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

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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

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Education for All

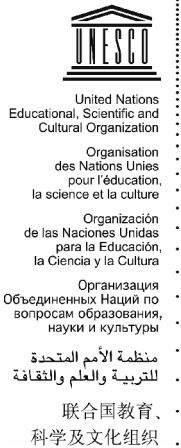
Fourth Meeting of the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education for All  
(CCNGO/EFA)

Dakar, Senegal

3 – 5 September

NGO Declaration on Education for All

Midway to 2015: Reaching the Unreached



**Collective Consultation of NGOs  
ON EDUCATION FOR ALL  
Consultation Collective des ONG  
SUR L'EDUCATION POUR TOUS  
Consultación Colectiva de las ONG  
EN EDUCACIÓN PARA TODOS**



**NGO Declaration on Education for All  
Fourth Meeting of the Collective Consultation of NGOs  
on Education for All (CCNGO/EFA)  
3 – 5 September 2007  
Dakar, Senegal**

**Midway to 2015: Reaching the Unreached**

We, the Collective Consultation of civil society from different regions of the world, have come together, aware of the urgency to address the continuing neglect and erosion of the rights of children, young people and adults to have a quality education, especially those from disadvantaged and excluded communities. This is happening at a time of deepening inequality and disparity and persistent poverty, ironically amidst general trends of economic growth worldwide. This is compounded by the fragility of communities hit by conflicts, natural disasters and the pandemic of HIV & AIDS.

We have struggled to build our capacities for policy engagement and advocacy; we have made tremendous efforts to organise ourselves into bigger, stronger and more mature coalitions and networks and we have attained a measure of impact. Our regional studies on “Civil Society involvement in education policy dialogue and the EFA process” provide ample examples of successful interface between the state and CSOs in the sector. But in many countries, governments either ignore the crucial role of civil society or simply give it merely token roles. Many governments and donors still do not regard civil society as full and genuine partners - they fail to institutionalise our presence in all the structures and mechanisms around the EFA processes. We also express concern about some states forming or co-opting CSOs, thereby undermining the integrity of genuine civil society.

In this fourth meeting, seven years after Dakar 2000 and midway to the promised target date for Education for All, we find ourselves articulating with frustration many of the things we have already said before, even as we take stock of what has been achieved so far in relation to the EFA goals. We are still asking that governments put education in the forefront as a national priority. We are still demanding that they put resources into classrooms and teachers' professional development instead of military expenditure and debt repayments.

Many governments have not embraced the full EFA agenda and do not recognize that the six goals are inextricably interlinked and cannot be approached selectively and in an isolated manner. Most countries in Africa and Asia have missed the 2005 target of getting as many girls as boys into schools. There are neglected EFA goals like early childhood education, adult literacy and quality education, and governments and donors also show very little interest in basic education and relevant technical and vocational skills for youths and adults who have missed out on formal schooling. Even for goals that have shown some level of achievement, the progress across countries has been mixed and uneven. Although progress is reported across regions and the number of out-of-school children reduced from 125 million to 77 million, we insist that the pace is not enough to reach the unreached in time, unless everyone is mobilised into a rights-based movement for EFA - an inclusive platform for both the voiceless as much as for those in power.

We are sorely disappointed that previous unequivocal promises of having no country deprived of the needed resources to finance their EFA plans remain largely unfulfilled commitments, with a global deficit of at least US\$11 billion per year. We deplore the fact that aid to education, especially basic education, remains scant, tied to conditionalities agreed by international finance institutions and adopted by the donors, and not always in grants, adding to the already heavy debt burden of many poor and middle-income countries. The Fast Track Initiative funding mechanism for EFA may have improved its processes to make funds flow more systematically and has started to provide space for civil society representation, but many low income countries still wait to be endorsed for a programme and many lower middle income countries and conflict-affected fragile states are not eligible even when they are constrained from addressing education resource needs due to serious debt and fiscal problems.

In our assessment of the progress and gaps with regard to the commitment of the Dakar Framework of Action “to ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development”, we identify the determining factors for effective participation and for genuine partnership between civil society organizations and national governments.

We took the opportunity of this meeting for self-reflection and to strategise how to strengthen ourselves, our South-South and North-South partnerships, as well as build alliances among EFA advocates and other social movements. We agreed that civil society organisations need to be more accountable, better organised and equipped, and so become more credible for the tasks ahead.

