

**Report on the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on Education for All
Paris, France, 14–16 November 2007**



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The drafts of this report were shared with all participants of the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on Education for All

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Preface

We have come a long way since the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000. We have seen significant progress in some areas of Education for All (EFA), while at the same time becoming more aware of the huge challenges we still face in achieving the six EFA goals by 2015. The Eighth Meeting of the EFA Working Group, occurring at the halfway point between 2000 and 2015, was acutely conscious of uneven progress and future responsibility. The re-sequencing of the EFA mechanisms gave the Working Group – now meeting in November instead of July – a new chance to more sharply define the most pressing EFA priorities, based on a careful analysis of the messages of the 2008 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*.

As this Report demonstrates, the Working Group succeeded in elaborating, for the benefit of the December 2007 meeting of the EFA High-Level Group, a set of discussion points that encapsulated the areas for immediate action in promoting EFA: equity, quality and financing. Equity and quality are inherent aspects of the EFA agenda and adequate financing is an indispensable condition. These are not new to EFA deliberations but – with less than eight years to go until 2015 – they represent the core of what we must do, as governments, funding agencies, multilateral partners, civil society, the private sector and other partners.

Equity and quality, as well as a commitment to financing, are of course not merely objectives with attendant actions, but also values and attitudes. It is here that the impact of the Working Group will be most broadly felt, not only providing a reasoned basis for an expression of greater political will by the High-Level Group but also driving forward our determination to maintain the vision of EFA. This is what will underpin the action that is so urgent for those still excluded from opportunities to enjoy a quality basic education.

Nicholas Burnett
Assistant Director-General for Education
UNESCO

Introduction

The Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on Education for All marked a break with the past. Taking place midway to the 2015 target date for achieving EFA, it was the first meeting to benefit from the re-sequencing of key EFA mechanisms, enabling the Working Group to work with the 2008 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (in embargoed form), thus helping ensure that the Working Group was in a position to produce relevant outcomes to take forward to the Seventh Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All (Dakar, Senegal, 11–13 December 2007). In this way, the Working Group on EFA fulfilled its technical role by preparing for the High-Level Group meeting; agreeing on key policy issues and activities to focus on during the coming years; deliberating on effective ways to strengthen links between key EFA programmes and initiatives; and addressing the outcome of recent meetings of the EFA Fast Track Initiative, the Global Advisory Committee of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative and the Capacity Development Seminar held in Bonn, Germany, in October 2007.

Director-General's opening statement

It was in this spirit that the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, opened the eighth meeting of the Working Group on EFA. After welcoming participants and introducing Mr Nicholas Burnett, the new Assistant Director-General for Education and chair of the meeting, he focused on the mobilization of the international community to enable good quality basic education to be available to all, a 'global drive' which began in Jomtien in 1990 and was re-affirmed in Dakar in 2000.

The Director-General reflected on the evolution of the Working Group since November 2000 and outlined the modifications to and re-sequencing of the key EFA events, citing the contributions of the annual EFA Global Monitoring Report and the creation of the International Advisory Panel on EFA, and describing how these key mechanisms will ensure continued momentum in the EFA movement. He also spoke about the shift in purpose of the Working Group - from considering a broad range of issues in EFA to the more specific aim of taking the evidence of the GMR and determining the key policy and strategy recommendations to be considered by the High-Level Group.

The Director-General then addressed the evidence of the 2008 Report, and reminded all those present of the need to pursue the EFA goals in a more holistic manner, as they are interdependent as well as each being significant in its own right. He drew attention to the three key areas of concern focused on during the Working Group meeting: equity, quality and financing. He further cited the continued neglect of certain EFA goals—early childhood care and education; the learning needs of young people and adults; and adult literacy, especially for women—noting the missed 2005 goal of achieving gender parity at primary and secondary levels of education.

The Director-General then concentrated on certain disturbing trends in EFA, speaking in particular about the need to increase overall aid levels, stabilize the predictability of aid and strengthen its link to national development strategies. He spoke about more efficient allocation of aid, notably in countries facing conditions of fragility. He urged participants to focus on rebuilding collapsed education systems and called for more intensive and creative efforts from all those involved. He argued that the overarching purpose of the Eighth Working Group meeting on EFA should be to propose ways in which balanced and holistic

approaches towards achieving EFA may be structured and concluded that we must strive towards not disappointing those in greatest need – ‘the women, men and children who still lack access to good quality learning opportunities’.

Towards Dakar

Mr Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General of Education, UNESCO, closed the opening session by affirming his enthusiasm and dedication in his new role of helping ensure the collective achievement of the EFA goals. He explained that the agenda of the Working Group—one of the first products of the International Advisory Panel—is more integrated this year, and based on the central messages of the 2008 GMR. Mr Burnett also emphasized the importance of working towards a limited number of specific outputs with recommendations to take forward to the High-Level Group.

Organization of the meeting and the report

The Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on EFA was held at UNESCO headquarters, 14–16 November 2007. Chaired by Mr Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO, the meeting attracted nearly 150 people from 45 countries as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations, research institutes, foundations, civil society and the private sector.

The re-sequencing of the EFA mechanisms meant that the agenda of the Working Group was considerably different on this occasion. Instead of a conference mode, with a series of panels on a range of EFA topics, the meeting took on a workshop mode. Over two-and-a-half days, the Working Group worked to identify, refine and give expression to the priorities to take forward to the High-Level Group, using small group sessions and adjusting the programme as it went along in order to achieve maximum ownership of the process and the outcomes. Small group chairs and rapporteurs served as an informal guidance group for this.

