

Global Future

Number 2, 2007

A WORLD VISION JOURNAL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

THIS EDITION

Can we close the education gap?



FEATURING

Vernor Muñoz

United Nations
Special Rapporteur on
the Right to Education

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Education for All
Fast Track Initiative
Secretariat

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for Education

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Education Initiative
Secretariat

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BARBARA FROST

Letter

from a reader

Ludovic Oluge R

Dear Sir,

Through *Global Future*, your efforts at enhancing the knowledge of Ugandan communities through the various very vital topics has enabled me and other colleagues to interact and share ideas about global occurrences, and where we have managed the community has got the ideas.

Uganda's effort at democratisation through mobilisation and sensitisation and the mass societal civic education programmes have [been taken to] the grassroots and as you have it in the *Global Future* publication, the exception is being turned into the rule.

Over time there have been concerted efforts at citizen empowerment through community-based organisations, international and local NGOs and FBOs that have been ably turned into people's voices to challenge policies found wanting.

LUDOVIC OLUGE R.

what next?

in number 1, 2008

Extending improved sanitation to the world's poor

According to the World Health Organization, the world is on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal target for drinking water but is likely to miss the sanitation target. Global sanitation coverage has risen, yet half of the population of the developing world still lives without improved sanitation. If the 1990–2002 trend continues, nearly 2.4 billion people will be without improved sanitation in 2015 – almost as many as there are today.

The first edition of *Global Future* in 2008, the United Nations International Year of Sanitation, asks: what local, national and international investments are needed to ensure that all of the world's poor have access to this critical service?

PLEASE NOTE:

There will not be a number 3, 2007 edition of *Global Future*.

front cover image: Tumenkhuslen, 7, lives in a community on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, where the unemployment rate is high. Many of her friends are unable to go to kindergarten. Her family was homeless but, with World Vision support, they received a ger (dwelling) and Tumenkhuslen receives school supplies.
photo: Justin Douglass/World Vision

facing page background image: Children play at a school in Kailali division, southwest Nepal. The school has an ecology group that helps children, many from farming families, better understand the importance of looking after the environment.
photo: James East/World Vision

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LEARNING, FOR LIFE, FOR ALL

World-wide, upwards of 70 million primary-age children are not in school. Millions more drop out of school at an early stage, often losing the little learning they attained during those brief years at school, and further swelling the ranks of the 770 million illiterate adults who struggle to find their way in today's world.



In human rights terms, access to a basic primary education is one of the most fundamental entitlements of every child. Efforts by the global development community to achieve this, under initiatives like Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals and the Fast Track Initiative, are to be heartily applauded. Trends such as the steady gains in access and the improvements in gender parity reported in EFA global monitoring reports are indeed encouraging.

Yet the High-Level Committee on Education for All has been warning that now, seven years away from the 2015 target, the bulk of those children who are still denied a chance to learn are left out for especially complex sets of reasons, which are going to require particularly creative solutions to resolve. These are the children of remote indigenous minority populations, street children, children hidden because of their disabilities, children of cross-border migrants, and children caught up in violent conflicts and other emergencies...the last "left-out" ones.

The UNESCO General Conference (1978) captured well the minimum standard that lies at the heart of a basic education when it defined literacy as the ability to use reading, writing and calculations for one's own and the community's development. Can we not ensure at least this minimum, formally or informally, for the world's remaining hardest-to-reach children and youth?

This edition of *Global Future* examines what is needed to make sure this happens. Desmond Bermingham describes the Fast Track Initiative and its partnership approach to accelerate progress towards universal primary education. With such supportive partnerships, governments can succeed, argues Guyana's Education Minister Shaik Baksh. Alex Kent of the Global Campaign for Education, meanwhile, pleads for stronger political will, and ActionAid's David Archer singles out the International Monetary Fund's role in freeing up governments to fully commit to education goals; both writers see an informed and active civil society as instrumental in this change. The need to monitor quality and learning outcomes for children – not just a seat in class – is the focus of World Vision's final article.

As the Dakar Framework for Action articulated so well, it is vital that all children, especially those in difficult circumstances, at least know how to read, write and manage basic computations – not only to protect themselves and find their way in a world where home, family and community may not be there to support, but also for nation building and ending poverty. Our contributors from Save the Children UK and the United Nations focus on the most left-out groups of children. Vernor Muñoz, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, emphasises states' responsibilities to ensure education for children with disabilities. Cheryl Gregory Faye of UNGEI articulates an approach to closing the education gap for girls. Save and UNESCO explore how gaps between the "education" and "humanitarian" sectors need to be bridged to ensure that children can still receive education even amid emergency situations (World Vision is working closely with the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies to promote INEE's minimum standards to this end).

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire inspired literacy movements around the world, even among isolated ethnic minority communities. Frank Laubach's "each one, teach one" approach led to millions of poor and disenfranchised adults to read in their own languages. Can we get out of the box and innovate in ways like these?

Our closing "reflection" urges us all to give children **time**. Isn't it now time for a global push to close the gap? Parents, students, communities, churches, governments, NGOs and the global development community undoubtedly all have a role to play if we are going to find enough creative solutions to provide every child with his or birthright: an education for life. ■

Dr Micael Olsson is Senior Education Adviser for World Vision International.



It is indisputable that people with disabilities, of both genders and all ages, have a right to education. Regrettably, it is also indisputable that this right is widely unrecognised today for a disproportionate number of people with disabilities in almost all countries.

Given that there are 500–600 million people with disabilities world-wide (of which 120–150 million are children, and 80–90% of them live in poverty in developing countries), the scope of this exclusion is simply unacceptable.

For instance, while the net rate of registration in primary school has increased throughout the developing world to as much as 86%, in those countries less than 1–5% of children with disabilities are in school. And while the literacy rate of all people with disabilities is approximately 3%, among women with disabilities it is as low as 1%.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The present and potential future effects of this exclusion raise enormous concern. As a result, a strengthening alliance between the human rights movement and the people with disabilities movement has promoted the education paradigm known as “inclusive education”. This principle acknowledges that boys and girls have individual characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, but that whenever possible, they should study together without establishing any type of differences.

By questioning traditional education, which is patriarchal, utilitarian and segregating, inclusive education also seeks to ensure an appropriate education for people with disabilities and other groups facing discrimination. It aspires to be both a systemic and a systematic model.

Inclusive education asserts that students with special educational needs must have access to the general education system and be accommodated within it through a pedagogy centred on the children. True access is a fundamental component of the right to education; it requires consideration of both the generic factors and the individual characteristics of each student, with or without disabilities. Failing to take this into consideration for persons

with disabilities frequently leads to completely closing off their access to education, whether inclusive or not.

In the unstoppable current of inclusive education, school is losing the sense of benign catalyst attributed to it for centuries, and is now called to change profoundly.

Inclusive education seeks to ensure appropriate education for people facing discrimination

The transition from segregated special education to inclusive education is not easy; we must bear in mind the complex issues involved and address them with determination.

The “integration” that often is presented as true inclusion has created its own difficulties. Attempts at mere integration into regular schools without the corresponding structural changes (such as organisation, study plans, and teaching and learning strategies) have been and will continue to be useless in guaranteeing the educational rights of people with disabilities.

“Integration” in regular schools may involve more exclusion than it does in special schools. The educational policy of today and the future must eliminate all structural biases from the ordinary educational system that entail potential exclusion. Policies and resources aimed at formulating genuinely inclusive practices must take precedence over the old practices.

We know of a number of simple but effective measures required to neutralise the external factors that limit access to education. Some examples are the design of hallways, classrooms and desks, access to buildings, changing or re-considering geographical location, and adapting entry standards and principles. To these we must add organising supplementary classes, various forms of communication, special tutors, support staff and nutritional meals, to name a few. It is also essential to view inclusive

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Education must be recognised and enjoyed as a human right, accessible by all, argues Vernor Muñoz – a right that states have specific responsibilities to protect.



Physical training class is always a favourite for this integrated group of children with special needs and their peers. Their inclusive kindergarten offers a unique approach to each child. Established by the local NGO Child and Environment and funded by World Vision Georgia and UNICEF, the kindergarten also serves as a resource centre.

Photo: World Vision

education from a broader perspective – a perspective of life-long learning from the nursery to professional training, basic education for adults, and education for an active life for senior citizens. Nations must respect parents’ freedom to choose a school for their disabled child as well as that child’s right to be heard on those matters.

STATE OBLIGATIONS

Human rights standards establish three broad obligations for states regarding the right to education.

The first is that states must not interfere in the enjoyment of this right. The second is that they must provide protection against discrimination, and ensure that both boys and girls can enjoy it under equal conditions. The last is that states must take measures to use all available resources to achieve full realisation of the right to education.

Mere integration, without structural changes, is useless

In addition to these general obligations, states have specific responsibilities concerning the right to education:

- Recognise inclusive education as a right.
- Identify common standards that permit people with disabilities to enjoy an available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable education on an equal footing with others. These must, at a minimum, address physical access, access in communication (sign language and Braille), social access (to classmates) and economic access (affordability of schooling), and provide early identification of special educational needs and intervention in early childhood.
- Establish minimum standards in relation to the underlying determining factors of the right to education. Therefore, states must ensure that the family, the community and civil society are active participants in inclusive education.

- Guarantee a plan for transition from the special education system to the new culture of inclusive education.
- Identify and entrust officials and institutions with meeting the state’s responsibilities and, in particular, designate the Ministry of Education as the state authority responsible for ensuring education for people with disabilities.
- Provide the financial resources and materials necessary to implement the policies of inclusive education.
- Establish mechanisms to monitor and assess inclusive education.

It is important to identify and address the problems that impede effective inclusion. These include the deeply-rooted social stigmatisation of people with disabilities, lack of attention to the specific needs of women with disabilities, inadequate knowledge of teachers and administrators, limited resources, inadequate attention to the special education needs of students in general education, and the lack of attention to early childhood, as well as the more tangible barriers to access.

From now on, the new paradigm of inclusive education must shape the institution of education. The traditional education system, as it was conceived and designed, is not only opposed to diversity, but works against the rights and interests of historically excluded populations.

To envision new directions for education is to envision another possible world, a world that helps to conceive new societies in which all people are welcome. ■

Mr Vernor Muñoz is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.

Legal framework

In 1990, the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand), established the now well-known objective of “Education for All” to promote equality and universal access to education.

In 1993 another step was taken when the United Nations General Assembly approved The standard rules on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities, which addressed the equal opportunity and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society.

In June 1994, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approved the Declaration of Salamanca on principles, politics and practice for special educational needs, which affirmed the need to provide education to all students within the common education system.

In April 2000, the World Education Forum, held in Dakar, reiterated the need to focus on access to education – particularly including secondary education – and the inclusion of students of both genders from disadvantaged and marginalised environments.

On 13 December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, one of the most significant formal events for advocating the right to education of children with disabilities.

That right had already been addressed more broadly in the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the Convention against Discrimination in Education approved by the UNESCO General Conference.



