



United Nations Educational, Scientific  
and Cultural Organization



The Newsletter  
of UNESCO's  
Education Sector

# Education TODAY

## FROM BRAIN DRAIN TO BRAIN GAIN

### INSIDE

#### LEARNING WORLD



Scoring goals for street children p. 3

#### FOCUS



Can we gain from brain drain? p. 4

#### EDUCATION FOR ALL



Education in Sudan:  
a new start p. 8

#### BRIEFS



A boost for global literacy p. 10

The term “brain drain” has been used since the 1950s and is often associated with loss. But can brain drain be turned into “brain gain”? FOCUS, a four-page dossier, responds.

### EDITO

There is nothing new about brain drain, the main theme of this issue of *Education Today*. Indeed, the Renaissance might never have happened without the westward movement of Greek artists and intellectuals after the fall of Byzantium. Nor is the phenomenon limited to developing countries. Eastern Europe is currently experiencing the emigration of its “best and brightest” towards the United Kingdom and Ireland, itself a country which suffered from acute brain drain until the mid-1990s.

The flight of human capital, as it is also called, is a controversial issue in North-South debates. The fierce competition among Northern companies and universities for top researchers, engineers, medical professionals and managers has been compared to football team transfers where the star player goes to the highest bidder.

Formerly, when people left in search of greener pastures, they stayed abroad. In today’s knowledge society, although the one-way ticket still reigns (especially to the United States), globalization has made temporary workflows almost commonplace. “Brain exchange” allows sending and receiving countries alike to benefit from the specialized experience of expatriate professionals – and not just from their remittances, considerable as these may be. The role of overseas Indian technicians in building ICT industries in Bangalore, India, is a textbook example.

I am sometimes asked what governments can do to build capacity and how UNESCO can help them. The UNESCO initiative, Academics Across Borders, aims to strengthen universities in developing countries by building global partnerships. Since 1996, a UNESCO-supported “brain circulation” project has enabled expatriate Malian academics to return home to teach short courses. In a different vein, the UNESCO/Hewlett Packard digital hub in South-East Europe is working to foster an environment for academic excellence and entrepreneurship.

Launching digital diasporas, luring migrants back with incentives, creating the conditions for brain circulation or even reintegration... the strategies may vary but the goal is the same: to keep more professionals at home while reaping the benefits of expatriate elites. While reversing the brain drain may not always be possible or even desirable, UNESCO’s mission is to help its Member States develop innovative ways to transform it into “brain gain” for all.

Peter Smith  
Assistant Director-General for Education

# The future in a toolkit

Drop-in centre brings new skills to marginalized street and slum youth in Uganda

Soon after he was orphaned at 10, William turned to a life of drugs, depending on them to see him through the day. Living on the streets of Kampala, the capital of Uganda, he dropped out of school because, like many others, he couldn't afford the fees. Today, William is drug-free and working as a mechanic in a garage in Wandegaya, a Kampala suburb.

The turning point in William's life was the drop-in center run by the Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL). William found adult guidance and skills training in the programme "Building Capacities for Non-Formal Education and Life Skills", which is implemented by UYDEL with financial and technical support from UNESCO.

The programme is designed to respond to the psycho-social needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged youth. It also provides non-formal education and a life skills programme by placing these marginalized youth with local artisans for three months of practical

training. The Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, along with Makerere University, participated by developing tools, undertaking a baseline survey, monitoring and evaluating the project.

With a population of 24.5 million, 50 per cent of Uganda's population is under 15 years old and 85 per cent of adolescents do not attend secondary school. "We wanted to come up with new ways of bringing marketable skills and a livelihood to these youth," says Mehboob Dada, who coordinates UNESCO's technical and financial support of two drop-in centres – one in rural Arua, the other in Kampala. Since 2004, 288 marginalized youth have been placed in viable professional situations and the majority are now working.

## Looking and learning

The centres' training methods revolve around three basic approaches: learning by doing, learning by producing and learning by earning. The process starts when a young

person comes into the centre or is referred by social workers. After the first visit, the social workers evaluate the adolescent's needs and look in his or her home area for skilled artisans in the field of work selected by the young person. Carpentry, hairdressing, mechanics, and tailoring are the most popular trades although others such as cooking, welding and electronics are also available.

Each youth receives an appropriate "Toolkit" for his or her respective trade. William, for example, was provided with overalls and screwdrivers while others seeking tailoring skills received needles, cloth and scissors. "The 'looking and learning'

method develops self-confidence by permitting the youths to discover their aptitudes" says Dada. A UYDEL social worker agrees: "Rehabilitation of the youth cannot be complete until they have gone through vocational skills training." Furthermore, the use of artisans is a more cost-effective way of targeting young people for skills development than formalized training institutions and approaches.

Integration of HIV and AIDS prevention messages in educating marginalized youth is another objective of UYDEL's. Artisans are thus encouraged to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS among their young trainees.

