



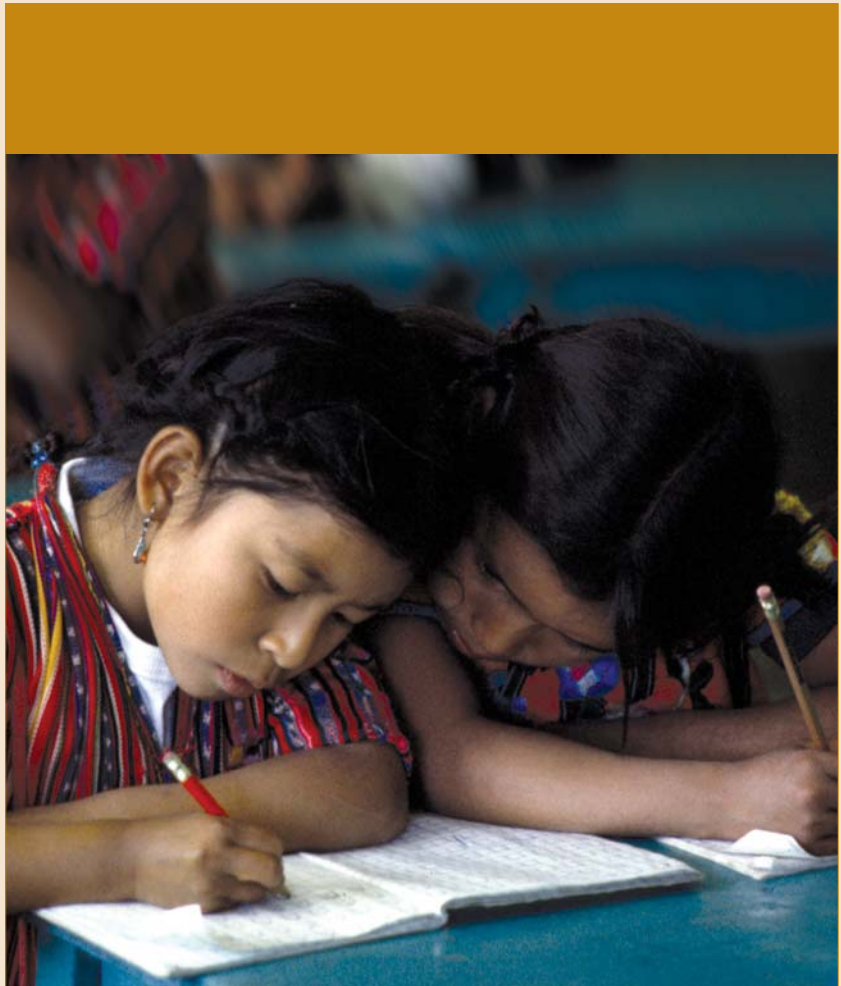
Education for



G E N D E R

E Q U A L I T Y

in basic education



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Education for all

Preface

The Ten Years' United Nations Education Initiative (UNGEI), was launched by Mr Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, as a world-wide programme for the improvement of the quality and level of girls' education. It is considered an essential element in global efforts to reduce poverty, and to promote social and economic development. Within the framework of the Initiative, and as a part of the follow-up to the Dakar meeting, UNESCO, in cooperation with its relevant partners, assists Member States in the formulation and implementation of plans for girls' and gender-sensitive educational programmes.

The UNESCO working document on 'Gender Equality in Basic Education: Strategic Framework', is an important contribution of the organization to the UNGEI. The strategies cover all sub-sectors within Basic Education, including universal primary education for girls, and non-formal and informal education for women and girls, which complement the UNGEI Concept Paper, prepared by an inter-agency working group.

It is hoped that the document will provide Member States with guidelines for the development and reinforcement of their national plans and programmes designed to achieve the objectives of the Dakar Framework for Action. In particular it is intended to assist in the achievement of Goal V, which is the elimination of gender gaps in primary and secondary education by the year 2005, and gender equality in education by the year 2015 .

The document describes UNESCO's conceptual basis for action, and gives practical guidelines to follow in ensuring gender equality in basic education. It provides a basis for the formulation of UNESCO's

three-pronged strategies for the achievement of gender equality in basic education in the next two-year programme cycle (2002-2003), which includes: i) advocacy and sensitization; ii) support for policy development, and iii) the promotion of gender-sensitive delivery systems.

In the preparation of this document, the international expert group meeting on gender equality in basic education met at UNESCO Headquarters from 5 to 7 December, 2000, in order to develop its general framework, and to identify relevant strategies. A draft version of it was then discussed at the UNGEI working group meeting on 21 June, 2001, and at the informal working session held during the International Conference on Education in Geneva, on 7 September, 2001. The final version of the document is, therefore, a result of consultation among many agencies and experts.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our consultant Ms Dina Crisatti for drafting the document. She responded admirably to her demanding task. I greatly appreciated the contribution of the experts and participants in the various meetings held, UNESCO colleagues, and the UNGEI working group, for their valuable comments, constructive suggestions and professional advice, which enriched the document, and ensured that it is relevant to today's global concerns. Our special thanks also go to Mr Ki Su Kim, Mr John Allen and Ms Nancy Droste, for their technical and language editing in the finalization of the document.

I am confident that this document will be of use to those working in the field of women and girls' education, and gender equality in education. It is our sincere hope that it will also contribute to the provision of education for all.

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Summary

The present “UNESCO Working Document: Gender Equality in Basic Education” lays down a strategic framework for the actions that UNESCO will take in its contribution to the United Nations Ten-Year Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI). The latter was launched in 2000 by the UN Secretary General as a coherent UN system-wide collaborative programme for improving the quality and availability of girls’ and women’s education through cooperative partnership between different entities within and outside the UN system. As such, the UNGEI was deemed to be an integral and essential element in the global effort to reduce poverty and enhance social development. The strategic framework developed in the current document is intended to complement and enrich the UNGEI by promoting the “gender equality” perspective in non-formal basic education for Education for All (EFA).