CHALLENGES AND SHORTFALLS FACING THE EFA MOVEMENT

Above all else, argues Alex Kent, the Education for All initiative needs political willpower, and a civil society that will accept no less.



Katembo, 12, ponders the questions during an exam at Lume Primary School, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Financial assistance enables his family to pay school fees, and to buy uniforms and books.
Photo: Jan Warren/World Vision

Seven years ago, leaders from 185 countries got together to discuss what they could do about the global education crisis. At the second World Education Forum, in the heat of Dakar, Senegal, they set the 2000 Education for All (EFA) Goals that would enable every child and adult to enjoy the benefits of education by 2015.

There was little doubt then, as now, that meeting these goals is not only achievable but essential. Education is a basic human right. Education is also critical for lifting people out of poverty, generating economic growth, fighting ill health (including HIV) and improving people's (especially women's) ability to realise their rights.

WAY OFF TRACK...

We're now at almost the exact mid-point on the EFA timeline, yet far from half-way to meeting the targets. In fact, at current rates of progress more than 75 countries will fail to get all children through primary school by 2100 – let alone 2015. The numbers of people this affects is tragic: today nearly 80 million children remain out of school, and 800 million adults are unable to read and write.

More than 75 countries won't achieve universal primary education by 2100, let alone 2015

Women and girls are disproportionately affected, girls making up more than half of out-of-school children. They were already let down when the goal to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 was missed by more than 90 countries. Failure to acknowledge the consequences of this missed target raises great concern; as Rasheda Choudhury, of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) Bangladesh, said at the time: "If world leaders won't even wake up to the failure to meet this target, what hope is there for all the other goals?"

But when there's the willpower, the right policies and support, countries can and do get more people into education. Since 2000, 37 million more children have entered the school gates. Brazil, Nicaragua, Cambodia, South Africa and the Gambia have all seen the number of children completing primary school increase by 20%. In East Africa, millions of children flooded

The Global Campaign for Education champions the Education for All (EFA) Goals:¹

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes
4. Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills

to schools when school enrolment fees were dropped – a process that was made possible due to public pressure, political will and debt relief.

It is generally accepted that education should be a responsibility of the public sphere, and should be free and compulsory at least at primary level. There are numerous examples of policies that help make education accessible to all, even the most marginalised: well-trained teachers; appropriate curricula; friendly, safe and clean schools; and the right combination of incentives, benefits and public awareness-raising. Such policies have been proven to enable girls, children with disabilities, and those affected by HIV or AIDS to go to school.

A TWO-SIDED BARGAIN

The problem, then, is political will, not a lack of know-how on what will make the difference. The world's richest nations must now strike a deal with less fortunate countries to guarantee the right of education to everyone. There are two sides to this bargain:

The **world's richest countries** must make available the resources to help every child realise their right to education. This is something that they are aware of, and to which they have made ongoing commitments:

- The 2000 EFA *communiqué* stated that "no country would fail to meet the EFA goals for lack of resources".
- In 2002, the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was set up as a global compact to make sure that the pledge was kept, and to fast-track resources to countries with good education plans that were most in need of help.

What is the GCE?

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is a movement that promotes education as a right. GCE pressurises governments and the international community to deliver on their promises of quality, free, compulsory education for all. Since it began in 1999, over 18 million people and thousands of organisations in over 100 countries have come together as part of GCE, calling for Education for All now!

Every year the GCE holds an Action Week in April, around the anniversary of the 2000 Forum in Dakar that set the EFA targets. During Action Week, civil society unites at national level in over 100 countries to campaign for Education for All. It is the highlight of the GCE calendar year, and is now an important part of school and government calendars. Action Week activities have included breaking the world record in 2003 by holding the biggest lesson, co-ordinating 5.5 million people in 2005 to send paper cut-outs to their heads of state asking them to "send my friend to school", and creating the world's longest people chain for education in 2007.

- In 2005, the G8 promised to cancel the unpayable debts in 18 countries and to add US\$50 billion annually to overseas development assistance by 2010.
- In 2007, the G8 reiterated the promise that no country would fail the EFA goal for a lack of funding, and committed to closing the FTI financing gap.

Despite the up-beat talk, the walk is more depressing: resources are still not being mobilised at anything like the scale needed to give everyone equal access to education. Although aid for basic education did increase from US\$1.7 billion in 2000 to a high of US\$4.4 billion in 2004, it has not kept pace with the need, as the school-age population has increased and costs have gone up. Therefore, the total annual financing gap for primary education remains at around US\$9 billion for primary education² and US\$13 billion if all the EFA goals are to be realised by 2015.³

The problem is not lack of know-how, but lack of political will

The **G8 nations** are particularly guilty, between them "owing" around 80% of the total needed.⁴ This year, 2007, must be the breakthrough year – when rich countries finally make good on their warm words of the past and reverse the decline, ensuring that all good plans are backed by the cash they need.

Southern governments, too, must keep their side of the bargain. Education has often not received the political and budget priority it deserves. No country has got its all children to school without spending more than 3% of GDP on primary education, but many developing countries spend far less than this, and as a result make the parents pay for schooling through fees – making education an impossible dream for the poor. States must increase the budget share going to education and implement progressive policies that target the masses, not the few.

PUBLIC PRESSURE IS CRUCIAL

Progress has been made when civil society has united, and applied targeted pressure. Civil-society education coalitions have emerged in over 50 countries in the last decade. Since 1999, they have formed the backbone of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), which has united an increasingly broad and dynamic alliance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions and child rights campaigners in their demand for the right to quality education for all.

Successes such as the abolition of user fees in Kenya, exposure of government corruption elsewhere in Africa, or the significant aid increases announced by the UK, have been due in large part to the growth of an increasingly vocal and effective civil society. And each year, we come together as one for the Global Action Week, uniting around a common theme and action to amplify our demands to the powerful.

Education for all is a rare example of a right-based, pro-poor vision for change; it would be a crime to let it slip from our grasp. The goals are within reach if, and only if, political will to make them happen can be mobilised. Working together, civil society can make a difference, voicing our demand and holding governments accountable to realise the dream that no-one – infant, child, youth or adult – should live without the light and hope that education offers. ■

Ms Alex Kent is Campaigns and Communications Coordinator for the Global Campaign for Education. See: <http://www.campaignforeducation.org>

¹ See: http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/dakfram_eng.shtml

² ActionAid, "The global campaign for education" http://www.actionaid.org.uk/896/global_campaign_for_education.html

³ Global Campaign for Education, *School report: Not up to scratch*, 2007 <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/schoolreport/>

⁴ *ibid.*



BRIDGING THE EDUCATION GAP THROUGH DONOR COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP

With partnerships and donor support, says Guyana's Education Minister Shaik Baksh, governments can achieve the Millennium Development Goals – and Education for All.

Guyana, on the north-eastern coast of South America, has a small population of 750,000 relative to its size of almost 215,000 square kilometres. The population's spread – from the densely inhabited narrow coastal belt to the thinly populated hinterland areas – presents significant challenges to education for all. Most indigenous peoples (10% of the population) live in hinterland communities which suffer the highest rates of poverty.

Over the last 10 years, Guyana has received substantial donor support in education through both grants and loans, bolstering our progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The government itself has apportioned a larger percentage of both the budget (13.6%) and the GDP (7.9%) to the education sector.¹

Two donor programmes are BEAMS (Basic Education Access Management Support) and GBETT (Guyana Basic Education Teacher Training). Through a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, BEAMS aims to improve literacy and numeracy through the primary cycle and expand secondary access. Through a grant from the Canadian International Development Agency, GBETT promotes teacher training in hinterland regions, with particular focus on distance education and educational institutions.

GUYANA'S EFA-FTI EFFORTS

The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) has also produced significant outputs. Guyana became an FTI-endorsed country in 2003, accelerating the implementation of School Improvement Plans in all schools. The main objectives are to: provide access to education in hinterland communities; improve the quality of education in these schools (closing the education gap with the coastland, which has better infrastructure, services and resources); and include indigenous peoples in the mainstream education system. This is in keeping with the government's goal of equity in education – to provide all citizens, especially those of school age, with an educational experience of comparable quality.

In February 2007, an International Development Association (IDA) mission reported that the EFA-FTI programme, including the provision of textbooks, school utilities upgrades, teacher incentives, and the new community-based school feeding initiatives, are “positively affecting teachers' ability to provide proper instruction, creating a better learning

environment, and providing an incentive for both teachers and students to attend classes”.

GUYANA AND THE MDGS

Guyana is well on track to achieving universal primary education (MDG 2) – net enrolment was 94% in 2005. Learning outcomes are also improving: fewer children are repeating classes,² the average scores in two Secondary School Entrance Examination core subjects (Mathematics and English) have risen, and more children are remaining in school until the end of the primary cycle. Guyana is also well advanced in attaining gender parity in education (MDG 3). The ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education is close to equal.

Yet many challenges remain: overcoming a deficit of trained teachers through migration, achieving universal secondary education, and preparing the school population for the world of work.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The 2003–2007 Education Strategic Plan is presently being implemented and a new five-year plan for 2008–2012 will be completed with the participation of donor countries. The plan will ensure that there is no slippage in the country's progress towards the MDGs.

The greatest challenge, as laid down in Goal 6 of the Dakar Framework for Action, is ensuring the **quality** of education “so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills”.³ It is commendable that the EFA-FTI is already tackling this, establishing a Quality Development Task Team to help partner countries measure outcomes as part of their national education plans.

The Guyana experience shows that strong donor country support and committed partnerships, as with the EFA-FTI, can provide the climate for successfully achieving MDG targets and outcomes. ■

The Honourable Mr Shaik Baksh is Minister of Education of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

¹ 2006 figures

² Rates of children repeating classes declined from 4% in 1996 to 1% in 2005.

³ Dakar Framework for Action, “Education for All: Meeting our collective commitments”, text adopted by the World Education Forum Dakar, Senegal, April 2000, 7(vi) http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/dakfram_eng.shtml



A group of Guyanese pupils from the hinterland region travel along the river on their way to school.

Photo: Ameer Khan/Guyana Government Information Agency (GINA)



A FAST TRACK TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Fast Track Initiative is a true partnership between donors and developing countries, ensuring accelerated progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015, explains Desmond Bermingham.

The world has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make access to education for all children a reality. Primary school enrolment is on the rise, especially in South Asia and Africa. In the last five years alone, around 23 million children who previously had no access to education enrolled in primary school. The share of children completing primary school has also risen – from 69% in 1995 to 79% in 2005; in six sub-Saharan African countries, completion rates have increased more than 10% a year since 2000.

But huge and immediate challenges remain. Still out of school are 77 million children, of whom 38 million are in sub-Saharan Africa.¹ An estimated 1.6 million teachers need to be hired in Africa alone to reach the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. At least 66 countries are at risk of not achieving this. Generally, children who don't attend school endure sheer poverty, belong to marginalised groups, live in rural areas and have uneducated mothers. Without education, they cannot escape the poverty trap.