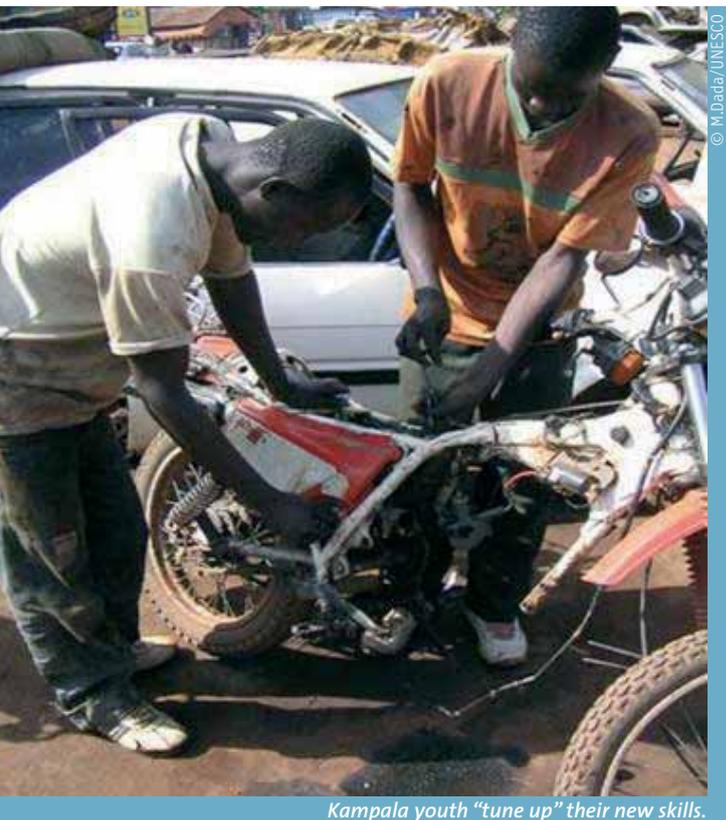
"We are trained on how to talk to youth and help them change behaviours as we teach them vocational skills" says Jane, a hairdresser from Kawempe. "This has helped me pass on information about HIV and AIDS and other risks."

## Building bridges

At the beginning of the project, the community's perception was that these children were lazy, rebellious, violent, prostitutes, lawbreakers and drug abusers. Continuous awareness-raising through dissemination of the survey findings changed perceptions. Community members are now more involved in the UYDEL vocational placement programme.

The drop-in centre gives the youth a sense of having a place in society and helps them learn how to make the right choices. One beneficiary of UYDEL, now a hairdresser at the Shedric Salon, describes her transformation: "I was helped by UYDEL staff when I was so poor that poverty could be seen from my face. But now I can smile. I am happy because I am self-supporting and useful to my family."

Contact: [m.dada@unesco.org](mailto:m.dada@unesco.org)



Kampala youth "tune up" their new skills.

# Scoring goals for street children

UNESCO mobilizes personalities and funds to help homeless children reintegrate society

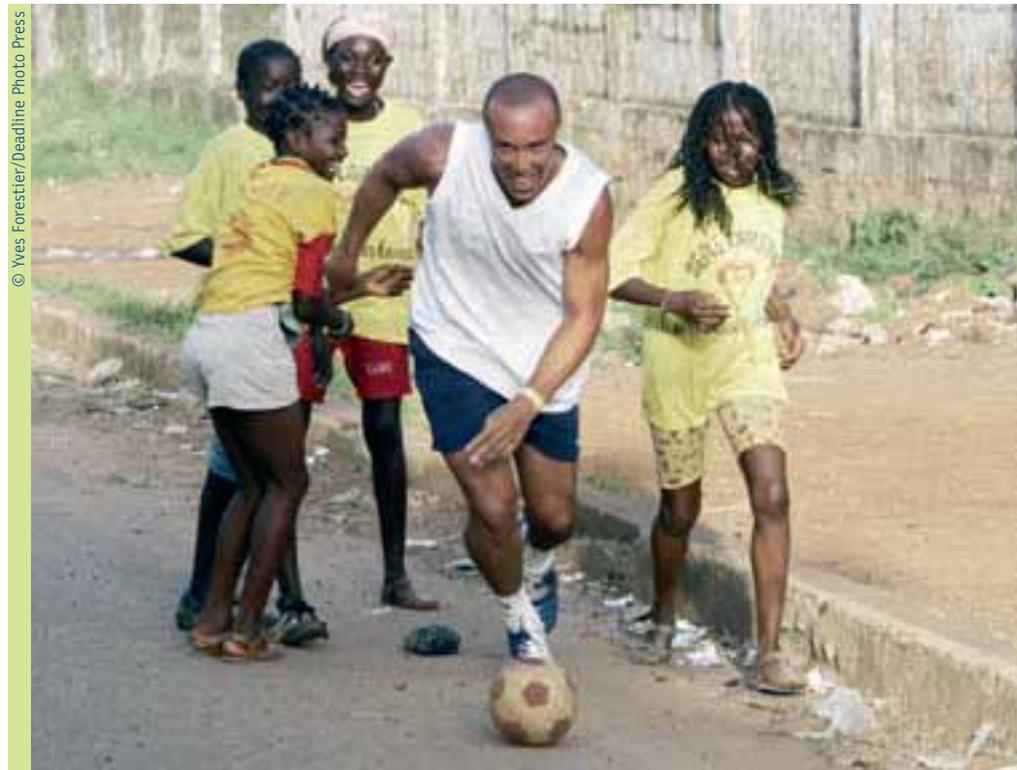
**F**ootballers Paolo Cesar, Christian Karembu, Emmanuel Petit and Mikaël Silvestre, runner Marie-José Pérec, tennis player Cédric Pioline and judo champion David Douillet have all geared up to play one of the most significant games of their lives – with street children. They are among some 20 sports stars and celebrities who have joined UNESCO's programme Hope and Solidarity Through Ball Games. This initiative aims at using team sports to enable marginalized children in developing countries to learn some basic socialization rules that can allow them to find a path towards education and thus reintegrate society.

The programme gives homeless children a chance to interact with famous people and to receive gifts such as footballs and t-shirts. Sports activities, especially football tournaments, are organized in order to facilitate interaction between girls and boys, between schooled and out-of-school children and between children from different communities and neighborhoods. "This allows the children to rebound back into life," says UNESCO's programme coordinator Marie José Lallart.

## An entry point

More than 60 countries have benefited from the programme including Afghanistan, Burundi, Rwanda, Togo and Tunisia. Over five million dollars' worth of sports equipment has already been sent all over the world since 1993, giving approximately 24,000 children a year the chance to play and socialize. "This small step towards insertion constitutes in some ways the entry point to community life," says Lallart. "The goal is eventual integration within the formal school system or professional training."