On the first day, participants divided into six smaller working groups that explored the three priority areas of the Global Monitoring Report—quality, equity and financing—in the context of two cross-cutting themes: countries facing conditions of fragility and neglected EFA goals. The main messages arising from these six working sessions were presented to all Working Group participants during a plenary meeting, and more deliberations took place. During day two, participants divided into three smaller groups, this time focusing on just the three priority areas themselves and concentrated on distilling the previous day’s deliberations and outlining priorities for the coming year. Although pinpointing the most pressing issues proved challenging, agreement was reached on the main aspects, which are summed up in the Working Group Discussion Points document.

The Working Group agenda also included three thematic sessions: gender parity, capacity development and education, and poverty and the Millennium Development Goals. Each of these sessions included a moderator, presentation and discussion centred on the theme’s impact on the EFA agenda.

This report serves as a record of the proceedings. It captures discussions and summarizes key findings pertaining to the themes of equity, quality and financing, both generally for the achievement of EFA initiatives as well as specifically relating to countries facing conditions of fragility and the neglected EFA goals. The report concludes with the Working Group

Discussion Points document which formed the basis of the Seventh High-Level Group Meeting on EFA held in Dakar, Senegal, 11 to 13 December 2007. The Director-General's address, background papers on equity, quality and financing, presentations during the thematic workshops and summaries of the smaller working sessions are included as appendices.

Starting-point: evidence and analysis from the 2008 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*

The 2008 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* provided the starting-point for the discussions of the Eighth Working Group on EFA. After a brief introduction by Mr Nicholas Burnett, Mr Keith Hinchliffe, Acting Director, EFA Global Monitoring Report Team, began by pointing out that the 2008 Report is titled '*Education for All by 2015: Will We Make It?*', although 'the brief answer is not unless some things change'. He provided an overview of EFA progress to date, including data that show the scale of the challenges to achieving the six EFA goals, with uneven performance across the goals and across countries. Despite continued global advances since Dakar, out of the 129 countries for which data have been compiled, an estimated 51 have achieved or are close to achieving the four most quantifiable EFA goals,¹ 53 are in an intermediate position and 25 (including some of those facing conditions of fragility) are far from achieving them. In addition, the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* states that the lowest category would likely be larger still if data were available for a number of countries facing conditions of fragility, including conflict or post-conflict countries with very low levels of education development.

While the issue of access to universal primary education (UPE) remains a major challenge, the equity and quality dimensions of basic education require more attention. A holistic and balanced approach to the full EFA agenda is key to achieving EFA at the international, regional, national and local levels. 'Education expansion does not take place in a vacuum', Mr Hinchliffe stated. Moreover, informed policy-making and efficient implementation, aligned with overall national policies, are critical. This demands a precise diagnosis of needs (based on accurate data) and robust education systems, and must take into account increases in income inequalities, urbanization, health and the general momentum of globalization. Although success in attaining the EFA goals depends, above all, on the will, efforts, commitment and resources of countries, it is evident that without adequate and effective support from the international community, the EFA goals cannot be met by 2015.

The 2008 Report shows that several of the EFA goals continue to be neglected, specifically Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) (Goal 1); the learning needs of young people and adults (Goal 3); and adult literacy, especially for women (Goal 4). The Report also provides evidence that the 2005 goal of gender parity at primary and secondary levels of education has been missed.

Despite this, Mr Hinchliffe was careful to emphasize the notable achievements since 2000, including several examples where countries have increased their expenditures on education, highlighting that the annual average increase in educational expenditure across those areas with the greatest challenges (sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia) has been more than 5 per cent a year. He also explained how aid to basic education has more than doubled in low-income countries and noted the change in geographic distribution of this aid.

Mr Hinchliffe gave a number of interesting examples of government action to promote access and improve learning, while focusing on the following five policy priorities for the coming years:

- Need for wider social inclusion (especially targeting various disadvantaged groups)
- Higher quality instruction

¹ Universal primary education, education quality, gender parity and literacy.

- Greater attention to ECCE and youth/adult literacy
- Greater capacity development
- Need for stronger commitment for funding and support (especially from national governments and their civil society partners) as well as efficient allocation of resources.

Discussion

Mr Hinchliffe's presentation raised numerous questions from participants, many enquiring about the specific methods of data collection. Other participants voiced support or concern regarding certain recommendations and policy priorities, and proposed areas that they felt were missing from the Report, such as an evaluation of the impact of the Teacher Training in sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) programme, more in-depth exploration of the link between employment and education, and teacher migration issues and their bearing on the education system.

Working sessions

Education plays a pivotal role in ensuring human security by developing individuals' capacities to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in the development of society, to improve the quality of their lives and to make informed decisions. In this view, literacy, inclusion, capacity development, quality and financing are foundations without which EFA and the Millennium Development Goals will not be met. The agenda of the Working Group enabled participants to focus more closely on equity, quality and financing, specifically analysing these issues in the context of neglected EFA goals as well as for countries facing conditions of fragility. As previously mentioned, this facilitated close and interactive engagement with the findings of the Report as well as the putting forward of realistic discussion points for High-Level Group participants to take into consideration at their Dakar meeting.

Emphasizing a coherent approach

During the smaller working sessions, participants stressed that educational quality has a strong bearing on equity and inclusion, and cannot be addressed separately from access. The need for coherence was flagged on many occasions, specifically in terms of harmonizing the work of different ministries, donor agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. A holistic and comprehensive approach is required to respond to the diverse circumstances and demands on the ground.

In several of the smaller groups, discussions centred on ways to hold governments accountable for all six EFA goals, taking into consideration economic, political, social, cultural and geographic contexts, and progress to date. As such, 'the opportunity cost of not implementing the EFA goals' was a phrase heard repeatedly.

