



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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Organisation  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

ED-11/WG-EFA/3  
Paris, France, February 2011  
Original : English



Eleventh Meeting of the Working Group on Education for All

2–3 February 2011  
Paris, France

**SUMMARY REPORT**

The eleventh meeting of the Working Group (WG) on Education for All (EFA) took place on 2 and 3 February 2011 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The meeting brought together people representing governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations, regional organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), research institutes, foundations and the private sector. Consisting of seven sessions, the meeting aimed to review the world's progress towards EFA and identify policy actions that can accelerate EFA progress, in particular as regards quality education, effective advocacy for education, violent conflicts and education and financing for education. The recommendations of the meeting were to be taken to the tenth meeting of the High Level Group (HLG) on EFA (Jomtien, Thailand, 22–24 March 2011).

## **Opening Session**

Chair: Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education (ADG/ED), UNESCO

Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO, opened the meeting by stating that ‘in times of uncertainty, one thing is certain: education is a smart investment’. The WG aimed to define clear and powerful messages for the 2011 HLG meeting, which should set the tone for messages to be brought to other major events (e.g. the G8 and G20 summits and the annual ministerial review of the United Nations Economic and Social Council). To this end, the Director-General underlined three points: 1) accountability in meeting financial commitments made by governments and partners for education; 2) quality and innovation in developing and implementing smart policies and relevant measures and 3) equity, i.e. making educational opportunities more accessible and affordable for all, including girls, as highlighted at the High-Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) held in September 2010.<sup>1</sup> She also reaffirmed her commitment to enhancing effectiveness of EFA coordination, referring to enhanced cooperation among the five convening agencies for EFA, which have decided to set up a task force to reflect on the EFA agenda beyond 2015.

Her speech was followed by introductory remarks by Qian Tang, ADG/ED, UNESCO, who explained the main purpose of the meeting and items of the agenda. ADG/ED highlighted a need to strengthen the links between the national, regional and global levels, which was also underscored by the Dakar Framework for Action.<sup>2</sup> Recalling that the strong concerns about equity and educational marginalization addressed by the 2010 Global Monitoring Report (GMR) and the last WG and HLG meetings helped frame global debates, notably the MDG Summit outcome document, he said that these EFA meetings can make a difference.

Olav Seim, Director, EFA Global Partnerships Team, UNESCO, reported progress in respect to the Addis Ababa Declaration, adopted at the ninth meeting of the HLG on EFA (Ethiopia, 23-25 February 2010),<sup>3</sup> and highlighted the need for more strategic advocacy for education. He then briefly introduced the process of, and progress on, enhancing effectiveness of EFA coordination. These topics were further elaborated on by the following speaker, Keith Hinchliffe, UNESCO Consultant, who summarized key recommendations of such EFA partners as the International Advisory Panel (IAP). These included reforming the HLG and related mechanisms, as described in a draft paper, *Enhancing Effectiveness of the EFA*

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<sup>1</sup> The speech can be found at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001908/190809e.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April 2000. The framework can be found at [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all/framework.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/framework.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> The declaration can be found at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001871/187149E.pdf>

*Coordination*, to be finalized this spring. He said that the HLG as currently constituted does not respond to needs and that its function and membership must be revised.

David Atchoarena, Director, Division for Planning and Development of Education Systems, UNESCO, provided findings of recent work on the impact of the global financial crisis on education. A quick survey which UNESCO conducted in 2010 indicated that the impact of the crisis on government budgets for education was not significant in the countries covered. Further studies, however, present a different picture, indicating a need for additional investigation.

Kishore Singh, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, stressed that the EFA process must be guided by human rights law. He highlighted five key areas in which national legal frameworks could be further developed: improving quality; overcoming inequalities and disparities; addressing gender parity; regulating private providers of education and increasing public investment in education. He drew attention to the gap between the international community's commitment to EFA and full realization of the right to education.

### **Plenary session 1: EFA progress review**

Moderator: Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan, Secretary General, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education

This session reviewed where the world stands with regards to the EFA goals, from the global and regional perspectives.<sup>4</sup>

#### Presentations

Key messages from the 2011 GMR, delivered by Kevin Watkins, Director, EFA GMR Team, indicated that progress towards the EFA goals may be slowing down. Regional reports were presented on behalf of UNESCO Regional Bureaus for Education in Beirut (Abdel Osman, Director), Santiago (Jorge Sequeira, Director), Bangkok (Abdul Hakeem, Education Adviser and Coordinator of APPEAL) and Dakar (Julien Daboué, Senior Programme Specialist). Showing a great degree of diversity among and within the regions, these presentations also revealed that the world is not on track to reach the EFA goals by 2015, although there has been encouraging progress in many areas.<sup>5</sup>

#### Discussion

To realize the six EFA goals, participants said, stronger advocacy is needed so that education will be placed higher on the global development agenda. Reaching decision-makers with strategic messages will lead them to allocate sufficient national resources. More creative advocacy is also required to convince donors to increase their support for EFA.

