UNESCO

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Education for All up to 2015 and Beyond
Consultation summary: Arab States

October 2012

Education for All up to 2015 and Beyond

Consultation summary: Arab Region

Background paper prepared for the
Sixth Meeting of UNESCO's Collective Consultation
of NGOs on Education for All (CCNGO/EFA)
by
Teacher Creativity Center

October 2012

Education for All up to 2015 and Beyond

Consultation summary: Arab Region

1. **Introduction**

In preparation for the 6th Meeting of the Collective Consultation of Non-Governmental Organizations on Education for All (CCNGO/EFA) (24 to 26 October 2012 in Paris), the CCNGO/EFA Ad Hoc Group, with the support of the UNESCO Secretariat, carried out a consultation of all member NGOs of the global CCNGO/EFA network to feed into the process of defining the necessary measures to scale up progress towards 2015 and the post-2015 education and development agendas.

As we approach the target date set for the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there is a growing momentum among diverse development stakeholders to look beyond the EFA and the MDGs in order to shape the international education development agenda beyond 2015. As UNESCO's key mechanism for dialogue, reflection and partnership with civil society organizations in the framework of the EFA movement, the CCNGO/EFA is one such stakeholder. A better understanding of current actions undertaken by NGOs to influence the post-2015 agenda will be useful to inform the discussions during the 6th CCNGO/EFA meeting and determine how UNESCO and the CCNGO/EFA should be positioned in this dynamic.

This report summarizes the responses from CCNGO/EFA member organisations from the Arab region.

2. **Reaching EFA goals by 2015**

Since the adoption of the EFA goals in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000, significant progress has been made especially in increasing enrolment and reducing gender disparities at the primary level. Progress has, however, been uneven both between and within countries and in some cases it has started to wane. Advances made in access have often hidden persistent and significant challenges in other areas, notably the quality and relevance of education. Many countries are not on track to meeting the international goals for education by 2015. In order to accelerate progress towards EFA, successful policies and practices need to be identified and shared to allow others to replicate them as appropriate.

2.1 Bottlenecks slowing down EFA progress

Respondent from the Arab region mentioned the following bottlenecks that are slowing down progress towards EFA.
- **Low and unstable budgets allocated for education**: In all surveyed countries. In Yemen for example, a study conducted by the Yemeni Education Coalition (2010) shows high spending on running costs as opposed to developmental programmes; decrease in the budget

allocated to education; insufficient budget to meet the plans and goals; low rate of budget allocation per student; and lack of contribution of the private sector to the educational budgets. In Palestine the budget goes to the running costs, especially for teacher salaries and only 8% of the education budget is spent on programme development.

- **Political instability, crises and wars**: Yemen has been under successive crises since 2004. This includes internal armed conflicts, conflicts between the government and the opposition, and the revolution. Iraq is also still undergoing difficult political conflicts that are sometimes accompanied with armed conflict and existence of external forces, which is also the situation in Palestine and Lebanon. These conflicts make education a lesser priority and also make decision making for education a complicated process that is affected by different players and different governments.

- **Poverty**: In Yemen, the low income and poor socioeconomic status of people forces many of them to compromise education for their children, especially girls. Issues in Jordan include poverty and social circumstances such as early marriage and gender discrimination; low quality of education; and lack of the appropriate educational infrastructure especially in the rural and marginalized areas.

- **Lack of proper educational environments that support achieving EFA goals**: In Iraq for example, this includes inappropriate and outdated curricula that does not meet modern needs; lack of proper professional development and training programmes for teachers; lack of information on development indicators; social problems; lack of a clear national strategy for educational development; lack of appropriate criteria for qualifications in education; and lack of incentives systems for teachers.

- **Administrative and financial bureaucracy** (in all surveyed countries)

- **Corruption**

- **Politicizing higher education and academic institutions** (for example in Iraq)

- **Poor potential and coordination among the Civil Society** (for example in Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Sudan, and Morocco), and lack of the civil society's ability to monitor government's performance on education.

- **Lack of a culture of social corporate responsibility on education** (Sudan, Yemen, Jordan and Iraq)

- High expectations when planning for reform (such as in Morocco) which affects the clarity of priorities and causes confusion and loss of unified and focused action.

- **Lack of coordination among stakeholders** in all countries.

- No follow-up for reform programmes especially those related to early childhood education (in Morocco for example).

2.2 Policies and practices that have been successful with regard to progress towards the achievement of EFA goals

In Yemen, there are no recent studies that addressed this issue. At the end of 2010, a formal report mentioned a success in children's enrolment in basic education, and in reducing the gender gap in enrolment. However, civil society in the Yemen doubts the results of this report, as the indicators still show poor achievement on the two aspects. In Palestine the enrolment is more than 95% for girls and boys.

In Iraq, there have been changes in curriculum content, such as teaching other languages besides Arabic as well as teaching a new subject on human rights for middle stage students. Other changes include private sector's involvement in primary education through supporting teaching languages and in higher education, expanding scholarships abroad; increasing enrolment; starting doctoral programmes; setting up non-governmental universities and research institutes in different specialties; and opening new departments in universities (for example, quality assurance) that pay attention to conferences and seminars.

In Jordan, there have been achievements regarding literacy programmes, gender equality in access to education, providing education services in marginalized areas and mainstreaming basic education.