Donor funding is seriously lagging. UNESCO estimates that US\$9 billion in aid for basic education is needed annually; in 2005, only US\$3.8 billion was committed. Contrary to promises made in international fora, aid for education in sub-Saharan Africa **dropped** in the five years to 2004–2005.²

In May 2007, at the high-level “Keeping our promises on education” conference organised by the European Commission, the UK Government and the World Bank, private capital investor and philanthropist George Soros said it was difficult for a foundation like his to meaningfully contribute to Education for All when the recurrent costs run into billions a year. Soros also recognised that the majority of education costs are carried by the developing countries. Low-income countries with solid and credible education sector plans set aside an impressive 15–20% of their national budgets to send children to primary school.

A MUTUAL ALLIANCE

This approach fits within the framework of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI).³ Launched in 2002 by some 30 bilateral and multilateral donors and hosted by the World Bank, this global partnership is built on mutual commitments. Developing countries agree to put primary education at the forefront of their domestic efforts and develop sound national plans to achieve universal primary education. Donors agree to provide co-ordinated and increased financial and technical support in a transparent and predictable manner. The overall objective is to ensure access to a **good quality** education for all children.

Contrary to promises, aid for education in sub-Saharan Africa has dropped

What started with only seven countries is now a successful world-wide partnership that includes 32 countries, 18 in sub-Saharan Africa. The FTI has proven to be an effective mechanism for more, better, co-ordinated and sustainable aid for education. It is a true alliance between developing countries, donors, international organisations and civil society that addresses four gaps: finance, policy, data and capacity.

Among the FTI's strengths is its partnership nature and its emphasis on harmonising donors around one national education sector plan.

To avoid over-stretched African government agencies having to cater to the needs of a hundred visiting donor missions every year, the FTI encourages donors to work together and do joint missions.

Besides donor funding, the FTI provides learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities. During a recent World Bank-organised workshop in Cape Town, a representative of Sierra Leone's Ministry of Education remarked: “We can listen to others, share experiences, and understand better how to access funds for our pressing needs.”

THE CATALYTIC FUND

Despite commitments made at the 2000 World Education Forum and reiterated at the 2002 Finance for Development summit, not all developing countries with sound education plans have been able to attract the financing they need. The FTI also manages a trust fund that helps countries to jump-start their FTI-endorsed education plans.

This Catalytic Fund, with a total of US\$1.2 billion in pledges for the 2003–2009 period, has had significant recent successes. In the Gambia, the first US\$4 million grant from the FTI Catalytic Fund enabled the purchase of thousands of textbooks for grades one to four, significantly impacting the quality of education for poor rural schools. In Yemen, a grant has enabled the government to hire female teachers, build a rural training institute, train 14,000 teachers and provide teacher housing – leading to a higher enrolment of girls, especially in rural areas.

In Kenya, the Fund has helped establish two successful schemes empowering primary school committees to decide on textbook and other purchases. Over 18,000 primary schools receive *per capita* grants and have committees operating bank accounts and deciding how to spend these funds.

The FTI responds to national demands; if a country primarily needs to hire and train teachers, it is not useful to dedicate the available aid to construct new school buildings.



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GROWTH AND NEED

Yet the FTI faces future challenges. Another 15 countries – many of them fragile or post-conflict states – have expressed interest in joining the partnership on short notice. Africa remains the most challenging region when it comes to achieving the Education for All goals, despite its great progress during the past decade; only 12% of African countries are on-track or have achieved universal primary education. Good policies, accurate data and well-trained human resources will be needed in the other 88% of African countries if they are to get back on track.

With increasing needs and demands from such challenging countries, predictable and long-term financing through FTI partnership is critical. The current 32 FTI-endorsed countries already face an estimated financing gap of US\$470 million for this calendar year. By executing their national education plans and putting children in school, their costs will go up. With eight new low-income countries joining the FTI partnership in 2008, the 2008 financing gap will be US\$1.1 billion.

By 2009, it is expected that 25–30 more countries will join the FTI, including populous countries with large numbers of children out of school, such as Nigeria and Bangladesh. Many Asia–Pacific countries with smaller populations but large challenges have also expressed strong interest in joining.

The FTI partnership should not deviate from the principles that have made it so successful. Universal primary education is an attainable Millennium Development Goal. However, every child must be enrolled in school by 2009 if this target is to be achieved. That means the world has **one year left** to make a difference in the lives of **all** children. We must not miss this historic opportunity to leave a lasting global legacy: every child educated, everywhere. ■

Mr Desmond Bermingham is Head of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative Secretariat.

¹ UNESCO, *Global monitoring report, 2007*

² Nicholas Burnett, UNESCO, presentation at conference “Keeping our promises on education”, May 2007

³ See <http://www.education-fast-track.org>

THE IMF AND EDUCATION FINANCING

The IMF needs to be challenged, and the burden is on civil society and governments to articulate the education sector's needs, argues David Archer.

When the government of Kenya abolished user fees in primary schools in 2004, more than one million new students enrolled. This should have been matched with the recruitment of many new teachers – but it was not. Indeed, not a single new teacher was recruited. The reason was simple. In 1997, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forced the Kenyan government to cap the number of teachers it would hire – fixing a limit at 235,000.¹ This cap was still in place when the government decided to implement free primary education – and no effort was made to remove it. As a result, class sizes grew, quality dropped and learning outcomes deteriorated.

The situation in Kenya, and several other countries, has led many organisations to look at the role of the IMF. At least 17 countries with a loan arrangement with the IMF called a Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF), have an explicit ceiling on their wage bill. Low wage bill ceilings directly affect education and health spending, as teachers, doctors and nurses are the largest groups on most government wage bills. When a cap is imposed by the IMF or Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education is left powerless – unable to hire all the teachers needed to achieve its goals.

Given the dramatic impact that wage caps have on the Ministry of Education, it is shocking to discover that there is rarely, if ever, any consultation with the Ministry of Education over how to set the ceilings. Projections about the number of teachers that are needed to get all children into school in acceptable class sizes never seem to be considered in the negotiations over setting wage bill caps.

Globally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that 18 million teachers are needed for all children to be in school by 2015, in classes of one teacher to 40 children.² At least 1.6 million new teachers will be needed in sub-Saharan Africa.³ It is clear that massive new investments need to be made. But it is equally clear that this growth in spending is unlikely to be achieved without some radical changes.

ECONOMIC OBSTACLES

Some of the most systematic research in this area has been done by ActionAid. The March 2007 report *Confronting the contradictions: The IMF wage bill caps and the case for teachers*,⁴ based on research in Malawi, Sierra Leone and Mozambique, shows that even where the IMF does not impose a direct ceiling on the wage bill, its pursuit of single-digit inflation rates and low fiscal deficit levels still effectively limits the size of the government budget, including the budget for teachers. This report argues that the IMF's macro-economic conditions are the biggest obstacle to achieving education goals. In Malawi the average class size is 72 children per teacher, and to achieve its education goals the government would have to more than double the teaching workforce – impossible under present IMF

conditions. In post-conflict Sierra Leone, the government has agreed to such restrictive macro-economic targets that it will be unable to recruit the teachers that are urgently needed to get all children into school. In Mozambique the government and donors successfully challenged the IMF to raise the wage ceiling – but this still falls short of real needs.

A FAULTY APPROACH

The ActionAid report argues that there are at least three fundamental problems in the IMF's dealings with education that need to be addressed together.

First there is the **short-termism of the IMF**. Despite compelling evidence that education is one of the soundest long-term economic investments a country can make, the IMF regards spending on education as “consumption” rather than “productive investment”. As such, education spending (especially on wages) is always something to be curtailed. The IMF works on a three-year planning framework, but returns to education are only seen over a 10-year period. Under a short-term framework, education is seen to only consume budget resources with few to no economic returns. In any longer-term planning framework education would be seen as a key strategic investment with big economic returns.

When caps are imposed, the Ministry of Education is left powerless

Second, there are serious problems around **sovereignty**. Key macro-economic policies are determined by the IMF, the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank. The Ministry of Education, parliamentarians, teacher unions or civil society are not included in these discussions. IMF conditionality renders the Ministry of Finance more accountable to the Fund than to its own citizens. These processes undermine democracy and parliamentary oversight.

The decision-making processes around teacher recruitment in Malawi, Sierra Leone and

Mozambique do not involve the Ministry of Education. The needs of this sector are not systematically considered when setting wage ceilings.⁵ *Confronting the contradictions* quotes one senior official at the Ministry of Education in Sierra Leone who observed: “It is the ceiling that dictates how many more teachers we can hire, not need. Schools tell us how many teachers they need but we are rarely able to meet this request.”⁶

One of the first things sacrificed is spending on education

Third, there is a problem of **internalisation**. Government officials, particularly in the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank, have internalised neo-liberal policies. The IMF's golden rule is that countries should achieve and maintain low single-digit inflation to be stable and capable of investing in development. Yet there is vibrant debate among economists around the world on this issue. Many economists argue that 10–20% inflation is compatible with rapid economic growth. The IMF ignores this and drives inflation to ever-lower levels, forcing governments to make “sacrifices”. One of the first things to be sacrificed is spending on education.

A 2007 report by the IMF's own Independent Evaluation Office (IEO)⁷ examined IMF loan programmes to 29 sub-Saharan African countries between 1999 and 2005. Much development aid to these countries – money that should have been earmarked to key projects including education – was diverted into national currency reserves as a result of IMF pressures. Ministries of Finance were trying to satisfy the conditions of the IMF because what the IMF says about your economy tends to be believed by donors and investors around the world. If the IMF gives your economic policies a green light, people will be willing to invest. If they give you a red light, no-one will invest in you and no donors will offer aid. The IMF's credit rating is everything to most poor countries. This explains why countries are willing to sacrifice

development and education in order to keep the IMF sweet.

UNITED ACTION

There is a role for direct challenges to the IMF. We can only do this if we have solid national research with a strong evidence base – so national studies that reveal the role of the IMF in limiting spending on education are essential. The latest ActionAid report led to a five-page rebuttal from the IMF on the front page of its website – showing how seriously it took the research.

But the real challenge lies in building broad-based national campaigns across Africa, Asia and Latin America. We need first to build our own understanding and strengthen our economic literacy. Different local, national and international non-governmental organisations – as well as teacher unions, parents' groups and children themselves – need to come together in national alliances and coalitions. As many of the same issues are faced by people working on HIV, women's rights or governance, we need to reach out to other sectors. And we must work with parliamentarians to reclaim democratic processes. We need to push **governments** to develop ambitious long-term education plans detailing the actual need for teachers to achieve education goals and provide quality-learning outcomes for all children. This requires sustained investment in advocacy and campaigning on education in every country. ■

Mr David Archer is International Head of Education for ActionAid International. See: <http://www.actionaid.org>

¹ Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, *Statistical booklet 1999–2004*, 2005

² UNESCO, *Teachers and education quality: Monitoring global needs for 2015*, UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Montreal, 2006 <http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/Teachers2006/TeachersReport.pdf>

³ *ibid.* p 41

⁴ ActionAid, *Confronting the contradictions: The IMF wage bill caps and the case for teachers*, 2007, http://www.campaignforeducation.org/resources/Apr2007/1._CONFRONTING_THE_CONTRADICTIONS_E-VERSION.pdf

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Independent Evaluation Office of the International Monetary Fund, *The IMF and aid to sub-Saharan Africa*, Washington DC, 2007, <http://www.ieo-imf.org/eval/complete/pdf/03122007/report.pdf>

Overflowing classes, too few classrooms

MALAWI

*“An ironic fact about challenges in education in Malawi has fast become a wry national joke: ask any teacher to recognise **all** his or her pupils by name and the teacher will flop the test miserably!*

The most likely situation, the pessimists suppose, is that the teacher will probably put up a show and say: “Hey, you over there, putting on a blue jersey – what is the answer to this question on the blackboard?”

