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EDUCATION FOR ALL HALFWAY THERE





EDUCATION FOR ALL: HALFWAY THERE

The sixth edition of the EFA Global Monitoring Report has just been released. It testifies to considerable progress in education since 2000: the number of out-of-school children dropped sharply, primary education forged ahead by 36% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 14 countries abolished primary school fees. But 72 million children are still deprived of school around the world, and 18 million more teachers are needed by 2015. And 774 million adults lack literacy skills. The challenges are substantial.

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EDITORIAL



UNESCO campaign «Send my friend to school» (2005). Work by Pepe Agost (Spain).

1990 – The Education for All (EFA) campaign is launched in Jomtien (Thailand). The international community pledges to provide quality basic education to all children, youths and adults.

2000 – In Dakar, Senegal, more than 160 governments set six goals to be reached no later than 2015. The goals concern early childhood education, primary school, life skills, adult literacy, gender parity and quality education.

2007 – “We are halfway there and we have good reason to be optimistic,” says, in this issue of *the UNESCO Courier*, Nicholas Burnett, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education and director of the just-launched 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report. Troublesome areas remain nonetheless, notably early childhood education, gender parity and adult literacy.

One reason for delays is the perception of education as an opportunity rather than a right, says Jan de Groof, professor of education law at the College of Europe in Bruges. “When the right to education is flouted, the courts can and must intervene,” he asserts, citing the exam-

ple of Roma children who just won their appeal at the European Court of Human Rights.

Schools with instruction entirely in Romani would represent a form of segregation, says Roma Michaela Zatreanu, education expert (Romania) who advocates multicultural education.

Meanwhile Adama Samassekou from Mali, president of the African Academy of Languages, is fighting much more fiercely for the integration of mother languages at school. “We need a school that is attached to society, not torn from it,” he declares.

But Africa has other problems in education. In Cameroon, for instance, contract teachers comprise 53% of the labor force at primary level. They have as many responsibilities and far fewer rights than their civil service counterparts. How then can they provide quality education? Lawyer-teacher Vincent Bikono tells his story.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Ecuador wants to set the example by greatly increasing its investment in education. Minister of Education Raúl Vallejo Corral presents an overview of the reforms.

Also in Latin America, Guatemala thinks that children who fail their first

year of school can be stigmatized for life. For that reason the country, 30% of whose 13 million inhabitants lack literacy skills, launched the campaign “Save the first year”.

And to return to the most delicate aspects of Education for All, David Archer, from the NGO Action-Aid, explains why illiteracy costs more than literacy. Sylvie Cromer, from Lille 2 University, demonstrates that gender inequalities are visible even in mathematics textbooks. Indian Journalist Shiraz Sidhva tells the story of working children in Bangladesh to whom the state is giving the opportunity to succeed. Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta, Director of Basic Education at UNESCO, talks about the Organization’s activities on behalf of early childhood, notably in developing countries where preschool education remains the privilege of the wealthier families.

The features of this issue of the *UNESCO Courier* offer a photo report on education for girls in Yemen, a country making considerable effort to close the gender gap in schools; and a brief summary of the six Dakar goals.

Jasmina Šopova

In 2000, the international community committed to six goals aimed at assuring education for all by 2015. We are halfway there and we have good reason to be optimistic. But much remains to be done in early childhood education, gender parity and literacy.

EDUCATION FOR ALL BY 2015: WILL WE MAKE IT?



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Warao woman at Robinson Mission, National Literacy campaign in Venezuela (2005).

The international community is setting itself more and more targets in all domains: education, health, climate change etc. Global targets signal the collective recognition of a problem and the collective will to do something about it. This is why over 160 governments committed to six goals in 2000, in Dakar (Senegal), aimed at assuring quality education for all by 2015. Two of the Education for All goals (EFA) - universal primary education and gender parity - are also Millennium Development Goals, a broad set of poverty reduction objectives endorsed by over 200 countries. Targets are also political instruments that citizens can use to hold governments to account for their pledges. They are, however, of little significance if not regularly monitored, with results used to inform and to influence policy.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report, now in its sixth edition, serves this purpose for basic education.

Reasons for optimism

The latest Report asks a seemingly straightforward question at the midway point to 2015: "Will we make it?" The scorecard leaves ample space for optimism because there is clearly a "Dakar effect" since 2000. Progress has been faster than in the 1990s on several fronts. In sub-Saharan Africa enrolment in primary school increased by 36%, in South and West Asia by 22%. Governments in fourteen countries abolished primary school tuition fees, a measure that has favoured access for the most disadvantaged children. The number of out of school children has dropped

sharply, especially since 2002. Many countries in Africa and Asia have taken special measures to lift barriers to girls' education through campaigns, better sanitation in schools, free learning materials and recruitment of more female teachers. Latin American countries have implemented effective subsidy programmes to offset the costs of schooling for the poorest households.

Public expenditure on education increased by over 5% annually in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, the two regions farthest from achieving the EFA goals. Finally, aid commitments to basic education increased substantially between 2000 and 2004, from US\$2.7 billion to US\$5.1 billion, with low-income countries benefiting most.

Success creates its own problems

As schools attract a larger and more diverse student population, they face pressure to offer more classrooms, trained teachers and textbooks. Across the world more than 18 million new teachers will be needed by 2015, with the greatest challenge in sub-Saharan Africa. Governments are taking stop-gapping measures to avoid a crisis by hiring teachers on short-term contracts, but this is not a sustainable solution for improving quality. Adequate teacher training and professional development are keys to better quality schools.

Relatively low learning achievement in language and mathematics characterize many countries worldwide. Pupils need to spend more time learning in school, with enough trained teachers, textbooks and learning materials. They are most likely to acquire literacy skills if they start learning in their mother tongue.

Inclusion stands among the greatest challenges for education today. Special measures are now required to reach the 72 million children who are not in school. They may belong to indigenous groups, live in rural areas, urban slums or countries in conflict, suffer from a disability, or have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. In all cases poverty is a major constraint. Only through policies that recognize that children from different backgrounds have different needs can education become fairer for all. Small interventions such as health and school feeding programmes can make a big difference to learning.

All the goals matter

Extending the reach of education now calls for a much bolder focus on all the EFA goals, with more financial support from donors. Several facts are cause for concern: early childhood education, gender parity and adult literacy.

Children under age 6 in most developing regions lack access to care and education programmes. These have the proven potential to offset disadvantage, prepare children for primary school and increase their chances of doing well there once enrolled. The whole education system benefits when children enjoy the right start.

Girls: data available for the school year ending in 2005 confirms that the gender parity goal in primary and secondary education set for that year has been missed. Only three additional countries reached parity since 1999. Only about one-third of countries reported parity in both primary and secondary education in 2005. Disparities remain widespread in sub-Saharan Africa,



« Send my friend to school », UNESCO campaign (2005), involved 25 artists. Work of Jean Joseph Sanfourche, France.