A new phase of the programme began in July 2006, just after the World Cup. Mikaël Silvestre flew to Kankan in Guinea to inaugurate the first non-formal education centre opened with the support of UNESCO and Kosimankan, an association working with street children in the Baada neighbourhood. He donated 50,000 euros to enable 25 street children to learn how to read,



© Yves Forestier/Deadline Photo Press

Footballer Mikaël Silvestre with street children in Baada, Guinea.

write and to be trained professionally over two years.

During his visit to Guinea, Silvestre met up with street children aged 13-15. These children left their villages and families and came to the city in order to support themselves and those they left behind. At night they sleep in the streets where they risk being mugged.

Children's education is the most efficient way to fight poverty, Silvestre told the media in Guinea. His decision to donate money was motivated by fatherhood. "When you have children, you soon understand that education is the most important thing," he remarks.

After listening to and evaluating the children's needs, the search for partners can begin. Local partnerships are crucial for providing support, land, or shelter but they cannot afford the expense required by learning centres. The big funds come following appeals to foundations and personali-

ties. The investment of Mikaël Silvestre in the Guinea project is the result of such an appeal.

Airlines and private companies are also approached for donations in kind: plane tickets, sports gear and even small items such as calculators and notebooks. This creates a win-win situation: UNESCO gets free equipment to distribute to children in need and companies give away products to a good cause.

Mikaël Silvestre is now interested in funding a new project in one of the world's poorest countries, Niger. With a sports star financing a second project, a new goal could be scored for UNESCO's Hope and Solidarity through Ball Games team.

Contact: [mj.lallart@unesco.org](mailto:mj.lallart@unesco.org)

# From brain drain

Well-educated migrants worldwide are not only a source of revenue but potential key actors

Cover illustration of "La fuite des compétences en Afrique francophone", UNESCO, Paris, 2004. © B. Ambry / UNESCO



*Since 1990, at least 20,000 qualified people have left Africa every year.*

Every year, tens of thousands of highly specialized professionals and academics leave the developing world for what they believe to be a better quality of life in countries of the North.

The majority – doctors, engineers, lecturers, researchers and senior managers as well as students – are tempted by more attractive career opportunities, salaries and living conditions. A university degree is also the safest passport out of an unstable political environment.

“A global phenomenon is emerging,” says George Haddad, Director of the Higher Education Division in UNESCO. “It’s driven by new forms of transport, communication, business and the search for economic, educational and scientific opportunity.”

## Staggering numbers

The extent of this “flight of human capital” is staggering, according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the International Organization for Migration. An estimated 27,000 skilled Africans left the continent for industrialized countries between 1960 and 1975. During the period 1975 to 1984, the figure rose to 40,000. Since 1990, at least 20,000 qualified people have left Africa every year. As Alex Nunn of Leeds Metropolitan University succinctly states, that makes 20,000 fewer people in Africa who can deliver public services and articulate calls for greater democracy and development.

But brain drain is not restricted to the African continent, nor to developing countries in general. Skilled migration between western countries is also on the rise, characterized by temporary flows of undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers, managers and specialists in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Key destinations include the European Union, North America, Japan, Canada and Australia.

# to brain gain

in their countries' development. Perhaps it is time to stop seeing them as a loss of investment.

The United States is still, however, the main pole of attraction, according to the OECD. Since the early 1990s, some 900,000 highly skilled professionals – mainly ICT workers from India, China and the Russian Federation – have migrated to the United States under its temporary H1B visa programme. This was created specially to allow the recruitment of foreign professionals for a period up to six years. Higher education is an important source of highly skilled migrants for recruiting firms; a quarter of temporary visa holders were previously enrolled at U.S. universities.

## Adding up the costs

The costs of this economic migration in terms of human development and public welfare are incalculable. Governments use scarce resources to subsidize the education and specialized training of workers who then take the potential economic and social spin-offs with them when they depart. In the meantime, the same governments struggle to fill posts in public welfare services and cope with skills shortages in key economic sectors.

In Latin America, for example, enrolment in medical schools is high, but countries in the region still have a chronic shortage of doctors. In certain African countries, national medical associations have warned that the skills shortage threatens the very existence of national health services as medical care and health facilities become available only to the wealthy. Countries such as Ghana and Nigeria stand and watch as their doctors and nurses leave in large numbers to take up better-paying positions in Europe and North America. In other spheres, developing countries are also critically lacking in engineers who can design and oversee infrastructure projects, as well as researchers and scientists who can pioneer advances in all areas of public welfare including health and education.

Experts agree that something needs to be done about the scarcity of key workers in developing countries. The question is what?

Many argue that those governments experiencing a significant outflow of professional workers should introduce incentive measures such as tax and welfare credits to limit the extent of outward migration from South to North. It has also been suggested that receiving countries should desist from recruiting in the most vulnerable sectors of labour markets in the South.

On the other hand, limiting migration from particular regions or countries could do more harm than good, comments Ashok Parthasarathi, a former science advisor to the Indian Prime Minister. "A 'pro-development' response to this situation must not include restrictions on migration [that] violate the fundamental values of human rights and individual freedom," he says.

## A positive force

A paradigm shift is needed in the way brain drain is perceived and analysed, argue an increasing number of development stakeholders, including scholars. The idea is to move away from the negative concept of brain drain and start talking about "brain circulation".

"Until the early 1990s, the term 'brain drain' evoked the idea of a one-way, permanent migration of skilled people from the developing world to the North", comments Francisco Seddoh, former Director of the Division of Higher Education and Adviser to the Director-General of UNESCO. "The term had negative connotations because it implied that vital human resources were being drained from those countries that need them most."

