



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



The Newsletter of UNESCO's Education Sector

Education TODAY

EDUCATING FOR TOMORROW'S WORLD

INSIDE

LEARNING WORLD



She sings about literacy, p. 3

FOCUS



Educating for sustainable development, p. 4

EDUCATION FOR ALL



Can we compare literacy rates accurately?, p. 8

BRIEFS



Promoting faith-based reproductive health, p. 10

Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the world for future generations. But how do we teach this? Focus, a four-page dossier, reports.



EDITO

I am often asked "What is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)?" The answer at first is quite simple. As educators, we are educating to make the world a better place for us and for future generations.

Brent Sciafani, who teaches at Champlain Elementary School in my hometown of Burlington, Vermont (United States) summarizes this nicely. "All I'm trying to do is teach kids that the fate of the earth is in their hands and they can actually do something about it," he says.

At the same time, the answer is highly complex and needs to be addressed from economic, social, civic and cultural perspectives. This is where the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) launched in 2005 comes in.

As a leader of this Decade, UNESCO is assisting countries and regions develop plans and strategies that are relevant to their different realities and concerns. As the dossier of this issue of *Education Today* explains, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for teaching about sustainability, and we are operating on a "learning-by-doing" basis. The DESD is a chance for all of us to do something together and to learn from one another.

I am very optimistic about the Decade and the impact that it will have. During UNESCO's General Conference last October, I was encouraged to witness the passion and energy with which our Member States discussed the issue of sustainability. That demonstrated to me that Education for Sustainable Development is and will increasingly become much more than just a slogan. It is a movement that is gaining momentum because we all are becoming convinced that it is the only option we have for tomorrow's world.

I leave you with the inspiring words spoken by Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, almost a half-century ago: "Before you eat breakfast this morning, you've depended on more than half the world. This is the way our universe is structured. We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality."

Peter Smith
Assistant Director-General for Education

Crossing the border to go to school

A UNESCO project helps fight exclusion of Haitian children in Dominican schools

Carrizal School is located in the Dominican Republic just a few hundred meters from the border with Haiti. 70 per cent of the students are of Haitian descent, either refugees or children who must cross the border each day to go to school.

In addition to high rates of unemployment, illiteracy and malnutrition, many suffer discrimination within this community because they are Haitians living in the Dominican Republic.

Linguistic and cultural differences between Haitians and Dominicans also create problems at school. Haitians speak French and many of the children struggle with Spanish, which is the official language of the Dominican Republic, and thus the language of instruction at the school. Dominican parents are not always tolerant of these students. One Dominican mother complains,

“My children go to school and then come home speaking like Haitians,” she says.

UNESCO has taken action to create greater tolerance within the two communities. Carrizal and five other schools in the region are taking part in the UNESCO project, “Children affected by Armed Conflict in Haiti: Assuring their Right to Education, Non-Discrimination and Participation in the Dominican Republic”; a two-year \$200,000 project run by UNESCO’s regional office for education in Santiago.

The project is funded by the extra-budgetary Programme for the Education of Children in Need, which has collected \$29 million to support 292 human rights projects in eighty-five countries since 1992.

Close and yet so different

The project started in 2004 by identifying the problems that Haitian children faced.

The first step was to send a technical support person to each school to organize teams consisting of principals, teachers, parents and community members that could diagnose the schools. The members of the teams were helped by a guidebook containing best practices from inclusive schools in countries throughout the world.

Based on an initial diagnosis, activities were implemented in the six participating schools. “Parents and teachers meet regularly with members of the technical team,” says Yuki Takemoto of UNESCO Kingston, “In this setting, parents feel free to express their concerns.” The meetings and capacity-building sessions have led to tangible results. Several workshops were organized and participants were exposed to the concept of “attention to diversity and development of inclusive schools.” There is increased communication between schools and communities and Parents’ Associations are now active in each school.

UNESCO also helped out with practical matters as needed. Infrastructure improvements were made in certain schools, such as the purchase of new furniture. In others, textbooks and materials for recreational purposes have been delivered. In one school, capacity-building activities targeting rural women were developed at the request of parents. In another school, an adult literacy programme was formed.

“The project is successful because of the personal relationships that are formed,” says Françoise Pinzon-Gil, coordinator of the Programme for the Education of Children in Need. “The collaboration of local authorities is also key,” she adds.

Including everyone

Originally, the project was envisioned to benefit Haitian children. But it soon became clear that the myriad of factors present in the communities required that a more comprehensive approach be taken. The project was reconceptualized so that the rights of all children were recognized. “This means certainly the Haitian children, but also children with physical and mental disabilities,” says Takemoto.

UNESCO is working to raise awareness among teachers and community about the importance of inclusion in education. “Inclusive approaches in education mean that we have to change school systems – administrators, teachers, parents and students to meet the needs of all learners,” says Roselyn Wabuge-Mwangi of UNESCO Paris. “We must recognize that providing education to all children regardless of their difference is no longer an issue of simple charity, but a matter of ensuring their rights,” she adds. In the Dominican Republic the first step is to secure that every child is integrated without discrimination.

Contact: Françoise Pinzon-Gil, UNESCO Paris
E-mail: f.pinzon-gil@unesco.org

One island, two countries



Haiti and the Dominican Republic both lie on the island of Hispaniola. But while the Dominican Republic is a middle-income country, Haiti is one of the world’s poorest countries (80 per cent of the population lives below the absolute poverty threshold of \$150 per year).