WHAT CAN UNESCO DO FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

Many governments in developing countries have relegated the aspect of preparing young children for school to the private sector, especially in urban areas where families who can afford it benefit most. We need a pro-poor strategy that focuses on rural areas.

Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta, Director of the division for the promotion of basic education, speaks to Cynthia Guttman (UNESCO).

Our approach is to reach young children by including two years of pre-primary within primary school programmes. Early childhood care and development (ECD) is very inter-sectoral: it is not only about pre-school, but about health, nutrition and support to parents. These pre-primary programmes are more flexible, involving play, nutrition, and use of the language spoken at home. They aim to build confidence and bridges between the home and the school. The idea is to bring ECD closer to the school system, and to work with parent-teacher associations and NGOs.

UNESCO needs to drive home the message to ministries of education that investment in education starts

early, otherwise you run into repetition, drop out and poor performance. Donors also need to be sensitized. They are beginning to see that preparation before primary school is important but funding does not yet reflect this.

We are here to help governments negotiate the right types of assistance to make sure that schools are prepared for each child and each child prepared for school. This approach can change policies in countries as well as patterns of investment. It is also grounded in human rights: good quality learning programmes for all young children are the best response to the Convention and Recommendation Against Discrimination in Education.



Outside school activities. New Windsor, New Zealand.

the Arab States and South and West Asia, where they mainly favour boys. In several other regions, including Latin American and the Caribbean, girls are at an advantage.

Literacy: 774 million adults lack basic literacy skills. Although the adult literacy rate has increased in developing countries, the absolute number of illiterates has barely changed over the past two decades. Lack of literacy is synonymous with deprivation, making individuals, and especially women, more vulnerable to ill-health, exclusion and exploitation. It also heightens the chance that parents will not send their own-children to school. Literacy must be promoted in school and in society

at large through adult education programmes and access to the written word through appropriate media and publishing policies.

To these difficulties is added the issue of international aid. In Dakar in 2000, the international community pledged to support countries' commitment to education by providing higher levels of aid. Between 2000 and 2004, aid for basic education increased by 90% but fell in 2005, sending out a negative message. Aid needs to increase sharply to meet the annual external financing need of US\$11 billion.

Education is everyone's concern. Projections suggest that the EFA goals will not be reached on current trends. The pace of change

can be accelerated with much greater political will, resources and partnerships, both within countries and between them. As societies become more knowledge intensive, the education goals are more relevant than ever. But policies must be grounded in a concern for inclusion and quality for all age groups. The targets set in 2000 act as a beacon, drawing countries forward to provide a way out of poverty and fulfil the right to education.

Nicholas Burnett,

Director of the 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report, Assistant Director-General for Education (UNESCO).



"The targets set in 2000 act as a beacon". This drawing was part of an exhibit of children's drawings from Cuba. UNESCO, 1970.

Too often, education is perceived as an opportunity rather than a right, although access for all children to free and compulsory education is guaranteed by most Constitutions. When the right to education is flouted, the courts can and must intervene.

EDUCATION, A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

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November 2007 : Roma children's victory at the European Court of Human Rights.

This article is based on the talk Professor de Groof gave at the 13 September 2007 session of "21st Century Dialogues" on the theme "How to make education fairer".

Let us look at India: an estimated 58 out of 185 million children aged 5 to 14 years are not in school. (Editor's note: According to other sources, India had 13.5 million children not in school in 2005.) Yet the original text of the 1950 Constitution of India stated that 'The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.' The 10 year deadline for the provision of free, universal elementary education is long passed and has not been met.

In 1992 and 1993, the Supreme Court of India examined two cases

in which the plaintiffs claimed a judicially enforceable right to education. The Court expressed its concern at the obvious failure of the Government of India to fulfil its duty: 'Does not the passage of 44 years more than four times the period stipulated in article 45 convert the obligation created by the article into an enforceable right?'. It held that the right to education up to age 14 contained in the Constitution amounted to a 'fundamental right' enforceable by law. The immediate effect of the decision: any child below the age of 14 denied access to primary education could approach a court and obtain an order directing the authorities to initiate appropriate measures.

The Indian Court re-characterized the right to education as a fundamental right. This activist approach has not been followed in other continents. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) rather reluctantly adhered to such a judicial interpretation.

A European break-through

A case in point is that of the 18 Roma children living in the Czech Republic who were placed in a school for children with learning disabilities. The Roma unsuccessfully complained in the Czech courts in 1999 that this placement was discriminatory on the basis of race and ethnic origin and constituted a breach of their right to education. They maintained that the State's "differential treatment" in sending them to special schools only served to aggravate the differences between them and the pupils attending regular schools. They therefore requested that the State take positive measures to compensate for their socio-cultural handicap and afford them instead a means of resuming the normal curriculum.

In 2000, the applicants turned to the ECtHR. Despite the disturbing statistics resulting from the placement of Roma children in special schools, the ECtHR held that on the basis of the relevant facts, the reason for the applicants' placement in special schools was not based on their ethnic or racial origin. Thus the Roma children were not treated differently from children of non Roma origin. The court voted six to one that there had been no violation of Article 14

of the European Convention on Human Rights (prohibition of discrimination), and no violation of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (the right to education).

On 14 November 2007, however, the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR, by a vote of 13 to 4, ruled in a ground-breaking judgment that segregating Roma students into special schools is indeed a form of unlawful discrimination, in breach of Article 14 of the European Convention (prohibiting discrimination), and of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (securing the right to education). As such, the judgment pointed out that the Convention addresses not only specific acts of discrimination, but also systemic practices that deny the rights to racial or ethnic groups. It also underscored that racial segregation which disad-

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Education is a fundamental right (A school in Slovenia).

vantages members of a particular racial or ethnic group amounts to discrimination in breach of Article 14 - thereby bringing the ECtHR's Article 14 jurisprudence in line

with antidiscrimination law of the European Union.

Infringements on the right to education and unequal educational opportunities are perhaps the most complex problem facing societies today as they struggle for social cohesion and economic development. There may be no silver bullet to eradicate them. However, fair legal processes within schools themselves would already be a good start. They would not only make it a safer environment but also give the proper signals about a fairer society. Most important, they would affect the way young people react to, and interact with, authorities and legal processes throughout their adult life.

Jan de Groof,

Professor of Education Law
at the College of Europe in Bruges.

SCHOOL IS LIKE A BICYCLE IF YOU DON'T PEDAL, IT TOPPLES

An education expert, Michaela Zatreanu doesn't fiercely advocate teaching school in Romani, despite being the author of the first textbooks published in this language in Romania. She thinks instruction exclusively in Romani would represent a form of segregation and promotes schooling with a multicultural dimension.