Participants also stressed the importance of a lifelong approach to learning opportunities. Early childhood care, basic education, higher education and life-skills development programmes were discussed at great length and policies linked to each of these stages of education were incorporated into the resulting discussion paper. The strategic allocation of resources to these different education levels was discussed, taking into consideration national priorities and needs.

Equity - Fundamental to EFA: Working Session I

A concern for equity is a fundamental aspect of achieving Education for All which, by its very name, refers to inclusion. Education systems should be used to transform inequality in a society rather than to reinforce division. The challenge of ensuring the inclusion of children, youth and adults currently not served well by education systems will remain a major obstacle during the next seven years.

The 2008 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* shows that pervasive imbalances in the development of many education systems create and reinforce disparities, which must be redressed if children, youth and adults are to benefit equally from learning opportunities. The first step is the need to correctly identify these excluded groups and to design strategies, such as appropriate funding methods for families (e.g. comprehensive social protection programmes of scholarships, cash transfers and school feeding) to ensure their inclusion.

Furthermore, it was readily agreed that inclusion is an important lens through which the planning, budgeting and implementing of education systems and school initiatives can take place.

In countries facing conditions of fragility, individuals do not forfeit their right to education, even where state institutions are unstable or frail due to conflict, weak governance, prolonged economic hardship, high levels of inequality or emergency. In light of this, the participants of Working Session I recommended that governments and donors should be challenged to ensure a minimum level of quality, access and accountability for education in conditions of fragility.

Key discussion points on equity concentrated on disruption of funding, insecurity and lack of sanitation, as well as psycho-social issues that lead to further marginalization. It was noted that national capacity and resources to deliver basic services, including education, tend to be unreliable in countries facing conditions of fragility. Traditionally, excluded children and youth—most notably girls, the poor, orphans, children with disabilities and children in rural areas, or from minority ethnic or linguistic groups—are more likely to be further disadvantaged in situations of scarcity. In countries facing conditions of fragility, such groups become even more vulnerable, but the current aid architecture does not provide for financing education in emergencies as a component of humanitarian aid. Transparent financial mechanisms should be put in place to guarantee that, despite poor governance structures and capacity in countries facing such hardships, funds are properly channeled and reach the most vulnerable children and other learners. This would also encourage donors who are at times reluctant to invest in fragile states due to a perceived lack of efficient allocation of resources.

Teacher education and training curricula based on reinforcing gender equality and promoting diversity were emphasized, alongside discussions on attracting and retaining pupils in schools. Relevant curriculum that caters for the needs of all learners was deemed essential, requiring policy and programme coherence at country level, with ministries, and bilateral and multilateral donor organizations addressing the inclusion of vulnerable groups in an integrated way. When designing strategies to cater to the needs of excluded groups, formal, non-formal and informal programmes should be explored, including skills-building and literacy programmes for both youth and adults, especially women and girls.

Quality – An indispensable condition: Working Session II

Over the past few years, discussions about achieving EFA have focused on undertaking a “*quality* education for all”, and thus guaranteeing an education that makes a difference, that is relevant to real needs and that empowers learners to make the most of their lives. Governments must ensure that a top priority is for pupils to master basic skills and competencies relevant to their everyday lives and the future of their communities.

Investment in teachers is the most effective input to improve educational quality. This includes professional development and training (such as classroom management and multi-grade teaching), the enhancement and standardization of teacher performance, and adequate salaries, benefits and positive working conditions. Teachers must be taught to use inclusive approaches that take into account specific student characteristics such as gender, socio-economic status and psycho-social conditions.

Communities should play a role in quality assurance; they can enhance the sustainability of quality education by guaranteeing school safety and healthy environments, and by being the first port of call in emergencies. In conditions of fragility, or those just coming out of fragility, such as Angola, communities can help ensure that Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction (MSEE) are being implemented at all times, to maintain a level of continuity in the education system. This has worked well in Thailand and Pakistan, among others. Similarly, parental involvement and positive environmental factors have proven time and again to be integral aspects in fostering and encouraging children to attend school, thus leading to higher quality education.

More money, better spent: Working Session III

Discussion about equity and quality education has direct implications for funding. While there has been progress in domestic expenditure and international aid, as well as in the quality of aid delivery, there remain a number of disturbing trends. In countries facing conditions of fragility, particularly, adequate resources and their effective allocation remain a challenge.

The 2008 Report estimates that US\$11 billion in external funding to basic education is needed annually to achieve EFA, a figure that, even if recent pledges are met, will be unattained. In his opening address to the Working Group, the Director-General of UNESCO called on developing countries to increase spending on education, and urged bilateral and multilateral agencies to boost their commitments. The Report clearly states that national governments must maintain public spending on EFA and, indeed, increase it when necessary. It is critical to ensure that pressure from other priorities does not diminish the focus on EFA spending.

Working Group participants agreed that greater efforts are required, especially with respect to better targeting of aid towards countries most in need. 'More money, better spent' was the theme, as one participant stated. Funding is essential to ensure the sustainability of inclusion, quality, literacy and capacity development. Costs are likely to rise for enrolling the most disadvantaged and marginalized populations, for the expansion of ECCE and literacy, and for teacher training and the provision of adequate materials for classrooms. Moreover, capacity development is often under-funded.

Better communication on issues in donor countries is needed to ensure a higher profile for education, with participation from the general public, decision-makers and parliaments, among others. Particularly with respect to countries facing conditions of fragility, concrete results must be communicated locally, nationally and globally, thereby helping to foster continued donor confidence and investment.

The promotion of grants and scholarships, and the abolition of school fees were discussed as methods of attracting and retaining children in schools, potentially imparting lasting positive benefits on inclusion and quality education. In this context, it was stressed that demographic shifts of populations need to be taken into account, as well as the 'real' costs of providing quality basic education, rather than the cost of providing 'more of the same'.