	Dominican Republic	Haiti
Total Population	8.6 million	8.2 million
Life expectancy at birth	67	50
Adult literacy rate	88%	52%
Youth literacy rate	94%	66%

Gaining literacy, gaining a voice

Literacy gave a Salvadoran woman the confidence to sing about her new life



Teresa Beltrán speaks out about literacy

Late one Friday afternoon in February, Teresa Beltrán, a 29-year-old woman from El Salvador, stands up on the stage in front of a microphone. “Come on everybody,” she says to the crowd, “Clap your hands and sing this literacy song with me.” People from Bangladesh, France, Mali, Morocco, Peru and elsewhere stand up and join in as Beltrán’s clear voice rings through the auditorium. Six years ago, she had to pay someone to read a prescription for her sick mother, earlier that day the newly-literate woman had read aloud a speech that she had written herself.

“My name is Teresa, but people call me Tere,” she began. “I am from Tamanique, in the Department of Libertad in El Salvador.” Then with a huge grin on her face and her hands wildly animating her speech, she told the audience about how gaining literacy changed her life.

A difficult childhood

“My parents were poor,” Tere says, “And it was hard for us to go to school.” But poverty wasn’t the only factor keeping Tere and her eight siblings from school. Although her father worked as a day labourer, he was able to scrape together money to pay for her two elder sisters to study nursing. At ten, Tere too was briefly enrolled in school but never learned to read or write.

Two events cut her off from formal education. First, both her sisters dropped out to

get married. “This angered my father,” she said. “He didn’t want to pay for our schooling if we were just going to get married.” Then, her mother became ill, and Tere had to care for her.

“In our community girls work as maids and boys work in the fields,” she explains. “Parents just don’t send their kids to school.” With few skills, Tere had trouble finding employment and eventually left for the capital city of San Salvador to work in a textile factory. Money was not her only problem, she also lacked confidence. “I was shy and I was ashamed,” she told the audience.

The literacy circle

Tere’s life changed when her husband encouraged her to join a literacy circle run by Intervida El Salvador, part of Intervida World Alliance, an NGO that works in partnership with UNESCO. The group of 24 people learned to read together, gain livelihood skills, and learn about health and nutrition. The literacy circle works under the assumption that literacy is necessary for greater participation in economic, social and political life.

Tere credits the literacy circle with helping her gain the communication and managerial skills that enabled her to participate actively in her community. She beams when describing one of her proudest accomplishments – a letter that her circle wrote to Intervida asking for medical help for local children. As a result, 55 children who were gravely ill received medical treatment. “Before, we never had the possibility to do something like this ourselves,” she adds.

A home with books

Tere’s success has encouraged other members of her family to start learning too. Her husband is now a part of her literacy circle as are her two teenage brothers. Even her father has been convinced of the importance of learning.

And the effects carry on to the next generation. Tere also credits literacy with improving her 6-year-old daughter’s life. “People

here don’t play with children and as a result everyone is shy,” she explains.

Tere now reads books to her daughter. “At first she didn’t know what a story was,” she says. “Now we read each day.” Her daughter also tags along the literacy circle meetings thus getting further exposed to literacy. “This is how children learn skills,” she adds.

She may only be 29, but Teresa Beltrán is a vibrant, dynamic woman who has dramatically transformed herself through literacy. In a few short years, she has gained the skills and confidence to improve her life and that of her family as well as to become a community leader. And now she is ready to embark on the next phase of her life: as an international advocate who sings to make known the plight of the remaining 771 million people in the world who still do not have access to literacy.

Contact: Florence Migeon, UNESCO Paris

E-mail: f.migeon@unesco.org

Website: www.unesco.com/education/literacy

Testimonies from learners

“At UNESCO, we often talk about the importance of literacy in the abstract,” says Ann Therese Ndong Jatta, Director of Basic Education at UNESCO. “It is so much more powerful to hear about literacy from someone who has experienced the difficulties of acquiring literacy skills in adulthood.”

Teresa Beltrán spoke at a roundtable on “Women’s Literacy for Sustainable Development” held at UNESCO Headquarters on 24 February. Literacy trainers, members of ministries, Beltrán other learners shared real-world experiences that demonstrated the links between literacy, life-long learning and sustainable livelihood at this event, which was co-sponsored by UNESCO and Intervida World Alliance (INWA), an NGO.

“The day was about raising awareness and highlighting success stories,” says Florence Migeon of UNESCO Paris. “And Teresa Beltrán is a powerful example of how gaining literacy turns women into leaders in their communities and beyond.”

Educating for tomorrow's

Education for sustainable development is a) teaching basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills to all, b) convincing people why they should not pollute, c) developing knowledge, skills and programmes that will end poverty for good, d) learning how to make decisions for the good of the whole community? *Answer: all of the above.*

Type “sustainable development” into an internet search engine and you’ll get more than 100 million hits. Search under “education for sustainable development” and you’ll find close to 60 million entries.

Clearly, sustainable development means a great many things to a great many people. There is no easy definition, nor is there one

central issue or regional perspective around which world opinion has easily coalesced. Rather, we have a constantly evolving laundry list of issues – climate change, water resource management, gender inequality, biodiversity, urban decay, sustainable consumption, poverty reduction and genetically-modified food – to name a few. Developing and middle-income countries are struggling with different issues and chal-

lenges than developed countries. And while many would agree that the present course of action is unsustainable, there is lack of clear consensus on what to do next.