In endeavouring to do so, we shall take these steps forward:

- Build and sustain our capacity for evidence-based advocacy at all levels and persistently push for wider space for CSO participation at every stage;
- Actively participate in major movements for the right to education, for free, universal and quality education, for lifelong learning and for peace, and for eliminating discrimination, exclusion and poverty;
- Ensure that all persons, especially the underprivileged, are fully informed about their right to free quality education and strengthen their ability to demand their rights, including through legal mechanisms when appropriate;
- Strengthen our financial and human/technical resource base but at the same time encourage autonomy and reliance on local resources which we need to pool together for higher impact actions;

- Strengthen our communication mechanisms and scale up information sharing using friendly formats;
- Reinforce accountability, transparency and self-regulation and build up our credibility to contribute to the construction of a common civil society agenda;
- Develop civil society social watch mechanisms to help guide development, government expenditure and political agendas at all levels;
- Promote the CCNGO/EFA widely and spread its goals and principles to reach all partners (communities, private sector, governments and donors); push to give its regional focal organisations and NGO networks a higher profile to be able to formally engage with regional UNESCO Offices as well as regional economic bodies and donors' forums;
- Work towards scaling up the broad-based movement for EFA that will include all CSOs, notably those of parents, children, youth, teachers, in partnership with governments, institutions of higher education, parliamentarians, media, religious institutions and groups, private sector and donors; consolidate ourselves into a unified platform with one strong voice;
- Work to achieve our programmes, projects and advocacy activities, based upon the Convention on the Rights of the Child and all other internationally agreed instruments on children's rights.

We call upon UNESCO and other relevant UN agencies to:

- Formally involve, and support the participation of, NGOs and CSO networks in the EFA Mid-term Assessments as well as in all global and regional EFA processes;
- Ensure that UNESCO funds earmarked for the CCNGO/EFA at central and regional level be really allocated to support the involvement of members of the CCNGO/EFA in regions and countries;
- Harness more support for the CCNGO/EFA mechanism both in funds and human resources in order to facilitate more cohesive linkages between CCNGO members, UNESCO Headquarters and regional offices and to sustain a regular communication flow with the entire CCNGO/EFA membership;
- Facilitate dialogue between the CCNGO/EFA and donors, in particular at the regional and national levels.

We urge national governments to:

- Assume their obligation to ensure everyone's right to quality education and to play a lead role in national partnerships to this effect;
- Make education a priority in the national and regional policy agenda and ensure the implementation of all commitments at country level;
- Look at the EFA goals as 'indivisible' because the attainment of each goal is closely interlinked with that of other goals; pay more serious attention to the neglected goals, in particular goals 1, 3, 4 and 6; and ensure the mandatory enrolment of children with disabilities;
- Institutionalise CSO participation in all EFA-related bodies at all levels and in all phases of education action plans and programmes including impact assessment;
- Encourage a culture of democracy within which institutionalised dialogue on EFA, the right to organise freely and the freedom of expression are promoted;
- Give special attention and funding to marginalized groups, e.g. post-conflict areas, migrants, refugees, indigenous people, persons with disabilities and all

- those who are socially or economically excluded, and abolish school fees and take action against hidden fees;
- Promote and support, in cooperation with civil society, UN agencies and donors, quality human investment in order to favour the participation of persons vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion in existing education programmes; and involve population groups which are excluded because of poverty or disabilities in the design, implementation and evaluation of education projects and structures;
  - Develop comprehensive responses to HIV and AIDS, and fully engage the education sector which must focus in particular on protecting future generations from being infected through the inclusion of HIV life skills programmes in the curriculum and systematic training of educators, as well as mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS and combating stigma and discrimination;
  - Anticipate, investigate, publicise and resist privatisation trends in education and/or analyse their impact; fight against corruption and mismanagement of education funds at all levels, and ensure that decentralisation processes lead to local participation and empowerment and not to the abdication by the State of its responsibility for fulfilling the right to education;
  - Recognise educators as education specialists and ensure their status so as to retain quality educators in the education system; recognise the need for educators to receive appropriate training to ensure quality education;
  - Formalise Early Childhood Care and Development in the education ladder;
  - Mainstream gender issues throughout education systems, supported by adequate resources and strong political commitment, in order to ensure gender equality in and through education;
  - Investigate, publicise and address the effects of deteriorating environment on access and quality of education;
  - Enhance cross-national transparent systems, using a diversity of measurement tools for monitoring EFA progress.

We call on the donors to:

- Fulfil their commitments, fill the resource gaps and fully fund EFA with increased long-term, predictable funding, prioritising basic education in low-income countries, including conflict-affected fragile states, otherwise the full EFA agenda will be compromised;
- Encourage the participation of NGOs in the official processes that decide the allocation and prioritisation of educational programmes that should be funded;
- Be transparent in the whole process including selection, implementation, financial reporting and evaluation of programmes;
- Support independent initiatives of the NGOs to monitor progress towards EFA goals that would review and check official data.