With regard to domestic financing, the possibility of drafting a legal framework was explored. This framework would explicitly mention the right to free and compulsory basic education in constitutions and laws, tied to a public expenditure spending target. Alternative

financing mechanisms were also considered, such as debt swaps for education, and their potential to allow for better tracking and accountability of funding processes was debated. This is of particular importance for countries facing conditions of fragility, where restoring education services through adequate channels can strongly encourage a return to stability and economic growth.

From an external financing point of view, competition between sectors and subsectors was a main concern, leading to a call for a re-examination of donor priorities. The importance of strong sectoral dialogue and the sharing of expertise was stressed, especially regional solidarity (as foreseen in the African Union's Second Decade of Education for Africa) and assistance by neighbouring countries.

Discussion

The plenary session discussions of these three themes highlighted five issues:

Access. Abolition of school fees as a way to ensure access for all children (notably the marginalized) arose as an important but controversial topic on many occasions, with a perception that it may not be the most appropriate proposal in countries such as South Africa, where some sections of the population are able to make a financial contribution. The concept of government accountability for access, however, was well received.

Inclusion and gender lens. Using inclusion and gender as a policy vector will help to redress the neglect of certain EFA goals, a problem which the 2008 GMR identified.

Multi-sectoral, holistic approach. This concept underlay most discussions, notably in the financing section, and provides a basis, it was agreed, for ensuring efficiency and cost-effectiveness. When defining this concept, a few participants suggested that a holistic approach includes bridging between formal, non-formal and informal education.

Sustainable Development. More coordination and linkages between Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and EFA was a strong focus of the equity and quality discussions.

Responsibility. The individual roles and responsibilities of countries, donors and international organizations were heavily debated. The need to come up with clear measurements of accountability was also discussed, in the context of pushing forward specific High-Level Group recommendations.

Thematic Workshops

Thematic workshop I: Gender parity

Presenter: Robert Smith, Consultant, UNGEI

Moderator: Elizabeth Heen, Norad/UNGEI

The Moderator, Ms Elizabeth Heen, began by reminding participants that the UNGEI partnership was launched at the Dakar World Education Forum. Coordinated by UNICEF, this network consists of UN and non-UN organizations, bilateral organizations and representatives of civil society that seek to improve the availability and quality of education for girls, in relation to the MDGs and the EFA goals. UNGEI focuses on moving the MDG and EFA agendas forward, by continually analysing advocacy and policy recommendations through a gender lens, since women and girls continue to be at a strong disadvantage with respect to these goals in many parts of the world.

Continuing from this introduction, Mr Robert Smith, a consultant with UNGEI, stressed the importance of understanding parity versus equality. He called for a re-examination of gender parity in primary and secondary education, stating that although girls tend to progress better in most regions in primary school, boys have a greater advantage in secondary school, due to a variety of factors such as inadequate hygiene, safety and health issues. Mr Smith spoke about the importance of improving teacher education, with a focus on developing the necessary teaching tools to ensure that girls and boys are taught in a manner that is most relevant to each of them. It is not enough to survive primary school: subject matter and teaching methods must be tailored to allow for greater retention of the information taught.

Looking at evidence presented in the 2008 Report, Mr Smith examined gender issues in countries facing conditions of fragility. He called for a framework for education in these highly challenged countries, stressing the wider gender disparities, low literacy rates, poor quality indicators and lack of inclusion in such situations. He suggested that civil society can be empowering in this context, but also spoke about the power of community involvement leading to positive changes with respect to gender equity.

Discussion

In the discussion that followed, many participants voiced support for these ideas and broadened the debate.

Social Realities. Participants noted that gender parity is harder to achieve in secondary school, notably in countries where students must travel long distances to find such schools, or where fees for education and meals are high.

Community Engagement. Engaging community and parents/local leaders to a greater extent in the establishment and upkeep of education systems was noted as a way to foster inclusion and gender equity.

Literacy. One participant noted that there is still a lack of data on the interdependency between girls' education and women's literacy. If parents – and especially mothers – are not literate and do not understand the importance of education, it will be correspondingly harder for children to receive the support at home they need to continue their studies.

Tailored Programmes. There was a consensus that further research should be undertaken to see exactly how women and girls learn differently than men and boys, and that programmes should be tailored to address this issue, thus ensuring that gender stereotypes are eliminated from education systems.

Thematic workshop II: Capacity development in EFA

Presenter: Temby Caprio, German Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation

Moderator: Robert Prouty, FTI Secretariat

Ms Temby Caprio began by thanking UNESCO for the opportunity to present the outcomes of the Bonn Forum on Capacity Development, held on 8 October 2007, and by defining Capacity Development as a process of strengthening the abilities of individuals, organizations and institutions (as well as societies) to make efficient and effective use of resources to achieve their goals on a sustainable basis. Using this definition of capacity development, and knowing EFA and MDG progress is not being achieved fast enough, the Bonn conference sought to generate collective recommendations on capacity development and to demonstrate that all sectors can work together, and indeed continue to learn from each other.

Centred around three topics (implementing EFA plans, achieving better learning outcomes and making the best use of more education financing), recommendations from the Bonn conference focused on strengthening country ownership, approaching sustainability and capacity development comprehensively and strengthening partnerships (a multi-stakeholder approach) in order to achieve EFA. Ms Caprio elaborated on some of these recommendations, including:

- a reform of current teacher-training systems (with greater focus on creating incentives, maintaining quality in the classroom and other motivational opportunities);
- developing capacity in school management to enable the measurement of quality outcomes;
- supporting government ownership and leadership;
- allocating 3 per cent of total Official Development Assistance (ODA) to reinforcing the capacity of civil society organizations;
- adapting rules and procedures at country level to help address absorption bottlenecks related to financing;
- creating opportunities for the national private sector to support EFA efforts;
- accompanying financing by donors with capacity development of macro, meso and micro levels; and
- elaborating training programmes for donors on harmonization processes, financial management instruments and sector dialogue.

