

The EFA declaration states what is required for successful EFA goal attainment; virtually all of them are lacking today in much the same way they were ten years ago, comparatively. National governments have shown a consistent lack of political will or ability to invest in education and to implement EFA policy reform, and this can be attributed to diverse causes. A government may never have truly intended to implement new policy; may not have the know-how to implement it; may not have consulted those who are implicated in the change (i.e. teachers in the case of EFA); may not have

### Jomtien promises and shortcomings

#### The commitments

#### Primary school enrolment

- Universal access and completion of primary education by 2000
- Universal access to basic education and completion of primary school by 80% of primary school-age children by 2015

#### The deficit

Progress in all regions, but too slow to achieve targets:

- Had the Jomtien mid-term target been achieved there would be 61m fewer children unschooled.
- Approximately 25% of the total primary-school pupils drop out before completing a basic education, many of them in the first two years.
- Twenty-nine African countries have increased enrollments at less than half the rate required to meet 2015 target.
- Completion rates have improved at less than one-third of the rate required to meet the Jomtien target.
- In sub-Saharan Africa they have increased at one quarter of the Jomtien target.
- The overall completion rate for developing countries is 70% compared to the international summit target of 80%.

#### Education quality

Progress difficult to measure, but the "quality deficit remains large":

- Around one third of primary school pupils attending schools without access to safe water.
- Millions of children being taught in classrooms with no blackboards.
- Chronic shortages of books and writing material.
- Problems of poor teaching, teacher absenteeism, and poorly designed curriculum widespread.
- Learning outcomes reflect poor educational environment.
- An additional 3m teachers needed in South Asia alone to meet target of 40: 1 pupil-teacher ratio.

Source: Oxfam International



Alice de Rémond du Chélas  
Communications Coordinator

Figure 3



## Oxfam International's partner campaign launched

To maximise the impact of the campaign *Quality Public Education for All*, Education International and Oxfam International have created a partnership. Outlined below are the main points of the campaign recently launched by Oxfam International and the ways in which Oxfam International and EI are working together.

On 22 March, 1999 Oxfam International (OI) launched its campaign "Education Now - Break the Cycle of Poverty". Simultaneous media launches were held in Washington, London, Johannesburg and The Hague, while launches in several other Oxfam member countries were held in the following months.

The key message of the OI campaign is that the world's governments are collectively failing to deliver on their promise to provide all children with quality education by 2015. Today, almost ten years after the Education for All conference in Jomtien, some 125 million children do not attend school. Another 150 million children leave the education system before acquiring basic literacy skills. This is unacceptable because education is, in our view, a key to breaking the cycle of poverty that keeps many of the poor in its grip.

Oxfam International argues that the targets for Education For All are achievable and affordable, but that, so far, the political will has simply been missing. The OI campaign calls on governments to deliver on their promises, by agreeing to the following policy changes:

- Deeper and more rapid debt relief for the poorest countries, to free up scarce government resources (now being used to service foreign debts) needed for education.
- Better use of OECD development aid, by increasing the share of basic education support from the current 2 or 3 percent to at least 8 percent of all official development aid.
- Reform of IMF and World Bank policies, in order to protect and expand the provision of basic education under structural adjustment.
- Southern governments to award higher priority to improvements in quality and coverage of basic education.
- A Global Action Plan for Education, with practical measures and funds to speed up the effective delivery of promises on education.

By using the media, mobilising supporters and lobbying governments, parliaments and international institutions, OI is trying to put education higher on the political agenda. In several developing countries, local NGOs are also picking up on the issue and are setting up national campaigns. Increasingly, local OI partners



© UNICEF/Freedman  
Angolan students learn with meagre materials.

are working jointly with EI member organisations. At the international level, Education International and Oxfam International have decided to combine campaigning efforts to maximise our collective impact. Already OI and EI have worked together in pushing for debt relief for education during the G-8 summit in Cologne. (See article on page 20.) At the next World Bank/IMF annual meeting to be held this autumn in Washington, EI and OI will focus on the impact of adjustment policies on education.

Some preliminary results of these and other campaigns such as "Jubilee 2000," the worldwide debt relief campaign, are emerging:

- The education campaign has gained a considerable amount of press coverage over the past few months, ranging from international media like CNN and the BBC World Service to many top-ranking national newspapers in dozens of countries all over the world.
- The June G-8 meeting in Cologne agreed on substantial improvements in debt relief for poor countries, particularly in Africa. Education was mentioned as one of the key sectors that should benefit from this.
- The World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO have agreed to support the idea of a Global Action Plan for Education, to be finalised at the Jomtien-review conference to be held in Dakar in April 2000.

