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Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

“Promoting Education for All (EFA) in Least Developed Countries (LDCs)”

Special Event organized on 13 September 2006 at the United Nations in New York in connection with the Mid-term comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Objective

The special event on “Promoting Education for All (EFA) in LDCs” that was held on 13 September 2006 at the United Nations in Conference Room 1 was organized by UNESCO jointly with the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)*, UNICEF, and the Secretariat of the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) to contribute to the mid-term comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. This review concluded with a two-day high-level plenary meeting on 18 and 19 September 2006, convened as part of the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly, in which the “Declaration of the high-level meeting of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010” was adopted.

The special event reviewed how LDCs had fared in the past five years with regard to EFA; the mechanisms and frameworks that were put in place to accelerate this progress; and how the EFA Global Action Plan could be utilized more effectively to implement the Programme of Action (the agenda is available as annex 1). The LDC booklet on “Education for All in Least Developed Countries” that was published by UNESCO (to download this booklet, please go to <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001472/147259M.pdf>), as well as the EFA CD on “Education for All – The Quality Imperative”, was distributed to all participants at the event, and later at the high-level plenary meeting. In addition, recommendations were also drafted at the end of the event that were then sent participants so that they could take them forward to the high-level plenary meeting (see annex 2). A summary of the pertinent issues that were discussed at the event is presented below; for more information on specific presentations, please contact Clare Stark, BSP LDC focal point, at c.stark@unesco.org.

Overview of the LDCs

There are 50 LDCs: 34 are in Africa, 14 in Asia, 1 in the Arab region and 1 in the Caribbean. The greatest assets of the LDCs, according to Commitment 3 of the Programme of Action, “are their women, men and children, whose potential as both agents and beneficiaries of development must be fully realized”. To build human and institutional capacity and address problems of low school enrolment and poor health care, governments in LDCs have been increasing their expenditure in the health and education sectors. According to the recent UN Secretary-General’s report for the Implementation of the Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, LDCs have adjusted their development strategies and action to give greater attention to poverty reduction either through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) or other national mechanisms. Development partners have also increased their financial aid to LDCs since 2002.

Progress in achieving EFA and the MDGs

* UN-OHRLLS is responsible for “ensuring the effective coordination, monitoring and review of the implementation of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action (POA).”

Data from the EFA Global Monitoring Report point to evidence that there has been substantial progress towards universal primary enrolment and that the gap between boys' and girls' enrolment is closing fast. The 2006 UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Report also highlights the progress that has been made towards the goal of universal primary completion. However, there still remains much to be done, particularly in regards to delivering on the promise of education, and its potential to transform the lives of individuals, families, communities and nations. In most instances, the Education for All Goals and the education-related MDGs (MDG 3 and 4) will not be met by 2015 without dramatically stepped up efforts. Policies are required that expand access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and school, improve quality education and scale up youth and adult literacy programmes. More strategic partnerships are needed between LDCs, NGOs, the UN system, governments, communities and learners so that education is strategically linked with other social issues such as child protection, HIV/AIDS, health and nutrition. The international community must scale up its aid in order to assist LDCs in developing more youth and adult literacy programmes. External funding for basic education still needs to increase three-fold to achieve the EFA goals in LDCs. Initiatives such as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), EFA-FTI, and the Global Initiative on Education and HIV/AIDS (EDUCAIDS) must be harmonized to be more effective and so that they also create less of a burden on countries with already restricted human and technical capacity.

Country experiences – lessons learned and challenges encountered

Government representatives from a range of LDCs addressed the meeting, outlining their experiences, lessons learned, and challenges encountered in working to achieve the EFA goals. The representative of the Government of Haiti said that the national education and training plan in Haiti covers a period of ten years, from 1997 to 2007, and gives priority to basic education. Although the State has been working to address the educational challenges it faces, much remains to be done. The following statistics give an indication of some of these challenges:

- 500,000 school-aged children who should be in school are not in school (this is often due to the lack of educational facilities, school fees, and the lack of trained teachers);
- 91% of schools are from the private sector and they absorb 81% of the students. To assist children in accessing education, the Government is providing grants to poor families so that they can afford the school fees to send their children to school, and is providing financial assistance to schools so that they can accommodate more teachers and children;
- 70% of the children in the educational system are older than the normal age because parents send their children when they have the money to pay the school fees. To address this problem, it was suggested that there should be an accelerated education course offered for three years instead of six;
- 3,000,000 people are illiterate, of whom 60% are women, and in addition one million people cannot write. Initiatives have been undertaken to address this problem, which include the production of didactic materials in Creole (4 million in total) and the training of trainers;
- The majority of teachers are under-qualified; 65% have an academic profile that corresponds to the 3rd year of secondary school. The Government has planned to create 24 learning centres in the next two years for teachers to learn about using pedagogical tools;

- The rate of people living with HIV/AIDS has decreased because of the efforts of the Ministries of Health and Education to sensitize and inform the public, and a national strategic education plan on HIV/AIDS has been developed.