EFA was a commitment by the world community to the satisfaction of basic educational needs for every person – child, youth, or adult. In this commitment, the world community declared in 1990 at Jomtien basic education for girls and women to be the most urgent priority. While numerous subsequent international meetings reaffirmed the validity of the declaration, the Dakar Forum of 2000 in particular made a significant step in bringing it to practice. It did so by including in the six goals it set for immediate action the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education and the achievement of gender equality in education. The UNGEI goes along with other projects that are being pursued inside and outside the UN system for the purpose of reaching these goals. Specifically, the strategic framework of this document is designed to facilitate UNESCO’s Member States as well as UNESCO itself in the pursuit of these goals by assisting the former in the preparation of their imminent national action plans and by guiding the latter in future activities, especially its Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007.

The strategic framework is unique in that it guides educational activities for girls and women in the field of non-formal basic education from the aforementioned gender-equality perspective and in an “expanded vision of basic education” advocated in the Jomtien Declaration. It first prepares the necessary conceptual framework by expounding the perspective and the vision. Then it summarily assesses the changes that have occurred to the status of non-formal basic education for girls and women during the period from Jomtien to Dakar. This assessment yields grounds for determining the objectives of necessary actions.

With a view to eliminating gender disparities and achieving gender equality in education, ensuring equal access to gender-sensitive education, while improving the quality, and meeting the basic learning needs, the three strategic directions and action-oriented recommendations are set forth as follow:

- Linkages between non-formal and formal education systems: In the Jomtien vision of basic education stressing lifelong learning, focus is laid upon non-formal education and integrating non-formal basic education with the formal education system in a way to promote diversity, flexibility and openness in education system.
- Diverse advocacy efforts are called for, promoting the active, creative and co-ordinated contribution of all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels for policy changes to achieve gender equality in basic education, with special attention to the basic learning needs of the excluded, disadvantaged, and vulnerable groups. Mobilization of mass media and national campaign in support of gender equality in education are also recommended to raise awareness of the importance of gender sensitive education, and participation of girls and women in education.

Support should be given to research programmes to develop and reinforce research, as well as to evaluation and monitoring capacities at the country level for better planning and sound policy making. Utilisation of research works for policy and activity development should also be encouraged. It was felt necessary to develop methodologies on gender equality in non-formal basic education, which assure coherence and sustainability in working towards the EFA Goals.

In each of these directions, action-oriented recommendations address national and international concerns, gender-related actions, and necessary training programmes.



Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in 1948, asserted that access to quality basic education was a fundamental human right. This position was embraced, and further elaborated, in several subsequent normative instruments adopted by the world community, and progress in the area was palpable in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the challenge of sustaining gains and addressing contemporary constraints remains substantial at the onset of the new millennium.

In March 1990, the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) reaffirmed the right to education, through the World Declaration on Education for All. Article 1 of the Declaration affirmed that “every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs”. Article 3 added that “basic education should be provided to all children, youth and adults” and declared, “For basic education to be equitable, all children, youth and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.”

What was laudable in the 1990 Declaration was its policy pronouncement to address not only the growth of the non-literate population but, especially, to deal with the gender imbalance in such growth. The Declaration set forth education for girls and women as the most urgent priority in attaining EFA objectives. It called for special attention to ensuring access to, and improving the quality of, education for girls and women, and to removing every obstacle that hampered their active participation in education.

Since then, and all through diverse world conferences – such as the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development of 1994, the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women of 1995, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development of 1995, the Hamburg UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education of 1997 – women’s education and gender equality in education gained a high priority in many local and global agendas, as well as large visibility in terms of conceptualisation and practice. The Beijing Platform of Action, in particular, set “the education and training of women” second in priority among the “twelve critical areas of concern” it identified.

The Jomtien World Conference on Education for All foresaw the need for comprehensive policy reviews at the end of the 1990s for the purpose of enabling countries to assess the effectiveness of their efforts for reaching their own EFA objectives and revise their plans accordingly. The EFA 2000 Assessments, which was prepared to facilitate such reviews, constituted the most in-depth evaluation of basic education ever undertaken, and underlined significant gains since Jomtien in the provision of basic education in many countries. However, in spite of all the efforts made by governments, international organizations, NGOs and civil society at large, according to the EFA Assessments, the achievements and developments in the area of education for girls and women presented rather unsatisfactory results. Gender disparity was still evident in access, enrolment, literacy and other aspects. The gender gap was not closing, and in some countries, it was even widening. Although the new decade was witnessing a burgeoning of endeavours and “success stories”, these remained rather sporadic phenomena and failed to lead countries to put “gender” in the central place in their overall educational programme or policy.

The EFA 2000 Assessments also provided the basis for discussion at the Dakar World Education Forum of April 2000. As a result of the discussion, the Dakar Forum included the elimination of gender disparity at all levels of education in the six EFA

Goals it formulated in a view of attaining them by 2015. And the Dakar Forum mandated all States to develop and strengthen national plans of action by 2002 at the latest, drawing on the evidence accumulated during the national and regional EFA 2000 Assessments and building on existing national strategies.

Within this context, and with regard to access to quality basic education for girls and women, the UN Secretary General launched the Ten-Year UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) while the Dakar Forum was still going on. The UNGEI was a coherent UN system-wide collaborative programme designed to improve the quality and availability of girls' education through a collaborative partnership of different entities, within and outside the UN system, and was envisaged as an integral and essential element in the global effort for poverty reduction and social development. The UNGEI Concept Paper, prepared by a task force led by UNICEF, primarily focused on the universalisation of primary education for girls. This overall goal was translated into strategic objectives, which called for building political and resource commitments, ending the gender gap and gender discrimination within education systems, helping girls' education in crisis, conflict and post-conflict situations, and eliminating gender bias that limited the demand for girls' education.

Now UNESCO is contributing to the UNGEI through the present strategic framework for action, entitled "Education for All: Gender Equality in Non-Formal Basic Education – A Strategic Framework" (henceforth "the Document"). The Document will be used to assist UNESCO's Member States in preparing their 2002 national action plans and in attaining the Dakar EFA Goals for 2015. It will also constitute policy guidelines for UNESCO's future activities in the field and support UNESCO in fine-tuning its Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007. Furthermore, the Document will complement and enrich the UNGEI by stressing "the gender equality perspective" targeting not only girls but also women, as well as boys and men, and the expanded vision of basic education with special reference to non-formal education.