These days, he adds, "migration is no longer a one-time only experience. Nor is it unidirectional. The influence of mobility on eco-

## Did you know?

- As of 2000, over 80 per cent of graduates from Haiti, Jamaica and Guyana were living abroad.
- Close to 30 per cent of the labour force from Guyana, Grenada and Dominica is currently in the United States.
- Africa lost 60,000 professionals (doctors, university lecturers, engineers) between 1985 and 1990. For every 100 professionals sent overseas for training between 1982 and 1997, 35 failed to return.
- US\$4 billion is spent annually on the salaries of approximately 100,000 Western expatriates in sub-Saharan Africa.
- There are over eight million overseas Filipino workers worldwide, representing 10 per cent of the total Philippine population and over 22 percent of the country's labour force.

Sources: United Nations, World Bank, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

omic and social progress has also brought recognition that the circulation of skills and manpower can be a positive force in accelerating development".

Seddoh points to "the immense benefits that can be gained from international migration for individuals in both sending and receiving countries, in terms of accumulated skills and experience as well as knowledge and technology transfer through networks and contacts".

This reflection is echoed by Mark Regets of the Institute for the Study of Labour in Bonn, Germany, who believes that "many of the global gains from migration – the creation and transfer of knowledge, the emer-



# From brain drain to brain gain

→ gence of a skilled and educated workforce and the fostering of commercial ties – are shared to some extent by countries on both sides of the equation”.

## Partners in local development

Many expatriates already contribute massively to their national economies through sending remittances to their families. For example, Ghanaians living abroad contribute about US\$400 million annually to the national economy, constituting Ghana's fourth highest source of foreign exchange.

But many more would like to use their expertise, skills and capital to become real partners in local and national development. This is true even if concerns about living conditions and (in the worst cases) political instability and human rights abuses mean that they don't necessarily want to return to their homeland.

For this group, the possibility of “virtual participation” in nation-building is now made easier through interactive technology that facilitates knowledge sharing as well as the conversion of specialized expertise into economic, social and cultural capital.

Diaspora networks offer “a major opportunity to transform the historical brain drain ... into [the] new African ‘brain trust,’” notes

John Sarpong, founder of Africast.com, an important internet portal for Africans living overseas.

The Digital Diaspora Network is another example. Launched in July 2002, this UN initiative aims to generate a network of experts and entrepreneurs in computer technology from the African diaspora in Europe and North America.

## A headache for universities

The issue of brain drain is a major headache for the world's universities as they adjust to increasingly mobile and competitive labour markets.

The premium placed on scientific expertise and technological knowledge, at least in industrialized countries, means that universities must compete with industry and private research and development institutions to attract qualified staff and scientists.

In addition, funding cuts in academic infrastructures, science and technology subjects or teaching/learning materials and equipment drive a growing number of graduates and researchers out of academia to take up lucrative posts in the private sector. This trend accelerates as university salaries fall behind those of senior managers in private companies.

The inability to attract or keep qualified academic staff is having a profoundly negative impact on higher education systems in the developing world. In some countries, not enough researchers and PhD holders can be tempted to stay within academia just to fill teaching posts, never mind carrying out key scientific research.

So what would it take for talented students, researchers and lecturers to stay? Much of the literature seems to indicate the need for challenging academic and career opportunities.

This is no easy feat for under-resourced higher education systems. But the most entrepreneurial universities are looking at how their changing funding structures and service mandate can be turned to their advantage. One solution is to direct research to areas providing the highest probability of academic excellence for staff, as well as full-time, waged employment for graduates.

## Brain circulation

At Makerere University in Uganda, for example, the Agriculture Department has adapted its undergraduate courses to the local world of work. The university's extension services have, in turn, stimulated domestic investment in university infrastructure and research and development capacities.

In India, the success of university/industry partnerships, twinning arrangements with institutes of technology in the United States, and technology/knowledge transfer led by the Indian Diaspora in Silicon Valley, have achieved almost folklore status in the building of India's ICT industries in the Bangalore region.

Universities are also drawing on the notion of “brain circulation” to create new learning arrangements that will keep or lure back their most prized lecturers and students. Existing undergraduate courses might be complemented with short periods of specialized and intensive study abroad. Meanwhile, exchange programmes encourage academic and research staff to return temporarily to their country of origin to give a lecture series or provide technical advice to a development project.



## African Students: the most mobile in the world

Third-level students from sub-Saharan Africa are the most mobile in the world, with one out of every 16 studying abroad, according to a report from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

“What this report shows is that the real dynamic in tertiary education is coming from African, Arab and Chinese students. They are the driving force behind the internationalization of higher education,” says Hendrik van der Poel, UIS Director.

Between 1999 and 2004, the number of mobile students worldwide surged by 41 percent from 1.75 to 2.5 million. This does not mean that more students are travelling, rather it reflects the rapid expansion of higher education itself, with tertiary enrolments also increasing by about 40 percent during the same period.

Six countries host 67 percent of the world's mobile students: with 23 per cent studying in the United States, followed by the United Kingdom (12 per cent), Germany (11 per cent), France (10 per cent), Australia (7 per cent) and Japan (5 per cent).

Contact: [a.otchet@uis.unesco.org](mailto:a.otchet@uis.unesco.org)

## Public/Private Solutions in South-East Europe

In the 1990s, conflict in South-East Europe resulted in great loss of life, but also of intellectual capacity. Many countries experienced emigration of up to 70 per cent of their skilled professionals, while two out of three teaching and research jobs were lost on some university campuses, devastating scientific research and higher education capacities.

Young scientists in South-East Europe have now been given the possibility to link up with fellow-nationals abroad through a powerful IT platform.

Launched in 2003, the joint UNESCO/Hewlett Packard initiative Piloting Solutions for Alleviating Brain Drain in South East Europe hopes to turn brain drain into brain gain.

