

Teachers are key to solving the global learning crisis, says UNESCO report

Nairobi, 6 May 2014

The Government of Kenya, in conjunction with UNESCO and Kenya National Commission for UNESCO will launch UNESCO's 2013/4 Education for All Global Monitoring Report (EFA GMR) in Nairobi on 6 May at 9.00 at the Sarova Stanley Hotel in Nairobi. The Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi will preside over the official launch of the Report: *"Teaching and learning: Achieving quality for all."*

The Report shows that being in school is not enough – children must learn while there. At present, 250 million children are not learning the basics, around half of whom have spent at least 4 years in school. In Kenya, abolishing school fees has shown impressive gains in increasing the numbers of children enrolling in school. However the recruitment of teachers and the provision of teaching resources have not fully kept pace. Partly as a result, national reports suggest that the typical primary school in the country lacks four teachers each, and children now have fewer textbooks to share between them.

To invert this worrying trend, and ensure that children's learning does not suffer, the Report concludes that good teachers are key to improvement and calls on governments to provide the best in the profession to those who need them most.

Without attracting and adequately training enough teachers, the Report warns that the learning crisis will last for several generations and hit the disadvantaged hardest. Even though Kenya is in a better position than many other countries in the region in terms of the numbers of children in school and learning, the poorest in the country are being left dangerously behind, mainly because they are still dropping out of school early. As a result, around three-quarters of the poor in Kenya have not learnt the basics, compared with 37% of the rich.

Low quality education has a huge impact on countries' economic performance. The cost of the global learning crisis translates into a \$129 billion loss for governments. Conversely, quality education ensures economic growth and well-being. It is estimated that if education inequality in Africa had been halved to the level of Latin America and the Caribbean, the annual per capita growth rate in the period 2005-2010 would have been 47% higher.

Increased enrolment and limited resources is a challenge that the Report recognizes in many countries around the world. Yet teachers are often expected to enter schools with little training to cope with such circumstances, while having to face ever-greater diversity in the classroom. Evidence from different countries shows that the curricula are often too fast paced, and assessment materials insufficient for teachers to be able to track – and so support – students most at risk of not learning

The Report shows that to achieve good quality education for all, governments must provide enough trained teachers, and focus their teacher policies on meeting the needs of the

disadvantaged. This means attracting the best candidates into teaching and giving them relevant training. Kenya extends training support to teachers working in poorly performing districts, for example. Teachers must then be deployed within countries to areas where they are needed most; and offered incentives to make a long-term commitment to teaching. The Report also highlights the need to address gender-based violence in schools, a major barrier to quality and equality in education. It underscores the importance of curriculum and assessment strategies to promote inclusion and improve learning.

If urgent action is not taken, poor quality education will leave a legacy of illiteracy more widespread than previously believed. On current trends, the Report projects that the richest boys in sub-Saharan Africa will achieve universal primary completion in 2021, but the poorest girls will not catch up until 2086. In addition, it will take until the next century for all girls from the poorest families in the region to finish lower secondary school.

Pauline Rose, the director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report, said: *“What’s the point in an education if children emerge after years in school without the skills they need? The huge numbers of illiterate children and young people mean it is crucial that equality in access and learning be placed at the heart of future education goals. New goals after 2015 must make sure every child is not only in school, but learning what they need to learn.”*

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Notes to Editors:

On the occasion of the launch of the UNESCO Report in Kenya, Representatives from MoEST, teacher unions, parents, civil society, development partners, will discuss the achievements, gaps and challenges for the education sector in Kenya, with a particular focus on teachers’ vital role for the provision of quality education. The presentation will be followed by a press conference and a panel discussion led by Prof. Kabiru Kinyanjui.

Developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report is an authoritative reference that aims to inform, influence and sustain genuine commitment towards Education for All.

The full report can be accessed here: <http://www.efareport.unesco.org>

The press kit can be accessed here: <http://www.unesco.org/new/index.php?id=121618>