And this makes the task of *educating* for sustainable development all the more complicated. “It forces us to struggle with values and our value systems,” sums up Mary Joy Pigozzi, Director for the Promotion of

© Alberto Mesa Malagon, a Colombian artist. This cartoon won a prize at the 10th International Cartoon Contest, Haifa, Israel, 2004.



world

Quality Education at UNESCO, which is the lead agency for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD).

A complex progress of change

“Sustainable development must be more than just a slogan,” insists UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura. “It must be a concrete reality for all of us – individuals, organizations, governments – in all of our daily decisions and actions.”

Launched internationally on 1 March 2005, the DESD takes the broadest possible approach to conceptualizing sustainable development as a complex process of change heavily reliant upon local contexts, needs and priorities. It builds upon a concept first articulated in the 1987 UN report, *Our Common Future*: “Sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) therefore is viewed as more than just simply environmental education, encompassing learning about human rights and conflict resolution, good governance, economics, the arts and culture as well. It is a multi-disciplinary and dynamic approach to educational reform, one that offers people at all stages of life and in all learning contexts – both formal and non-formal – the opportunity to learn the lifestyles and values necessary to create a sustainable future.

“ESD must go beyond the frontiers generally set by current educational and learning practices,” says Aline Bory-Adams of UNESCO Paris. She adds, “one of the central challenges of the Decade is how to translate this complex vision into textbooks, curricula, teaching and learning methods and national education policies.”

Towards a new kind of learning

“The problem is you are dealing with different assumptions, in different disciplines,” says Natarajan Ishwaran, Director of Ecological and Earth Sciences at UNESCO. “People differ in their understandings of sustainable

development, knowledge and education.” Ishwaran is responsible for the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme, which has been trying to encourage people from different disciplines to collaborate, under the hypothesis that such interdisciplinary co-operation is essential to attain DESD goals.

In the future, Ishwaran hopes the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, under the MAB programme will become “learning laboratories” for the Decade, putting special emphasis on converting reality-based learning into educational tools and converting context specific case studies into curriculum resources. Moreover, he thinks experiential learning is key to the success of ESD. “You can’t just talk only about principals and concepts. You have to talk from real life experience and practice.”

Action plans and strategies

As partnerships are formed between educators, NGOs, community activists and policy-makers and as a growing body of knowledge develops to give real-world form to the abstract notion of ESD, the greatest promise of the Decade is that a new paradigm of education for sustainable development will take hold.

“The Decade invites us to celebrate our achievements to date,” adds Wynn Calder, Associate Director of the USA-based University Leaders for a Sustainable Future. “And it calls us on to look forward ten years, to envision what we hope to achieve, and to create a strategy for getting there.”

Now celebrating its first anniversary, the DESD has been so far about deliberations at the international, regional and national level to formulate action plans and strategies.

The final version of the International Implementation Scheme, approved by UNESCO’s Executive Board last September, sets out a broad framework for all partners to contribute to the Decade. It provides overall guidance and shows why, how, when and where the enormous range of partners can develop their contributions.

UNESCO’s strategy

The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development focuses on linking quality education for all to the goal of sustainable development. To this end, UNESCO’s Member States and other partners are engaged in advocacy and vision-building as well as in efforts to improve quality basic education, reorient national education plans and programmes, build networks, develop public awareness and provide training and research opportunities.

UNESCO’s efforts will aim to foster these efforts by:

- catalyzing new partnerships with the private sector, youth and media groups;
- encouraging a research agenda on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as well as monitoring and evaluation;
- serving as forum for bringing together key stakeholders, such as multinationals, faith-based institutions, youth associations, indigenous people, etc.;
- sharing good ESD practices; and
- linking Member States that have put in place curricula, policies and research related to ESD with those Member States requesting help.

Meanwhile, the equally challenging work of fostering links with the Decade’s activities and other UN initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals, Literacy Decade and Education for All, as well as with UN agencies, is also getting off the ground. Examples of concrete activities include a joint UNEP-UNESCO project spearheaded by UNESCO’s Nairobi office to expand environmental research and training at African universities and by the UNEP-Tongji office to expand post-graduate degrees and scholarships in Chinese universities.

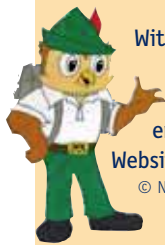
Localizing the approach

The broad and varied response to the DESD is most evident at the regional and national level in nearly all regions and the 40 countries that have formally launched the Decade.

The Europe and North America region was the first to officially adopt its strategy shortly after the UN launch in March 2005.



Environmental mascots worldwide



With his Robin Hood hat and trademark phrase, "Give a Hoot, Don't Pollute," Woodsy the Owl has been America's environmental champion since 1970.

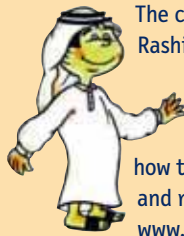
Website: www.fs.fed.us/spf/woody/

© National Symbols Program, USA

"The Migration of the Ibanes" is the first in a series of comic books in English, French, German and Italian about two young children facing the consequences of catastrophic climate change. Website: www.educapoles.org



Ozzy Ozone, defender of our planet, promotes the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) ozone education programme. Website: www.ozzyozone.org



The cartoon character Rashid appears in an activity book and CD-Rom to teaching Qatari children about how to reduce their garbage and recycle. Website: www.unesco.org/education

Children learn more about the preservation of the biosphere with the help of Little MAB, the mascot of the Vosges du Nord/Pfälzerwald Biosphere Reserve in France and Germany. Website: www.unesco.org/mab/little.htm#



→ Now the region is focused on developing indicators to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of its strategy by the end of 2006. This is, in fact, seen as a critical component in the overall success of the DESD and it is hoped that this attempt, along with the efforts of other regions to formulate their own measures of success, will form the basis of the next generation of thinking about ESD.