Born into a Roma family in Maglavit, a village of 2500 inhabitants in south-east Romania, Michaela Zatreanu learned Romanian by watching television before starting school. Her mother language, Romani, spoken by the 70-odd Roma families in the village, was banned at school, even in the playground. "Under Nicolae Ceauscescu, the recognized minorities were Hungarian, German, Serb and miscellaneous. We were miscellaneous," she explains with a laugh.

Today Zatreanu, 32, is a consultant at the Romanian Ministry of Education, after having worked for the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), an organization partnered by the

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Fishermen's children in Kazakhstan.

Council of Europe and the European Union. "Working for a year within the Council of Europe! What an amazing experience!" she exclaims.

She never imagined getting that far. Her dream when she was a little girl was to attend high school in Bucharest. She made it, thanks to her determination and her father's moral support. "He was afraid he wouldn't have enough money to pay for my schooling, but he said, 'Go, we'll see what happens.'" He was right. Michaela passed the exam for teachers' training school.

"That's where I really saw the difference between the attitude of the teachers in my village and the teachers in the capital," she explains. Unlike her brother, who finally dropped out at elementary level because his teacher was beating him, Michaela has fond memories of school. But, she does recall, "When a pupil lost his pen or anything else, some teachers would make all the Roma children come up from the back rows (we were always in the back) and stand in line in front of the board and take off our boots. Imagine the shame – I wore socks that weren't very presentable. I was very very embarrassed." And she won't soon forget the time her history teacher said in front of all the pupils in the playground that if this young Roma girl could be an excellent student, anybody could do good schoolwork.

"It certainly wasn't a compliment, but his intentions weren't evil," she says. "You have to keep in mind we Romas were inferior, in our own eyes as well as other people's. Up to a point, I accepted this treatment. I didn't find it terrible."

But Ms Zatreanu won't generalize. "Not all teachers are racist and not all Roma suffer from discrimination. But some do. It can be explained through their own experience, their own motivation." She wants to remain optimistic: "I won't say all teachers now are extraordinary, but they are generally better prepared than before. Things today have changed a lot."

Undoubtedly. Proof enough to see her take the floor at international meetings held at UNESCO and to think of her grandmother who

couldn't even imagine leaving her village, or her father, whose idea of a very good job was doing the cleaning in a hospital. "When you live in poverty, perspectives are very limited," says the woman who defied deeply-rooted prejudice.

One incident in the late 1990s did upset her. She was teaching in a state school in a district of Bucharest with a large Roma population. "Another teacher came and banged on the door of my classroom. 'Come out and make your little gypsies quiet down!' she shouted. I told her it was out of the question for me to interrupt my class to stop a fight. The most shocked was the American journalist who was in the classroom just then, reporting a story about my Romani classes."

What a lady!

What were these classes? After the fall of Ceausescu's regime, the Ministry of Education embarked on extensive reforms, and Romani could be taught as a mother language in schools. The young teacher jumped at the chance. "It was outside the regular school curriculum. After an entire day of classes in Romanian, when the children were tired, I would take my guitar and sing them songs in Romani. They had fun and they learned at the same time, the little Roma and the little Romanians."

No real program, no real method... so she decided to create them. That was how she became the author of the first Romani textbooks: "It wasn't

difficult for me, since it was my mother language. And I had an excellent director of research. And linguists had already come up with a writing system based on the Latin alphabet."

Ms Zatreanu the pioneer decided to continue her studies: "I had a great teacher in high school. What a lady! She was my role model, and when you have a role model like that, you make progress," she says. Michaela was accepted into the philology department at the university and chose English and Romani. Had Romani been taught at university during Ceausescu's time? "No way!" she shoots back.

How many Roma live in Romania? "Officially it's 5,500, but according to some of the Roma NGOs, it's more than two million! I wonder if there aren't even more than that. Half the Roma who make it don't admit to being Roma, you know."

Romania's luck

There is genuine political will in Romania to improve education for the Roma. About five years ago, the government adopted a number of measures pertaining to different social issues: education, housing, health, employment. "It's to be expected," says Ms Zatreanu. "Romania has the luck to have more Romas than other countries" – she maintains her radiant smile – "and therefore more educated Roma who could participate in instituting such a strategy. The largest number of Roma activists at the European level comes from Romania!"



© UNESCO/Michel Ravasard
Michaela Zatreanu.

Does this strategy have real impact on daily life? "Of course, but it's not always visible. We have a law against segregation and discrimination. Children's learning conditions are regulated. It's a good start. But policies aren't enough to change the world overnight! If you want to solve the problem of discrimination, you have to work on people's minds."

Ms Zatreanu proceeds to explain that teachers' outlooks are changing, parents are more involved in the school program, curricula are no longer "monocultural", and schools are becoming autonomous as power is

decentralized, a novel process that is inspiring people - for decades used to working under state authority - to take responsibility for themselves.

"School is like a bicycle. If you don't pedal, it topples. The system has to move all the time. I always see change as positive," she says. "For example, the fact that more and more Roma children in Europe no longer speak Romani is considered a real problem. But I say if a child is happy without speaking Romani, that's positive!"

In Ms Zatreanu's view, it is the state's duty to offer mother lan-

guage teaching to Roma children, or at least to have teachers who speak it. But, she maintains, "Setting up a school exclusively in Romani would be another form of discrimination."

As the mother of a four-year-old son, does she want her child taught in Romani? "For me, it's important he have multicultural schooling, in whatever language. My son has already learned Romanian in kindergarten. With no effort, just by playing."

Jasmina Šopova
and **Ariane Bailey**,
UNESCO Courier

Education should enable people to take root in their culture as well as open them up to other cultures. Africa needs schooling that integrates its languages, history and social values, according to Adama Samassekou, president of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN).

FOR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

This article is taken from Adama Samassekou's talk at the session of "21st Century Dialogues" held at UNESCO on 13 September 2007 on the topic "How to make education fairer?"

If education were a consumer product, we would make it fairer by distributing it equitably among all the peoples of the world, so that no one would be lacking. But if education is a process of conditioning, with the aim of shaping children's personalities so that as adults they can find their place in the society in which they live, then the educational project is linked to a societal project.

In that case, would it be fairer for everybody to practice the same education, at the risk of falling into global cultural leveling? Isn't the diversity of educational methods the best guarantee of the cultural diversity we are so fiercely safeguarding these days? From this standpoint, to increase fairness in education, don't we have to make sure that all the world's peoples have the means to create their own educa-

tional systems? And shouldn't we think about taking concerted action to make education fairer, by making access to educational means more equitable?