*“Who says this is a laughing matter?” retorts 42-year-old **Austin Tchukambiri**, a teacher at Nanjiriri Community Day Secondary School in the sprawling Machinjiri Township, on the outskirts of Malawi’s commercial hub, Blantyre City. “We are now into the third term but I cannot put names to faces of even half the students I teach at this school. It is a sad development but when the teacher:pupil ratio is this distorted, you only do your very best to contain the situation,” Mr Tchukambiri laments.*

He was emerging from his Form Two lesson at the school. And the number of the students he was teaching that afternoon? Ninety-six.

OVERFLOWING CLASSES

Mr Tchukambiri also services three other classes: Form One, with 110 students; Form Three, with 37 students; and Form Four, with another 93. In this school, the afternoon classes, between 2.15 and 5.15pm, are devoted to the Open Secondary School – comprising students who chalked up mere passes and were not selected to attend formal government secondary schools.

Earlier in the day, from 7.30am to 2.10pm, Mr Tchukambiri and 17 other teachers run classes for the Day Secondary School students. These number 110 students in Form One, 135 in Form Two, 70 in Form Three and 91 in Form Four.

“Obviously, we have very large classes. The ideal thing to do is split up into several manageable classes – but we do not have enough classrooms, hence the morning and afternoon shifts that keep us here teaching the whole day,” he points out.

The situation at this school is just the tip of the iceberg. For example, among the more than 20,000 eighth-graders from six nearby primary schools – Nkolokoti, Nanjiriri, Makalanga, Mthawira, South Lunzu and Namilango – only about 736 students have ended



up at the Nanjiriri Community Day Secondary School. On a national level, only about 31% of boys and 27% of girls who sit for the crucial Grade Eight secondary school entrance examinations pass. And only about 40% of these make it to formal government-run secondary schools. Expensive private schools, many of them not up to the status of standard educational institutions, absorb the few children eager to pursue secondary education whose parents are able to pay.

Mr Tchukambiri says the other problems in education include a lack of trained teachers, students’ poor attitudes towards education, and abject poverty – whereby some students fail to pay school fees. He points out that a poor government policy, more than two decades ago, was responsible for the lack of trained teachers in schools throughout Malawi. When free primary education was introduced in 1994, when multi-party democracy emerged in Malawi, the educational system had to contend with over 1.2 million new schoolchildren, straining human and material resources. To address the huge influx of pupils, the government then introduced two-month crash courses that saw volunteers inadequately filling the places of qualified primary school teachers. By and large, teacher training colleges slowed down or closed their operations.

Within a few years, the inevitable happened. Education standards plummeted, as reflected by the poor pass rates in primary, secondary and even tertiary education. Schoolchildren themselves generally lacked seriousness and became unruly, some in the mistaken belief that democracy made them free to do whatever they wanted, including breaking rules at school.

“All this sounds like we have a hopeless situation on our hands,” Mr Tchukambiri comments. “But my take is that we can all bridge the gap by working hard together – the government, non-governmental organisations like World Vision, teachers and parents.”



Global
VOICES OF LIFE FROM ARO

“I cannot name even half of the students I teach”

The teacher says he has seen that in many primary schools within the Nkolokoti area, World Vision has had a great impact. “At Nkolokoti Primary School, I know that students who were learning under trees, in the open air, are now finally learning from modern classrooms constructed by World Vision. That is great!” he declares.

“I hope many other development players can help with uplifting the standard of education at every level. For example, the European Union and the Catholic Church constructed the three school blocks for secondary education at this school,” he says.

He also happily points out that the government that came to power three years ago has new policies that stress **quality** education, including thorough teacher training and coaching students to work hard in class and be disciplined. The current government is revamping the education sector; it has re-opened the teacher training colleges that had almost closed, embarked on rehabilitating secondary schools, and begun building boarding schools to encourage girls to remain in school. In its budget under discussion in parliament at the time of writing, the government has allocated K17.6 billion (nearly US\$126 million) to education, 6.2% more than last year. The University of Malawi has been given K4.4 million (US\$31,428), representing a 400% increase on the fiscal year 2003/2004 allocation.

World Vision Malawi Child Protection, Governance and Advocacy Manager, **Elton Ntwana**, discusses the agency’s contribution to education in Malawi:

“World Vision has ensured that children get off to a good start by promoting pre-school education. Our development programmes across the country have either set up or helped to fund rural pre-school groups, or community childcare centres which have given especially needy children a rare head start in education,” he remarks.

Mr Ntwana notes that children have seen the world opening further for them through the promotion of formal primary, secondary and tertiary education. The multi-faceted assistance offered by World Vision includes improving school amenities and the learning and teaching environments.

World Vision also has helped promote the quality of education in schools in many parts of the country, through regular supply of the often-scarce educational materials, provision of merit awards and sports equipment, paying of school fees and donation of clothes to poor children.

“In Malawi, World Vision has been among leading non-governmental organisations which have revived adult literacy education, since it is literate people who can best sustain development endeavours. We have advocated for the girl child – girls can now go back to school if they are pregnant. We have also enabled the youth who drop out of school to learn life skills,” Mr Ntwana says, adding that the interventions are being pursued in accordance with the World Vision International Education for transformation toolkit.¹

“Things are beginning to look up in education and other development issues in Malawi. If everyone contributes whole-heartedly to the process, it will not be long before we get there,” enthuses Mr Tchukambiri, dusting off chalk from his hands and clothes, as he knocks off – some ten hours after reporting for duty on this routine day.” ■

Reported by Mr Samuel Chunga, Communications Manager, World Vision Malawi

¹ World Vision International Education taskforce, Education for transformation toolkit, 2005 <http://www.worldvision.com.au/resources/eft/Toolkit/index.html>

Photos

Right – Teacher Austin Tchukambiri consults with headmistress, Mrs Catherine Mandota, over his lesson plan.
Above left – Austin Tchukambiri engages students in one of his large classes.
Far left – Two girls study from a vantage point at Nanjiriri Community Day Secondary School.



YOUNG PIONEERS

Most communities have barriers that prevent some of their members from fully participating or from attaining their human rights. A particular context can raise or lower these barriers and put different groups at risk.

The following stories recognise the strength and determination of individuals, but also reveal systemic obstacles that prevent full access to the right to education. In Romania, not every child has been so fortunate as Simona. But if this is the impact on one girl's life, imagine a world where **every** child had this chance! Nowadays, hundreds of adolescents and young people give up the dream of graduating from high-school or university – poverty is such a threat that they choose the promise of financial independence in the hope of building a better life. But the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* states that it is education that should develop “the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”.

Young people with impairments are often disabled by their society. Limited access to education, stereotypes and a lack of understanding from the community can drive them into a sense of hopelessness and low self-esteem. In Cambodia, World Vision supports the Bringing Hope Project¹ providing opportunities to restore dignity, hope and confidence through education and vocational training. The project has improved the life skills and employment opportunities of 168 young disabled adults from cities and provinces, and helped to decrease institutionalised and social discrimination faced by people with disabilities. After this training, 70% of the participants have been employed.

The right to an education is recognised as one of the most fundamental human rights. It benefits individuals and strengthens whole communities and civilisations. We need societies to change to improve the experience of education as one of participation and of quality for **all**.

¹ Project in co-operation between World Vision Cambodia and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, supported by World Vision New Zealand and World Vision

Simona, 16, in the study room of her boarding school

Simona

ROMANIA

“I'm a simple girl from a beautiful village in an even more beautiful country. I love living in a village, even though it can lack the comforts of city life. People in the countryside are sometimes more cheerful, even if their lives are filled with poverty. They know that life can always get harder, so I think they are more at peace with themselves and their lives.

Still, growing numbers of young people wish for more – to continue their studies and to have a different perspective on life. Unfortunately, for many of them this will remain only a dream.

Two years ago, I had my first crucial school exam. I was so scared. I kept thinking about what would become of me, of my life, if I couldn't continue my studies.

But, because life is generous with those who fight and truly believe in their dreams, a miracle happened – I gained a scholarship from World Vision in partnership with the Vodafone Foundation. I couldn't believe it at first, it seemed too good to be true! It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

It was hard at the beginning. Many times I felt I was one step away from disaster. My school, which is 36 kilometres from my home, was a whole new world for me. Expectations were high and the teachers were more demanding. At first it seemed like they were speaking a whole different language. Fortunately, I found real help in one of my teachers who understood and encouraged me. She treated me with kindness and warmth and told me that if I worked hard enough and believed in myself, I would succeed. My schoolmates taught me that I didn't need lots of money to be loved and appreciated. They were always close and helped me when I needed it – they even helped me pay for a trip that I couldn't afford, just to be able to have fun together. Looking back, I am grateful for all the people who stood by me.

These last two years have made me more confident. Even when my parents divorced, I managed to get through it. I realised that I'm strong enough to get over many obstacles and that, with a bit of perseverance, I can pass any test.

I am a role model for my brothers and sister. I miss them a lot, I miss taking care of them. They miss me too. When I was staying at home I helped all of them with their homework and always tried to transfer to them my eagerness to learn.

Every time I visit my family back in my village I hear of other young people who have left to go abroad seeking a better future, leaving behind a sick parent or a family fighting against poverty.

I am more determined than ever to graduate. I will never give up.” ■

Report and photography by Ms Magda Camanaru, Communications Manager, World Vision Romania

“for many,
this will
remain
only a
dream”

Global
VOICES OF LIFE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Vuthy CAMBODIA

“I was born in Angkor Chey District, Kompot Province, 105 kilometres from Phnom Penh. I was infected with polio when I was three and at the time there was no treatment – my sickness was incurable. Yet with the enormous support of my family, who are farmers, I was able to enjoy my childhood. When I was 10, I was very happy when my parents sent me to school. But not long after, I realised that I did not enjoy the same rights as other schoolchildren.

From grade one to three I depended on my father to carry me to the classroom. And I spent my break time inside, watching other children play outside. When I was in grade four I received a wheelchair from a local NGO. I was excited because I could finally participate with my classmates. But it seemed that whenever I overcame one challenge, another came up. I could not move in and out of class myself because of the stairway. I had to leave my wheelchair outside and move on my hands into class. It was embarrassing. I came up with a good idea – I asked my father to install a ramp so that I could easily move in and out of the classroom.