Gender equality in basic education

The Document will, first, expound such perspective and vision. Then, it will summarily assess the changes that have occurred to the status of non-formal basic education for girls and women during the period from Jomtien to Dakar, and lay down the goals of the Document. Finally, it will present three strategic directions and related action-oriented recommendations for gender equality in non-formal basic education.



Conceptual framework



Removing gender discrimination in basic education constitutes a non-negligible enabling factor for socio-economic and political development, and for women's participation in social, economic and political life. Studies have shown, for example, that women with a few years of schooling are better workers than those without any formal education, in agriculture and in various other economic fields. Many governments now support women's basic education in order to foster economic growth, to fight diverse forms of economic polarization between rich and poor, or to eliminate poverty. It is by now widely recognized that investment in girls' and women's basic education has also positive impact on wider social development, inclusive of increased family income, reduced fertility rates, reduced infant and maternal mortality rates, and better family health and nutrition. Basic education, furthermore, gives girls and women the tools they need to move from exclusion to full participation in society. It prompts women to engage in community affairs and enables them to take action for the benefit of their communities. It is a precondition for the effective exercise of women's human and legal rights and responsibilities. Basic education indeed empowers entire nations, because educated citizens have the skills to make democratic institutions function effectively.

In the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women of 1995, the discussion on women and education led to a deeper reflection on the interconnections between women's education and empowerment. As acknowledged at the Conference, access to basic education entails many other, if not more significant, potentials. It gives women the chance to make informed decisions about their lives; it opens up the avenues of

communication that would otherwise be closed to women; and it expands women's personal choice and control over themselves and their environment. Young women who are exposed to basic education are more likely to have greater autonomy, to move freely, to earn money, and to control their earnings; they have a larger role in the choice of a husband, and in the timing of marriage. And within marriage they are able to cope more appropriately with work responsibilities and family relations. Basic education carries the promise of strengthening women's self-confidence and ability to develop into community leaders and adult educators. It is the key with which they can become critical thinkers and committed actors – the key to unlock the full range of their talents and creative energies.

The present Document is constructed on the basis of the following two conceptual pillars: the gender equality perspective, which overcomes the dichotomized relations and views on male versus female, and the expanded vision of basic education, which is defined as a response to basic learning needs of people of all walks of life.

- *The Gender Equality Perspective*

International debates and practices on gender equality in basic education during the past decade have crystallized two different yet mutually complementary perspectives: the equity perspective and the equality perspective. These perspectives have been vividly discussed during the Hamburg UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA) of 1995. In Article 29 of the resultant Hamburg Declaration, participants from governments, international agencies and civil society committed themselves to “promoting the empowerment of women and gender equity through adult learning”.

Education based on the principle of equity promotes the reduction of gender discrimination and the social and economic self-reliance of women through policies and programmes further ensuring access to, and quality of, basic education and productive skills. This is done without questioning and/or altering the existing structure of gender relations.

The equality perspective, on the other hand, reaches beyond access issues, and also quality issues, in basic education, and beyond training women for employment and income generation opportunities. It recognizes that gender is a socio-cultural construct, and underscores the social relations between men and women, in which women are systematically subordinated. Advocates of education for gender equality argue that structural transformations are needed in order to end discriminatory practices based on gender.

Basic education for equality thus entails the necessity of “empowering” women by giving them a range of socio-cultural competencies and tools, beyond the narrow conceptualisation of reading and writing skills. According to diverse studies undertaken by the Hamburg UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE), empowerment education involves several dimensions:

- a cognitive dimension, or women’s awareness and understanding of their conditions and causes of subordination, and of the local, national and global contexts of impoverishment, and patriarchal practices;
- a psychological dimension, or women’s self-confidence and self-esteem;
- an economic dimension, or women’s ability to access resources, to engage in productive activities and to take autonomous decisions; and
- a political dimension or women’s ability to set their own agenda, to negotiate, lead and organize for challenging oppression and changing conditions.



All in all, education for gender equality aims to transform gender relations, so that both women and men enjoy the same opportunities to achieve their potential.

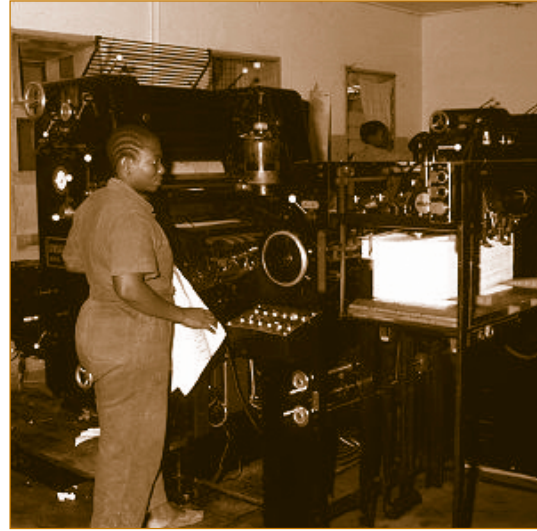
The challenge of achieving gender equality raises important questions about the education of boys and men, as well as girls and women. The attitudes and behaviour of boys and men, along with girls and women, within the larger societal context, need to be examined to change gender bias and stereotyped view on the roles of men and women.

From the beginning, from pre-school and primary school, basic education for girls and boys must address gender roles and the importance of gender equality.

Being committed to promoting gender equality, UNESCO will not accept arguments that insist on a male-female dichotomy, i.e. attributing characteristics to women and men by virtue of their sex. UNESCO believes that this line of argumentation is non-productive and does not lead the way forward to gender equality.

Social structures that reproduce gender inequality should be addressed by acknowledging the complexity of social and cultural norms and by challenging them. UNESCO's ultimate goal in reaching gender equality is to make fundamental changes in gender relations and create new partnerships based on mutual respect, dialogue, and sharing public and private roles and responsibilities.