Building on these first results, OI and EI are now planning a major public campaign for 2000. This joint global campaign on education would link up with the Education For All review process and EFA-meeting in Dakar, on 26 to 28 April 2000. In addition to our own members and partners, EI and OI are inviting a wide range of other organisations from South and North to join this campaign. A central element of the campaign will be a World Wide Action Week, tentatively scheduled from 3 to 8 April 2000. We intend to jointly mobilise so much public and political support that "education for all" becomes a reality. ◆

## NETWORKING Building alliances for the right to education

To promote quality public education for all, ActionAid, an EI ally, launches its multi-faceted worldwide education campaign.

Like many NGOs, ActionAid has worked for years with local communities and schools to find innovative, small-scale solutions to education problems facing the poor and marginalised. Its work in adult literacy, teacher training, curriculum and mainstreaming informal education has brought ActionAid praise from donors and other NGOs.

Yet these small successes are drops in the ocean of educational exclusion. Even in the areas where ActionAid has programmes, it has seen enrolment fall and quality deteriorate in the past two decades. Teachers are demoralised and unsupported, affluent parents are switching their children into the burgeoning private sector, and poor people are increasingly cynical about their children's prospects in underfinanced and mismanaged public schools.

To address these trends, a fundamental change in public priorities is needed nationally and internationally. For this to happen, citizens and civil society must demand improvements in public education from their governments and from international agencies. This will never be achieved unless citizens themselves stand up to demand their right to a quality education, and unless organisations of civil society have the power and ability to hold governments and international agencies accountable for their record on education. The Elimu<sup>1</sup> campaign, launched in January 1999, is a five-year effort to create effective pressure groups at national, regional and international levels.

For the first six months of the campaign, ActionAid has focussed on supporting and strengthening national coalitions or alliances of organisations concerned about the state of education and willing to campaign for action to improve it. In twenty-one Southern countries and four European countries, allies include religious groups, human rights organisations, teachers' unions, women's associations, and a range of national and international NGOs.

From June 1999 to April 2000, the campaign's focus is on the international education targets set in 1990 in Jomtien and in 1995 in both Copenhagen and Beijing (see articles on pp 6, 16-17). Like EI and Oxfam,

ActionAid's Elimu is calling for more radical and urgent action by governments and donors to achieve these promises. Coalitions in the South work to influence their governments, urging them to address such issues as quality, relevance and equity. To target donors in the North, a major postcard campaign aimed at Members of Parliament took place in September. Finally, Elimu is working with other NGOs to organise regional pre-meetings of NGOs and other civil society organisations and obtain representation in regional pre-meetings as well as the forthcoming Dakar EFA conference itself.

As national campaign alliances gain in strength and confidence, they are preparing to tackle policy issues that go well beyond the issue of funding.

- Combating trends towards privatisation and unequal provision, and reasserting the right to free and universal education, is one worldwide focus. In the North we are lobbying intensively for an end to aid expense restrictions that promote the use of foreign firms to provide essential education services. A public survey in Nepal will demand to know where politicians send their children to school.
- Democratising education policy-making – making space for civil society to play a more active role in the design and monitoring of sectoral programmes and other education policies – is another important focus. Two major reports on participation in policy-making are to be released later this year – one focusing on donors and one looking at national policy processes.
- At grassroots level, innovative work with participatory video making is planned to enable community organisations to voice their demands and perspectives to policy-makers even without formal literacy skills.
- Budget analysis and audit projects, training NGOs in the skills needed to track and influence the allocation of government and donor resources, will get underway later this year.
- Pressing the IMF to reform structural adjustment policies that undermine adequate public investment in education is another priority for the coming year.
- Campaign coalitions in Brazil, Nepal, Uganda and Pakistan have highlighted the deterioration in teachers' work conditions.

A joint ActionAid and Oxfam conference in London on International Literacy Day, 8 September 1999, invited donor representatives, Southern government representatives and civil society activists to consider the global crisis in education and identify steps to resolve it. ◆



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Oxfam International is a network of eleven aid agencies that work in 120 countries throughout the developing world. There are Oxfams in Australia (Community Aid Abroad), Belgium, Canada, Quebec, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Ireland, the Netherlands (Novib), New Zealand, Spain (Intermon) and in the USA.