The Asia and the Pacific region, has also contributed significantly to the start of the Decade by conducting an in-depth analysis of the ESD efforts of every country and sub-region in its constituency. UNESCO Bangkok's *Situational Analysis* gives an excellent glimpse into both the challenges and opportunities facing many countries in this part of the world.

One trend clearly emerges. While all of the countries in the region have incorporated Environmental Education (EE) into their curriculum to some extent, there is very little implementation or even basic understanding of the emerging concept of ESD. In the Pacific, South Asia, and Central Asia, the survey notes that many practitioners, especially those who are not in the environmental field, mistakenly think that EE and ESD hold the same meaning and use the

terms interchangeably. Southeast Asian countries, such as Viet Nam, understand ESD as the pre-eminent challenge of the 21st century and are beginning to think creatively about how to incorporate these practices into their formal and non-formal education systems.

Institutionalizing commitment

This underscores the necessity for understanding and leadership amongst national governments and officials from a variety of ministries – not just environmental departments. According to Derek Elias, who coordinates UNESCO's ESD activities in the Asia Pacific region, Iran, Japan, New Zealand and Viet Nam are amongst the countries taking the lead at developing ESD at the national level. For example, Iran developed a charter on the Sustainable Development of the Earthquake Stricken City of Bam. "These countries are really helping us in our task of raising awareness," he says.

Awareness also helps with fundraising. Calder, who recently wrote an in-depth status report on global DESD efforts, says it is clear that the Decade is helping to direct more funding toward ESD. "That's part of its power," he says. This is especially important since the UN offers very little funding for DESD-related activities.

Germany, notes Calder, has perhaps gone the furthest in establishing and funding a National Committee for the Decade to bring together a cross-section of experts and institutions including the Education, Development and Environment Ministries, parliamentarians and the States, NGOs, the media and private enterprise. "There is enough interest in Germany amongst people who can actually make things happen. There is buy-in at the highest level," he says. Much more common is the approach taken by such countries as Japan and the United States that rely on private, voluntary networking organizations to promote DESD.

Re-orienting existing programmes

More countries are taking the route that China has chosen by expanding current environmental education programmes and experimenting with ESD pilot projects. China's "Education for Environment, Population and Sustainable Development" programme was initially launched in 1998 and aimed at providing interdisciplinary and moral education to teenagers. Now reaching 3,000 schools and over one million students, it is being expanded to incorporate primary school students as well. Organizers note the success of the pilot project is changing national educators' minds about ESD and say it could serve as the basis for a national curriculum initiative.

The "Sandwatch Initiative" is another interesting example of how environmental education programmes are being re-formatted and re-energized to adapt to the new priorities. This programme was initially started in the Caribbean with the aim of incorporating information about the problems facing →

Key dates for

▼ 1968

Biosphere is one of the subjects of the first UNESCO intergovernmental conference on the "rational use of resources"



Galapagos Islands, Ecuador/ © Erich Heidenbauer / UNESCO

▼ 22 April 1970

First Earth Day unites 20 million people in a global teach-in



Senator Gaylord Nelson (USA), Founder of Earth Day © University of Wisconsin Green Bay

→ surrounding coastal environments and fragile marine habitats into traditional classes such as biology, woodworking, literature, mathematics, information technology and drama. This successful programme is now being adapted for use in other island nations in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Teaching values

Perhaps most importantly, the Decade has also inspired local action. One of many examples is in South Africa where the first Youth Environmental Symposium for the City of Cape Town brought together students of different backgrounds from twenty-one schools to discuss sustainable living.

This project, as well as the many other community-based projects inspired by the principles of ESD, is serving as a building block for the future of the movement. "This is about establishing ownership of ESD as broadly as possible. It is about reinforcing each other's positive contributions," says Derek Elias who takes every opportunity he can to remind activists in his region that, "you are part of a larger groundswell, you are not standing alone."

The bottom line is that for the Decade to be successful, people must make sense of it in their own terms. "Educating for Sustainable Development is not another lofty, unattainable notion," comments Pigozzi. "It's a necessity", she says.

Or as one schoolgirl from New Zealand put it simply when asked to help create a play celebrating the launch of the Decade in her country: "It's about making the good things last longer."

Learning from indigenous traditions

© Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division



"Let us put our heads together, and see what life we will make for our children."

A quote from Takanta Iotanka, the Sioux Chief known in English as Sitting Bull

For Native Americans, the concept of sustainable development is an integral part of their heritage. Hundreds of years ago, the Iroquois Confederacy of Five Indian Nations required leaders to consider the impact of their decisions on the seventh generation – their great, great, great, great grandchildren.

This principle is still alive in the White Earth Land Recovery Project, founded by Winona LaDuke to assist members of her tribe, the Ojibwe. It includes modern alternative energy projects, a nutrition and food

assistance programme relying on the distribution of traditional foods, the strengthening of spiritual and cultural heritage and the restoration of ancient practices of sound land stewardship, language fluency and community development.