Gender bias and sexist stereotypes are internalised by boys and men, and girls and women alike, through socialization process. Thus social structures that uphold gender inequality continue to exist. The basic education setting must provide an enabling environment to address and prevent gender-biased attitudes and practices from taking hold. Basic education that promotes gender equality requires a holistic, gender-sensitive approach that upholds mutual respect between boys and girls, and between men and women. The situations of both boys/



men and girls/women must be addressed through gender analysis that examines both the realities and causes of inequities. The responses for addressing inequality may vary in different contexts. However, through basic education, equitable and creative solutions must be sought to bring girls and women to an equal playing field with boys and men, and to realize an all-inclusive learning and social system.

In addition, the gender equality approach takes into consideration the fact that women do not constitute a homogeneous population group and that there are discriminatory social and economic elements within the category women. Addressing questions of poverty are an intrinsic element of gender equality in basic education.

- *The expanded vision of basic education and non-formal education*

The devastating effects of economic globalisation and the social and economic, regional and national, exclusions and disparities they are creating, represent key challenges for educational policies. Educators around the world increasingly recognize that a broader vision of basic education needs to be promoted in order to enhance human development and social and economic progress. Article 2 of the Jomtien Declaration holds that “to serve the basic learning needs of all requires more than a re-commitment to basic education as it now exists.” It goes on to add, “What is needed is an ‘expanded vision’, that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery systems, while building on the best in current practices”. The Delors Report of 1996 further clarifies the “expanded vision” pertaining to adult education as “a continuous process of forming whole human beings – their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and the ability to act.” According to this Report, an expanded vision of adult education “should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment, and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community”.

The expanded vision of basic education involves several concerns. The first concern involves a conception of basic education as an activity of breaking down the traditional distinction between initial education and continuing education. The contemporary emergence of “knowledge-rich societies”, organized around the creation and manipulation of knowledge, information and ideas, is placing increasing and accelerating demands on basic education. Such societies require knowledge and skills to be updated repeatedly in order to cope with the challenges of social and economic transformation. Learning should thus involve all ages from early childhood to adulthood, and “lifelong learning” must be considered an important component of basic education.

As the needs for lifelong learning opportunities grow, secondly, conventional systems are unable to meet such needs. Schooling can no longer constitute the only organized educational experience for most people. Basic education is strongly affected by forces beyond the control of schools. For example, the use of a widely shared common language, access to newspapers and books, and good levels of nutrition and health tend to support basic learning. Non-formal education, in particular, has a big role to play in providing learning opportunities for all and constitutes an important component of basic education.

Thirdly, non-formal basic education is embedded in the specific socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and environmental contexts in which learning occurs. It has the flexibility to be responsive to needs and immediate realities, and the strength to create enabling learning environments. In this sense, it is important to differentiate it from traditional non-formal education, such as literacy education. The present Document furthers a concept of non-formal basic education that is founded on local initiatives and resources, and that requires the involvement and efforts of diverse actors – parents, family, and community members, health and agricultural extension workers, craftsmen and craftswomen. Non-formal basic education builds on innovation and improvisation and on problem-solving and positive thinking; it equips learners for a proactive life-style and expands their capacity.

Finally, non-formal basic education has importance specifically in reaching out to the excluded, disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups which are denied learning opportunities – the millions living in deprived rural areas, urban slum dwellers and street children, the bulk of the poor searching for employment and livelihoods, the drop-outs, girls and women, the victims of catastrophes, refugees and displaced persons, minority and indigenous groups, and the handicapped. For them, non-formal basic education is often the only possible learning opportunity, and must be integrated within a framework of addressing poverty eradication and social development.



In short, non-formal basic education has a vital role to play in furthering gender equality in education. In the words of the Amman Affirmation, issued at the 1996 Amman Mid-Decade Meeting of the International Consultative Forum (ICF) on Education for All, *“Non-formal and out-of-school education, once seen as a marginal and second-class alternative to formal schooling, is increasingly seen as a necessary and complementary component of a comprehensive strategy to provide Education for All.”*

Therefore, the ICF recommended that non-formal education *“should be recognized as an integral part of an education system, rather than as a parallel, but separate, alternative”*. In line with this perspective, the present Document calls to stop the compartmentalization of basic education into formal and non-formal, to recognise non-formal basic education as a legitimate sphere of educational activity, and for efforts to upgrade and accredit it for equal certification with the formal education system.



Additionally, UNESCO holds that bridging and creating an interface between formal and non-formal basic education, learning from the weaknesses of each and building on the strengths of each, entails interesting potentials in enhancing the quality of both, and in attaining EFA.



situation review

The following is a brief, and by no means exhaustive, assessment of the changes that have occurred to the status of girls and women in non-formal basic education during the period from Jomtien to Dakar. It also lays down a general thematisation of some key global orientations, responses and conceptual tools that have emerged from governments, international organizations and NGOs, for the purpose of improving the situation. The section is organized in four areas: lifelong learning and non-formal basic education; the role of stakeholders and cooperative mechanisms; political and economic environments; and research and statistics, monitoring and evaluation.

- *Lifelong learning and non-formal basic education*

Most of the progress made in relation to the EFA goals during the past decade has taken the form of expanded primary schooling. The total number of primary school pupils rose from just under 600 million to over 680 million, and the number of out-of-school children declined from 127 million to 113 million globally. While celebrating such gains, it is admitted, first, that regional disparities still separate the North from the developing world, which accounts for 97 percent of the 113 million out-of-school children, and second, that fewer girls attend school than boys. Girls still account for 67 million (or 60 percent) of the out-of-school children.

Enrolment in early childhood education, considered the foundation for basic education, has increased since 1990. However, increases are characterized by the EFA 2000 Assessments as small and marginal (from 99 million in 1990 to 104 million in 1998, a rise of only 5 percent), and with huge variations, favouring the industrialized

countries and urban areas.

Adolescent girls in the rural and poor urban areas, in particular those who are denied the opportunity to go to school, are often left out of other alternative non-formal education programmes as well, since the latter are designed mainly for either “primary school age girls” or “women and mothers”. Moreover, those adolescent out of school girls face such diverse problems as early marriage and early motherhood, and are not prepared – psychologically as well as materially – to face the challenges of adult life. Policy debates over adolescent girls, as well as non-formal education programmes tailored to their needs, are rare. Even the EFA 2000 Assessments does not deal with this vulnerable population group specifically.