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<sup>4</sup> Background notes on all the sessions can be found at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/international-cooperation/working-group/11th-meeting-2011/core-working-documents/>

<sup>5</sup> Summaries of the presentations made at the meeting can be found at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/international-cooperation/working-group/11th-meeting-2011/core-working-documents/>  
PowerPoint presentations made at the meeting can be found at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/international-cooperation/working-group/11th-meeting-2011/resources/>

Also recognized was the importance of a holistic approach to developing education systems, with attention to all types, levels and forms of education, including early childhood education, youth and adult learning and literacy. At the same time, participants were reminded of the importance of basic education, the foundation of the system.

Reaching the most marginalized and improving educational quality are still pressing matters. There was general agreement that the issues of access, participation and quality in education must be tackled together. Assuring equity is critical, especially maintaining focus on gender. Social protection measures must be strengthened to make educational opportunities available for the most disadvantaged.

## **Plenary session 2: Improving the quality of education**

Moderator: Mmantsetsa Marope, Director, Division for Basic to Higher Education and Learning, UNESCO

The session addressed the quality of education, one of the major challenges for the EFA movement.

### Presentations

Country experiences were shared by two presenters. Patricia Arregui, Group of Analysis for Development, Peru, discussed the lessons from school learning assessments in Latin America, stressing the need for such assessments and their effective use in policy-making. Examining a Norwegian experience, Annette Skalde, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Education and Research, Norway, outlined success factors for sustainable, equitable access to quality in education and effective learning.

Dirk Van Damme, OECD Centre for Education Research and Innovation, stated that the EFA movement needed a major knowledge management system and highlighted progress and trends in monitoring and assessment of education quality, including understanding of non-cognitive skills acquisition.

Underscoring the critical role of teachers in improving education quality, Marja Karjalainen, Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, International Task Force on Teachers for EFA and George Godia, Education Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kenya, presented key outcomes of the International Conference on Teachers for EFA in Africa: Collaborative Action to Address the Teacher Gap (Nairobi, February 2011).

Nitya Rao, Co-Chair of Global Advisory Committee, United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), presented a gender perspective, citing a need to move beyond enrolment and gender parity and foster quality of education from a gender and social justice viewpoint by addressing critical issues of power, diversity and participation.

Rebecca Winthrop, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Universal Education, Brookings Institution, introduced an initiative being developed to identify common policy agenda and related strategies to facilitate improvement of learning outcomes in low-income countries, with a particular focus on gender equality.

### Discussion

Subsequent discussion mainly concerned four points. First, improving the quality of education requires an integrated approach, joining up the issues of access, quality and equity. This necessitates elaboration on what is meant by quality, access and equity.

Second, developing a robust knowledge base on the quality of education is central to achieving the EFA goals. The discussion focused particularly on knowledge of learning outcomes, encompassing both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Although this entails additional financial resources as well as technical expertise to resolve conceptual and methodological questions, such knowledge will enable decision-makers to develop sound policy. It is important to strengthen corresponding systems and their capacities to enable them to manage such knowledge and use it effectively, with a comprehensive approach to monitoring and measuring learning outcomes.

Third, teachers are central to the quality of education. Teacher-related matters, such as professional development, teaching materials, working conditions and community support, should receive further attention.

Fourth, multistakeholder partnerships can make a difference. The debate illustrated that a many initiatives on behalf of EFA have been carried out across the world. These initiatives, undertaken by various stakeholders, require better coordination based on improved understanding of the comparative advantage of each partner.

It was also stressed that a systematic approach to the topic should continue to provide an overarching framework within which prioritization of certain issues could be considered. Recognizing that there seems to be considerable consensus on what should be prioritized, some called for further clarification on measures to address those issues.

### **Information session: How to make the case for education**

Moderator: Akanksha Marphatia, Acting Head of International Education, ActionAid International

This session explored ways to make a better case for education to mobilize additional political and financial support. It focused on the centrality of education to sustainable human development and poverty reduction.