Ms Caprio stressed the importance of ‘thinking outside of the EFA box in order to achieve EFA’ and ended her presentation by suggesting that the Working Group participants should discuss with their governments country-level applications of the capacity development recommendations resulting from the Bonn conference. She also offered the following quote from Richard Manning, current chair of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC):

‘You need to have capacity to run the education sector and you need the education sector to build capacity’

Discussion

Following the presentation, a lively discussion ensued, during which participants expressed their views about the definition of capacity development and its applicability to various situations within the context of the achievement of the EFA goals. Three prominent points emerged from the discussion:

Assumptions. We must be careful not to assume anything about what capacity development already exists, and in which context. Much can be done within existing frameworks.

Context. Much discussion centred on what kind of capacity, and for whom. Questions put forward by participants included the following: is it the capacity of teachers to impart knowledge, the capacity of a country to encourage its children to attend school and to provide teachers with the materials and environment to teach, or the building of human capacity?

Responsibility. It was suggested that an examination of the costs of continually ignoring the build-up of capacity, e.g. the costs of waste and improper projections, can help ensure that governments feel responsible and are held accountable for certain priority areas of capacity development.

Thematic workshop III: Education, poverty and the MDGs

Presenter: Barbara Bruns, Lead Economist, Human Development Network, World Bank
Moderator: Bernhard Kühn, Germany Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation

Ms Barbara Bruns began her presentation by providing an overview of the global MDG progress to date, as indicated in the 2007 *World Bank Global Monitoring Report*, focusing on challenges of gender equality and fragile states. Through a series of charts and graphs, Ms Bruns showed that, overall, significant progress has been made toward achieving MDG 1 (eradicating extreme poverty and hunger), although there remain clear variations across regions. She spoke about how the pace of poverty reduction depends on more than just a country’s growth, particularly emphasizing how countries are being left out due to persistent fragility (21 of the 34 states judged as fragile in 1980 were still viewed as such in 2005) and slow growth. The pace of poverty also poses a dilemma for the development community.

All regions, and 80 per cent of countries, are off track on MDG 4 (reducing child mortality) despite exceptional progress from specific countries in all regions. Notable progress in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (the two regions the most off-track to achieve the MDGs) includes declining HIV prevalence, increase in access to antiretroviral therapy (ART), and improvement of drinking water availability and general sanitation conditions.

The financing of MDGs was examined, with EFA FTI shown to be fostering harmonization and alignment in education, although government accountability and efficient investment remain worrisome. The importance of a cost-effective financing system in both health and

education was stressed, and it was noted that the pursuit of multiple goals through a holistic approach makes cost-effective methods all the more imperative. The need for a stronger focus on quality was also addressed, even while countries continue to scale up quantity. Specific learning assessments based on outputs (such as level of patient service) and outcomes (such as specific health results) most relevant to developing countries needs to be established to ensure that quality is continuing to improve in a consistent manner. This would lead to long-term social stability and economic gains in human development.

In remarks about emerging thinking on education and growth, as shown through recent work of the Commission on Growth and Development, Ms Bruns spoke about the associations between quality and economic growth, and quantity of education and growth, noting that skill levels achieved are far more important than years of schooling, although the latter tend to dwarf the former. Ms Bruns unveiled World Bank research on investment into education, including an exploration on the distinct impact on growth of investment in ‘high-brow’ education (research universities) vs ‘low-brow’ education (community colleges).

Discussion

The presentation on education, poverty and the MDGs provoked many comments and ideas concerning evaluating progress of the EFA agenda and the MDGs.

Benchmarking. It was suggested that although certain countries have increased the number of benchmarks pertaining to the achievement of the EFA agenda in their individual countries, it would be useful to have common benchmarks for evaluating certain goals, taking into consideration cultural differences and issues.

Cost effectiveness. Cost effectiveness was a term that was repeatedly heard, although participants stressed this should not come at the expense of quality learning. Multi-grade teaching in primary schools was offered as a manner, in certain contexts, of stabilizing costs while maintaining quality.

Conclusion and forward thinking

The focus of the Eighth Working Group on EFA was to review where the world stands collectively in achieving the EFA agenda, at the mid-point between 2000 and 2015. Drawing upon the evidence presented in the 2008 EFA *Global Monitoring Report*, as well as taking inspiration from the thematic workshops on gender equity, capacity development and education, poverty and the MDGs, participants engaged in a passionate exchange of ideas and actions on how to best achieve the EFA goals. The richness of the debates reflected the numerous accomplishments and ongoing concerns of the diverse constituencies, notably due to the varied resources available across countries.

Throughout the Working Group discussions, it was readily agreed that the 2008 EFA *Global Monitoring Report* continues to be a useful tool to understand the scale of the challenge to achieve EFA. Many stated that they hoped the 2008 Report would be interpreted in a positive way, showcasing the progress and obstacles, but largely pinpointing specific areas of activity where resources need to be secured and policy recommendations re-examined and adjusted.

The necessity of integrating all stakeholders (governments, civil society, bilateral and multilateral donors, and the business community) in the achievement of the EFA goals was a key underlying theme. Participants also emphasized the importance of focusing on sustainability rather than on simply achieving short-term goals. This was of specific importance to countries facing conditions of fragility.

One concern reiterated throughout the discussions was the need for more responsibility and accountability of countries, especially with regard to the allocation and distribution of funds, and ensuring safe and hygienic school environments, to further foster quality education.