The number of literate men and women in the world is increasing, and this growth is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, albeit at very slow rates. According to the EFA 2000 Assessments, the number of illiterate adults fell from 895 million in 1990 to 880 million in 1998. More than 98 percent of illiterates are found in the less developed regions. Although the downward trend of illiteracy has been more marked among women than men, women still form the majority of illiterates, accounting for up to two-thirds of adult illiteracy (64 percent). The marginalisation of women is especially profound in rural areas. Literacy projects for women continue to be very limited in number, are weakly conceptualized, and fail to recognize the specificity of women’s conditions and needs. Non-formal educational activities carried out by non-educational sectors entertain less than satisfactory concerns with women’s education. The relevance of literacy for other sectors besides education, such as health, agriculture and community development, is neglected. Although by now policy makers at large have adopted the concept of gender equality in basic education, their attention is limited to the satisfaction of immediate women’s basic educational and technical needs, and not extended to the development of critical awareness and empowerment. Their concept has not materialized in effective actions, either.

Over the decade, generally, there has been a much better understanding of the factors that exclude girls from basic education and that reinforce the gender gap: cultural barriers, poor educational facilities, and scant accessibility to low-cost girl-friendly schools in remote rural areas. While poverty excludes both girls and boys from school, girls are especially affected by it, because “cost” is a matter of concern, and the perceived value of educating girls is often low. Such a perception is related with the high dowry costs for educated girls, the expectation that girls should care for siblings and perform domestic chores, marriage preparations and puberty rites, as well as the limited promise of future earning potential in societies in which men are still seen as the principal breadwinners.

Although notions such as gender-sensitive education and productive and healthy learning environments have been fully recognized as important elements in efforts towards gender equality in basic education, they have not received due attention. Curriculum contents are not designed to reflect gendered needs, realities and values. The absence of effective classroom management and participatory and active learning techniques continue to characterize the education system. The fact that non-formal education is usually under the jurisdiction of ministries other than the ministry of education is reinforcing parallel systems with little interaction and resource sharing. Instructors or facilitators in the non-formal sector have no institutional linkages with the teachers of the formal sector. They are not exposed to formal training and to meaningful professional development. They are not officially recognized as educators by the authority. And their status is often low. On the other hand, the rich experiences they have gained through the practices of non-formal education programmes, their experiences based on the local culture and practices, and appropriate technologies and indigenous knowledge, as well as NFE methodology used to meet the requirements of local people, seldom reach the formal sector. Chances to transfer and mainstream their successful results are often lost.

Despite this less than favourable picture, the past decade has nevertheless

manifested remarkable endeavours in the field of non-formal basic education, which, no matter how dispersed and modest, can be regarded as significant models for further planning towards gender equality. Early childhood education, girls' education and adolescent education have gradually opened up to programmes directed to the family and the community, and to more qualified and innovative training and teaching. Girl-friendly community schools have provided out-of-school girls with access to safe and gender-sensitive learning environments. They have successfully addressed the socio-cultural constraints to girls' education by training female facilitators from the communities, and by involving parents and village members, as well as NGOs, in planning and management. Other "learning centres" have reached out to the entire community (children, girls and boys, adolescents, and the illiterate adults) through holistic, participatory and learner-centred educational approaches, promoting inter-generational literacy, engendering learning processes around diverse programmes and increasing community awareness of gender issues.

Alternative training centres have combined livelihood programmes and income generation activities ("training for employment") with educational contents, including diverse empowering tools to increase autonomy and self-esteem, to develop individual and organizational skills, to overcome social and cultural barriers, and to facilitate participation in the design, development and evaluation of educational programmes. These "learning and earning" educational projects, for the most part targeting illiterate adolescent girls and women living in highly traditional, marginalized and impoverished communities, have demonstrated successes in addressing the difficult social context in which learners live and in which work constitutes a fundamental part of cultural and social development.

Other innovative ways of meeting learner needs, while at the same time enhancing learner motivation, skills and empowerment, have transpired all through the decade to address gender gaps in literacy and in adult basic education and to enhance women's

lifelong learning. Mostly targeting at poor rural women, they are promoting basic literacy, while enabling women to reflect on their own circumstances, to develop solidarity and collective strength, and to engage in action for change. Many of such ways have led to success in building local infrastructures of committed female village activists, staff and resource persons, and in supporting women's self-reliance in terms of collective decision-making, planning and management. Other literacy campaigns are endorsed by decentralized structures which are essential for ensuring community support and resources. There are even examples where more conventional literacy campaigns are articulated towards issues of citizens' rights and responsibilities, enhancing self-confidence and critical minds for the exercise of democratic citizenship.

Finally, diverse approaches have been taken to address unavailable or irrelevant learning materials and poor teacher training. Different curricula and materials have integrated literacy skills and work-oriented activities with empowerment tools (confidence building, leadership, communication, problem-solving, group solidarity, and so on), participatory methodologies, adapted modern technologies, and safe and tolerant learning environments . Other approaches have also been taken with focus on women's problems and needs, realities and life-styles, and their capacity to think, analyze, discuss, plan and practice what they learn. Mobilizing resources from the community has emerged as a key factor in successful non-formal basic education. Training women from the community to facilitators and leaders of educational activities has proved promising in this regard.