Universal knowledge and endogenous knowledge

The need to preserve each people's identity and singularity doesn't exclude the need for communication and exchange with the rest of the world. If, in every corner of the globe, we succeed in blending harmoniously a certain quantity of universal knowledge and a certain quantity of endogenous knowledge, this education enables humans to take root in their local cultures and also to become part of an international culture.

Maybe it's a dream, but it would be good to remember the greatest



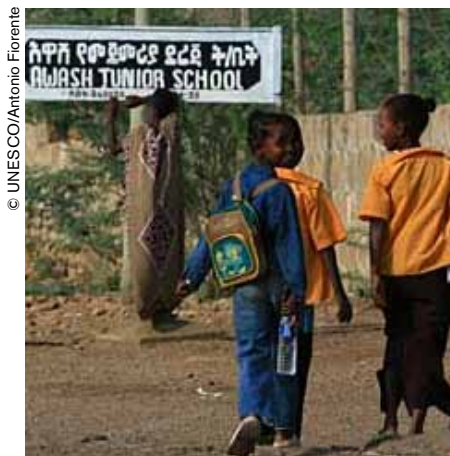
Multilingual education based on the mother language must be developed.

projects of humanity were, for a long time, dreams. Let us recall the wise words of Brazilian Don Helder Camara: When you dream alone, it's just a dream; but when several people have the same dream, it's already the beginning of reality.

In my part of the world, Africa, the situation is sadly only too well-known. Who has described it better than the author of "Educate or Perish", the late Professor Ki-Zerbo (Burkina Faso), with his highlighting of what prevails on our continent: a culturally integrating education, which for decades has not respected the right of millions of pupils to have an identity; education that impoverishes, too, because it is disconnected from production; and finally a socially violent education, because it fosters the social exclusion of the less-privileged, who are handicapped by the preceding anomalies.

We need a school that is attached to society, not torn from it. A school that would give real actors back to society, and not victims of the cognitive violence represented by the repression of the mother language.

I am convinced that if we want to achieve education that is fairer in Africa, we must develop a multilingual education based on the mother language, an education in the African languages of the learner, in partnership with the European and international languages serving today as official languages in the greater majority of African states; an



© UNESCO/Antonio Fiorentino
We need a school that is attached to society, not torn from it.

education that builds bridges between early schooling in the formal sector and literacy training for those who are past the age of starting school.

Education and culture are indivisible

Most African countries continue to endure an unacceptable situation: as soon as they start school, children start learning in a language they don't speak at home. Introducing African languages in the African school systems – as a vector of learning and as a subject of study – is one of the goals of the African Academy of Languages, which I head. We decided to undertake a genuine rehabilitation process for education at continent level, by reestablishing the link between education and culture and by including our languages and our history in school curricula. It's what I call the reestablishment of the African educational system, characterized by three essential principles,

like the three stones of the African hearth: rebuilding cultural identity of the learner by taking as a base the simultaneous use of the mother language and the official language; linking school to life, by restructuring curricula and promoting professional training, entrepreneurship and active educational methods; and promoting a dynamic of partnership around and for the benefit of the school, allowing the entire educational community to contribute to a school project in which participants can recognize themselves.

Taking African languages into account as working languages in all domains of public life must start at school, the best place for building know-how and developing knowledge, before it takes its place in other social spheres. Africa is the only continent in the world where, in most countries, the person on trial doesn't have access to justice in his or her mother language, and still has to rely on an interpretation system inherited from the colonial period. Let us remember the indignation of Mahatma Gandhi, who as a lawyer in court was obliged to express himself in English while an interpreter translated his words into his own mother language. "Isn't this ridiculous," he would say. "Isn't it a sign of slavery? Must I blame the English or myself?"

Africa has decided to change the situation by creating the African Academy of Languages. It's a continental structure concerned with all language issues, which makes it unique in the world. It aims to set up a real partnership in Africa between what I would call "Africanophony" – the condition of speaking one or several African languages – and other linguistic spheres: English-speaking, French-speaking, Spanish-speaking, Portuguese-speaking etc, with a view to intercultural civic education. In this way, the African Academy of Languages represents one of the major catalysts for the ongoing African cultural Renaissance.

Adama Samassekou,

President of the African Academy of Languages, former Minister of Education of Mali (1993-2000).



© UNESCO/Aleksandar Džoni-Šopov
Children must learn in the language they speak at home.

In Cameroon, contract workers make up 53% of teaching staff at primary level. Systematically paid less than those with civil servant status and sometimes better qualified, contractors are in the process of founding a union.

VINCENT BIKONO

CONTRACT WORKER AND NOT PROUD OF IT



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Pupils at the Melen school in Yaounde (Cameroon).

At his makeshift desk in a CM2 class (10-11 year olds) at the Melen public school in Yaoundé, Vincent Bikono, a teacher on contract, is deep in his thoughts while his pupils – 20 boys and 20 girls – complete their first history and geography tests of the school year. “I’m lucky,” he says. “Aid from Japan to Cameroon built three schools in our district. It allowed us to make classrooms less crowded, while in districts like Mballa II, Nlongkak or Tsinga, teachers find themselves in front of 100 pupils. Actually, in our school too, some of the lower grades still have classes numbering 95 children.”

But that’s as far as this teacher’s “luck” takes him. With his professional diploma - CAPIEM – qualifying him to teach at preschool and elementary levels he found himself in the educational system more out of necessity than by vocation. “I had obtained a degree in law and I was unemployed. A friend one day advised me to take the qualifying exam for the state school for teachers. I passed and in 1998 I started working as a substi-

tute teacher. It was survival instinct,” he recalls. It takes nine months to obtain the diploma that qualifies teachers in Cameroon.

Working as a teacher in Cameroon

He had to wait eight years to move up from substitute teacher to contractor. In 2006, some 10,300 substitute teachers were promoted, giving them a slightly larger paycheck. But working conditions remain unsatisfactory. “Being a teacher in Cameroon is not particularly pleasant,” confides a disillusioned Mr Bikono. “If you’re a contract worker on top of it, you tend to feel marginal and frustrated.” His monthly salary comes to 99,000 CFA francs (about US\$158), a long way from the starting salary of 140,000 CFA francs for a teacher with a civil service job.

“It’s true that as a substitute teacher, I was only making 55,000 CFA francs, 10 months out of 13 in theory, but often more like seven out of 12 in practice....As a contract worker, I get paid every month.” And indeed

his salary is much superior to that of teachers in the private sector who earn between 20,000 and 50,000 CFA francs (between 40 and 100 dollars for eight or nine months of the year, as the employer pleases. But Mr Bikono feels he should be paid as much as his civil servant colleagues. “It’s discrimination. We’re doing the same job and we have the same amount of work. In fact, contractors are sometimes better qualified than civil servants, because some of the latter take the CAPIEM exam when they have only a BEPC (lowest level secondary school diploma).” The teacher becomes indignant about his paltry salary, which does not allow him to live decently and forces him to live in his father’s home. His wife has left him, tired of waiting for a “supposed improvement of the situation”.