In the light of the new sequencing and modified role of the Working Group, it was important to evaluate the effectiveness of the Working Group meeting. Evaluations submitted by participants indicated a large measure of satisfaction at the changes. They particularly appreciated the workshop atmosphere, the focus on outcomes and the flexible process that enabled the group to concentrate on forwarding clearly prioritized discussion points to the High-Level Group.

The Discussion Points document capturing the Working Group's outcomes is appended; it provided the basis for the communiqué resulting from the Seventh High-Level Group meeting on EFA.

Appendix I: Opening Statement by the Director-General

Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on EFA

UNESCO, 14 November 2007

Distinguished Members of the Working Group,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to UNESCO for the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Education for All. My thanks go to each of you for coming, and for your deep personal and institutional commitment to the cause of EFA.

I am also very pleased to introduce to you Mr Nicholas Burnett, the new Assistant Director-General for Education, who will chair this meeting. Many of you may already know Mr Burnett from his previous role as Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report. He was responsible for the 2008 Report, which you will be discussing. I am confident that his knowledge and expertise will have a very positive influence on the outcomes of this meeting.

Our meeting takes place at an important juncture, midway toward the 2015 target date for achieving EFA. It is a time for reflection and for learning lessons from past practice. Above all, it should be a moment of re-affirmation of our collective determination to push forward the EFA agenda.

Let me remind you that this global drive to fulfil everyone's right to education, a drive that began in Jomtien in 1990 and was re-galvanized in Dakar in 2000, is historically unprecedented. Never before has there been such an attempt to mobilize the international community around the goal of making good quality basic education available to everyone, not just as a nominal right, but in actual practice. There is now an historic opportunity to act globally, nationally and locally in new and creative ways to achieve Education for All.

Let us not underestimate the enormity of the challenge. But, equally, let us not be faint-hearted. Above all, let us be firmly resolved to do all we can to make EFA happen.

Like myself, some of you have participated personally in all the meetings of the Working Group since it first met in November 2000 here at UNESCO. Over these past seven years, the Working Group has evolved into a very important mechanism for providing technical guidance on EFA issues. This importance will increase within the new sequence of EFA events that is being introduced this year.

I would like to take a moment to outline these modifications, which aim to give new momentum and focus to the EFA movement.

As you know, from 2001 the meetings of the Working Group took place in July each year, while the High-Level Group convened in November. As indicated in the Dakar Framework for Action, the High-Level Group was to be informed by an annual EFA Global Monitoring Report, and this began to appear in 2002, being published just prior to the High-Level Group meeting.

In the subsequent years, this sequence meant that the Working Group was not in a position to use the new GMR in its deliberations, nor to examine the evidence it presented in preparing the High-Level Group agenda.

In view of this situation, in October 2005 the 33rd session of UNESCO's General Conference adopted a resolution proposing to introduce a change in this sequence, which is now being implemented.

From this year on, the Working Group will meet, as today, in mid-November. It will thus be able to draw in its deliberations on an advance copy of the Global Monitoring Report, made available at the end of October. Time constraints in receiving and analyzing data mean that the production of the Report cannot be brought forward further in the year.

As a result of these changes, the Working Group, which previously considered a broad range of issues in EFA, will now have the more specific purpose of taking the evidence of the GMR and determining the key policy and strategy recommendations to be considered by the High-Level Group, meeting a month later. This will be done in plenary sessions and in smaller working groups, which should enable a close and interactive engagement with the findings of the GMR.

It is my hope that this new way of working will produce even better results in terms of stimulating further EFA progress. Based on the solid evidence and analysis of the GMR, I expect this meeting to identify specific priorities to be taken forward to the High-Level Group for political and financial support, when it meets in Dakar from 11 to 13 December. Overall, this process will serve to increase the momentum and political will in favour of EFA, which is the principal *raison d'être* for the international EFA mechanisms.

In order to support this new sequence, which puts both the Working Group and the High-Level Group into the fourth quarter of the year, I have created the International Advisory Panel on EFA. The Panel serves to ensure the adequate preparation of these key meetings, and to provide consistent and ongoing advice to UNESCO in its coordinating role throughout the year. Its members represent the four main EFA constituencies: developing countries; bilateral donors; multilateral agencies; and civil society, including the private sector.

I opened the first meeting of the Panel at UNESCO Headquarters in May this year. Two further meetings have been held prior to the Working Group, the most recent being hosted by Georgetown University on the 20th of September.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In preparation for this meeting of the Working Group, the 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report was made available to you, under embargo, in advance of its public launch on the 29th of November. Let me draw your attention to some particular highlights.

At this halfway point towards 2015, the Report presents an overview of EFA progress, based on data from 2005, the latest available. In reporting on all six of the EFA goals, the Report provides a timely reminder of the need to pursue the EFA goals in a holistic manner, both because they are interdependent, and because each one is significant in its own right. The

need to give attention to the whole EFA agenda is something I have emphasized repeatedly over the past seven years, and I do so again now.

The Report is absolutely clear that certain of the EFA goals have been and continue to be neglected. These are: early childhood care and education (goal 1); the learning needs of young people and adults (goal 3); and adult literacy, especially for women (goal 4). In addition, the Report provides clear evidence that the 2005 goal of gender parity at primary and secondary levels of education has been missed.

I mention these aspects of our collective EFA endeavours not as a discouragement, but rather as a call to re-orient and strengthen our commitment.

Let us draw strength from the fact that there have been a number of significant achievements since 2000.

Legal frameworks for compulsory education have been established in 23 more countries. Between 2000 and 2006, 14 countries officially abolished tuition fees for primary schooling. Global net enrolment rates are advancing steadily, and have now reached 87%. Gender parity has been achieved at primary level in 75% of countries.