Then at secondary school my wheelchair could not enter into the building, which was located at the foot of a mountain – it took me 15 minutes just to get up to school! After graduating from high school in 2005, I decided to stop studying for a while because most of the universities were too far from my home.

Fortunately, in April 2006 I heard about the Bringing Hope Project (BHP), which supports young Cambodians with disabilities. The programme helps high school graduates to pursue vocational training. I gained a scholarship and was offered a short course in Accounting and Administration.

Even though many bad things have happened to me, I am satisfied with what I learned through my BHP studies, especially the Personal Development Course which helped me to face my disability and to participate in society like others.

I'd like to see more schools in Cambodia renovated to allow children with disabilities access to a full education. And I'd like to see the government encourage private schools and universities to offer scholarships to people with disabilities, providing opportunities to be employed by private companies (with co-ordination from the government) and to become independent upon graduating from school.” ■

Reported by Mr Bo Vibol, Education Programme, World Vision Cambodia

Hoeung CAMBODIA

“I was disabled when I was three years old. My mother told me that one day I had a fever, I was injected, but I contracted polio and became disabled.

When I saw people reading Khmer language books fluently, it motivated me to go to school, for I was not able to read even a single letter. First, my father disagreed with me going, even though my mother approved it, because he thought that even if I finished school I would not be able to do anything. Later, with help from my neighbours, I attended a Khmer language school. At the time I was 14 years old, and I was the oldest student in the class.

“I had to move on my hands into class... it was embarrassing”

But I dropped out of school in grade nine to give my two younger brothers and my sister the chance to continue their study. At that time I realised that my goal to study at university was ended.

After quitting, I found a fee-free English class located in a pagoda. There, I met a disabled man who introduced me to the Bringing Hope Project (BHP), which granted scholarships to people with disabilities. I was very enthusiastic.

I applied for a scholarship and was selected. My mother and I were delighted. The six-week Personal Development Course helped me to view things differently. Now I dare to face up to reality and to socialise with other people. In particular, the course helped me to build confidence and to feel less frustration and shame.

I am grateful to BHP. Without it, I would have no chance to develop myself. I want the project to continue, for the sake of helping others. All people with disabilities should strive to pursue their study as high as possible. Being well-educated will enlighten our lives.” ■

Reported by Mr Ying Bun, Writer and Translator, World Vision Cambodia

Left – Vuthy, being interviewed
Below – Hoeung, in class
Photos: Bo Vibol/World Vision



Women – teaching and learning

AFGHANISTAN

“Standing before a room of bearded and turbaned men, religious mullahs¹ and teachers from the villages, **Jamileh***, 28, is the only woman in the classroom. The men listen attentively as she writes multiplication tables on the board. It is the first time they have sat with a female teacher. Jamileh is a teacher trainer in World Vision’s School Enhancement Programme. Since 2003, over 3,000 teachers in two provinces have benefited from these classes that provide lessons in improved teaching practices.

Afghanistan has at least 140,000 teachers, but only 17% are professionally qualified (i.e. have completed grade 12). Jamileh follows a teacher training curriculum utilised in training centres across the country. What is not common is that she is a woman. Jamileh is a principal at the local girls’ school. “At first they could only stare at me in shock,” she smiles, recounting her first day of training. “They could not believe a woman was standing before them, teaching them.” But they listened to her, engaged with her and, she says assuredly, were respectful. In addition to learning teaching techniques from her, they are seeing that women can be educated and perform as leaders.

“They return to their villages with a different idea about women and about girls’ education. They will hopefully start change in their own communities. Slowly, slowly.”

History has shown that quick solutions imposed upon a community do not work, and also

that change requires the investment of the male population. Recruiting and training the mullahs is a first step towards instigating a change in attitudes, especially in remote communities where women are rarely seen outside of the home.

World Vision workers, like education project co-ordinator **Ahmad***, believe that men are critical stakeholders, and work hard to convince them that empowering women can only strengthen their families and communities. Achieving any social change at the local level requires the concerted and deliberate inclusion of husbands and fathers, brothers and sons. Men must be willing participants in the elimination of gender disparity.

“hopefully change will start... slowly, slowly”

“There shouldn’t be such a gap between genders,” says Ahmad, whose passion for his people is equalled only by the depth of his desire to see change. Addressing village elders, he dresses in a turban and shalwar kameez (the long shirt and baggy trousers commonly worn by Afghan men). In the office, he is less traditional, but he recognises the necessity of utilising a common language. “We have to talk with the communities, suggest and share ideas for a future where both men and women can work fully for the better of the country and our people. It used to be in our law that two women were equal to one man. The law has changed. But culturally, it remains in our minds. There are many misperceptions about women....We must work to change these ideas,” he adds.”

¹ Mullahs are the traditional teachers of the community



Global
VOICES OF LIFE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

“Two years ago, there were no literacy classes in the Jawand district of Afghanistan. “No woman had permission to leave her home,” says **Sayed***, 39, an education field officer for World Vision in the district. World Vision opened three literacy classes in a small town where, today, 20 classes are held, with five more in villages on the mountain plateau. Each class has 25 women.

Najiba* is one of only 17 girls who have attended school in this small town since the 1980s. World Vision workers enlisted her to help recruit students for the new school. She was behind the drive to bring girls back to school – going house to house, speaking with women, and encouraging families to educate their daughters.

In Najiba’s small, home-based classroom, the mud walls are painted and covered with posters that describe in words and pictures the best health and hygiene practices, the dangers of landmines. Through a large window, light floods the room, sparkling on the sequined shawls of women. “I teach them how to wash their food properly, how to care for themselves and for their children,” Najiba says. At the same time, women are learning to read and write. Afghanistan has one of the lowest rates of literacy in the world: only one in 10 Afghan women can read.

A thin woman in the corner, wrapped in a long black veil, worn and faded, looks older than her years. She says she must come to class to learn. “With education, I am able to help my children. When I can read and write, I can help them. When they have questions or homework, I can do something. When they’re little, who can help them, if I cannot?”

Research has shown that an educated woman is more likely to delay marriage and childbirth, immunise her children, and understand the nutritional needs of her family. Higher educational levels correlate with improved levels of child survival and development. Afghanistan’s infant and child mortality rates are among the highest

in the world, and educating women is key to any developmental efforts.

Najiba speaks to the needs of the women in her community. She knows their average life expectancy is only 43. “We have so few schools, we’re not literate, we have no female doctors...we have no freedom. We want our girls to become engineers, doctors, teachers.” Najiba knows this class is a start.” ■

Reported and photographed by Ms Mary Kate MacIsaac, Communications Manager, World Vision Afghanistan

* Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Photos

Far left – Jamileh* is principal of a village girls’ school in western Afghanistan.
Left – Two World Vision community development workers are joined by village boys when visiting a home-based school for girls; there is no budget for girls’ classes at the village school.
Right – Young women peer from a window of a World Vision-funded literacy class. Here they learn how to better care for themselves and their families as they also learn to read and write. Women’s literacy in Afghanistan is the lowest in the world, varying by region between 8–15%.

“with education, I am able to help my children”

life

UND THE GLOBE



BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

When education systems are damaged, children are neglected, often for decades. Unless humanitarian and development sectors join forces, warns Katy Webley, there will be too little to build on.

In Dakar in 2000, world leaders outlined a broad collective commitment to Education for All (EFA). Later that same year, heads of state agreed to a set of time-bound, measurable targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including to “ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.”¹ As we pass the mid-way point, our performance is unacceptable. At the current rate, this MDG will not be reached until at least **2050**.

All too often, promises made at international summits are not followed by swift (or any) action. The financing available for education has increased, but not enough. The world needs US\$9 billion every year until 2015 to fill the financing requirement for Universal Primary Education (and we are currently short by US\$6 billion each year). But another gap exists for education – that between the humanitarian world and the development world.

Of the 77 million children out of school today,² 39 million live in conflict-affected fragile states. These countries receive less than one fifth of global aid for education, despite having more than half the world’s out-of-school children.³ Each year there are at least three new major emergencies requiring concerted and co-ordinated international action – each affecting at least 500,000 people, 50% of whom are children. And there are countless smaller emergencies.

THE DISCONNECT

The **global education community** is improving access and quality in even the poorest countries, backed by growing donor support and international co-ordination. But it does not yet embrace the most complicated and hazardous contexts. Meanwhile, the **global humanitarian community** is delivering increasingly sophisticated, systematised, accountable and predictable responses to emergencies. But it does not yet really include education in its work.

What does that mean to a child whose education is under threat in Afghanistan and Somalia? to those displaced by ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka or Nepal? to the generations of children still waiting for education in southern Sudan? to the sheer millions

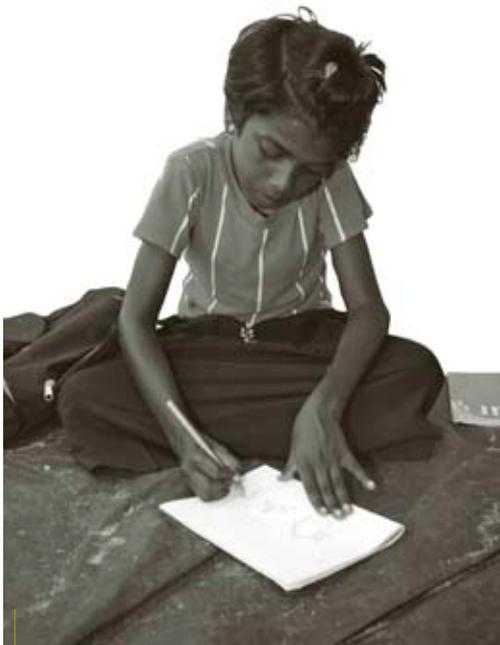
of children out of school in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who far exceed the government’s ability to deliver quality education for all? And to the millions of children affected each year by flood, drought and earthquake?

The education community does not tend to talk about emergencies. During EFA Working Group meetings there has been little discussion on delivering education in acute and chronic crises. In general, high-level donor and government representatives do not follow the humanitarian reform process; they know not of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative⁴ or the Principles of Partnership,⁵ nor realise the purpose of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee⁶ or the Cluster Approach.⁷

Traditionally, donors have not viewed education as a life-saving sector

For its part, the humanitarian world historically marginalised education. The Sphere *Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response*⁸ sets out what assistance people affected by disasters can expect. Probably the most widely referenced book during emergencies, it does not include education. Donors’ humanitarian sections argue that emergency interventions must be life-saving, and education is not a traditional life-saving sector. There is danger here of this remaining a theoretical debate about which sector is more or less life-saving.