For more information about the OI campaign:  
[www.oxfam.org/educationnow](http://www.oxfam.org/educationnow)



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# ECONOMY

## Debt reduction at the G-8 summit in Cologne: a significant step

One of the major demands of the trade union movement since the early 1980's has been the reduction or elimination of the debt of developing countries in order to enable them to increase their investment in human resources. Yet, in the past, international financial institutions as well as the lending countries have, more often than not, responded to this demand by proposing and even imposing macro-economic strategies, under the banner of structural adjustment, to be used in re-balancing national budgets. In other words, debtor States were constrained to reducing their expenditures and increasing their revenues.

The reduction of public expenditure, particularly with regard to health and education, and the privatisation of certain public services and/or State enterprises have been the most visible manifestation of these strategies. The situation has become so critical that certain developing countries have had to resort to extraordinary measures, often without consulting trade union organisations, such as delaying the age of admission to primary education; delivering lessons in shifts; recruiting temporary teachers, with no statutory guarantees and reduced salaries; introducing ever-increasing tuition fees in higher education, etc. These measures have done very little in helping to achieve re-balanced national budgets, and several African States, and also Russia, have found themselves unable to pay teachers their salaries.

Public education has suffered greatly from this situation, in terms of its image and quality. Responsibility for this must be clearly established. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, at least until 1995, should be severely judged for their strategies and practices. The governments of several developing countries, lacking democratic practice and having no positive vision regarding the future of their peoples, have initiated and maintained practices where corruption and bad management held sway over policies. Indeed, the political leaders in some of these countries behaved like criminals with regard to their citizens. These derelictions of duty must be denounced and the international community should no longer be allowed to shroud them in a veil of guilty silence.

### Reducing poverty

Consistently denied over time by the international financial institutions and the larger industrialised countries, the increase in poverty is now widely recognised. The intellectual battles waged by experts as to how the level of poverty should be measured are still topical and not always totally honest. Without going into the fastidious details, let us nevertheless consider some of the current statistics and indicators of poverty in the world.

Examples could be given, particularly within the African continent, which show that the level of poverty lies between 40 and 50%, with a catastrophic situation in Sierra Leone, where the level of poverty has reached 56%. Developing countries are not the only countries to experience poverty, even though it is difficult to

make a comparison between the situation in developing countries and the industrialised countries. The World Bank has established its own indicators for the measurement of poverty levels, setting the poverty line at US\$1 per person per day. This indicator is highly questionable for two reasons: it presumes, firstly, that the purchasing power of US\$1 is identical throughout the world; it also implies that, by earning more than US\$1 a day, you are no longer poor... Be that as it may, most now agree that the development of education and health services are necessary means for poverty reduction. The international community recognises this in principle at least. Now it just needs to put these principles into practice.

### Progress in Cologne

At the Cologne G-8\* summit, the call for reduction or elimination of public debt in the world's poorest countries received a partially favourable response. It was supported by a large-scale international campaign, conducted by national and international trade union organisations, such as the ICFTU and EI, and civil organisations working for sustainable development, such as Oxfam International and ActionAid.

The statement released by the Heads of State and Governments of the G-8 indicated that: "We have decided to give a fresh boost to debt relief to developing countries... Recent experience suggests that further efforts are needed to achieve a more enduring solution to the problem of unsustainable debt burdens. The central objective of this initiative is to provide a greater focus on poverty reduction by releasing resources for investment in health, education and social needs."

Forty-one developing countries (cited in margin) should benefit from the new debt initiative amounting to an estimated US\$70 billion. The funds thus liberated through the reduction or elimination of debt will then be invested in human and social development, according to conditions to be approved not only by the international financial institutions but also by civic organisations in the countries concerned.

In context, Education International and its member organisations in the countries concerned will need to prove themselves capable of taking initiatives and making proposals for social projects aimed at reducing poverty and improving human resources. This can be achieved by facilitating access to and improving quality of education. Trade union actions in this field therefore need to be pursued.

### SCHEDULED DEBT RELIEF

Country	Completion date	Total debt relief*	% reduction in debt
Uganda	04/98	650	20
Bolivia	09/98	760	13
Burkina Faso	04/00	200	14
Guyana	06/99	500	25
Côte d'Ivoire	03/01	800	6
Mozambique	06/99	2,900	57
Mali	12/99	250	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,060</b>	

\*in millions of US\$

Source: IMF

This new initiative aimed at the reduction and/or elimination of debt is only one stage in the long road towards the elimination of poverty. We must exploit it to its fullest potential. It also constitutes an element of our global campaign for a "quality public education for all". We are very happy to note that, thanks to the combined efforts of all, we are now headed in the right direction. ♦

The most heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) are:

Angola, Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Kenya, Lao PDR, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Vietnam, Yemen, and Zambia.