In Morocco, successes include providing social support to poor groups in order to encourage education, providing schools with equipment and resources to support the teaching process, as well as incorporating a large number of school cafeterias and rooms with multimedia equipment. In Palestine despite the high rate of enrolment the quality of education is going down

3. **Actions to be taken by UNESCO in the run-up to 2015 in terms of EFA coordination and in terms of its collaboration with the civil society**

In autumn 2011, UNESCO's Executive Board endorsed the UNESCO Director-General's decision to renew the global EFA coordination mechanism in order to enhance efficiency and speed up the progress towards the achievement of the EFA goals[1].

In terms of EFA coordination and UNESCOs collaboration with the civil society between now and 2015, the respondents thought that UNESCO should:

---

[1]For more information about the mechanism, see 'Information note on the reform of UNESCO's global EFA coordination mechanism' http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002168/216834E.pdf.

- Contribute in strengthening and enabling the civil society to lead a social movement that addresses the EFA goals.
- Encourage governments to provide clear and time-bound commitments towards developing quality of education.
- Raise additional resources and follow up with donor countries to ensure they meet their commitments to education in the low income countries.
- Provide reports on the status of donor countries' commitments.
- Lead a global partnership that bridges national partnerships, and ensure that these national partnerships include governments, private sector, donors and civil societies. Support participatory prioritizing and goal-setting.
- Adopt effective educational policies that meet the needs of the societies, and pay attention to participatory and research-informed planning for education.
- Pay increased attention to creative, analytical and critical skills and encourage role models in education.
- Ensure diversity in educational policy and systems to meet various needs, coordinate the countries' resources, plans, development plans and training programmes.
- Develop the administrative aspects in education.
- Develop the structures of higher education institutions.
- Encourage educational research financially and provide tools such as libraries, resources, seminars.
- Transfer and share developed countries' knowledge and experience.
- Provide annual reports on education.
- Develop educational media and encourage journalists to increase public discourse about education.
- Evaluate the efforts of the civil society and develop coordination mechanisms.
- Demand governments to continue reform programmes and to institutionalize this reform in order not to be affected by political conflicts.
- Prepare cadres to be able of monitor the reality of education and to suggest reforms.

4. The post-2015 education agenda

In three years, we shall be reaching the 2015 target date set by the international community for both the EFA and MDG goals. Different development stakeholders have initiated processes to review progress and experiences and to define the post-2015 development agenda.

4.1 Participation in processes related to the definition of the post-2015 education or development agenda

Many countries in the Arab region are reforming their education systems and many respondents highlighted participation in related campaigns, activities and processes at different levels.

Yemeni Educational Coalition: The Yemeni Educational Coalition is relatively new. It was established in August, 2009, but efforts have taken more time because of the political situation in the country. Therefore, the Yemeni Coalition needs capacity building and support in preparing its leaders to be able to carry out successful campaigns and effective partnerships. The Coalition suffered during this period of time also scarcity in resources and funding which made its effectiveness very limited. There are other conditions that affect the work of civil societies in developing countries such as pressure from governments. International bodies such as UNESCO could suggest solutions to this problem. The Yemeni Educational Coalition believes that the national coalitions are partners through their participation and/or membership in the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). National coalitions try to be part of or to be represented in the processes of developing educational programmes. In Yemen, the Coalition is expecting to join these processes in the coming period. The Yemeni coalition would expect support from UNESCO and GCE to help the national coalition in taking its role, especially in light of the challenges that face civil societies in the developing countries.

Iraqi Coalition: The Iraqi organizations follow up the progress in developing educational programmes. However, there is no clear plan in the country for education post-2015. Organizations work effectively each year in the GCE, especially for the Global Action Week (GAW). There are many adult literacy programmes and programmes for education on human rights and citizenship.

Morocco Coalition: The Moroccan Coalition participated in the reform programme, however, the government amendments changed the situation in which the coalition plays a role of following up and documenting the current government's processes.

Palestinian coalition: The Palestinian coalition is active now on developing the role of the civil society in monitoring and evaluation of education policies. They also play an active role in mobilizing strong community involvement in the ongoing education reform.

4.2 Priorities for the period post-2015

In Yemen, the Yemini Educational Coalition believes that stating the priorities without looking back to what the countries have achieved wouldn't be precise. Therefore, it is important to build a strong partnership with all stakeholders before deciding on the priorities. However, the Yemini Coalition sees that the following aspects are still considered priorities in Yemen since 1990:
- Increasing funding to education to contribute to:
    - Expanding geographical areas that receive education cervices
    - Supporting children's enrolment in basic education
    - Reducing the gender gap in enrolment
    - Supporting marginalised and disadvantaged groups such as children with disabilities.
    - Literacy, especially among women.

In Iraq, the focus needs to be directed on:
- Construction of additional schools
- Enhancing the economic status of teachers
- Benefiting from the developments on curriculum in the developed countries and ensuring social appropriateness.

In Jordan, the priorities include:
- Quality of education
- Justice and equal opportunities between cities and rural areas
- Effective teacher education programmes
- Clear vision for an incentives system
- Building true partnerships with the civil society

In Morocco, the priorities include:
- Qualification of teachers to ensure quality education
- Deciding on the appropriate pedagogies and solving the language problems
- Developing primary educational programmes that are in line with modern standards and that meet the students' needs
- Focus on quality of education
- Enforcing mentoring and accountability in education

In Sudan, the priorities include:
- Early childhood education
- Free and compulsory education for boys and girls
- Literacy for adults

In Palestine, the priorities include:
- Education reform
- Increasing the education budget
- Early childhood education
- Quality of education
- Privatisation
- Community involvement in education