A total of seven universities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and the Federal Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia received state-of-the-art equipment from Hewlett Packard, enabling them to share computer power and data storage capacity.

The project is using a cutting-edge information technology called grid computing. "It has the potential

to convince local talented individuals that they no longer need to look further afield in order to gain access to the latest technology," says John Saw, Marketing Director and Philanthropy Manager of Hewlett Packard International Sales Europe.

Participating universities have succeeded in creating teams of faculties, scientists and decision-makers across the region, all working closely together. In the University of Belgrade, for example, several young engineers remained in the country to develop experiments using the grid computing technology. Project meetings have also acted as a stimulus for overcoming boundaries at inter-regional level.

"Not only has the project strengthened scientific and educational capacities at the national level, it has re-established dialogue among young researchers from the region after years of broken communication," says Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic, the UNESCO coordinator

A booklet on the project will shortly be available.

Contact: [s.uvalic-trumbic@unesco.org](mailto:s.uvalic-trumbic@unesco.org)

→ One successful example of a programme tapping into the positive benefits of "brain circulation" is the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) project at the University of Mali. A joint endeavour of the national government, UNESCO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the project was initiated in 1996 to encourage overseas-based Malian academics, experts, professors and researchers to undertake short-term teaching contracts.

Similarly, the UNESCO initiative Academics Across Borders (AAB) is planning to facilitate a short-term volunteer service for retired academics and professors from developing countries who are willing to assist teachers in selected universities in their countries of origin.

The UNESCO/Hewlett Packard project in South-East Europe is another innovative programme aimed at stimulating the scien-

tific or entrepreneurial environment necessary for academic excellence. It offers a platform for students thinking about emigrating to stay in contact with leading authorities in their fields, principally through access to overseas libraries and co-operation with their fellow-nationals abroad. "Such initiatives are a significant factor in slowing down the flow of those who otherwise would leave for good", says UNESCO coordinator of the programme, Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic.

Is brain drain inevitable? The UN Economic Commission for Africa and the International Organization for Migration warn that, in the future, it may become even tougher to keep skilled professionals in developing countries. With falling birth rates and aging populations, demand for labour in Northern countries is expected to grow. And in a globalizing world which promotes the free movement of capital, it will be difficult to restrict the free movement of skilled labour.

The challenge for policymakers is to find innovative strategies to face these harsh realities. They can continue to use ICT to build capacity, especially in the universities. Most of all, governments should liberate the potential of their diaspora communities and enable them to play a meaningful role in their countries' development. ●

# Rebuilding Sudan's education system

Interview with Ibrahima Sidibe, Head of UNESCO's new antenna office in Khartoum

After two decades of civil war, illiteracy rates have dropped to below 50 per cent in North Sudan and a dramatic 87 per cent in the South. The 2005 landmark peace agreement gives new hope. Now, the ambition of the President of the Government of South Sudan, Salvarikiir Mayardit, is to halve illiteracy by 2010. "We have come out of one war," the President recently said. "Only one war remains: the fight against illiteracy."

Quoting the President's remark, Ibrahima Sidibe, Head of UNESCO's new antenna office in Khartoum, sets out the enormous challenges facing Sudan's education systems, in an interview with *Education Today*.

### What is the role of education in rebuilding Sudan?

Education was in fact one of the main causes of the war although it is also considered as one of the main solutions for peace and reconciliation. The education system was simply not providing the fourth pillar of education which is learning to live together. Sudan was not recognized as a multicultural society. It is crucial to ask ourselves which education system should be put in place so Sudanese citizens will recognize the multifaceted aspects of Sudan and work to provide a peaceful and progressive country.

### What is the most important challenge, in your opinion?

Building classrooms and infrastructure but especially, reconstructing the system itself. The country needs to undertake reform of curricula, teacher training and management. It also needs to strengthen the role and participation of local communities.

### What is UNESCO's role in the light of these reforms?

We have to push the country to enter the 21st century of education. This doesn't only mean knowing how to write and read but putting scientific and technological skills at



© C. Dahlin/UNESCO

Back to school in Sudan.

the heart of education. We need to build the capacities of local governments in areas such as education costing, financing, and planning.

UNESCO is working to assist UNICEF with its Go to School Program by putting in place the mechanisms which will improve the programmes so that children don't only go to school but stay there. UNESCO provides technical services on reforming the curriculum content, improving learning methods and teaching. By making learning content more relevant to the needs of children and parents, UNESCO's participation can increase the role and effectiveness of education so that more Sudanese children will complete the education cycle.

Finally, because Sudan is a post-conflict country, it has a lot of internally displaced persons. Millions of returnees will also be coming from 7 or 8 different neighbouring countries with different educational backgrounds and languages. UNESCO needs to

make sure that the new Sudanese education system can absorb millions of additional people coming from diverse horizons.

### What are the most urgent issues?

First, everything in Sudan has to be taught in light of the approach "one country, two systems". South Sudan urgently needs to rebuild classrooms because all has been destroyed. The north of the country also requires rebuilding but needs curriculum reform so as to include all Sudanese citizens.

For me the best test of Sudan's success in promoting diversity is when any Sudanese citizen, whether he comes from the north, the south, the west or Darfur can sit in any classroom of the country and take from the educational system the knowledge of learning to be, to know, to do and to live together.

Contact: [i.sidibe@unesco.org](mailto:i.sidibe@unesco.org)

## EFA at the G8 Summit



There is a US\$ 7.6 billion shortfall in order for developing countries,

particularly in Africa, to achieve key basic education goals. So UNESCO Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura told participants at the G8 Summit in St Petersburg (Russian Federation), which took place from July 15 to 17, 2006. He also urged developing countries to do their utmost to mobilize domestic resources. Nevertheless, significant funds are needed if these countries are to achieve the six Education for All goals by 2015. It is estimated that

external aid to basic education globally needs to reach \$12 billion per year.