Source: IMF



Elie Jouen  
Deputy General Secretary

\* The G8 regroups the following countries: Germany, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, the USA and Russia.

# NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

## Member organisations at work defending quality public education for all

How are Teachers' unions around the world promoting quality public education for all? Below are excerpts of responses<sup>1</sup> to this question submitted to us by some of our member organisations.

### Social mobilisation for education in Brazil

This year has been marked by intense activity aiming to defend public education in Brazil. Long-standing deficits linked to the consequences of neo-liberal policies adopted by the federal government in recent years have aggravated problems in the education sector. The situation has been denounced by the "Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Educação" (CNTE) and by NGOs who work to create favourable conditions for quality education for everyone. Gradually, this struggle is affecting other sectors of society and it seems likely that it will succeed in raising the country's awareness and in provoking responses from a wider audience. The mobilisation is structured around three key initiatives, combined with other actions.

A **National March** is planned for the defence and promotion of public education which will culminate on 6 October in Brasilia, the federal capital. With the slogan 'Education, a right to defend', the march's objectives are to: increase the resources of the national GDP allocated to education from 3.7% to 10%; eliminate illiteracy; guarantee access for all to public schools at all levels; administrate public schools democratically; improve the status of education workers; guarantee the quality of education and to ensure accessibility as well as equal opportunities for all.

At the state level, 29 regional organisations affiliated to the confederation are working on the march project. As well as providing an analysis of the situation, this march will circulate positive educational experiences, through classes open to the public, street activities, meetings with the school community, interviews with members of parliament, public demonstrations and conferences. Another equally important objective of the march is to support the National Education Project which has been prepared by people from various sectors of society and presented to parliament.

A **National Congress on Education** is the second major event planned. The "Congresso Nacional de Educação", is to take place 2-5 December 1999. The previous conferences brought together more than 5000 participants and organised preparatory activities involving thousands of education workers, students, academicians, representatives of social and popular movements, union and political leaders. It was in this highly productive environment that the below-mentioned National Education Plan was set up. At their third meeting, the participants will develop their positions regarding education policy on the basis of the success rate of Brazilian public schools.

A **National Campaign** for the right to education is CNTE's third large-scale mobilisation operation. It is based on the premise that education is a social right of every Brazilian and is the State's responsibility to create

the material, financial, human and political conditions necessary to put into practice this constitutional prerogative. This initiative aims to influence education policies from the point of view of social justice. To be launched in September 1999 and continue until 2003, the campaign will involve various civil society organisations, the media, legislative, executive and judiciary powers, churches, unions, multi- and bi-lateral organisations and UN agencies.

### Sénégalese teachers' union working for school improvement

In Sénégal, average school attendance rates for elementary education in 1998-99 stood at 65.5% with strong regional disparities. In Dakar and Ziguinchor over 90% of children attended school, while in the four regions of Djourbel, Tambacounda, Kolda and Louga, numbers fell below 50%. The under-attendance of girls contributes to this important disparity, in addition to the consequences of living in rural areas.

These gaps can be explained by looking at education supply. First, the educational infrastructure is unable to adapt itself to the unbalanced distribution of the population: the population is widely dispersed in rural areas and heavily concentrated in urban areas. Second, there is a chronic lack of teachers, despite the annual recruitment since 1995 of 1200 education volunteers, in addition to the 500 teachers currently being recruited in the public sector. This lack of teachers is particularly serious in rural areas.

In terms of the demand for education the situation is equally unbalanced between urban areas, where demand is generally strong, and rural areas, where many parents express doubts as to the need to educate their children due to an unfavourable impression of the education system, or wish to put their daughters to work in performing domestic tasks which provide an immediate financial return.

The supply of education will need to be developed simultaneously in the public and private sectors and in community schools.

With regards to the increase of access to basic education, Sénégal's total enrolment in elementary education equates to a school attendance rate of 65.5%.

A project aimed at increasing the enrolment of girls has been implemented and committees have been established throughout the country with the task of raising the awareness of parents on the importance of schools and transforming sexist mentalities regarding the education of girls.