Humanitarian aid is a major form of support in both acute and chronic crises, and for some countries (e.g. Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone) it can become the dominant form of long-term aid. Yet education is one of the least-funded sectors in humanitarian aid and received only 1.1% of assistance in the 2006 Consolidated Appeals Process,⁹ despite representing at least 4.2% of assessed needs (in itself, a likely under-estimation). The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) – set up by the United Nations (UN) in 2005 to pre-position funding for humanitarian action – has US\$450 million for grants



“I’m so happy I can go to school here at least temporarily,” says Gajendi, 10. “I have a lot to catch up – I missed school for a couple of months because of the war. I want to study hard and be a teacher when I grow up.” Displaced in East Sri Lanka, she is seen with her books even during her free time in the camp.
Photo: Hasanthi Jayamaha/World Vision

and US\$50 million for loans. The grants facility funds both rapid response and under-funded emergencies, but the CERF focuses on life-saving criteria and remains cautious of funding education.

AN INCREASING PROFILE

Recent analyses of humanitarian relief view immediate life-saving interventions within the context of a sound economic survival strategy. This more sophisticated approach includes livelihoods, food security, protection and good quality education programmes.

There is also greater emphasis on humanitarian agencies being held to account by their intended beneficiaries – consulting with disaster survivors on their needs, instead of delivering relief based on the charitable leanings of donors. This is particularly evident via the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership initiative.¹⁰

Though a shocking 49% of education aid still goes to middle-income countries on the basis of geo-political ties, the EFA movement has successfully increased focus on low-income countries, with “fragile states”¹¹ lacking basic services increasingly on the global agenda.

The voice of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) becomes stronger each year, reporting on leaders not paying their “fair share” of the financing requirements. And the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) has improved the way donors fund education, co-ordinating support for long-term nationally-owned education sector plans. Save the Children’s own *Rewrite the Future* campaign¹² also has led both directly and indirectly to significant change for children.¹³ This is an ambitious effort of 28 members working in over 100 countries to secure quality education for millions of children out of school in conflict-affected countries.

Without doubt, the most effective effort to ensure children affected by emergencies benefit from their right to an education is the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).¹⁴ Established in 2000, INEE brings together a global open network

working within a humanitarian and development framework to ensure the right to education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction.

LINKING THE TWO WORLDS

Keep promises. It is time to deliver on the G8’s 2005 promises of an extra US\$50 billion in aid per year by 2010.

Pay a “fair share” where the need is greatest. Many donors – notably Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the US and Italy – need to increase their resources to basic education and pay their fair share of the external financing requirement. A large percentage of new funds should reach children in conflict-affected fragile states, according to need.

Promote good governance. Weak governance and conflict in fragile states pose some of the world’s most challenging contexts for development partners. Donors who fail to fund on the basis of lack of transparency or accountability must invest in building good governance, by funding civil-society agencies and coalitions to track and analyse budgets for education, research and monitor national policies, engage in policy processes and advocate for change.

Provide a comprehensive humanitarian response. Quoting Jan Egeland’s article in 2006’s *Global Future* on humanitarianism, the global response needs to be guided by “solidarity, not charity”, and the humanitarian system “must be the responsibility of all nations and must benefit all nations”.¹⁵

Ensure coherent, inter-related donor policies. More donors must follow the example of Norway and Sweden, with humanitarian policies that explicitly include education from day one of a humanitarian response, and development policies that seek to support education in low-income countries, including conflict-affected fragile states.

I expect that few education professionals go on to work for the humanitarian sections in UN or donor agencies, at least compared to those from health

or nutrition. Likewise, few from the humanitarian sector may ever cross over into the professional field of education. How many of those who log onto ReliefWeb each morning or receive updates from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also seek updates on EFA (and vice versa)? We need to bridge this professional divide, understand each other’s mandate, and thus realise our inter-dependencies.

Clearly, achieving Education For All entails supporting education at all stages of development: during the humanitarian phase, the transition from emergency to reconstruction, and the long-term development. Then good quality education contributes to economic growth, peace and stability, good governance, and emergency preparedness. Only if embraced by both the humanitarian and the development community, can education truly be available for all primary school-aged children by 2015. ■

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¹ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

² UNESCO, *EFA Global monitoring report 2007: Strong foundations*, 2007 http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR/2007/Full_report.pdf

³ Save the Children’s methodology identifies countries affected by armed conflict and characterised by income disparity, weak governance and inequality. See also: *Last in line, last in school: How donors are failing children in conflict-affected fragile states*, 2007 http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2525.htm

⁴ <http://www.goodhumanitarianism.org>

⁵ <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/documents/working/20070319-1206/Principles%20of%20Partnership%20DRAFT%20%20endorsed%20by%20SC.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/about/default.asp>

⁷ <http://www.humanitarianreform.org/humanitarianreform/Default.aspx?tabid=115>

⁸ <http://www.sphereproject.org>

⁹ <http://ochaonline.un.org>

¹⁰ <http://www.hapinternational.org>

¹¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/licus>

¹² <http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/rewritethefuture>

¹³ Save the Children, *One year on, 2007* http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/media/photoessay/2007_RTFLyearon

¹⁴ <http://www.ineesite.org>

¹⁵ Jan Egeland, “Solidarity, not charity, to guide global response”, in *Global Future, Humanitarianism revisited: issues for the 21st century*, no. 2 2006, p 2



EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES: RESEARCH EFFORTS

As research and recognition increases, funding of education in emergencies is showing some signs of improvement, suggest Christopher Talbot and Daiana Andreoli, though great gaps remain.

Since the late 1990s, research on education in conflict, emergencies and reconstruction has become recognised as a sub-discipline within educational planning and humanitarian relief studies. Many governments and agencies now document and evaluate their field experience of providing education during and after wars and disasters. Rigorously conducted, academically robust research is being published. This new literature is influencing policy-making and practice in ministries and among non-governmental organisations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies and donor governments. Though still small, the research is beginning to yield results in the efforts to reach the Education for All (EFA) targets.

The World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000, formally identified conflicts and disasters as significant obstacles to achieving EFA. In November of that year, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) was formed, giving agencies and governments working in post-conflict and post-

disaster areas greater impetus to collaborate, set standards, and share experiences and information on education.¹

INEE advocates for the educational needs of populations affected in front-line emergencies to be systematically addressed. Lobbying by INEE and its many member agencies recently led to the successful inclusion of the education sector in the Humanitarian Cluster Approach.² INEE's collaborative definition and publication of *Minimum standards for education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction* also made a huge contribution to field practice in its aim to increase the quality and accountability of educational response in such situations; the INEE *Minimum standards* have been supported by training, and implementation and evaluation tools.³

ASSIST AND ENGAGE

Donor governments and agencies are paying greater attention to education in emergencies and reconstruction. Here are just two recent examples: the Netherlands has moved toward increasing assistance for education to 15% of its official development aid and has pledged US\$201 million to UNICEF for education in emergencies and post-crisis countries; and the UK has provided considerable funding to conflict-affected governments, as well as £20 million to UNICEF for education in emergencies and fragile states.

Despite these and other notable efforts, funding of education in emergencies remains under-prioritised by donors. Research conducted by the Save the Children Alliance has shown that only 1.1% of all humanitarian aid went to the education sector in 2006. And, to achieve universal primary education, a US\$9 billion annual external funding commitment needs to be filled.⁴

Donor reluctance to fund education in emergencies or reconstruction stems from what Gene Sperling has described as "trust gaps" – the lack of donor confidence in fragile states. This may be due to the motives or illegitimacy of some governments

in question or the capacity and implementation of their educational aims.⁵

DRAWING ON EXPERIENCE

Over the last 10 years, much of the research into education in emergencies has drawn on lessons from the field and guided agency field practitioners. An increasing number of universities also are conducting research into these issues.⁶ Yet great gaps remain.

The UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) has made a modest contribution to filling some of those research gaps through its Programme for Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction. Given its mandate and experience, IIEP has focused on building governments' capacity to plan and manage education in emergencies, conflicts and disasters. IIEP has published several country- or territory-specific analyses of efforts to rebuild and transform education systems in Rwanda, southern Sudan, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Burundi (in press).

In 2006, IIEP drew together the results of some of this research, enriched by the contributions of many recognised specialists, to publish its *Guidebook for planning education in emergencies and reconstruction*.⁷ This *Guidebook* aims to provide practical advice to planners in conflict- and disaster-affected Ministries of Education; it is also useful for educational planners and managers at all levels, working for NGOs, UN agencies and donor governments. IIEP has also developed training materials, conducted summer schools in educational reconstruction in post-conflict situations, and offered specialised training courses in response to partners' and member states' needs.

IIEP is currently engaged in a research case study of the educational response to the earthquake that struck Pakistan on 8 October 2005. The Institute has also recently established two partnerships to contribute to EFA goals through research on education in conflict, emergencies, reconstruction and fragile states.

The first research partnership involves the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies (AMIDSt) of the University of Amsterdam, and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The research focuses on:

- certification of learning for refugees and internally displaced pupils, and
- opportunities for positive change to education systems during conflict and early post-conflict reconstruction.

This partnership will produce joint IIEP–University of Amsterdam–IRC publications, containing case studies and policy advice for all institutions concerned with these issues. The major findings will be presented at IIEP-hosted international seminars in Paris in January 2008, providing opportunities for policy-makers and specialists to exchange experiences and to distil research findings into guidance.

The second partnership involves the UK-based CfBT Education Trust, and will research four themes:

- advocacy-driven educational programming in emergencies and early reconstruction (including a case study on making safe spaces work for children)
- alternative education programmes for refugee, internally displaced and returnee children and youth
- protecting positive community participation in education during emergencies and reconstruction, and
- donors' engagement in education during and after conflict.

For each theme, IIEP and CfBT will co-publish policy-related research guidelines and global thematic policy studies.

PROSPECTS, CHALLENGES

In the past decade, there has been great progress in support of education in conflict, emergencies, reconstruction and fragile states. Professional networks have been nurtured, minimum standards for quality and accountability have been established, advocacy has increased for early educational response in acute emergencies, sound planning

and management tools are now available, and the results of research are disseminated. All this has generated awareness of needs and mobilised the search for solutions.

In situations of conflict and state fragility, there are three major challenges for the coming years, and there are constructive ways to meet these challenges:

1. Strengthening the role and capacity of education authorities.

International agencies with strong technical expertise can seek to build long-term supportive relationships with Ministries of Education and other authorities within education systems of conflict-affected states. This needs to go far beyond mere provision of short training courses; shared experience in planning processes, implementation of plans, monitoring and evaluation help to build capacity over time. Valuable resources such as the IIEP *Guidebook* and the INEE *Minimum standards* are tools available for immediate use that can supplement training. Already the Minimum standards have been translated into over ten languages including Bangla, Dari and Khmer.

2. Overcoming donor reluctance.

Donor reluctance to invest in those Ministries and educational authorities may be surmountable. One possibility for funding is to expand the scope of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI). Most conflict-affected governments lack the capacity to fulfil the EFA-FTI requirements, which are expressed in the FTI Indicative Framework. A new approach to facilitation of dialogue between conflict-affected governments, donors and aid agencies, referred to as a "Progressive Framework", is currently being elaborated. This may open the way to more predictable and sustained funding, allowing greater progress towards EFA for conflict-affected fragile states.