Seven contract workers for three civil servants

Contract teachers play a very important role in Cameroon’s educational



© Dorine Ekwé

Teachers have a major responsibility in Africa. (Class in Ethiopia).

system, Vincent Bikono explains. "At the Melen public school, there are seven of us contractors and three civil servants, including the headmistress, the secretary and one teacher." The Ministry of Basic Education recognizes the importance of contract teachers by listing 36,000 of them in its mid-term expense budget for 2007, not counting the 5,500 new hires last September. According to

the government report on the national education system, contractors make up 53% of the teaching workforce at primary level.

His teaching job involves giving pupils about a dozen classes, from Monday to Friday, from 7.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. "It's a huge workload. I give classes in grammar, spelling, mathematics, history, geography, English...not to mention

sports! Luckily there aren't too many pupils so when it comes to marking homework, things mostly go well," recounts Bikono, who says a contract teachers' union is being set up to better coordinate collective action.

Dorine Ekwè,
journalist at *Mutations*,
Cameroon.

Ecuador has considerably increased its investment in education. The country occupies an intermediate position regarding fulfillment of the Education for All objectives set in Dakar (Senegal) in 2000. Its Minister of Education Raúl Vallejo Corral describes the situation.

RAÚL VALLEJO CORRAL

REMOVE OBSTACLES LIMITING ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Interview by Lucía Iglesias Kuntz (UNESCO Courier).

What initiatives has Ecuador taken in order to achieve the Dakar goals?

Our wager for achievement is contained in the ten-year education plan adopted on 26 November 2006 by a national referendum, with more than 66% of the vote. In other words, the people voted in favour of this plan and turned it into state policy. This means that independently of the government or of the minister in charge of this portfolio, the plan will be pursued until 2015. It rests on eight pillars (link towards Dakar goals), with the first four aimed towards universal education and the rest concerned with restoring school infrastructure.

Among other aspects of the plan, I would underline the development of a fairer wage policy for teachers and the establishment of funding policies. The latter consists of increasing by half a point annually the proportion



Minister Raúl Vallejo Corral working with a child.



Raúl Vallejo Corral, Minister of Education of Ecuador at UNESCO's General Conference in 2007.

Eight pillars of the ten-year plan

1. Universal preschool education from age 0 to 5.
2. Universal general primary education from 1st to 10th year.
3. Increase of number of secondary school pupils to 75% of the age group concerned.
4. Eradicating illiteracy and reinforcing adult education.
5. Improving school infrastructure and equipment.
6. Improving educational quality and equity, and implementing a national system of evaluation and social responsibility for education.
7. Enhancing the status of the teaching profession and improving teacher training, continuing education, work conditions and quality of life.
8. Increasing by 0.5% annually the educational sector's part of the GDP until 2012, or until it reaches at least 6% of the GDP.

of the GDP allocated to the education sector until 2012, or at least until the education sector's part reaches 6% of the GDP, as UNESCO recommends. In 2005, the percentage was 2.4% and in 2006 it had already risen to 2.9%. This year we hope to reach 3.4%, then 3.9% in 2008.

How are these measures applied concretely?

We began by removing obstacles limiting access to education. In 1992, we launched a programme to provide free textbooks to pupils in rural schools. In the period I would call the "long night of neoliberalism", the programme was suspended, but we have revived it. We provide textbooks (mathematics, Spanish, natural sciences and social sciences) to all children within the public school system, from the first to the tenth year.

We have also eliminated parents' financial contribution until the seventh year. From now on the State takes on all these costs, so that the right to free education guaranteed by our Constitution becomes a reality. We have also increased the number of days of school catering from 80 to 120. In all we have 200 days of classes, so we are 80 short. Our goal remains to serve the children food on every school day.

Furthermore, we are at the point of achieving universal education for the

first year. Before, children started school at age six and now it's five. We have hired 1,400 preschool teachers and this year we will hire 1,400 more.

Another very troublesome issue is indeed the shortage of teachers. In Ecuador, there is a shortage of 112,000 schoolmasters....

Yes, that's true. The reason is that since 1998, not a single teaching job has been created. According to neoliberal reasoning, this meant spending more public money. Right now, we have two options to solve the problem: a programme encouraging teachers who want to retire to do so with a financial incentive of US\$12,000 per teacher. This year, we will thus open 2,000 positions, and with the money saved, we will be able to make up the deficit by hiring younger teachers. And above all, a few weeks ago, President Rafael Correa decided that his Minister of Economy and myself would work together to create these 12,000 jobs, by conceding an investment of US\$60 million.

What reactions are being sparked by the debt swap initiatives for education?

In 2005 and 2006, Ecuador developed a debt swap programme with Spain, in the amount of US\$20 million. The debt swap was a success but it was fragmented into a multitude of small projects. We are currently negotiating a new more balanced swap that will cover overall projects.

In general, debt swap opens up an interesting possibility for developing countries. But it should not be viewed as charity, consisting of sending us consultants or experts who would pocket 70% of the non-refundable loans to advise us to do what we already know. From another perspective, a useful strategy would be to insert debt swap into national education plans. This would make it possible to fund concrete actions with easily verifiable results: repair schools, for instance, or equip them with computers. Obviously, UNESCO could be the ideal forum to promote

FIRST YEAR OF SCHOOL CRUCIAL FOR THE REST OF A CHILD'S LIFE

Support for teachers, evaluation of pupils' progress, follow-up for children outside the classroom, and parents' participation in their children's education – these elements are key to the success of the campaign “Save the first year” in Guatemala. Simple but effective strategies.



© USAID/World Learning

Maya K'iche children in the El Quiche region (North West of Guatemala).

Guatemala, a country facing high rates of illiteracy, has found a genuinely effective solution through the program “Save the first year”, which can play a determining role in the success or failure of thousands of children living in poverty. Taking the country “out of the darkness of illiteracy” is the goal of the organizers of the project, which was devised by the United States Agency for International Development and implemented throughout the country since 2004 by the Ministry of Education.

The strategy consisting of “catching up” children who fail their first year has had positive repercussions, as much for pupils and their parents as for the teachers themselves, who see it as source of inspiration for improving the quality of education in the country.

The coordinator of the national agency for the management and quality of education, Jose Francisco Puac, is visibly delighted by the success of “Save the first year”, pointing out that out of the 9000 children who took advantage of the program this year, 63% were “caught up” and admitted to the following class. In 2007, the program cost US\$62,000.

Parents and children have become aware of the importance of education,” says Francisco Puac, explaining that dropping out and repeating in school before the implementation of the program were due to teachers' insufficient training and the lack of family support. From now on, he adds, “the essential remedy is that teachers are ready to surmount these difficulties,” thanks to financial incen-

tives allocated by the Ministry of Education, such as for instance the scholarships available for teachers and students.