With the transfer of responsibility from state to local authority level, those schools which are situated in the poorer areas face grave problems. For instance, some schools have no water or electricity and often lack

### Public Education in Brazil\*

Level of education	% enrolment in the public system
Pre-school Education	76.0
Literacy Classes	68.3
Elementary Education	90.5
Secondary Education	82.4
Special Education	46.8
Educ. For young people and adults	87.3
Higher Education	39.3

\* Figures from 1998  
Between 16 and 20 % of adults over the age of 20 are illiterate.

Member organisations on all continents are participating in this campaign. Pictured here is the National Education Association (NEA) conference in Florida, USA, where approximately 9,000 delegates met in July 1999 to "recommit themselves to quality public education for all."



1 This article was made possible thanks to the following contributors:

Mr. Carlos Abicalil, President of CNTE (Brazil)  
Mr. Oumar Tall, General Secretary of SNEEL (Senegal)  
Mr. Abu Saleh, Administrator, BTF (Bangladesh)

# NATIONAL MOVEMENTS



Demonstrators in the Philippines participate in Global March Against Child Labour and sport a banner "Quality Education for All".

teaching materials. It should also be noted that a child is not allowed to enrol in the formal education system beyond the age of seven. From the year 2000, a system of community schools will therefore provide education to such children from 8-9 to 15 years of age. The experiment currently under way in community schools will be widened so as to allow for the admittance of an extra 6000 children per year. This will allow for the disparities within the formal education sector, resulting from its incapacity to cater to the needs of all school-age children, to be corrected.

As an accompaniment to this universalisation of the formal education system, a body of "contractual teachers", hired on permanent contracts, has been established in order to take over from the voluntary teachers in order to maintain some consistency.

**Role of the Union:** the "Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Elementaire" (SNEEL) is engaged, at all levels, in

- Promoting awareness. A significant increase has been reported this year in gross rates of school enrolment and attendance.
- Implementing support structures aimed at facilitating access to schools and informal education centres to stimulate the demand for education
- Improving the quality and supply of basic education.

In addition to information and awareness-raising campaigns, action will also need to be taken in order to ensure the implementation of programmes aimed at the development of teaching materials, the organisation of teaching time and space, the introduction of national languages, teacher training and the evaluation of curricula.

**Teacher Training:** the pedagogical committee of SNEEL is particularly concerned by the professional training of teachers.

SNEEL has fixed three strategic objectives for itself in order to contribute to the promotion of Quality Public Education for All:

- Increase access to basic education while correcting disparities
- Improve quality and relevance of the basic education
- Contribute to the promotion of a coherent, modern and efficient management of basic education

Dialogue has been established at the level of the national education department. Several technical committees have been set up, which are taken into account within the main policy orientations of our organisation. A project to construct and fully furnish 1000 classrooms has just been launched throughout the country to be available autumn 1999.

In addition, SNEEL has been involved via its regional branches in actions aimed at:

- identifying children without identity cards
- encouraging the participation of parents in school life
- fighting exclusion by providing reception centres
- strengthening existing partnership-building process.

In Senegal, with the transfer of responsibility from state to local authority level, those schools which are situated in the rural areas face grave problems.

## Bangladesh striving towards quality public education

Formal education offered in Bangladesh comprises five years of primary education, five years of secondary education and two of higher secondary.

It was in the 1950s that education came to be valued not only for social and cultural development but also as an agent of economic development. During this period attempts were made to bring some changes in the prevailing situation by making education available to a larger group of people. Although technical education was emphasised, the need for trained and efficient workers in adequate numbers in the various sectors remained unfulfilled.

The 1997-98 education budget, reportedly 14.64% of the national budget and the highest investment to date, indicates the government's intentions of making education a priority. Where is the money being spent?

Some of it has been spent pursuing the goal of education for all by the year 2000. Compulsory primary education and free education to girl students up to class VIII in the district levels outside municipal areas have been implemented.

## Teachers' Unions promote public education

In Bangladesh, some feel that teachers' unions play a vital role in promoting quality public education. They arrange seminars and workshops, attend discussion meetings with Prime Ministers, Education Ministers and with various officials of Education Ministry and Directorates. Within unions, they train members on various issues of quality education and submit seminar and workshop recommendations. Others suggest teacher union roles, particularly regarding promoting education for all, are limited and that the Bangladesh government has not involved teacher organisations at all on how to implement the Jomtien recommendations.