3. Maximising the impact to reduce state fragility. Equitable access to quality education is vital for the reduction of state fragility. Education provides a safe space for reconciliation and discussion, leading to the creation of positive social relationships, peaceful

engagement across societal cleavages, and people re-connecting with their communities. To this end, conflict-affected Ministries of Education should strive to support educational services that promote equity and social integration. ■

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¹ INEE is an open network of over 1,900 NGOs, UN agencies, donors, practitioners, researchers and individuals world-wide who are working/interested in education in emergencies. Its flexibility and responsiveness encourages participants to exchange information, develop resources and tools and build capacity. See: <http://www.ineesite.org> ² The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) officially endorsed this designation in December 2006. ³ The text of the *Minimum standards*, in many languages, is available on the INEE website. ⁴ International Save the Children Alliance, *Last in line, last in school: How donors are failing children in conflict-affected fragile states*, London, 2007 ⁵ Gene Sperling, "Closing the trust gaps: unlocking financing for education in fragile states", paper presented at the 4th FTI Partnership meeting in Cairo, Egypt, November 2006, p 5 ⁶ Chris Talbot (co-author of this article) will shortly publish a more comprehensive review of research needs on the INEE website. ⁷ Available in hard copy, CD-ROM or on the IIEP website: http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/focus/emergency/emergency_1.htm ⁸ See: <http://www.fasttrackinitiative.org>

Do you know?



- ▶ There are some 77 million children out of school today; 39 million live in conflict-affected fragile states; 38 million are in sub-Saharan Africa; more than half are girls; and more than a third have a disability.
- ▶ More than 90 countries missed the goal to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005.
- ▶ Children whose mothers read are more likely to succeed. EFA goals call for adult literacy because it is a human right of adults and a great way to ensure children also learn – 75% of children not in primary school have uneducated mothers. (UNICEF Gender achievements and prospects in education, The gap report, Part one, 2005, p 9)
- ▶ Fewer than 10% of children with disabilities in Africa attend primary school. (UNESCO, EFA Global monitoring report 2007: Strong foundations, p 74)
- ▶ Education is one of the least-funded sectors in humanitarian aid. (See: <http://ochaonline.un.org>)



She was a quiet girl whose polite demeanour and neat school uniform belied the horrors she had confronted. Abducted at age 13 by the Lord's Resistance Army from near her home in Chope, northern Uganda, Mary¹ had returned home three years later with a baby and a determination to complete her schooling.

In July 2007, Mary and three other "child mothers" had come to a meeting organised by partners in the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) "to find out what you will do to help us", as she stated defiantly. She explained to us that against tremendous odds, the girls had put their past behind them, returned to school – taking their babies with them – and managed to complete primary school. But they didn't have the financial resources needed to continue to secondary school, and despite promises from many to whom they had appealed, they were now at home in a camp for people internally displaced in the long-running conflict, with little hope of being able to realise their dreams.

Unknown to them, Mary and her friends personified the successes and challenges of partnerships for girls' education. UNGEI was launched in April 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in response to a troubling reality: of the millions of children world-wide who are not in school, more than half are girls. UNGEI's work is driven by Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2: **Achieve universal primary education**, with the target to "ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling"; and MDG 3: **Promote gender equality and empower women**, with the target to "eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015".

To achieve these goals and ensure a special focus on girls, who are frequently the most disadvantaged in schooling in developing countries, requires a concerted effort. UNGEI therefore became the Education for All (EFA) flagship initiative for girls' education. It is a partnership that embraces the UN system, governments, donor countries, non-governmental organisations, civil society, the private sector, communities and families. The Initiative provides stakeholders with a platform

for action and galvanises their efforts to get girls into school.

ACCESS AND REWARDS

Many obstacles thwart those efforts, including poverty, gender roles and cultural traditions, and the belief that educated boys will contribute better than educated girls to family income. HIV is a major barrier, as disproportionate numbers of girls are infected or forced to care for family members. Further, girls are especially vulnerable during humanitarian catastrophes, when gender inequality is exacerbated and social norms break down.

UNGEI's vision is a world where all girls and boys will have equal access to free, quality education. Barriers to learning, such as school fees and other costs of education, must be removed. There needs to be greater focus on access to education in emergency situations. And education policies, plans and budgets need to prioritise the most disadvantaged, including girls and women.

Beyond advocating for access to education, UNGEI works for gender equality in a broader sense. Educating girls is one of the most cost-effective ways of raising economic productivity, lowering infant and maternal mortality, improving nutritional status and health, reducing poverty, and halting the spread of HIV and other diseases. The continuing effects of girls' education are illustrated clearly by the high correlation between a mother's education and that of her children, demonstrated in figure 1.

We need a cross-sectoral, holistic approach to education, with balanced investment across the life cycle, addressing early childhood education and development for children of poor families, and literacy and empowerment of women and girls.

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

UNGEI operates at global, regional and country levels. Its Global Advisory Committee² is composed of key partners who share in the planning, decision-making, guidance and accountability of the partnership. At the global level, the partnership is making an impact: educational policy and funding decisions are increasingly made in a girl-friendly manner, as evidenced by UNGEI's

DETERMINED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE: A PARTNERSHIP FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

To close the education gap for girls world-wide, Cheryl Gregory Faye argues, we need a partnership that embraces a gender perspective, engages at all levels, and recognises the long-term rewards for future generations.



Almost half of the children beginning primary school in Uganda are over the recommended starting age of six years. Over-aged girls are at risk of dropping out of school due to early marriage and pregnancy. Here, a national GEM trainer encourages an out-of-school girl in Soroti District to come back to school.
Photo: © GEM/UGDA/SHARPE

influence with the EFA High-Level Group (HLG) and Fast Track Initiative (FTI) processes. As a result of UNGEI advocacy, HLG meetings now conclude with calls to programme countries and donors for special attention to girls' education and gender mainstreaming. Similarly, the FTI Assessment and Endorsement Guidelines now ensure that gender is a major consideration when approving national education plans; in monitoring the effectiveness of this change, UNGEI has reviewed the gender component of selected plans.

Online resources on girls' education and links to partner organisations are readily available on UNGEI's website,³ and e-discussions on timely issues provide a forum for educators, policy-makers and other concerned individuals around the globe. Above all, the partnership speaks with one voice when it comes to upstream issues related to girls' education.

Perhaps the greatest achievements and challenges lie at the country level

Dynamic partnerships also are at work at the regional level. In West and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, South Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific, dedicated staff support networks of partners confronting specificities of their geographical areas. Publications and meetings of policy-makers and technicians address regional strategies on girls' education. And regional hubs provide targeted support in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States – regions that have largely achieved gender parity in education but that have localised gender inequalities.

Still, the world community missed the MDG 3 target for 2005 of gender parity in primary and secondary schooling. And perhaps the greatest achievements and the greatest challenges in girls' education lie at the country level. UNGEI supports country-led development and seeks to influence decision-making and investments to ensure gender equity and equality

in national education policies, plans and programmes. Recognising the importance of country-level efforts, it operates as a mechanism to advance education strategies and provide the technical capacity to assist countries. UNGEI partners mobilise resources for both targeted project interventions and country programmes, as well as large-scale systemic interventions designed to impact on the whole education system. UNGEI streamlines its efforts through the strategic use of existing mechanisms such as Poverty Reduction Strategies, sector-wide approaches and UN Development Assistance Frameworks.⁴

In some countries, partnerships work largely at the national level, influencing policy and resource allocation, while in others, they operate at the decentralised level through community-based associations such as mothers' clubs. In Uganda, a vibrant partnership works at national and district levels, involving a broad swath of actors,⁵ including the Girls' Education Movement (GEM). Made up of young volunteers, GEM clubs work at the community level in the conflict-affected north of Uganda to get girls and boys back in school.

At the meeting where Mary challenged UNGEI partners to help her and her friends, GEM club representatives were present. Also present were local education administrators, elected officials and parents, as well as representatives of Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and UNICEF. After lengthy discussions where all present accepted responsibility, a solution was found and the girls were due to enrol in secondary school in the next academic year.

Of course, removing barriers to girls' education is not the only challenge. Fully embracing a gender perspective must become central to the efforts of the partnership, to make certain that all components of educational policies and programmes are reviewed for impact on boys and girls. Policy-makers must remember that a focus on girls is also critically important to boys' education, and that educated mothers play a crucial role in

Percentage of children out of primary school, by mothers' education

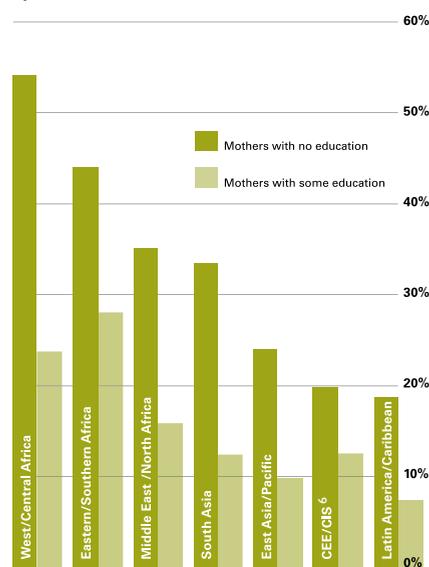


Figure 1: Correlation between a mother's education and that of her children

Source: Progress for children: A report card on gender parity and primary education, No. 2, UNICEF, New York, April 2005, p. 8

their children's education – so forging linkages to adult literacy efforts for women is also essential. Above all, using the comparative advantage of the various partners to the full advantage of girls' education will ensure maximum synergy.

As the global community marks the halfway point to 2015, much is at risk. There is clearly a vested interest in supporting and strengthening girls' education as a means of delivering on all of the MDGs and helping realise the rights of all children. To girls like Mary, this may be the only chance that they have. For the partnership, the stakes are high, indeed. ■

Ms Cheryl Gregory Faye is Head of the UNGEI Secretariat and Senior Education Officer for UNICEF.

¹ Not her real name.

² See: http://www.ungei.org/whatisungei/index_715.html

³ <http://www.ungei.org>

⁴ <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=232>

⁵ UNGEI national partners in Uganda include civil society organisations, government ministries, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), parliamentarians, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, USAID, WFP, World Vision International, and youth organisations.

⁶ Central and Eastern Europe / Commonwealth of Independent States



OCCUPIED SEAT = OCCUPIED MIND? MONITORING QUALITY AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The global education community is starting to look beyond enrolment numbers, reports Jennifer Philpot-Nissen, to define an agreed set of foundational life skills and more systematically monitor learning outcomes.

If a child completes a full course of education, attending school regularly, but afterwards doesn't have the skills to apply for a job, to negotiate an inter-personal conflict, or even to keep account of household spending, what did that child really learn?

The right to a basic education is enshrined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and the Education for All (EFA) goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) promote universal access to primary education as a means of fulfilling this right. The EFA-Fast Track Initiative, launched in 2002 to assist developing countries and donors to work together to achieve these goals, reports a significant increase in access to primary education,¹ but it also recognises that this has been coupled with reduced rather than increased learning gains.