#### Presentations

Eva Jespersen, Deputy Director, Human Development Report Team, UNDP, introduced findings from the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the Human Development Report (HDR), *The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development* (UNDP, 2010). The 2010 HDR reviews and analyzes progress on human development since 1970, notably the interactions between education, health and economic growth. Taking a few examples of ‘fast movers’ in the Human Development Index (HDI), Jespersen pointed out the central role of education as a driver of progress in human development over the past forty years. She emphasized that education, knowledge and informed choices are crucial in developing people’s capabilities, assuring freedoms and fulfilling human rights. She also stressed that inequality in access and quality of education remains a critical challenge for human development advancement.

Mohammed Al-Yaqoubi, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, Sultanate of Oman, presented his country’s experience since 1970. Oman is ranked as the top mover in the HDI thanks to achievements in education and

health, notably through strong and sustained investment and political will. The presenter gave illustrations of these remarkable gains and introduced some of the main factors in Oman's success.

Robin Horn, Manager, Education Sector, Human Development Network, World Bank, emphasized the high return on investment in education from an economic point of view. He highlighted three points to use when making the case for education: the fact that learning and cognitive development is a strong foundation for economic growth; the cost benefits of investing in education and the improvements in employment and earnings resulting from 'learning for all' that includes the secondary and tertiary levels.

Giving an alternative vision of EFA, François Gérin-Lajoie, President, Paul Gérin-Lajoie Foundation and Richard Sack, independent consultant, made a joint presentation on behalf of the Policy Action Group on Learning of the Commission on Globalization. Gérin-Lajoie began by calling for increased support to skills development programmes for young people with a view to preventing high unemployment. Sack then stressed the importance of building on local knowledge, know-how and assets, rather than deficits and gaps in learning outcomes, financing and inputs.

#### Discussion

Several participants cited a need to develop more appealing and evidence-based messages for education and adapt them to diverse target audiences within and beyond the education sector. Various suggestions concerning such messages included bringing in voices from a range of groups, such as communities. There was agreement that the education sector needs eminent advocates or champions who can reach out and mobilize a wider audience.

In discussion on refining the messages, participants said synergies must be created between the approaches to education, notably between education as a human right and as a driver for human development.

### **Plenary Session 3: Violent conflict and education**

Moderator: Susan Durston, Associate Director, Education Programmes, UNICEF

Inspired by the 2011 GMR, *The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education*, the session discussed various aspects of education in the context of violent conflict.

#### Presentations

Kevin Watkins discussed the key findings of the 2011 GMR, noting that every armed conflict which entails human rights violations has significant impacts on education in different ways, including those on schoolchildren, teachers and schools. The 2011 GMR highlights four areas of systematic failure in international cooperation: protection of civilians from violence; provision of education as part of humanitarian assistance; early recovery and reconstruction of education systems and the role of education as a force for peace building. Stressing the importance of recognizing education as part of the post-conflict environment, he called for strengthened responses from the international community in such situations, including improved assessment of education needs in conflict-affected communities and the setting up of a monitoring structure within the UN system to improve monitoring of human rights violations in education.

A concrete country experience was related by Mirwais Masood, Secretariat Director, Human Resource Development Board, Ministry of Education, Afghanistan. Describing the impact of armed conflict on the education system in Afghanistan and the challenges that it faces, he underscored the critical need for support on the development and implementation of a national emergency strategy to address the special needs of insecure areas.

Khalil Mahshi, Director, UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, emphasized the importance of educational planning as a force for peace. Key elements he discussed included a participatory and inclusive planning process for education system recovery, the lessons to be learned from monitoring and evaluation as well as the empowerment of all stakeholders.

Joseph O'Reilly, Head of Education, Save the Children, pointed out shortcomings in humanitarian assistance systems with regards to education in humanitarian crises, notably failure of provision and failure to protect children, teachers and schools. On improving provision, he called for better education needs assessments and increased, predictable funding with a longer-term perspective for recovery and reconstruction of education. He also called for exploring a high-level initiative to address education in emergencies and crisis. On protection, he suggested reinforcing monitoring and reporting mechanisms and acting decisively on rape and other sexual violence.

### Discussion

Two aspects of education in the context of armed conflict were highlighted throughout the session. First, school is not a sanctuary in conflict situations, and education systems need protection in such situations. Violent conflict has a considerable impact on various aspects of social development, presenting serious challenges for education. Schoolchildren, especially girls and female teachers are particularly susceptible during violent conflict. Trauma may result in reluctance to go back to school.

Second, education can play a significant role in preventing conflict and building peace, for example through providing a school environment and curriculum that promote tolerance and respect for others. Education can also enhance psychosocial well-being and should provide a safe haven for children.