Across the globe, there is renewed interest in the preservation of traditional ways of life and recognition that native wisdom is invaluable. At the Youth Forum preceding UNESCO's 2005 General Conference, this was in fact a key topic for conversation amongst the young delegates.

"Contrary to popular belief, young people do appreciate their indigenous culture," said a participant from Jamaica. "They are concerned about assuring that their culture is appreciated by other countries and that the dying aspects are in fact revived."

The DESD implementation scheme recognizes indigenous peoples as key stakeholders because of their intimate knowledge of the sustained use of their environments, and because they are particularly vulnerable to unsustainable development. It also gives high priority to incorporating culturally diverse learning into educational programmes at all levels.



Traditional mining techniques from Colombia © Claudia Navas-Courbon • Website: www.claudianavas.com

Sustainable Development

▼ 1972	▼ 1987	▼ 1992	▼ 1999	▼ 2000	▼ 2002	▼ 2005
UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm leads to creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	<i>Our Common Future</i> , the report of the Brundtland Commission, popularizes the term "sustainable development"	Agenda 21 adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro as the basis for measuring progress in sustainable development	Launch of the global sustainability index tracking corporate practices	The Millennium Declaration adopted by UN General Assembly defines "respect for nature" as a fundamental value and commits "to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies"	World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg promotes environmental protection, economic and social development as interdependent and mutually reinforcing	UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) is launched to advance lifelong learning of knowledge, skills, and values required for durable social transformation
						

Sources: UNAIDS, UNESCO and the Global Campaign for Education. For a more complete, interactive timeline and downloadable PDF file go to <http://sdgateway.net/introsd/timeline.htm>

Can the numbers be trusted?

The 2006 Global Monitoring Report demonstrates the complexities of measuring literacy

Nearly one-fifth of the world's adult population – 771 million adults – lack the basic literacy skills vital to improve their livelihoods, according to the EFA Global Monitoring Report released in November 2005. But where does this number come from? Does it include migrant workers, nomads or refugees? And how accurate is it?

The Report makes cross-national comparison of literacy using data compiled by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). About two-thirds of the country statistics come from nationally-reported figures based on national censuses or surveys. UIS uses statistical models to provide estimates for the remaining countries. "The methods are not perfect but they are the best available," says Aaron Benavot of the Report team.

It is difficult to compare national statistics as the definition of literacy and the way that data is compiled differs among various countries. A large majority conceives literacy as the ability to read and/or write simple statements in either a national or indigenous language but there are numerous nuances to this (see box).

Another factor affecting the accuracy of the figure is that most countries compile data using conventional methods that do

not actually test whether a person is literate. One common method is for respondents to subjectively state whether they are literate, or the head of household determines the literacy level for each family member. Another method uses completed years of schooling as a proxy for whether a person is literate or not.

As a result, there has been a strong push over the past two decades to directly test literacy skills. Today, most experts prefer these alternative methods. "Direct assessments demonstrate that conventional evaluation methods often overstate literacy levels," says Benavot. According to the Report, in a conventional assessment conducted in Morocco, 45% of the respondents said they were literate, yet only 33% could pass a simple reading test. Similar gaps are found in a number of countries.

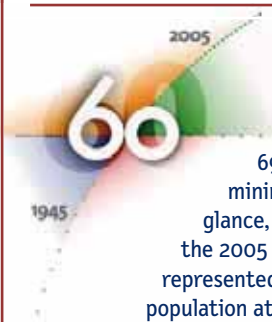
Using only direct assessments to monitor regional or global literacy is not yet an option. The problem is that direct assessments of functional literacy skills are not standardized and can be time-consuming. The good news is that an increasing number of countries such as Botswana, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lao PDR and Nicaragua have

designed literacy surveys that provide more accurate pictures. Also, UIS is currently developing a new data collection instrument called the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), which aims to provide internationally-comparable literacy data of a higher quality based on a continuum of literacy skills rather than the traditional view of literacy as a dichotomy – that a person is either literate or illiterate.

"The development of effective education programmes, and the advocacy for adequate levels of investment depend on the availability of valid, reliable, comparable data on literacy skills among the adult population," says Michael Millward, acting Director of the UIS. "Improving our measures of literacy is strongly needed and programmes such as LAMP are a step in the right direction," he adds.

Report Website: www.efareport.unesco.org
UIS Website: www.uis.unesco.org
UNESCO Literacy Portal:
www.unesco.org/education/literacy

Literacy at mid-century



In 1957, when UNESCO published the first 'global' survey of literacy, an estimated 690-720 million adults lacked minimum literacy skills. At first glance, this number seems close to the 2005 literacy figure, however, it represented 44% of the world's adult population at mid-century compared to 18% today. The geographical distribution of literacy was different then too. At the time, 74% of the world's adult illiterates was concentrated in Asia, and the remainder in Africa (15%), the Americas (7%), and in Europe, Oceania and the former Soviet Union (4%).

Comparing apples and oranges?

Examples of different ways that countries define a literate person



- **Brazil:** A person who can read and write at least a simple statement in a language he or she knows.
- **Cameroon:** Literacy is the ability of people aged 15+ to read and write in French or in English.
- **China:** A person is considered literate if he or she knows 2,000 characters (1,500 characters if he or she lives in a rural area).
- **Islamic Republic of Iran:** A literate is an individual who can read and write a simple sentence in Farsi or in any other language.
- **Mali:** A person who has never attended school is considered illiterate, even if that person can read and write.