The poorest have priority

At the beginning the program covered the 331 municipalities comprising Guatemala. This year, it concentrated on 41 communities, considered the poorest “with high rates of malnutrition, as well as health, education and human development problems.”

According to Francisco Puac, these communities were selected because they had the highest drop-out and repeating levels, up to 50% of the children inscribed in school.

He says that children who fail their first year “remain stigmatized” and are doomed to an uncertain future. This slows social and economic development in the country, 30% of whose nearly 13 million inhabitants are illiterate.

“The success of the program is due to the interest shown by



© UNESCO/Eduardo Barrios

Class at Santa Teresita primary school (Guatemala).

parents of pupils and to the support of the authorities,” echoes Olga Monterroso, a headmistress in San Marcos department. “These children no longer repeat their first year and are no longer among Guatemala’s illiterates.” Her region scored highest this year by “catching up” 82% of the 1700 children who benefited from the program, in which six municipalities and 375 teachers took part.

One asset of the innovative project is that it motivates children to continue their schooling, instead of their

parents sending them out to work in the fields for the boys, or making them do housework for the girls, given the conditions of extreme poverty in which they live.

Oscar Ovando, a headmaster in Petén department, which borders Belize and Mexico, is also satisfied with the impact of the program, because it really does help prevent children from dropping out or repeating the first year. He has even asked for the program to become institutional, given that Alvaro Colom, a Social-Democrat elected for four

years, officially begins his term on 14 January 2008.

Ovando explains that out of the 2815 children inscribed in schools in the municipality of Sayaxché, 775 participated in the program and 175 succeeded in going up to the next grade. “That proves the method is effective,” he concludes. “It’s very important because for a child to make it past the first year can determine whether his life is a success or a failure.”

Edgar Calderón,
Guatemalan journalist.

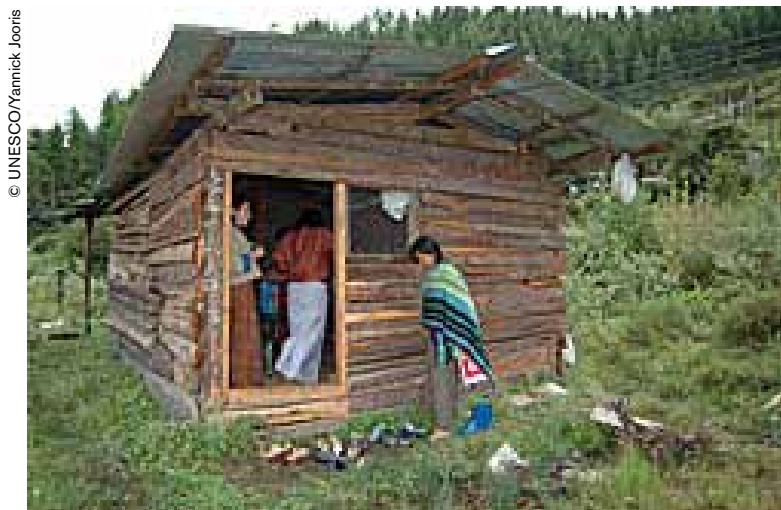
ILLITERACY COSTS MORE THAN LITERACY

We cannot abandon adult literacy under the pretext that children are being educated, when we know the crucial importance of the home environment. Literacy has often been associated with one-off campaigns when sustained investment over time is needed.

The donor community has played quite a negative role by reducing the EFA agenda to primary schooling. The World Bank in particular has quite actively argued against investment in adult literacy. We are a very far cry from the post-independence era when adult literacy was a national priority in many countries.

Sometimes past practices are at fault: adult literacy has often been associated with quick, one-off campaigns whereas you clearly need sustained investment over time. National policy makers respond to national evidence, but there is a lack of good quality evaluations.

A first priority is for governments to understand the scale of the challenge. Kenya’s recent national literacy survey is an excellent example. It used direct testing of adults and graded results along a spectrum. It found that literacy challenges were



School for adults in Bhutan.

much higher than anyone had previously thought and this discovery is leading to new engagement on adult literacy.

Second, there is an urgent need to build up good quality trained professionals to work in the sector. Third, there is a case for putting together national documents

that look at the history of literacy in the country, and pooling what has worked from the effective programmes.

Renewed momentum

Governments’ role is to put together policy frameworks and galvanize



« Literacy project » of the Public Library at Watertown, Massachusetts, United States.

resources. It is now widely accepted that the most effective literacy programmes are those run collaboratively, across multiple government agencies, with civil society, and decentralized to a district level so that learning is relevant to the livelihoods of the learners.

There has been renewed momentum over the past year around the UN Literacy Decade. Many big

African countries, including Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, are beginning to take literacy seriously again. Brazil is doing extremely interesting work. Donors need to send out the message that they are willing to support adult literacy. We need to put pressure on them to support education plans that include adult literacy (as happened, for example, with the Fast Track Initiative's en-

dorsement of Benin's education plan which included adult literacy), otherwise governments will continue to neglect it.

The cost of not achieving literacy is immense. You can't abandon generations of adults under the pretext that it is enough to educate the next generation of children. All literature shows the incredible importance of the home environment. A child from a non literate household will struggle at school. Women's literacy in particular empowers the whole household. Adult literacy is the invisible glue for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

David Archer,

Head of International Education,
Action-Aid (development
through education NGO),
with **Cynthia Guttman** (UNESCO).

Are girls and boys equal in mathematics textbooks?

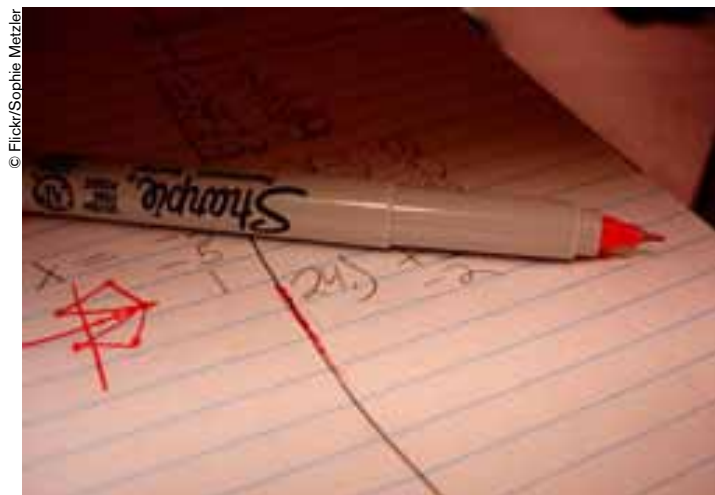
This is not evident, judging by the study conducted by Sylvie Cromer, lecturer at Lille 2 University. With a group of African academics, she analyzed primary school textbooks in several countries in the region. Result: girls become fewer as the scholastic level rises.