It was pointed out that the problem of violence should be perceived beyond the conflict context. It was recommended that a message for the HLG meeting should be broadened to capture the extensive nature of violence where it prevails in schools and on streets as well as the sexual and political nature of violence.

Education in conflict situations must be addressed not only within an emergency framework but also in a sustainable development framework. This requires enhanced coordination among stakeholders and education planning that harmonizes long- and short-term approaches for education in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Many voiced the need for a more flexible funding mechanism to respond to the needs of education in conflict. The EFA Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) is committed to becoming more flexible and responsive to needs of fragile states. Predictable funding mechanisms must be also put in place to bridge humanitarian aid and long-term development assistance.

## **Plenary Session 4: Financing of education**

Moderator: Carol Bellamy, Chair, Board of Directors, EFA Fast Track Initiative

In the light of the significant EFA financing gap, this session focused on financial aspects of education, especially ways to improve the current funding mechanism, the EFA FTI, as well as alternatives for additional financial resources.

### Presentations

Albert Motivans, Head of Section, Education Indicators and Data Analysis, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), gave a detailed analysis of the trend of financial commitments for EFA by countries in sub-Saharan Africa, drawing on a forthcoming report, *Financing Education in Africa: Meeting the Challenges of Expansion, Equity and Quality* (UIS, IIEP and UNESCO Dakar, 2011). While he reported overall progress in access and progression in primary education, the picture showing governments' commitments in education is mixed.

Lucia Fry, Policy Advisor, Global Campaign for Education, underscored the need to increase finance for education, not only through external aid but also in domestic funding. She also recommended improving the use of available funds by reducing technical support.

A donor perspective on education finance was provided by Phil Rose, Head of Education Policy Team, Department for International Development, UK. He shared the encouraging news that the new UK Government had committed to meet its aid target despite the global financial and economic crisis. It appears that the government will continue to support education programmes, with a focus on girls' education.

Claiming that the financial gap for EFA cannot be filled only by public revenue and aid, Hugues Moussy, Chief Manager, Human Development, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, France, recommended exploring innovative sources of financing: debt swaps, bonds, voluntary contributions on remittances, etc.

Charles Tapp, EFA FTI Fundraising Adviser, briefed participants on a three-year replenishment exercise for the EFA Fund starting in late 2011, which aims to increase EFA FTI financial capacity.

### Discussion

Key points included the critical role of domestic financing, which is a major financial source for education. The case of India, which introduced a tax (cess) for education, was given as an excellent example of mobilizing financial resources for education from national budgets. Sharing of good practices and lessons learned on domestic financing should be further promoted through various means, including south-south cooperation. A need to strengthen the knowledge base on resource allocation was identified; doing so will require improving data quality and developing appropriate indicators.

Another major subject was innovative financing. Ideas proposed for consideration included a tax on financial transactions and a tax on air travel. Public-private partnerships were also raised, and representatives from the private sector expressed willingness to support and contribute to the realization of the EFA agenda.

Most participants indicated that it would be better to use existing education financing initiatives, such as the EFA FTI, than to create a new international funding mechanism for



education. Several pointed out, however, that the current system requires improvement, particularly to assure timely response to country needs. In light of this concern, the news that the EFA FTI was introducing a new management system was most welcome.

### **Plenary session 5: The way forward**

Chair: Qian Tang, ADG/ED, UNESCO

Olav Seim summarized key points and messages identified by participants in the meeting<sup>6</sup> and outlined the next steps, leading to the tenth meeting of the HLG on EFA. UNESCO will prepare a short draft declaration, most likely one page long, to be circulated to HLG participants for comments prior to the HLG meeting. The 2011 HLG meeting will consist of two main components: a small-scale high-level segment in interactive roundtable format (23 March) and technical meetings before and after that. This will be a transitional step to reinforce the HLG's political influence on the international development agenda.

Orachart Suebsith, Deputy Permanent Delegate, Permanent Delegation of Thailand to UNESCO, provided information on logistical details and said preparations were well under way, with a special steering committee set up by the government.

#### Discussion

On the 2011 HLG, participants asked questions about membership, selection criteria and themes. Some suggested aspects that could be incorporated in the HLG Declaration, including early childhood care and education as well as the impact of global challenges on education and the role of education in mitigating the impact. UNESCO explained that the Secretariat had been working closely with the Government of Thailand and UNESCO Regional Offices, with inputs from the 2011 GMR and other resources, including the 2010 HDR, in selecting countries and setting the agenda. The topic of violent conflict and education is not a concern of all governments, however the Secretariat took note of requests by some participants to include this on the HLG agenda.