Indeed, there is progress across the board. However, it has not been fast enough to meet the demanding goals we set ourselves in Dakar seven years ago.

At this Working Group meeting, therefore, you will examine three key areas of concern: equity, quality and financing. You will pay particular attention in all these areas to the neglected goals of EFA, and to the special needs and circumstances of countries facing conditions of fragility.

A concern for equity is fundamental and must be constant, as is implied in the very title 'Education for All'. At the recent Ministerial Round Table on Education and Economic Development, which I held last month in conjunction with the 34th session of UNESCO's General Conference, around one hundred Ministers of Education re-affirmed that quality basic education is a human right that must be urgently realized for all, without exception. The final communiqué was endorsed by the General Conference, and has been distributed as one of the key documents for this meeting.

The challenge of the next eight years will be to ensure the inclusion of children, youth and adults whom education systems do not currently serve well. This will demand more intensive and creative efforts from all of us.

The call to improve the quality of education is heard increasingly frequently – quality education which offers viable opportunities for productive work and active citizenship, and which is linked to the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour underlying sustainable development. In other words, learners need an education that makes a difference, that is relevant to their real needs, and that empowers them to make the most of their lives.

The third theme, that of financing, is one that we discuss regularly in the EFA movement. We have seen progress, both in domestic spending and international aid. We have also seen improvements in the quality of aid, notably through the EFA Fast Track Initiative. However, there remain a number of disturbing trends.

The funding of EFA is primarily the responsibility of national governments. It is therefore worrying to note that while 50 countries outside North America and Western Europe increased spending on education as a share of GNP between 1999 and 2005, in 34 countries this share decreased. This includes some of those countries furthest from achieving the EFA goals. It is a trend that must be reversed.

The Report also observes that while commitments to basic education increased from US\$2.7 billion in 2000 to US\$5.1 billion in 2004, they dropped to US\$3.7 billion in 2005.

Several donors have announced their intention to increase overall aid in the next few years. However, even if these pledges are met, funding to basic education is still likely to remain far short of the US\$11 billion that the GMR estimates is needed annually to achieve EFA. Assuming that aid to education increases at the same rate as aid for all sectors, and that the priority given to basic education remains the same, it is estimated that overall aid to basic education will reach US\$6 billion by 2010. This leaves a funding gap of US\$5 billion.

Both bilateral and multilateral agencies urgently need to increase their commitments. The watchword of Dakar – that “no countries seriously committed to education for all would be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources” – must remain the expression of our collective determination as we look forward to 2015.

In terms of quality, too, greater efforts are required. Aid needs to be more predictable and long term, and better aligned with national development strategies. Higher priority must also be given to basic education compared with other levels, particularly higher education. Some of the largest donors are still allocating less than one-third of their education aid to basic education.

Aid must likewise be more effectively targeted. The GMR notes that while more aid to basic education has been distributed to the poorest countries as a group, this has not necessarily targeted the neediest among them. Donors must give greater priority to those countries furthest from achieving the EFA goals, including those in conditions of fragility. This leads me to the first of our two cross-cutting themes.

The needs of countries facing conditions of fragility – especially those that suffer the consequences of conflict or disaster – call for our particular attention. The GMR makes plain that over one-third of out-of-school children live in such countries.

Your discussions must build on those of other fora in finding innovative ways to fund and deliver quality learning opportunities in conditions of fragility. As well as undertaking work to rehabilitate collapsed education systems, we must also give attention to those young adults who have missed out on years of education and whose voices are rarely heard.

I referred earlier to the three neglected goals of EFA – this has been a regular theme of the Global Monitoring Report as it has dealt with one goal after another over the past few years. For the sake of learners of all ages and in all circumstances – and in order to build knowledge societies and to achieve international development targets, including the MDGs – all six EFA goals must be realized.

However, let me be frank – this message is not being clearly heard. This too must be challenged. Therefore, in your analysis of the GMR evidence, and in determining what priorities might be addressed by the High-Level Group, I ask you to propose ways in which a balanced and holistic approach towards achieving EFA may be structured.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me express my sincere hope that the new sequence of the international EFA mechanisms will help the Working Group and, next month, the High-Level Group, to address more effectively the challenges we face.

I believe that this year, 2007, must mark a turning point in our determination to achieve the EFA goals. For this to happen, we must face facts – the EFA facts – and resolve to do something about them. We must face up to the problems – and find viable solutions. Above all, having raised hopes and expectations, we must do our utmost not to disappoint those in greatest need – the women, men and children who, in this day and age, still lack access to good quality learning opportunities.

Thank you.

Appendix II: Agenda of the Meeting

F i n a l A g e n d a

Focus on outcomes

Being at the mid-way towards 2015, the sequence of the key meetings of the key EFA mechanisms has been reorganized this year. The Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on EFA will focus on specific outcomes, working with the evidence of the 2008 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, still under embargo in November, to identify strategic policy priorities for the coming year. These will take the form of recommendations to the Seventh Meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA (Dakar, Senegal, 11 to 13 December 2007). The 2008 Report will present an overall review of EFA progress, with the official launch on 12 December during the High-Level Group meeting. Meanwhile, the International Advisory Panel (IAP) on EFA, which has replaced the former 'sherpa' group, has been created by UNESCO to guide the year-round process of preparing, conducting and following up the main annual EFA events.