GENDER EQUALITY IN MATH TEXTBOOKS AN IMPOSSIBLE EQUATION?

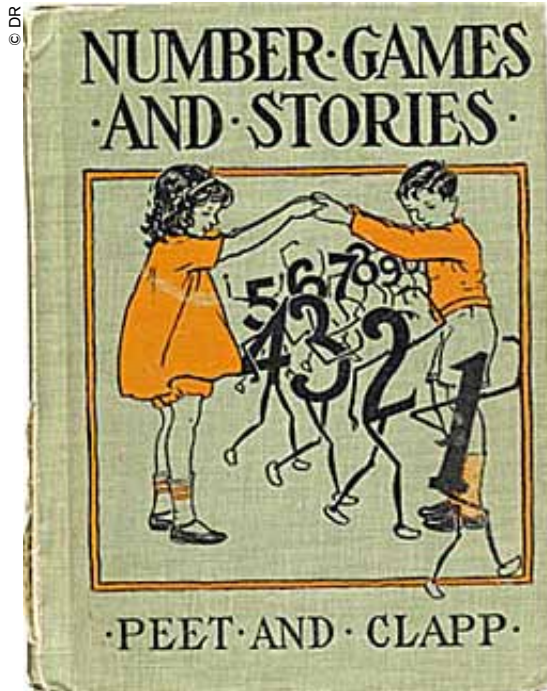
Interview by Agnès Bardou, UNESCO Courier.

What did this study examine?

The study is the result of scientific research carried out within the framework of the Réseau international de recherche sur les représentations sexuées dans les manuels scolaires (RIRRS – international research network on gender representations in textbooks), and of regional seminars organized by UNESCO in several African countries. Universities in Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Togo and Senegal volunteered to examine the math books used throughout the primary level in their country, adding up to a



School books are not neutral with respect to gender parity



Old school textbook: male and female figures are treated the same. Is this an exception?

total of six years. This is a novel initiative because up until now, the study of gender representations in schoolbooks has mainly looked at history or French books. We chose to look at math books because normally we consider science to be neuter and abstract – therefore it was interesting to see whether it was as sexless as we generally think. It's also interesting insofar as scientific fields of study attract, as we know, many more boys than girls. In addition, we took a quantitative approach while other studies are generally qualitative – which is to say we looked not only at situations and illustrations but also counted each gender instance in the books.

This thorough survey yields an extensive body of knowledge.

What are the main findings of this study?

It reveals first that textbooks aren't neutral when it comes to gender equality. They are based in fact on examples from daily life that call upon representations of gender. To learn counting, for instance, you find a mother who goes to market with a certain number of eggs in her basket, or a child who travels a number of kilometers. What is noteworthy is that the characters who play a role in books designed for the youngest pupils are often children. At that level,

we see that there is practically parity; we count as many girls as boys. But as the level rises, the adults are more and more present. And when adults are represented, there is a majority of men. The over-representation of men reaches 67.6% in Cameroon and 76.4% in Togo. It means that the more we advance, the more the masculine figure takes over and the more the deficit in female characters becomes flagrant.

Is the difference only quantitative?

No, masculine and feminine characters aren't treated the same way. In one out of two instances, when the subject is a man, he's identified by his profession. When it's a woman, she's often identified by a family relationship – she's the mother, sister or daughter "of". And when she's identified by her profession, she's usually from the informal sector: for example, she's selling produce from the family garden, but she doesn't have the status of a shopkeeper. Girls are also more often shown in passive situations. I remember the cover of one textbook that showed a boy and a girl at school. The boy was writing on the blackboard while the girl was simply handing him a geometry triangle. There's nothing shocking about this. We're far from the sexist stereotypes you could find in schoolbooks 30 years ago. Yet the stereotypes haven't disappeared; they've reconstituted themselves in more subtle forms.

Do these representations have real impact on schoolchildren?

In all societies, text books are a fundamental educational tool, even with competition from multimedia. They are a powerful vehicle for transmitting knowledge, and also values. It's even truer in developing countries where books are expensive. In classes, therefore, they make full use of them. Which is why it's so important for the books to transmit images of equality, because they have the power to legitimize them. And a girl can't feel her ambition to learn mathematics is legitimate if that knowledge is shown as a masculine privilege.



The male figure dominates in most school books and manuals.

More than half the inhabitants of Bangladesh's city slums are children: nearly 15 million boys and girls, of which 8 million must work to help their families survive. For a cost of 35 dollars a child, the government has launched an education project for child workers, giving them a chance to change their lives.

THE INVISIBLE CHILDREN OF BANGLADESH



© UNESCO/L. Iglesias

Some eight million children work in Bangladesh.

Twelve-year-old Hosneara has been wielding a heavy hammer to chip bricks since she was nine. But her life changed two years ago, when she started spending two hours a day at a learning centre close to her home in one of the poorest slums in Dhaka, Bangladesh. "The employer used to cheat me, but he can't anymore, because I've learnt how to count," she says proudly. Farzana, an 11-year-old domestic worker, is equally proud that she is able to count the change returned to her at the grocery store. And Al-Amin, who's 11, is happy to have escaped toiling in a factory since he helped his father start and run a phone and fax facility – he too received his basic education at a learning centre close to the slum where he lives.

These are just three examples of thousands of children who have benefited from the Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project. Supported by UNICEF and managed by the Bureau of non formal education of the government of Bangladesh this project was initiated in 1997. Its first phase ended in June 2004. Currently it is in its second phase which runs through 2009. The project seeks to provide vulnerable child labourers in Bangladesh with a basic primary school education while they continue to work. Though the eradication of child labour is the ultimate goal, the project recognizes that it is not yet feasible to do away with the malaise in a country where an estimated 7.9 million children

work to help their families survive.

The children are "hard to reach" because many of them work invisibly, behind closed doors. Often, they are domestic workers in private homes, or toil in small sweatshops where there is no regulation, and most often, exploitation. "We are looking to prepare the children for the better life options that will be available to them once they have a basic education," says Shamima Siddiky, UNICEF's education specialist in Dhaka, who monitors the program.

The Roadside Schools, as they are sometimes called, targeted 8-14 year olds in the first phase, with 11,550 centres in six cities, reaching 339,150 working children. Classes were held in two shifts to accommodate the children's work



Child workers (Dhaka, Bangladesh), in an aluminum tableware manufacturing workshop who learn to read and write after hours.

schedules, with a maximum of 30 students per class. Learning materials were provided, and there was no homework involved.