The G8 leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the EFA agenda in the education document approved by the G8 Summit – entitled “Education for Innovative Societies in the 21st Century”. They welcomed “UNESCO’s efforts to finalize a Global Action Plan to achieve the EFA goals and provide a framework for coordinated and complementary action by multilateral aid agencies in support of country-level implementation.”

## Overcoming obstacles to EFA

### Seventh meeting of the Working Group on EFA

The abolition of school fees, the elimination of child labour, education in fragile states and the need for gender-sensitive education to address the HIV and AIDS epidemic were on the agenda of the seventh meeting of the Working Group on EFA, held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 19 to 21 July 2006.

The Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, called on the Working Group to draw on its “expertise, experience and resources to assist developing countries in overcoming these [obstacles] in a systematic and coherent manner”.

The Director-General also highlighted the importance of improving education service delivery in fragile states. He asked the Working Group not only to focus on the short-term issue of the restoration of services, but also to consider the much longer-term and more complex question of rebuilding institutions.

The Working Group will provide recommendations concerning the implementation of the Global Action Plan, particularly at country level. In 2007 and 2008, UNESCO will coordinate a Review and Stocktaking of the EFA Progress at national level, which aims to improve inputs into national policy formulation.

The sixth meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA will be held from 14 to 16 November 2006 in Cairo, Egypt, following the launch in October of the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 on the theme of Early Childhood Care and Education.

Contact: [k.shaheen@unesco.org](mailto:k.shaheen@unesco.org)

## 3 questions to Nicholas Burnett

Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report Team



### 1 What is the focus of the 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report?

Our special focus this year is on early childhood care and education (ECCE) – the first of the six EFA goals. While efforts to achieve universal primary education have dominated national and international policy agendas, minimal attention is paid to what happens in the first six to eight years of life. This is a serious mistake. Supporting children during these early years sets strong foundations for all future learning. The case is overwhelming, based both on rights and on reducing poverty.

### 2 How is ECCE important in the contexts of social development, gender equity and poverty reduction?

We know that a child born in the developing world has a four out of ten chance of living in extreme poverty. About 10.5 million children die each year before age five, most from preventable diseases. Good quality ECCE programmes provide health, nutrition, hygiene, stimulation and social interaction that supports the child’s development and learning. They improve children’s chances of doing well in primary school. When young children attend ECCE programmes, their older sisters or female relatives are relieved of care-giving responsibilities, often

a barrier to school attendance. ECCE programmes yield very high economic returns, especially for children from poor families. They are thus a powerful contributor to reducing poverty, the overarching objective of the Millennium Development Goals.

### 3 What is the greatest challenge to EFA?

Time is running out to meet even the primary education goal by 2015. Acting with urgency is imperative. We need to ensure that education really is for all. Right now it is not. The comprehensive vision of the Dakar agenda is being lost. Most countries – and most donor agencies – are paying minimal attention to improving adult literacy and to ECCE. There is a wide gap between enrolment and completion rates in primary school. The number of out-of-school children remains unacceptably high. Efforts need to be accelerated and more focused. In too many countries, fees and indirect costs remain a major obstacle to poor children’s schooling. Public spending on basic education clearly needs to increase but so does international aid: levels have increased, but aid to low-income countries must at least double to reach the EFA goals.

[www.efareport@unesco.org](mailto:www.efareport@unesco.org)

## White House Conference on Global Literacy “a great success”

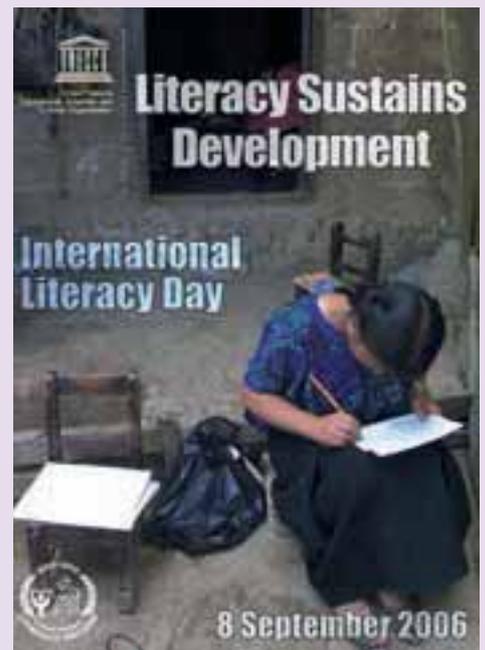
UNESCO has hailed the White House Conference on Global Literacy a great success. The Conference, organized and hosted by the First Lady of the United States of America, Laura Bush, in her capacity as Honorary Ambassador of the UN Literacy Decade (2003-2012), took place in New York on Monday 18 September 2006.

The event was aimed at mobilizing governments into action to reduce by half the world’s adult illiteracy rates by 2015. During the Conference, Mrs Bush announced that the United States would contribute US\$1 million to the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), a UNESCO initiative to improve the accuracy of global data on literacy. The Director-General of UNESCO welcomed the announcement. “Improved monitoring,” he said, “will be absolutely essential to our success in meeting international literacy targets.”

Mr Matsuura also announced that to maintain the momentum created by the White House Conference, UNESCO would organize a series of high-level Regional Conferences during 2007 and 2008. “These conferences,” he said, “will address specific regional challenges in literacy with the aim of building cooperation among stakeholders and mobilizing resources for concrete interventions at country level.”

The President of the United States, George W. Bush, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and US Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings also participated, along with 32 first ladies and spouses of world leaders, 41 ministers of education from around the world, and numerous other personalities.