In fact, the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) examining the World Bank's support to primary education concluded:

"Among children already enrolled in primary school, learning outcomes have often been low – in some cases disastrously low – reflecting widespread ineffectiveness in teaching and learning processes. National test data from Bangladesh, Brazil, Ghana, Pakistan, the Philippines and Zambia all show a majority of those who leave primary school to be achieving well below their countries' minimum performance standards, with results in many low-income, rural areas being 'only marginally better than for children who have not completed school'."²

Such results are echoed in recent editions of the UNESCO *EFA Global monitoring report*.³ Clearly, an occupied seat in class doesn't *ipso facto* mean an occupied mind. We know that in too many places, children in overcrowded schools can go right through the primary systems without attaining reading, writing and mathematics skills. The 2004 Fast Track Initiative (FTI) framework encourages, though does not mandate, countries to track learning outcomes and the quality of teaching – but it is not part of the indicative framework.⁴ Global investment in education must also be measured in terms of improved learning outcomes if it is going to contribute to poverty reduction. So while we applaud the stepped-up investment in improving access to education, we need to take a closer look at how the resources are directed.

An IEG evaluation of Uganda's Education Sector Adjustment Credit programme (prepared by the government and the World Bank to reduce pupil:teacher and pupil:textbook ratios) found that the targets were not met because of unanticipated and continuing growth in enrolments. The evaluation concluded that the rapid expansion in enrolments led to a deterioration in both education quality and learning outcomes.⁵

What then, is the goal of Education for All? There are many arguments supporting the mere attendance of children in school, usually framed in terms of protecting children from the potentially harmful or exploitative environments in which they might find themselves when deprived of adult supervision.

But the obvious goal has got to be connected with what a child actually **learns** during this critical period of his or her life. Beyond merely ensuring a child's presence in the classroom, Education for All seeks to ensure a "recognised and measurable" level of learning for each child.⁶

FROM 3 Rs TO LIFE SKILLS

Historically, a basic education has been understood to centre on the three Rs (reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic), and literacy levels have been a key indicator of the success or otherwise of an individual's education.

Lack of life skills lies behind many critical development issues

Some international assessments of basic skills are being done but are far too limited to indicate whether core skills are improving among children from poorer and culturally excluded families in particular. Where data is available, the results underscore the insufficient impact investment has had on learning outcomes, especially in places where the need is the greatest. Consider the 2000–2002 study of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ II): in some countries, hardly any survey participants reached the competency level for numeracy; and half the countries surveyed were at or below 10% of the desired literacy level – 10%! While global data is just not available, the concern is that the situation might be similar for poor and culturally marginalised populations across the developing world.

More recently, and due in part to the AIDS pandemic, UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations have made various attempts to incorporate a list of "life skills" – common cognitive, social, emotional and communication skills and abilities – into the minimal learning outcomes education seeks to ensure for all children.⁷ UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO) list ten core life skill strategies and techniques: problem solving, critical thinking,

effective communication skills, decision making, creative thinking, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness-building skills, empathy, and coping with stress and emotions.⁸

The WHO incorporates them into the skills-based health education and life skills instruction it seeks to implement in all schools through its FRESH (Focusing Resources on Effective School Health) initiative. It defines life skills in terms of “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”.⁹

Likewise, the UN Decade for Literacy seeks to ensure that both children and adults have a broader range of skills to protect themselves, maximise their opportunities and participate in community development.

AGREEING ON STANDARDS

Despite this broad agreement that a basic education involves more than achieving a functional level of literacy, there are wide disparities in what constitutes minimum learning standards. Given the data collection issues, completion often has become the proxy indicator used to monitor quality. The global community must be clear about both the minimal learning outcomes associated with a basic education and the indicators that should monitor progress toward achieving them.

With the growing understanding that a lack of skills and abilities for making good judgments, for managing emotions, for collaborating with others, for negotiating and for communicating effectively lie behind many of the most critical development issues facing the global community, it is urgent that in addition to ensuring **access** to education for all, we increase our effectiveness in ensuring that all children and young people attain functional levels of these skills.

Ensuring that all children who complete a primary education actually attain functional levels of the core skills and abilities they need to lead full and productive

lives is an enormous challenge, especially in those parts of the world where teaching and learning are weak.

But the global education partnership and the development community must ensure that the **quality** aspect of the EFA and MDG goals is being addressed alongside the expansion of access. Clearly, a greater portion of the world's investment in education must go to improving quality... and quickly, if we are to ensure marked learning gains for more children by 2015. ■

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¹The World Bank, *Progress report for the Education for All Fast Track Initiative*, p 10 [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMITT/Documentation/21046513/DC2006-0015\(E\)-Education.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMITT/Documentation/21046513/DC2006-0015(E)-Education.pdf)

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³ See especially UNESCO, *EFA Global monitoring report 2005: The quality imperative*, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001373/137333e.pdf>

⁴ The World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, *op. cit.*, p 32

⁵ *ibid.*, p 15

⁶ EFA Goal 6: “Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.”

⁷ See UNESCO, *Learning: The treasure within*, 1996 http://www.unesco.org/delors/delors_e.pdf

⁸ ESCAP/UN, *Life skills training guide for young people*, Module 7, 2003, p 2

⁹ “In particular, life skills are a group of psycho-social competencies and inter-personal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathise with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Life skills may be directed toward personal actions or actions toward others, as well as toward actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health.” (WHO, *Skills for health*, Information series on school health: Document 9, p 3)

Further reference



- ▶ **Education for All by 2015: Increasing the momentum** (presentation by Nicholas Burnett, UNESCO, 2007) <http://www.education-fast-track.org/library/brusselspresentation.pdf>
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- ▶ **Teachers and educational quality: Monitoring global needs for 2015** (UNESCO, 2006) <http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/Teachers2006/TeachersReport.pdf>

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the Back Pages

...spiritually speaking

LEARNING ON THE FRONT LINES

We can learn much from the rhythm of Jesus' work and ministry, finding answers in the natural language of the community.

Most of the moments we treasure from Jesus' life occurred in the midst of daily activities. During an evening meal, a woman of questionable reputation anoints his feet with oil, enraging the host and eliciting from Jesus as eloquent a defence as any woman ever received from any man, a defence that smashed the cultural barriers of his time and still echoes today.¹

As Jesus stops on a dusty road for a drink of water, a Samaritan woman approaches and he reveals his identity to her in an unforgettable and significant encounter, changing her life and the life of her community forever.²

Zaccheus catches Jesus' eye from his perch in a tree, a precarious outpost in the ancient Mediterranean landscape. Jesus' response is, as always, worthy of reflection. He doesn't waste a moment or a word. "Come down from there immediately. I must stay at your house today." The crowd (public opinion) aligns itself against Jesus' action. Does he lack discernment? Doesn't Jesus know that Zaccheus is a tax collector, a swindler? Jesus ignores the crowd's murmuring and maintains his focus on Zaccheus. "Here and now", Zaccheus commits half of his possessions to the poor and promises full reparation to all he has cheated.

In my mind's eye, I see the ripple effect of Zaccheus' transformation – his reparations benefiting the vulnerable families and communities of his time: children's school fees, food on the table, medical care for urgent cases, help for people who had given up hope. Good news instead of bad news.³

Did Jesus have nothing better to do with his time than to spend it so freely on the seemingly insignificant or dishonoured citizens of his day?

There was never a man with more to do in the allotted time he was given. And yet, was there a moment, regardless of circumstance, when Jesus gave the slightest hint that these encounters were interruptions? No. They were the very fabric of his life.

When we ask "what needs to change to close the education gap?", perhaps a clue to the answer can be found here. Perhaps it is **we** who need to change. We need to discern more clearly the crucial opportunities. Most importantly, we need to renew our own faith in the power of transformation and recapture a transformative rhythm.

Moments of transformative power

I believe that development practitioners in the 21st century, working on the front lines of rural and urban communities, understand best the importance of this transformative rhythm exemplified in Jesus' work and ministry.

Most recognise that it is not an easy rhythm to master. In fact, the demands of globalisation and a world operating at break-neck speed militate against it.

However, the communities in which development practitioners work are, in fact, universities that can re-create this rhythm. The community is a university that teaches us to listen long and listen hard. It teaches us to observe first and respond second. It teaches us how to weave development work seamlessly into the moments of each day.

The community is also a university in which practitioners learn to identify complex development indicators as they are expressed in the natural language of daily conversations. They learn to be alert to the off-hand remark of a mother, haltingly expressed – a remark that holds the dreams of the mother for the child playing at her feet.

In the open air "classroom" of a village street at twilight or in a busy urban thoroughfare, a child's question reverberates and the experienced development practitioner registers it, almost as if his or her mind is the blank page on which the child is writing.

With practice, development workers see the open doors in the lives and hearts of the community members. It was this discernment that allowed Jesus to recognise and create the transformative moment.



World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and their communities world-wide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

As followers of Jesus, World Vision is dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender:

Children are often most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. World Vision works with each partner community to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutrition, health and education. Where children live in especially difficult circumstances, surviving on the streets, suffering in exploitative labour, or exposed to the abuse and trauma of conflict, World Vision works to restore hope and to bring justice.

World Vision recognises that poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures that constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people be able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty.

back cover image:

Students celebrating their new school in Jaya district, Indonesia. Following the 2004 tsunami, many children thought they would never be able to return to school. With support from World Vision United Kingdom, they now have three new and three renovated classrooms, a teachers' room, and two modern toilet facilities.

photographer:
Enda Balina/World Vision

Learn to listen

What does this mean for policy-makers? What does it mean for decision makers at every level? It means that we all have to learn to listen. It means that we have to slow down our schedules and silence our cell phones long enough to hear the questions that children raise – to let them challenge us to action on their behalf. It means that we must be guided by them to search for ways to address the global gap in education, to build a bridge across the chasm.

Our front-line development practitioners, those who carry the seeds of the parents' dreams and the children's questions and plant them in programme designs and project indicators, deserve our support. Our advocacy workers, those who follow through on advocacy issues regardless of how long and arduous the road, need our commitment. If we accept the mother's dreams and the children's questions as part of the fabric of our own personal and institutional lives, the education gap can be addressed through creative and dynamic action.

Children will always be learning something. Let that "something" be that we can **all** learn – learn from them how to keep the doors of their schools open and welcoming.

One of the most treasured moments of Jesus' life occurred when he gathered the children in his arms.⁴ In that profound encounter, he was able to both welcome the children and address the adults who tried to block them. As Jesus was recognised as a teacher in his day, the children wanted to learn from him. And he wanted to teach them. Today, I believe that he would be walking the kids to school, checking their homework, encouraging future plans. But he wouldn't stop there. He would simultaneously be working with parents and transforming the government officials to ensure that the schools were worthy of the children's potential. **We** can carry that legacy forward – transforming the present to transform the future. ■

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All Bible quotations from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*.

¹ Luke 7: 37–50

² John 4: 7–26

³ Luke 19: 1–10

⁴ Luke 18:16



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