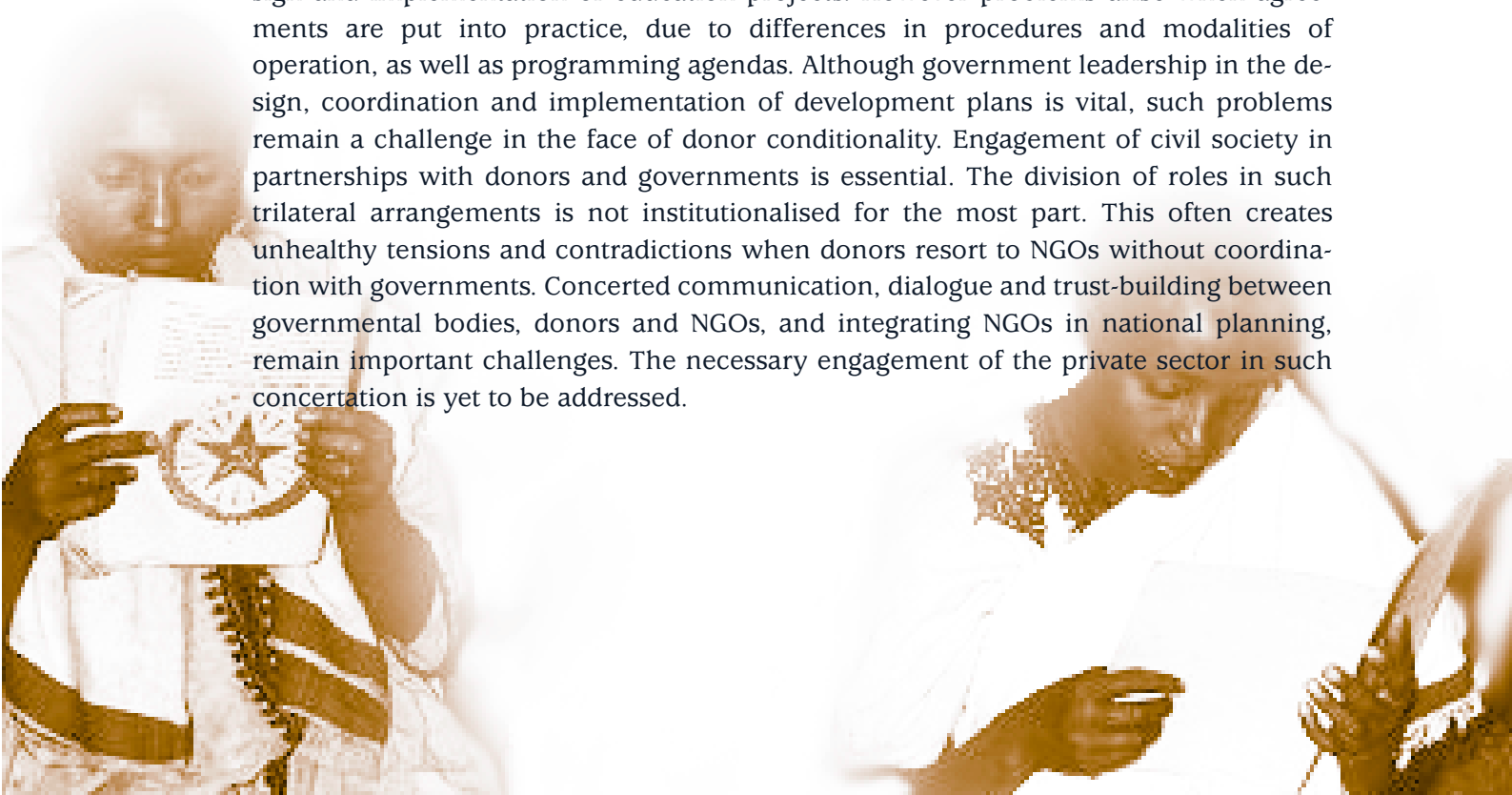
- *The role of stakeholders and cooperative mechanisms*

Article 7 of the Jomtien Declaration suggests that the achievement of EFA goals will require “new and revitalized partnerships at all levels . . . partnerships among all sub-sectors and forms of education . . . partnerships between governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups and families”. Indeed, while governments still have a major role to play in basic education, various entities in civil society have increasingly added their weight and engaged in partnerships with official institutions, specifically in the field of non-formal basic education for out-of-school girls and women. The Amman Mid-Decade Meeting noted that the wider and more active these partnerships had been, the better the results achieved since Jomtien.

According to the EFA 2000 Assessments, of the various actors involved in education, NGOs have distinguished themselves by their efforts in non-formal basic education. They did so especially in broadening learning experiences beyond the classroom and the curriculum. They have increasingly gained attention from decision-makers with regard to the relevance and quality of non-formal basic education programmes. NGOs are demonstrating capacities in assessing and articulating people’s needs and tailoring projects to these needs, in involving and enabling local communities and fostering creativity and self-help, in mobilizing resources, in improving the quality and relevance of education through innovative and flexible approaches, in creating learner-friendly contexts, and in instigating an appreciation of gender equality and a commitment to its support and enhancement. In addition, NGOs are manifesting their increasing potential in formulating policy issues and influencing policy reforms. Women’s organizations in particular are now clearly acknowledged as pioneers in advancing gender interests in education projects.

However, NGOs are often regarded as if they are a panacea, specifically in an era in which the state is retreating from the provision of basic social services. They face the enormous challenge of improving their institutional and technical capabilities, of increasing their understanding of national and global dynamics, of strengthening their networking mechanisms, and of institutionalizing their action and models at local, national and international levels. The problem is that civil society organizations do not usually have much control over the education system, and it is not yet certain whether their involvement has any influence on decision-making in programme planning and policy formulation.

At other levels – national, regional and international – new paradigms of cooperation have evolved between donor agencies, governments and civil society organizations. There is stronger inter-donor consensus on, and collaboration in, the design and implementation of education projects. However problems arise when agreements are put into practice, due to differences in procedures and modalities of operation, as well as programming agendas. Although government leadership in the design, coordination and implementation of development plans is vital, such problems remain a challenge in the face of donor conditionality. Engagement of civil society in partnerships with donors and governments is essential. The division of roles in such trilateral arrangements is not institutionalised for the most part. This often creates unhealthy tensions and contradictions when donors resort to NGOs without coordination with governments. Concerted communication, dialogue and trust-building between governmental bodies, donors and NGOs, and integrating NGOs in national planning, remain important challenges. The necessary engagement of the private sector in such concertation is yet to be addressed.