Contact: [m.sachs-israel@unesco.org](mailto:m.sachs-israel@unesco.org)



Every year on 8 September, International Literacy Day highlights the importance of literacy to individuals, communities and societies. The theme of 2006 was “Literacy Sustains Development”. Celebrations took place throughout the world.

## Exploring sustainable development on the Volga

The Volga, Europe’s longest river, faces a number of environmental challenges. What better way for students to investigate them than on board a ship at an international forum where they study as they navigate?

“Along the Great Volga River Route: Young people set sail to explore World Heritage, Sustainable Development and ICTs”, a scientific cruise organized as part of UNESCO’s Great Volga River Route (GVRR) project, took place from 16 to 20 May 2006 between Moscow and Yaroslavl (Russian Federation). Field trips along the way allowed participants to observe sustainable development issues in real life situations.

On board were 47 teachers and secondary school students from UNESCO Associated Schools (ASPnet) in the 16 GVRR participating countries:

Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Iran, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland Romania, Russian Federation, Sweden, Turkey and Ukraine. Also present were experts on World Heritage and Sustainable Development.

Students conducted hands-on experiments, presented research on scientific and cultural

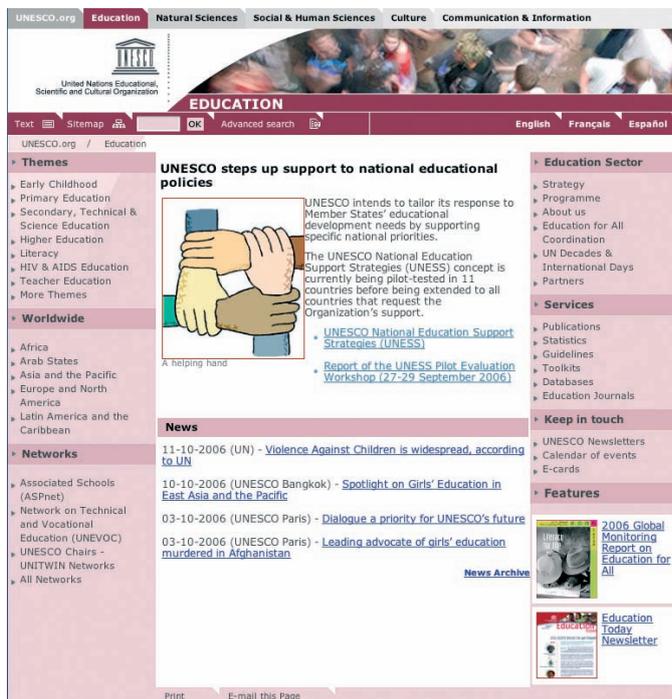
topics and proposed sustainable solutions for preserving the region’s biodiversity and World Heritage sites. They also engaged in dialogue with each other and their teachers on reinforcing school partnerships to work on similar issues. “When students start learning from doing, with their teachers as partners, you know the experience is worthwhile” says Bernard Combes of UNESCO.

Implemented by an intersectoral team at UNESCO Moscow office and Paris Headquarters, the GVRR project is one of the first major regional education initiatives designed to contribute concretely to the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

Contact: [l.saldari@unesco.org](mailto:l.saldari@unesco.org)



All aboard for a unique learning experience.



## A new Education web portal for UNESCO

The redesigned web portal of the UNESCO Education Sector is now online. Navigation has been simplified, reducing graphics to a minimum and providing greater coherence as well as accessibility across different operating systems. The goal is to generate and share relevant information and knowledge on UNESCO education priorities and activities.

New features include a new version of country profiles, a comprehensive list of networks and a range of new services, including inventories of ED databases, guidelines, toolkits, journals and UNESCO newsletters about education. Most information is or will shortly be available in three languages (English, French and Spanish).

Your comments and suggestions are welcome at [kms@unesco.org](mailto:kms@unesco.org).

[www.unesco.org/education](http://www.unesco.org/education)

## Comparing student achievement: a new approach

How can governments design effective policies that raise the quality of learning while reducing disparities among students? A new report from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) addresses this question as well as providing a useful “measuring-stick” for decision-makers.

Entitled *Learning Divides: Ten Policy Questions about the Performance and Equity of Schools and Schooling Systems*, the report introduces an analytical tool called the gradient to show the relationship between student learning outcomes and socioeconomic status.

Part of the UIS series of working papers, the report highlights obstacles and opportunities policymakers face when trying to improve the quality and equity of education systems.

To find out more and download the report: [www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org) (under ‘Documents’).

## Events

### Launch of 2007 Education for All Global Monitoring Report

October 26 • New York, United States of America  
The 2007 edition focuses on early childhood care and education (ECCE) – the first of the six EFA goals – arguing that early intervention is crucial to shaping the quality of children’s lives, their future education, their health and well-being.  
Contact: [c.guttman@unesco.org](mailto:c.guttman@unesco.org)  
[www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org)

### Sixth 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: [k.shaheen@unesco.org](mailto:k.shaheen@unesco.org)  
[www.unesco.org/education/efa](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa)

### World AIDS Day • 1 December

UNESCO celebrates World AIDS Day with activities at its field offices and headquarters. This year’s theme – Accountability – focuses on the challenges faced in achieving global targets and commitments, as well as advocating for a greater and more meaningful involvement of civil society.  
Contact: [aids@unesco.org](mailto:aids@unesco.org)  
[www.unesco.org/aids](http://www.unesco.org/aids)

### International Mother Language Day • 21 February 2007

Nearly 6,000 languages will be celebrated on International Mother Language Day, an event aimed at promoting linguistic diversity and multilingual education. The theme for 2007 is languages and cyberspace.  
Contact: [m.rosi@unesco.org](mailto:m.rosi@unesco.org)  
[www.unesco.org/education/imld](http://www.unesco.org/education/imld)

● **The Sixth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting Report** highlights the commitment to accelerate progress towards Education for All (EFA) by intensifying South-South cooperation within the nine most populated countries in the world (E-9) as well as with other developing countries. The meeting took place in Monterrey, Mexico, 13-15 February 2006. In English only.