Source: GMR 2006 Metatable

The buzz from Beijing



“It is clear that the quality of basic education remains low and will not lead to meaningful learning outcomes unless tackled with renewed vigor,” said UNESCO’s Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura at the 5th meeting of the High-Level Group for Education for All, (Beijing, China, November 2005). While significant progress had been made towards achieving the six EFA goals by 2015, there were still huge challenges ahead, he commented.

One of the major concerns of the meeting was that the goal of achieving gender parity by 2005 had not been met, and if current trends continue, eighty-six countries may not achieve gender parity by 2015. But the general consensus in Beijing was guarded optimism. “The EFA challenges are not insuperable,” said Nicholas Burnett, Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report.

“There has been significant progress in getting girls into primary school in countries furthest from the goal; public spending and aid are up, and reductions in illiteracy have been significant, notably in China,” Burnett explained. “What is most missing is the political commitment to adult literacy and to the literate environment,” he added.

Education for All week 2006

If children are to receive quality education, they need good teachers. This year, the Global Campaign for Education focuses on the theme “Every child needs a teacher.” Events are planned throughout the world from 24-30 April. Organizers are hoping to mobilize even more than the 5 million people who participated in the 2005 “Send my friend to school campaign.” For its part, UNESCO is mobilizing support for the week in Member States, other UN agencies, the Associated School Project Network, the donor community and partner NGOs.



Website: www.campaignforeducation.org

Each year, the High-Level Group meeting brings together Ministers of Education, the donor community and other organizations to assess progress towards the EFA goals. This year’s meeting, which focused on the goal of halving adult illiteracy by 2015, was informed by the 2006 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, *Literacy For Life*. Additional issues covered included education for rural people, a Global Action Plan to coordinate the EFA movement and the mobilization of resources.

Website: www.unesco.org/education/efa

3 questions to Xinsheng Zhang

Chairman of UNESCO’s Executive Board, Vice Minister of Education People’s Republic of China and President of the China Scholarship Council



1 The number of illiterate adults in China has decreased by over 140 million in the past twenty-five years. What is your recipe for this success?

We have been making great strides since 1978, and in the 21st century, we are reducing illiteracy at a rate of 2 million people per year. Our recipe is simple. Our government places a high priority on two tasks – eliminating illiteracy and providing nine years of compulsory education for all. Our government enables people to see the benefits of literacy by linking it to family life, agricultural production, economic development and indigenous traditions. We also encourage women’s literacy, because if a woman becomes literate, her whole family benefits.

2 Education for Rural People was high on the agenda of the 5th High-level Group on Education for All held in Beijing last November. Why is this issue so important to China?

Unlike in Paris, Shanghai or Beijing, the natural conditions in much of western rural area of China are harsh. From the Himalayas to the grasslands, much of the western part of our country is vast and thinly populated. This means that we need to double our efforts and our investments in order to achieve the same results. Other countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa can relate to these challenges. Political will is key to finding a solution. We have a coordinated mechanism in which leadership and accountability is

shared at the central, provincial prefecture, municipal and county level, according to the strength of each ministry and agency.

3 What is at the top of your agenda as Chairman of UNESCO’s Executive Board?

We need to focus on UNESCO’s strengths in education, science and culture. UNESCO’s 60th anniversary is a milestone. We must fulfill the Organization’s mandate by contributing to peace and prosperity. But there are new challenges too, HIV and AIDS, SARS, avian flu, sustainable development and terrorism. I have a very good Board in terms of its experience, diversity, knowledge and willingness to contribute. Reaching our goals will be a collective effort.



Faith-based reproductive health kit

Issues surrounding adolescent reproductive and sexual health are often considered 'taboo' among different religions and cultures. UNESCO is increasingly involving religious groups in getting the messages across. A new self-contained training toolkit is currently being developed by UNESCO's Bangkok Office. "Faith-based Advocacy for Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health in Asia and the Pacific" explores the subject within the context of Asia's three major religions: Islam, Catholicism and Buddhism.

"This is the first time that a training toolkit is being developed that specifically meet the needs of Muslim, Catholic and Buddhist youth," says Francisco Roque of UNESCO Bangkok. "Engaging cultural partners and faith-based organizations places reproductive rights and service access on the agenda of local communities," he says. Discussions that were once considered taboo can be moved into the public arena and discussed openly, he adds.



The toolkit is part of the Advocacy and Educational Support to Adolescent Reproductive Health, a project that provides information to educationalists working with adolescents and youth in the region.

The toolkit has already been reviewed by experts in the three religions and are currently being edited and produced in a limited quantity.

"In the next few months we will have them translated into Bahasa

Indonesia, Filipino and Thai for trial-testing," says Roque. The next step is to test the kit with adolescents living in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. The

final product is conceived as a regional training manual that can be adapted as necessary to the specific needs of individual countries in Asia.

Contact: Francisco Roque, UNESCO Bangkok
E-mail: f.roque@unesco.org
Website: www.unesco.org/arsh



UNESCO at African Union Summit

A second "Decade for Education in Africa" is to be launched in 2006 to push forward the momentum of Education for All on the continent. "I hope that this Decade will allow us to make considerable progress in education, especially pan-African education," says Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union.

As a prelude to this Decade, education and culture were high on the agenda for the African Heads of State participating

in the 6th African Union Summit in Khartoum, Sudan on 23-24 January. During this meeting, Africa's Ministers of Education and Culture pledged to accelerate the development of quality education for all by investing a minimum of 20 per cent of their national budgets in this sector.