- *Political and economic environments*

Despite the commitments made at Jomtien, the funding of non-formal basic education remains precarious in nearly all countries of the world. The available statistical data suggest that few governments have given real funding priorities to adult literacy. The ability of many developing countries to pursue EFA has been severely restricted by the heavy and unsustainable debt burdens, which limited their capacities to invest in



education. The economic crises of the 1980s and the 1990s and Structural Adjustment Programmes have had the effect of reducing the proportion of GNP spent on education and other sectors of social development. This is coupled with weak political commitments to develop non-formal basic education strategies. The field of non-formal basic education is characterized by inadequate policy and legal frameworks, lack of know-how in policy implementation, frail institutional capacity, poor and fragmented use of human resources, and insufficient attention to poor and marginalized population groups.

However, there is room to explore additional financial resources for adult basic education even in developing countries. Although such countries generally cannot afford to allocate large sums of money for adult basic education, they invariably have non-educational ministries that can participate in this field of education. For instances, the ministries of health, agriculture, community development, and so on, can share their budget with the ministry of education in joint programmes of adult basic education. Or they may organise their own meaningful adult basic education programmes.

Similarly, donor spending in the field is hidden in general figures on basic education and not easily spotted. Donors and international agencies continue to direct their financial resources and programme agendas to formal primary schooling and managerial reform, because it is frequently asserted, albeit without sound research, that adult literacy programmes are inefficient and costly. Any involvement in the field of non-formal basic education is reactive rather than part of a long term strategy. Policies in this regard are often not favourable to the poor.

Strong financial, political and institutional commitments, from both national governments and donors, are vital to achieving gender equality in non-formal basic education. Education for empowerment will not make a difference in women's status on a large scale without supportive political will. Pockets of successful projects will not suffice to build a critical mass to sustain positive changes. In addition, if education systems are to be sustainable, existing resources must be effectively focused and targeted. In many countries with the less than satisfactory education indicators, educational spending is directed towards the upper levels, where participation is low and dominated by high-income groups. This underlines the need to invest in non-formal basic education, and more so to recognize that this field of education is a valuable and legitimate path to learning.

- *Research and statistics, monitoring and evaluation*

The EFA 2000 Assessments refers to the dire need for an active, systematic and serious research base that supports the development of conceptual frameworks and qualitative analysis, as well as the refinement of education data and survey statistics. Without such a research and data base, advocacy for political and financial commitments remains illusive, and programming and planning inefficient. This is

particularly true for gender research on non-formal basic education. Women's literacy is utterly under-researched, and the development of dependable gender-sensitive and disaggregated data and indicators precarious. Research needs are expressed by women's groups and researchers in areas such as theories and concepts of empowerment, elements and strategies of empowering education, factors that promote women's literacy, content analysis of literacy primers and training methodologies, literature surveys, and so on. Women's studies centres and institutes have carried out substantial work in this regard, but research results are not cumulative and often do not feed into either policy or action. In this regard, it can be noted that the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) in Hamburg has promoted research as a strategy towards gender equality, by evaluating and highlighting successful programmes, disseminating information, and reaching out to policy makers.

Available data pertaining to non-formal basic education are generally limited and incomplete, and should be viewed as indicative of magnitudes and trends, rather than reflecting accurate measures. Gaps in research are associated with inadequate information, or the lack of information, about volumes of provision, data on the demand and supply of educational opportunities and on participation, the quality of programs, and key indicators for data collection. In addition, weak national institutional capacity for research in basic education, and lack of training on the use of gender-sensitive indicators, represent major barriers to sound research and statistical production. Finally, very few donor agencies support the promotion of gender research, specifically in the field of non-formal basic education.

Other problems in research on gender and non-formal education are related to monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. Although the profile of monitoring and evaluation in education has improved over the last decade, the field of gender and non-formal basic education has not drawn much benefit from the improved profile.

Operational guidelines for monitoring and evaluating achievements towards gender equality in non-formal basic education are practically non-existent. An interesting example, which could be closely observed in this regard, is the set of indicators for monitoring governments' compliance with international agreements, developed by the Latin American Regional Network on Women's Popular Education (REPEM) and the Gender and Education Office of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) as a first step for designing and implementing monitoring initiatives.







Goals

Within the framework of the Ten-Year UN Girls' Education Initiative, the goals of the present Document are based mainly on the Dakar EFA Goals for 2015, with specific emphasis on gender equality in non-formal basic education:

- *Eliminating gender disparity and achieving gender equality in education, with a focus on lifelong learning and non-formal basic education;*
- *Ensuring that the basic learning needs of the excluded, disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups are met through equitable access to appropriate and gender-sensitive educational programmes;*
- *Improving all aspects of quality in teaching and learning, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all.*



Strategic directions and action-oriented recommendations

The present Document identifies three priority areas, each of which requires strategic intervention for attaining the above goals. They are non-formal basic education and the formal education system (in “integration with diversity”), advocacy for policy change, and research on and for gender equality in non-formal basic education.

- *Non-formal basic education and the formal education system: “integration with diversity”*

The first strategic direction is to promote and institutionalize education for empowerment and non-formal education as essential elements of basic education and decisive avenues in reaching EFA. It is to strengthen linkages between non-formal basic education and the formal education system, further equivalency between the two, and work towards upgrading the quality of both, and this while maintaining the flexibility of non-formal basic education in its conceptual and organizational aspects and in its faculty to reach diverse and, especially, excluded groups. The following action-oriented recommendations are identified:

International:

- Assist Member States in strengthening governmental capacity to design and manage non-formal basic education programs with special reference to the poor;

- Encourage Member States to develop equivalency programs between the non-formal and formal education systems, to institute comparable standards and minimum learning achievements for both, and establish regulations for accrediting non-formal basic education; and
- Promote the valorization of non-formal basic education through the voicing of good practices and successful and pioneer experiences, and facilitate information sharing and exchanges.