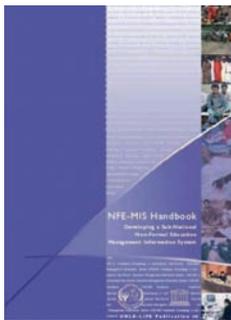
Contact: [k.shaheen@unesco.org](mailto:k.shaheen@unesco.org)

● **Report of the Fifth meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All.** The report expresses clear determination to accelerate progress in EFA through more coordinated action and closer alignment with individual country needs. It acknowledges and reinforces support for South-South cooperation and the Global Action Plan. Held in Beijing, People's Republic of China, 28-30 November 2005, the meeting brought together 360 participants. Available in English and French.

Contact: [k.shaheen@unesco.org](mailto:k.shaheen@unesco.org)

● **Expanding the Field of Inquiry: Cross-Country Study of Higher Education Institutions' Responses to HIV and AIDS** is the first report documenting at a global level the responses of higher education institutions to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The 73-page report analyses the findings from twelve case studies. In English only.

Contact: [l.ramos@unesco.org](mailto:l.ramos@unesco.org)



● The **NFE-MIS Handbook** provides an easy-to-use methodology for setting-up a non-formal education management information system (NFE-MIS). This system responds to the demand for a practical and internationally applicable approach to NFE mapping, monitoring and evaluation which is adaptable to local contexts and information needs. In English only.

Contact: [m.sachs-israel@unesco.org](mailto:m.sachs-israel@unesco.org)

● **Street Children and HIV and AIDS:**

**A Methodological Guide for Facilitators.** This flexible training resource to assist facilitators in dealing with HIV and AIDS and street children focuses on preventing risk behavior. It also offers tools in order to measure the effectiveness of interventions. Available in French and English.

Contact: [f.migeon@unesco.org](mailto:f.migeon@unesco.org)

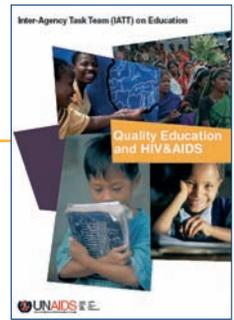
● **Education, HIV and AIDS in Central Africa: How can Schools Shape Behaviour?** This report features the findings of the February 2006 regional workshop on HIV and AIDS curriculum development. It also explains how schools can shape behaviour. In English only.

Contact: [yaounde@unesco.org](mailto:yaounde@unesco.org)

● **Quality Education and HIV and AIDS.**

How can education systems change their conduct in relation to HIV and AIDS? This publication presents a framework for quality education, including ten specific areas for consideration. Available in English, French and Spanish.

Contact: [info-iatt@unesco.org](mailto:info-iatt@unesco.org)



● **Synergies between Formal and Non-Formal Education.**

This report is a first step in showing how national Ministries of Education in four regions (Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, the Arab States and Africa) are creating synergies with non-formal education providers. In English only.

Contact: [m.dada@unesco.org](mailto:m.dada@unesco.org)

● **Orienting Technical and Vocational Education for Sustainable Development: A Discussion Paper.** This paper explores key concepts such as the definition of sustainable development within technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and its impact on the world of work. Available in English and French.

Contact: [info@unevoc.unesco.org](mailto:info@unevoc.unesco.org)

● **Three New Volumes on Teacher Education and the Teaching Workforce.**

The first volume presents teachers' knowledge on HIV and AIDS, as well as proposals to incorporate prevention information into initial teacher training curricula. The second is a comparative analysis on teacher performance, assessment and professional careers in 50 countries and 55 education systems in Europe and North America. The third presents seven innovative models in initial teacher education in Latin America and Europe. In Spanish only.

Contact: [g.alberti@unesco.cl](mailto:g.alberti@unesco.cl)

● **Getting Girls Out of Work and Into School: Policy Brief.**

This brief summarizes the causes and consequences of girls' child labour on their educational opportunities and describes instruments and strategies to reduce girls' labour. Available in English only.

Contact: [bangkok@unescoibkk.org](mailto:bangkok@unescoibkk.org)

● **Higher Education in South-East Asia.** An analysis of the challenges facing higher education in the South-East Asia region, which reveals the interplay between global higher education trends and national and regional needs and developments. Available in English only.

Contact: [bangkok@unescoibkk.org](mailto:bangkok@unescoibkk.org)

● **Using ICT to Develop Literacy.** A concise overview which explains how ICT can enhance literacy education and contribute to achieving the goals of the UN Literacy Decade (2003-2012). Literacy Decade goals. Available in English only.

Contact: [bangkok@unescoibkk.org](mailto:bangkok@unescoibkk.org)

All UNESCO education publications can be found on [www.unesco.org/education/publications](http://www.unesco.org/education/publications)

*Education Today* is a quarterly newsletter on trends and innovations in education, on worldwide efforts towards Education for All and on UNESCO's own education activities. It is published by UNESCO's Education Sector in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Russian. All articles are free of copyright restrictions and can be reproduced provided *Education Today* is credited.

Editors: Anne Müller, Jean O'Sullivan, Géraldine De St Pern

Contributors: Annie Mathieu, Carmela Salzano, pp 4-7

Assistant: Martine Kayser • Design: Pilote Corporate • Layout: Sylvaine Baeyens

Photo credits (cover): Berthold Egner; UNESCO/ASPnet/Karin Hunziker; UNESCO/Brendan O'Malley;

UNESCO/Georges Malempré; UNESCO/Spier-Donati • ISSN 1814-3970