Trained for a job

Based on the studies and evaluations of the initial phase, a number of strategic changes have been incorporated in the second phase, explains Siddiky. An older age group of 10-14 years, who are even less likely to return to mainstream education has been targeted, with 200,000 children to be enrolled in 8,000 new learning centres by June 2008 – 3,310 of these are already operational. The basic education course, which allows students to reach an equivalent of grade 3, has been ex-

tended to 40 months, from the earlier two-year program.

Priority has been given to vocational training in a trade or livelihood skill. – The first phase having produced 1,000 graduates in Dhaka, Sylhet and Barisal, the second phase will enroll twenty thousand working children above the age of 13 in training.

A future for 35 dollars

The project will then assist the trained children with job placements, or self-employment, and follow up on their needs for six months. Students not chosen for vocational training will also be linked to services through other relevant organizations.

Many of the learning centres are

located in close proximity to city slums, where there is a concentration of working children who lack the most basic amenities, and have no access to schools. Over one-fifth of Bangladesh's population of 140 million lives in urban areas (about 28.8 million people). Children account for about 56% of slum inhabitants – nearly 15 million boys and girls.

“Our main task is to identify the children, and then motivate them to attend classes,” says Siddiky. “It is very important to involve the community in this endeavour, with teachers, parents and employers working together to ensure a brighter future for the children.” The project includes a month-long training program for teachers who are recruited locally, and have the basis for contacts with parents and employers in the vicinity.

“Most of the teachers are women, who have a better chance of approaching parents and getting girls to attend,” says Reazul Quader, Joint Secretary and Project Director for BEHTRUC, BNFE. Since girls are particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation, especially as domestic workers, and as part of an improved gender strategy, learning centres attempt to enroll 60% girls.

“The project has been running smoothly so far,” says Quader. “One of the main problems we face is high drop-out rates, which have recently increased from 20% to 30%,” he adds. Quader explains that this is mainly because slum inhabitants are evicted by government agencies, and have to seek a new home every two or three months. “The government has decided to halt evictions, in order to improve attendance,” he adds. “The children really enjoy coming to the learning centres, because they know it (education) will eventually change their lives.”

This project has cost 39.5 million dollars up to date, i.e. 35 dollars per child a year.

The main donors are the Swedish and Canadian governments.



For 35 dollars a year, this child can have a better future.

Shiraz Sidhva,
Indian journalist

Yemen

an example in education for girls

Yemen is making considerable efforts to fill the gap between the number of girls and boys attending school. Photo reportage on the Attabari primary school in Sana'a by the American photographer Linda Shen born in Shanghai (China) in 1969.



The pupils read "Tariq brushes his teeth".

- At the end of the 1990's, some 2000 teachers were trained in the rural areas. They are a model for young girls and encourage them to finish secondary school before marrying.
- Yemen is a poor country, with a traditional society and one of the lowest rates of school attendance for girls in the world.
- Since 2006, in partnership with the private sector and UNICEF, the government launched a campaign encouraging girls to attend school which aims at reaching the gender parity goal at school: Business Partnership for Girls Education. (Source: UNICEF)

© UNESCO/Linda Shen



Many girls growing up in rural areas may never get a chance to go to school.



Attabari Elementary School.

© UNESCO/Linda Shen

Where the world stands on the six goals

© UNESCO/Antonio Fiorentino



Education made us what we are (Ethiopia).

1. Expanding and improving early childhood care and education

Although child mortality rates have dropped, a majority of countries are not taking the necessary policy measures to provide care and education to children below age 3.

The provision of pre-primary education for children aged 3 and above has improved but remains scarce across sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States.

2. Ensuring access to free and compulsory primary education

Access to and participation in primary education have sharply increased since Dakar, and the number of out-of-school children dropped from 96 million to 72 million between 1999 and 2005.

Twenty-three countries that lacked legal provisions for compulsory education in 2000 have since established them. Compulsory education laws now exist in 95% of 203 countries and territories.

The global net enrolment ratio rose from 83% to 87% between 1999 and 2005. Participation levels increased most rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa (23%), and South and West Asia (11%). The number of out-of-school children dropped by 24 million to 72 million between 1999 and 2005. Thirty-five fragile states account for 37% of all out-of-school children.

Despite overall enrolment increases, sub-national disparities in school participation persist between regions, provinces or states and between urban and rural areas. Children from poor, indigenous and disabled populations are also at a systematic disadvantage, as are those living in slums. On current trends, 58 out of 86 countries that have not yet reached universal primary enrolment will not achieve it by 2015.

3. Ensuring the learning needs of young people and adults

This goal has been particularly neglected, in part because of the difficulty of defining, documenting and monitoring it. Many young people and adults acquire skills through informal means, or through a great variety of non-formal literacy, equivalency, life-skills and livelihood programmes.

Household surveys show that non-formal education is the main route to learning for many disadvantaged youth and adults in some of the world's poorest countries. Yet non-formal education programmes remain neglected in terms of public funding, although some governments have recently developed national frameworks for sustained provision.

4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in adult literacy

Adult literacy remains a serious global issue. Worldwide, 774 million adults still lack basic literacy skills. Some 64% of them are women, a share virtually unchanged since the early 1990s. Three regions (East Asia, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa) concentrate the vast majority of the one in five adults around the world still denied the right to literacy. Except in China, there has been little progress during the past decade in reducing the large number of illiterate adults.

The adult literacy rate in developing countries increased from 68% to 77% between the periods 1985–1994 and 1995–2004. Of the 101 countries still far from achieving 'universal literacy', 72 will not succeed in halving their adult illiteracy rates by 2015.

5. Eliminating gender disparities

Only 59 countries with data had achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005; 75% of countries with data are at parity or close to it at primary level, while

47% are close to reaching the goal in secondary education. Boys' underparticipation and underachievement are of growing concern in secondary education.

Only 18 out of 113 countries that missed the gender parity goal at primary and secondary level in 2005 stand a chance of achieving it by 2015. Gender equality remains elusive: sexual violence, insecure school environments and inadequate sanitation disproportionately affect girls' self-esteem, participation and retention.

6. Improving the quality of education

Survival rates to the last grade of primary school improved between 1999 and 2004 in most countries with data but remained low in sub-Saharan Africa (median rate of 63%) and in South and West Asia (79%). Relatively low and unequal learning achievement in language and mathematics characterize many countries worldwide.

Crowded and dilapidated classrooms, too few textbooks and insufficient instructional time are widespread in many developing countries and fragile states. Pupil/teacher ratios have increased in sub-Saharan Africa and in South and West Asia since 1999. Eighteen million new primary school teachers are needed worldwide to reach universal primary education by 2015.

Many governments are hiring contract teachers to save costs and rapidly increase the teaching force, but where such teachers lack adequate training and service conditions, this practice could have a negative impact on quality in the future.

Extracts from the "EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008".



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