The Summit was also the occasion for UNESCO's Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura, and Mr Konaré to sign an agreement that will enable the two organizations to cooperate more effectively. Mr Matsuura also inaugurated an exhibition highlighting the cooperation between the two organizations entitled "UNESCO and Africa: memory, liberation and development of human resources."

Website: www.africa-union.org



Help for Palestinian Higher Education

A UNESCO programme providing support to Palestinian Higher Education has received a \$15 million grant from the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinian People. UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura calls the grant "a very good example of international solidarity as well as a demonstration of South-South cooperation."

The programme will provide financial support to 11 Palestinian universities and give scholarships to 20,000 students. The grant will also be used to assist the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education in creating a single Financial Assistance Management System that unifies all forms of student assistance, such as grants from UNESCO and loans from the World Bank. The first step in this capacity-building activity was a two-day workshop (31 January-1 February) devoted to the issue of Student Household Income Assessment in Palestine.



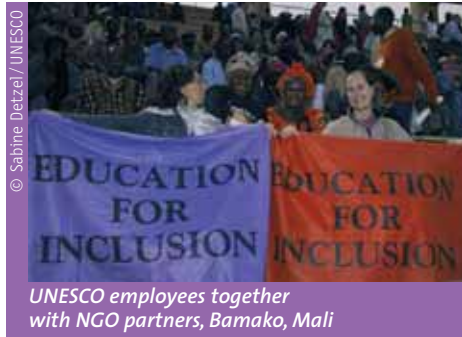
Female students graduating from An-Najah National University, Nablus

"Palestinian territories are facing considerable obstacles to social development due to various political factors, increasing poverty and massive unemployment," says Matsuura. "This is why investing in education is critical." Despite these challenges, Palestinians have already made great strides. The rate of enrolment in Palestinian universities has more than tripled between 1995 and 2003. A total of 136,000 students were enrolled in 2003 in 11 universities, four university colleges and 24 community and technical colleges. This represents an enrolment rate of 25 per cent, higher than the average of 15 per cent in the Arab region.

Contact: Bechir Lamine, UNESCO Ramallah
E-mail: b.lamine@unesco.org



Education at the World Social Forum



UNESCO employees together with NGO partners, Bamako, Mali

UNESCO and partner NGOs organized two panels on education at the Polycentric World Social Forum in Bamako, Mali, last January.

The first workshop focused on the positive links between literacy, HIV prevention education and women's empowerment. The second looked into civil society perspectives on Education for All.

Participants underlined civil society's role and responsibility in ensuring that governments respect their commitments to providing education opportunities to their people. They recognized too that the EFA Monitoring Report on Education for All was a useful and not sufficiently exploited tool. However, they also stressed the need to look at the wider context of challenges posed to governments' decisions on education policies and budgets by debt, WTO agreements, confused development priorities and pressures from international financial institutions.

"This kind of dialogue is essential to make UNESCO's partnerships with civil society more meaningful," says Sabine Detzel of UNESCO Paris. "It enables us to establish rich dialogues about the Organization's priorities, such as Education for All, and to learn about the successes, potential and constraints of our partners."

The sixth edition of the World Social Forum was polycentric, which means that it was decentralized, taking place in Bamako, Caracas, Venezuela and Karachi, Pakistan. Around 15,000 people participated in the Bamako Forum, 10,000 of them came from outside of Mali. Next year's World Social Forum will take place in Nairobi, Kenya.

Contact: Sabine Detzel, UNESCO Paris,
E-mail: s.detzel@unesco.org



Changing a school's climate

The Institución Educativa Concejo Municipal de Itagüí, a Colombian school in Antioquia has taken a new approach to school discipline that has demonstrated impressive results. The school is one out of 7,900 schools participating in UNESCO's Associated Schools network (ASPnet).

Ernesto Corrales Gutierrez, the school ASPnet Coordinator, explains that the school embraced the psychological concept of "Disciplina con amor" or positive discipline.

The first phase took place over three years and targeted pupils aged 9 to 14 and their teachers. "We questioned traditional models of authority based on punishment, blame and exclusion," says Gutierrez. Teachers and students discussed ethical and behavioural

issues at regular class meetings. Through this process, students learned: how to listen, respect other points of view, solve problems and take responsibility for their own actions. They were then invited to evaluate their own behaviour. The school also held special training sessions for parents to keep them in the loop.

Among the results noted were an 80 per cent decline in reports of poor discipline and the resolution of a serious conflict between the director and fifth-grade students. The project was then expanded to encompass all of the school's 1,400 students, aged 9 to 17.

"Projects like this help prepare children and young people to meet the challenges of today's world," says Sigrid Niedermayer, International Coordinator of ASPnet.

Contact: Sigrid Niedermayer, UNESCO Paris
E-mail: s.niedermayer@unesco.org
Website: www.unesco.org/education/asp

Events 2006

6th E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting • 13-15 February • Monterrey Mexico
Vicente Fox Quesada, President of Mexico, will inaugurate the 6th E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting, 'Policies and Systems for the Assessment of the Quality of Education', which will be attended by the Ministers of Education from nine high-population countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan).

Education for All week 2006: Every Child Needs a Teacher • 24-30 April
The Education for All week serves as a reminder to governments and the international community about their promises to achieve Education for All by 2015. This year, EFA week focuses on the importance of teachers.