National:

- Develop linkages at legislative/legal and technical levels;
- Review, modify and develop areas that could form links between the formal and non-formal curriculum, and their educational materials, and, in so doing, ensure greater gender-sensitivity and that curricular and educational materials are favourable to the poor;
- Use formal education facilities to non-formal education activities, wherever possible, and improve their learning environment;
- Identify entry-points for a convergence, in the planning processes, of both the formal and non-formal sectors;
- Transfer the methodologies and successful approaches of non-formal education to the formal one wherever possible, and mainstream them at diverse levels;
- Enhance the decentralization of management and the devolution of responsibility to local official units accountable to the local population, with a view to identifying their needs and problems using innovative approaches, where necessary, facilitating the implementation of successful experiences, and assuring access to government resources.
- Involve diverse local stakeholders in both the formal and non-formal sectors, such

as community groups, Parents-Teachers Associations, NGOs, and so on, in the identification of needs, the planning and implementation of learning activities, and promote the integration of efforts, and the development of partnerships at the local level; and

- Identify incentive schemes such as school snacks/feeding programmes to reach poor children, girls in particular.

Gender:

- Foster, improve and develop, the methodologies and innovative approaches of gender equality in non-formal basic education, and work towards improving them; and
- Promote the integration of gender-sensitive approaches in diverse non-formal education projects, such as income generation, vocational training, agricultural extension and health care programmes; and develop integrated programmes with other social development sectors, and coordinate them effectively with those of other ministries providing non-formal basic education.

Training:

- Develop integrated training and supervisory programs for educators in both the formal and non-formal sectors, in order to improve and upgrade their competence, especially on societal and gender matters, and encourage the exchange of information on them.

● *Advocacy for policy change*

The second strategic direction is to engage systematically in diverse advocacy efforts, aiming to furthering gender equality in non-formal basic education and to address the adverse effects of structural adjustment policies and economic globalization, and, also, to promote the active, creative and coordinated contribution of all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels, to policy change. The following action-oriented recommendations are identified:

International:

- Use international meetings, such as G8 Summits, UN Conferences, World Summits, and other international forums, as well as the UNGEI policy “compacts” to draw attention from, and raise awareness of, the world leaders and the world community to issues related to gender equality in education and the role of non-formal education;
- Press for coherent resource mobilization through such development strategies and policy framework as the Common Country Development Assistants (CCA), the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the World Bank Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPIC) Initiative, so that governments can make progress in the development of education for all and towards closing gender gaps in education;
- Collaborate with donors in mobilizing resources and obtaining aid for budgets which promote educational reforms integrating formal and non-formal basic education; and
- Urge for a revision of national policies and legislation to bring them more in line with international conventions and agreements to which they are signatory.

National:

- Press for a greater commitment on the part of the state to leading and coordinating non-formal basic education activities in partnership with various stakeholders at the local, regional and international levels;
- Encourage the formulation of a clear policy statement on formal and non-formal basic education for use by advocacy groups and organizations; and
- Make sure that the above elements and concrete steps towards the elimination of gender disparity and discrimination in education should be incorporated in the National EFA Plans to be prepared by 2002 in accordance with the Dakar Framework of Action.

Co-operation:

- Encourage cooperation and dialogue in the formulation of policy;
- Press for equitable political and economic environments;
- Press for expansion of non-formal basic education programmes of good quality;
- Encourage flexible and innovative networking in support of non-formal basic education;
- Support the development of organized and institutional constituencies;
- Mobilize the mass media as a political and communicative means of creating an awareness of non-formal basic education as a means of providing learning, and of the need for gender equality;
- Build partnerships with the business sector with a view to obtaining financial support for programmes;
- Collaborate with NGOs in advocacy work, in the development of policy and the implementation of programmes; and

Gender equality in basic education

- Promote national cooperation mechanisms between local communities and civil society organizations, research centers, the private sector, the media, various ministries, donors, and UN, regional and international agencies.

Gender:

- Press for the recognition of the importance of gender in non-formal basic education as a means of achieving the goals of education for all, reducing poverty, and promoting social and economic development;
- Press for a stringer commitment to gender equality in non-formal basic education, and for the maintenance of such commitments on the political agenda;
- Press for the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment in non-formal basic education;
- Highlight, and disseminate, information on the successes of gender equality in non-formal basic education;
- Launch national campaigns in support of gender equality in non-formal basic education; and
- Stress the importance of using research, analysis and disaggregated data in the formulation of relevant programmes.



- *Research on and for gender equality in non-formal basic education*

The third strategic direction is to develop systematic and comprehensive research programmes and methodologies on gender equality in non-formal basic education, and to raise the profile of monitoring and evaluation in the field, with a view to furthering better planning, contributing to policy making, and assuring coherence and sustainability in working towards the EFA goals. The following action-oriented recommendations are identified:

International:

- Support the role of UNESCO and its institutes, such as IIEP, UIE and IBE, in assisting the Member States in building or strengthening their research capacity;
- Support the role of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics in developing a common framework for data collection and analysis, in building indicators for monitoring and assessing progress on EFA on a continuing basis, and in training in the relevant fields, assisting the Member States in building the necessary capacity; and
- Encourage Member States to conduct qualitative studies, provide timely and relevant gender-sensitive data and statistics, and translate research results into policy and action.

National:

- Strengthen national research and monitoring capacities;
- Develop the capacities of local communities to conduct applied and action-oriented research;
- Support the establishment of women's studies programmes, and the promotion of

gender research and statistics;

- Encourage and facilitate networking between research institutions and entities working on the ground on gender equality in non-formal basic education;
- Build monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in programmes and projects, for measuring compliance with international declarations and conventions;
- Promote qualitative research and analysis in areas of immediate relevance to gender equality in non-formal basic education, for instance, factors that affect achievement or promote women's literacy; the use of ICTs; and the relevance of non-formal basic education to disadvantaged groups;
- Produce guidelines for integrating gender perspectives in research on non-formal basic education;
- Produce studies and needs assessment analysis on integrating the formal and non-formal basic education systems;
- Document and analyze stories of success and good practices;
- Encourage the compilation of gender-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive statistics and analysis, for instance, public and donor expenditures, demand and supply of non-formal basic education, and participation; and
- Develop gender-sensitive indicators and operational guidelines for measuring discrimination, learning achievements, cost-effectiveness, and for directing planning, monitoring and evaluation activities.

Training:

- Provide more national and local training in the use and interpretation of gender-sensitive educational research.



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