In a recent survey, the Bangladesh Teacher's Federation suggested the following ten measures to be taken to radically increase school enrolment and literacy rates:

- 1) Teachers' organisations should be involved in education planning and implementation.
- 2) Social awareness/mobilisation should be increased.
- 3) School should be tuition free and books and materials should be supplied to the students free of cost.
- 4) Schools should be places of learning and playing for all students.
- 5) Cultural functions and sports should be arranged for all students.
- 6) In every village there should be a school and poor students should get preference in school enrolment.
- 7) Teachers should be well trained/paid.
- 8) School supervision should be maintained properly and supervisor should demonstrate expertise in school curriculum.
- 9) Teachers' organisations should involve in-school supervision and monitoring activities.
- 10) Textbooks should be written by the teachers concerned of the school programme in consultation with the respective teachers' organisation. ♦

# INTERVIEW

## Ten years of Education for All: what's next?

**The Education for All Forum has a newly appointed Executive Secretary. His name is Svein Osttveit. He comes to the EFA Forum – the coordinating body with monitoring, advocacy, and information activities – with ten years of diverse work experience at UNESCO starting with the International Literacy Secretariat and joining the EFA Forum a year ago. Here he gives his views on the crux of the EFA movement, its lack of progress, and its future.**

**Question:** You joined UNESCO in 1989 just before International Literacy Year 1990 and the World Conference on Education for All. What do you think has been the main impact of these events?

**Svein Osttveit:** I think it is safe to say that today, basic education figures much higher on the agenda of decision-makers, governments and the donor community. They now agree that basic education is one of the most crucial issues in development. Also, we can say with some certainty what works and what doesn't work. In the past ten years, there has been a systematic approach to innovative ways of providing education.

**Question:** Where does public education fit into the EFA equation?

**S.O.:** Public education is clearly a central issue of EFA. Remember, the Jomtien Framework for Action is based on six dimensions laid out in its "Goals and Targets." Public schooling is key to this expanded vision. It should be universal, free, and offer a quality learning environment. Yet, we are convinced that in order to reach the 80-90 million children who are not in school today, we need to reinforce this target area by reaching out to other diverse education sectors such as early childhood education and adult education. Universal primary education cannot be achieved in isolation.

**Question:** The results of EFA do not measure up to what the international community expected and hoped for in 1990. What is the reason for this lack of progress?

**S.O.:** There is a lack of patience and understanding of the fact that human development is a slow process. It may take several decades if not generations to achieve our goals of Education for All as investment in basic education only has an impact on a long-term basis.

It is important to understand that development is unpredictable. We can plan to a certain extent but there will always be events not planned or wished for such as the education crisis in Eastern Europe or the eco-

nomic crisis in East Asia, which have made millions of people poor again.

**Question:** Are unpredictable events the reason for the lack of progress in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, where education is still a luxury reserved for the few?

**S.O.:** There are several reasons for the situation in Africa. The structural adjustment programmes have had a rather negative impact. But we cannot blame it all on this. The lack of progress is partly due to the specific socio-economic problems in the region and partly to the serious lack of co-ordination between governments, donors, non-governmental organisations and others working in education. There are many overlapping projects pulling in different directions.

**Question:** But has the Forum succeeded in this co-ordinating role? You mention both overlap and confusion of targets.

**S.O.:** The Forum may have to expand its mandate and functions. Monitoring, advocacy and information activities are clearly not sufficient to achieve the goals of Education for All.

**Question:** Could you explain this possible new dimension of the Forum's mandate?

One idea may be to involve the Forum more actively in the provision of basic education. It could be instrumental in mobilising necessary resources and in co-ordinating better provision of technical assistance to help governments to realise their goals of Education for All. Countries would still set their own targets but would be assisted both by donor and by United Nations agencies, which would need to co-operate much more than is the case today. But we have to avoid a heavy top-down centralised structure.

**Question:** But where would the money come from? Donor aid is declining and the series of United Nations conferences during the 1990s have not changed this.

**S.O.:** There is a development fatigue. Many people feel that development does not lead to specific results, especially not in education which is such a long-term investment and where the impact is so hard to measure. Moreover, education is considered a key to eradicating poverty, but education alone cannot solve poverty. Basic education is a fundamental requirement, but changes in political, social and economic areas are also needed. Donors must therefore link their investment in education to other development areas. This is the only way to success, and I think that the Forum has an important role to play because it gives the various partners involved in basic education an opportunity to get together and discuss. Then, it is a question of priorities and political will. ♦



Svein Osttveit  
Executive Secretary  
EFA Consultative Forum