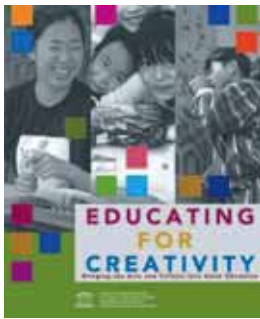
7th Working Group meeting on EFA • 19-21 July • Paris, France
The Working Group meets annually to provide technical guidance to the EFA movement. It provides a forum for exchange and discussion on EFA experiences at the country, regional and international levels, creating and reinforcing partnerships.

6th High-Level Group Meeting on EFA • 14-16 November • Cairo, Egypt
This annual meeting brings together several Heads of State, Ministers, senior officials of development agencies and civil society representatives. It will draw on the data and conclusions of the 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report, focusing on early childhood care and education.

Contact: Abhimanyu Singh, UNESCO Paris
E-mail: abh.singh@unesco.org
Webpage: www.unesco.org/education/efa

● **Children in Abject Poverty in Uganda: A Study of Criteria and Status of Those in and out of School in Selected Districts in Uganda.** This publication looks at poor children both in and out of school who live in Uganda. Since such children do not form a special social category in poverty eradication intervention programmes, their inclusion in Education for All efforts tends to be a hit-or-miss phenomenon. E-mail: w.gordon@unesco.org

● **Developing Learning Communities: Beyond empowerment.** The second volume in a series on 'Developing Learning Communities' examines an initiative for rethinking education and empowerment undertaken in Mussoorie, India. It illustrates how research on learning communities can challenge common beliefs about education, development, progress, backwardness, and empowerment. E-mail: m.sachs-israel@unesco.org



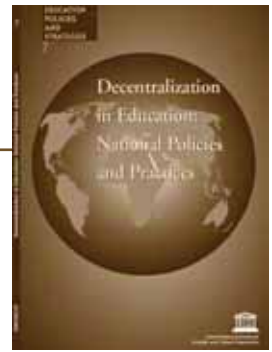
● **Educating for Creativity: Bringing the Arts and Culture into Asian Education.** This report presents the outcomes of two conferences: Asian Regional Symposia on Arts Education, Measuring the Impact of Arts in Education, Hong Kong SAR, China (9-11 January 2004) and Transmissions and Transformations: Learning Through the Arts in Asia, New Delhi, India (21-24 March 2005). Artists, educators, policy makers and experts in art and culture from across Asia prepared the papers for this report. E-mail: t.wagner@unesco.org

● **The Evaluation of UNESCO Brazil's Contribution to the Brazilian AIDS Programme** by Elliot Stern. This publication is an evaluation of UNESCO's large HIV/AIDS programme in Brazil. It highlights the lessons learnt from UNESCO's Brazilian experience, which can be useful references for future projects throughout the rest of the world.

● **Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-based Teaching** by Carol Benson. This publication argues that language, specifically the language used in schools, is one of the principal mechanisms through which inequality in education is reproduced. It shows how the learner's mother tongue holds the key to making schooling more inclusive for all disadvantaged groups, especially for girls and women.

● **Lifelong Learning and Distance Higher Education.** This volume deals with distance higher education systems – especially those designed for lifelong learners – in the context of the changes surrounding globalization. As the world becomes more and more globalized, education is increasingly crossing borders – be they national, regional, sectoral or institutional. At the same time, educational systems must respond to other profound changes, such as the explosion of knowledge and the development of information and communication technology (ICT). E-mail: z.varoglu@unesco.org

● **Decentralization in Education: National Policies and Practices.** The seventh volume in the series 'Education Policies and Strategies'. The national experiences of ten countries are analyzed to reveal the complexity of educational reform and decentralization processes throughout the world. E-mail: gc.chang@unesco.org



● **Interagency Secondary Education Virtual Library 1.0.** This CD-Rom focuses on Africa and contains publications about critical issues relating to secondary education, including access, curriculum and teacher training. The self-copy feature of the CD-Rom is useful for distribution in developing countries as numerous copies can be made with little additional cost. Email: e.adubra@unesco.org Website: www.humaninfo.org/collections/secedu/

● **Islands of Education: Schooling, Civil War and the Southern Sudanese (1983-2004)** by Marc Sommers. This book examines the Southern Sudanese educational situation in three primary contexts: within southern Sudan, in refuge asylum countries and in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital. It sheds light upon the disastrous consequences of underinvesting in education during conflict. Price: €12. Website: www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/pubs/sudan.pdf

● **'Scaling up' Good Practices in Girls' Education.** This publication focuses on strategies for meeting international targets and national goals for universalizing girls' access to, retention in and completion of quality education. This will be done through 'scaling up' successful interventions, or components of interventions that can be replicated. Email: l.buchert@unesco.org

● **The UNESCO-AGFUND Cooperation: A Joint Force Serving Human Development.** This publication gives a summary of the various projects sponsored by UNESCO-AGFUND (Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations) Cooperation. Over the past 25 years, AGFUND has enabled UNESCO to plan and implement sixty-nine projects, the majority in the field of education. Eighty-five countries have benefited from AGFUND's contributions to the tune of \$24 million. E-mail: e.dienes@unesco.org



● **Winning People's Will for Girl Child Education.** This publication describes the process, outcomes and lessons learnt from a UNESCO project to educate girl children in two communities in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. E-mail: kathmandu@unesco.org

Unless otherwise indicated, all publications are available online at unesdoc.unesco.org