The importance of strengthening EFA coordination, with more systematic links at various levels, was reiterated. Major global mechanisms will be reformed in line with the 2011 HLG experience and recommendations made by partners. While details are yet to be decided, the functions and nature of the future WG as a mechanism associated with the reformed HLG are likely to focus on an annual review of EFA progress and information and knowledge sharing, with greater attention on the regional and country levels.

Olav Seim mentioned that education was high on the political agenda in most countries, indicating strong concern on the part of governments and citizens. The struggle at the global level in raising the profile of education, can be attributed more to the dominance of development partners' perceptions in global debates.

ADG/ED closed the meeting, thanking participants for their invaluable input and reiterating UNESCO's continual commitment to the collective endeavour to achieve the EFA goals. Special thanks was extended to the Government of Thailand for hosting the next HLG meeting.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1 for the key points and recommendations of the meeting.

## Appendix 1

### Eleventh Meeting of the Working Group on EFA (Paris, 2-3 February 2011)

#### Key points/policy recommendations:

##### **Plenary Session 1: Education for All (EFA) progress review**

- Social protection measures must be strengthened to reach the most marginalized.
- Better advocacy is needed, with sharp and targeted messages, to get education back on the global agenda and ensure that national budgets are not reduced, that efficiency in educational spending is improved and that donor funding to EFA is increased.
- EFA strategies must address access, quality and equity alike, as they are closely interlinked.
- Education systems must be developed in a holistic manner and built on solid foundations that also include the pre-primary, youth and adult populations.

##### **Plenary Session 2: Improving the quality of education**

- Improving the quality of education requires an integrated approach. There is no inevitable trade-off between access and quality. The knowledge base on the relationship between access, quality and equity needs to be elaborated.
- Measuring learning outcomes matters. Achieving the EFA goals necessitates stronger diagnostic and analytical work and systems that allow effective management and use of the knowledge thus gained. There is a need to strengthen a comprehensive approach to monitoring and measuring of both cognitive and non-cognitive learning outcomes, and to ensure that the resulting knowledge is reflected in planning and implementation.
- Teachers are central to quality in education, and we need to prioritize teacher-related matters. But we must not lose sight of a systemic approach to improving the quality of education.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships can make a difference. The many good ongoing initiatives and partnerships need to be recognized, and better coordination between them is called for.

##### **Information Session: How to make the case for education**

- The progress towards EFA is uneven, with some countries making substantial advances and some falling behind. We need to boost the sense of urgency for scaling up efforts as regards the countries most in need and for increasing attention to neglected EFA goals like ECCE, literacy, skills and quality. This requires sharpening our messages and strengthening advocacy on education, and adapting and targeting the messages to audiences beyond the education sector.
- We should make better use of existing evidence on the benefits of education in terms of human development and economic growth, while promoting education as a fundamental human right. We should also document the negative consequences of not investing in provision of quality education and learning for all.
- We need global and national champions for education who can reach out to a wider audience, put a spotlight on the importance of education and convince the general public and policy leaders that investment in education brings high returns.
- We must tap into the potential for using innovative means of communication. We need to strengthen and build on our partnerships with all education stakeholders – including

private companies, foundations, non-government organizations, universities, the media, etc. – to convey the message to the unconverted.

### **Plenary Session 3: Violent conflict and education**

- There is an urgent need to protect education in conflict situations. Schoolchildren, especially girls, and female teachers are particularly susceptible to violent conflict. It is important to harmonize long-term and short-term approaches for education in conflict situations and ensure that education becomes an integral part of humanitarian aid and reconstruction.
- Education can contribute to conflict prevention and peace-building through school environment and curriculum. Education can also enhance psychosocial well-being and should provide a safe haven for children.
- Violence should be examined within the perspective of an extended context of conflict, as violence – in schools, on streets, and of sexual and political nature – is becoming endemic in various forms in our everyday life, mirroring our societies. Within the UN system, a structure could be set up to improve monitoring of human rights violations.
- There is a need for credible needs assessment for education and a more flexible and predictable funding mechanism such as the EFA-Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI).

### **Plenary Session 4: Financing for education**

- Domestic financing is the major source of education financing. It is important to strengthen knowledge of domestic financing, especially as regards innovative partnerships taking place at country level. South-South cooperation should be strengthened to increase sharing of lessons on innovation and partnerships.
- There is a need to strengthen existing education financing initiatives, such as the EFA FTI, instead of creating new ones. Synergies should be established between the EFA FTI and work on innovative financing for education.
- Donors need to strengthen indicators on resource allocation and distribution.