The High-Level Group meeting on EFA continues to serve as a lever for political commitment and for technical and financial resource mobilization; the Working Group on EFA will fulfil its technical role by preparing for the High-Level Group meeting. It will discuss the High-Level Group agenda and seek to agree on key policy recommendations to take forward to the High-Level Group meeting, drawing upon the contributions of representatives of the main EFA constituencies including countries, development banks, civil society and the private sector, as well as multilateral and bilateral organizations. The Working Group is also expected to identify the core elements of the High-Level Group Communiqué and to reflect on the further integration of programmes and initiatives of different partners such as the EFA Fast-Track Initiative and UNGEI in the follow-up to the six Dakar goals.

Expected results

The Working Group will have agreed on:

- The provisional agenda of the High-Level Group on EFA
- Key policy recommendations to take forward to the High-Level Group meeting
- Core elements of the High-Level Group Communiqué
- Effective ways to strengthen linkages of programmes and initiatives of different EFA partners

Wednesday, 14 November

8:30 – 9:30 am

Registration

Opening Session

9:30 – 9:45 am

Opening Statement: Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General, UNESCO

9:45 – 10:00 am

Introduction – Overview of agenda and outcomes:
Mr Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

Plenary Session I

10:00 – 10.45 am

Evidence and analysis from the 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report:

Mr Keith Hinchliffe, Acting Director of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report*

10:45 – 11:00 am

Coffee break

11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Questions to Mr Hinchliffe and comments

12:15 – 1:00 pm

Introduction to group work - Aims and organization

Mr Mark Richmond, Director, ED/UNP

1:00 – 2:30 pm

Lunch (Hosted by UNESCO DG)

Thematic workshop I: Gender parity

2:30 – 3:30 pm

Presenter: Mr Robert Smith, United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)

Moderator: Ms Elizabeth Heen, Norad/UNGEI

Working Session I

3:30 – 6:00 pm

Group Work: Discussion by key theme/messages

Output: draft policy recommendation for HLG

The 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report, entitled *EFA by 2015: Will We Make It?*, will provide an overview of EFA progress, stating that despite continued global advance since Dakar, data show the scale of the challenges in achieving the six EFA goals, with uneven performance across the goals and across the countries. An estimated 129 countries including those facing conditions of fragility are far from achieving the EFA goals. While the issue of universal access to primary education (UPE) remains as a challenge, the equity and quality dimension of basic education deserves and requires more attention. A holistic and balanced approach to the full range of EFA goals is a key in our endeavours to achieve EFA at international, regional, national and local levels. Moreover, informed policy-making and its efficient implementation, in harmony with overall national policies, are critical, demanding, on the one hand, fine analysis of the status based on accurate data and statistics and, on the other, robust education systems. Although success in attaining the EFA goals depends, above all, on the will, efforts, commitment and resources of countries, it is evident that without adequate and effective support from the international community, the EFA goals

cannot be met by 2015. This working session will focus on three priority issues highlighted by the 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report in order to determine the direction and approaches towards 2015. Each group will also consider a cross-cutting theme as part of the discussions, either EFA in countries facing conditions of fragility or the neglected EFA goals, as indicated below:

Groups 1 + 2: Equity: realizing the right to education and ensuring inclusion

Group 1

Cross-cutting theme: Countries facing conditions of fragility

Moderator: Ms Nora Fyles, Canadian International Development Agency

Group 2

Cross-cutting theme: Neglected EFA goals

Moderator: Mr Gorgui Sow, African Network Campaign on Education for All

Groups 3 + 4: Quality education and learning

Group 3

Cross-cutting theme: Countries facing conditions of fragility

Moderator: Ms Maria Khan, Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education

Group 4

Cross-cutting theme: Neglected EFA goals

Moderator: Mr Rolands Ozols, Latvia

Group 5 + 6: Financing EFA: planning for adequate domestic and external allocations to basic education

Group 5

Cross-cutting theme: Countries facing conditions of fragility

Moderator: Mr Jacques Malpel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France

Group 6

Cross-cutting theme: Neglected EFA goals

Moderator: Mr David Archer, Action Aid International

6:00 – 6:30 pm

Group moderators: process check and review outcomes of groups

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Reception

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Thursday, 15 November 2007

Thematic workshop II: Capacity development in EFA

9:00 – 10:00 am

Presenter: Ms Temby Capiro, German Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation
Moderator: Mr Robert Prouty, FTI Secretariat

Plenary Session II

10:00 – 11:00 am

**Reports from Groups to Plenary (10 minutes / group)
Questions, debate, comments**

Moderator: Mr Joe Carney, United States Agency for International Development

11:00 – 11:20 am

Coffee break

11:20 am – 1:00 pm **Reports from groups to Plenary** (10 minutes / group)
Questions, debate, comments
1:00 – 3:00 pm **Lunch** (Moderators: Consolidate group output into one text)

Working Session II

3:00 – 5:00 pm **Group Work (3 Groups): Reduce/sharpen text into small number of key policy recommendations**
Group 1 Moderator: Ms Phyllis Magrab, Georgetown University
Group 2 Moderator: Ms Lynn Murphy, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Group 3 Moderator: Mr Ronald Siebes, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands

Plenary Session III

5:00 – 6:00 pm **Discussions on key recommendations from Groups**
Moderator: Mr Dankert Vedeler, Ministry of Education and Research, Norway
6:00 pm Moderators: revise text

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Friday, 16 November 2007

Thematic workshop III: Education, poverty and the MDGs

9:00 – 10:00 am Presenter: Ms Barbara Bruns, World Bank
Moderator: Mr Bernhard Kühn, Germany Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation

Plenary Session IV

10:00 – 11:00 am **Agreement on key recommendations to take forward to the High-Level Group on EFA**
Moderator: Mr Cream Wright, United Nations Children's Fund
11:00 – 11:45 am **Coffee break** (Moderators: produce final text)
11:45 am – 12:30 pm **Adoption of text**
Subsequent process
12:30 pm **Depart**

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