The Government of Haiti currently allocates 3 billion gourdes (approximately USD 78 million) for education. This budget does not allow the State to fully implement its education plan and to address the challenges which it faces. In terms of external aid, donors are supporting approximately 10 specific educational projects for a total of 150 million USD. There has also been a proposition from the World Bank that Haiti be released from making payments on its debt for two years so that the Haitian government can allocate this money to improving its educational system.

The representative of the Government of Burkina Faso informed the meeting that the Decade Plan for the Development of Basic Education in Burkina Faso (PDDEB/2001-2010) had been adopted in 1990. This Plan is based on three phases that set forth specific objectives. Although there have been unforeseen successes from the first phase of implementation of this Plan, such as an increase in the schooling of pupils from 44.4% in 2000-2001 to 56.8% in 2004-2005, and the enrolment of 640,856 learners in literacy programmes -- three times more than the number of learners expected -- there are still many challenges to overcome. The Government is still having difficulty in providing enough educational opportunities to meet the demand and providing the required human and material resources (teachers, schools, curricula, etc.). This task is also exacerbated by the difficulty it faces in absorbing external aid. To address these challenges, the Government is proposing to increase the financial resources allocated to basic education to 20% by 2010, concentrating 10% of the national budget on literacy and non-formal education. To achieve gender parity at both the primary and secondary level, the Government must take into account why girls have difficulty in accessing education (domestic work, distance from their home to the school), and provide them with the incentives for attending school, i.e., school feeding programmes and educational grants.

The representative of the Government of Bangladesh mentioned that massive efforts had been undertaken to address the challenges of EFA. The Government has received \$500 million USD in aid for education. In the area of universal primary education, the Government has increased its distribution of textbooks, constructed and repaired primary schools, and recruited and trained more teachers. Out-of-school children are accessing education through education and learning centres that have been established throughout the country on a needs basis in collaboration with NGOs. Gender parity has been achieved at both primary and secondary level, and massive social mobilization programmes have been undertaken to encourage parents and guardians to send girls to school. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, curricula have been developed for pupils in non-formal and secondary education, and the media is being utilized to increase public awareness.

Framework and mechanisms to accelerate progress towards achieving EFA

Representatives from International Save the Children Alliance, UNICEF, the Education for All Fast-Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) Secretariat and UNESCO presented the frameworks and mechanisms to accelerate progress towards EFA.

The representative from the International Save the Children Alliance, an independent non-governmental organization that is working to provide children, particularly those affected by armed conflict, with educational opportunities, mentioned that it has launched a new campaign on emergency education called “rewrite the future,” which is of particular relevance for a number of LDCs. Currently, the organization operates in over 120 countries and its work includes providing educational opportunities and protection to children in emergency situations; helping communities to manage schools; training teachers; and developing education policies and relevant, child-friendly curricula. It is working to engage national governments, donors and international agencies to take immediate and sustained action in this important initiative.

The representative of UNICEF reported that UNICEF is the lead agency and Secretariat for UNGEI, which is a partnership designed to galvanize the efforts of the United Nations system, governments, donor countries, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, communities and families to narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to ensure that by 2015, all children complete primary schooling, with girls and boys having equal access to all levels of education. UNGEI provides stakeholders with a platform for action and galvanizes their efforts to get girls in school. It helps to build country leadership in developing countries in the area of girls’ education through capacity building to achieve the MDGs, providing support through partnerships, and by supporting innovative financing mechanisms.

The representative from the Education for All – *Fast Track Initiative (FTI)* partnership informed the meeting that this is a global partnership between developing countries and donors to accelerate progress towards the goal of universal completion of quality primary education by 2015. EFA-FTI provides developing countries with more efficient aid for primary education, sustained increase in aid for primary education, and sharing of knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, it assists donors by providing a platform for aid effectiveness, by better coordinating and harmonizing aid at the national and global level, and helping more countries to get on track towards achieving Universal Primary Education. Its partners include 30 bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, and all low-income countries may be eligible to receive some kind of support through this initiative.

The representative from UNESCO reported that UNESCO is working with the other four EFA convening partners (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, World Bank) to develop the EFA Global Action Plan (GAP) in order to more effectively implement the Programme of Action for the LDCs, particularly as it relates to the EFA goals. To do this, the GAP will focus on the following areas of action: strengthening national leadership, capacity development, advocacy and communication, resource mobilization, the effective use of aid, and widening the scope of monitoring EFA. The high-level inter-agency working group that was established to develop the GAP has made substantial progress in defining the above-mentioned areas, and it is now focusing its efforts on defining the application of the GAP at the country level. A more fully developed version of the GAP will be presented to the sixth meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA that is to be held in Cairo, Egypt, on 14-16 November 2006.

Next steps:

- Determine how the EFA Global Action Plan that is currently being developed by UNESCO and other EFA partners can be utilized to assist LDCs in more effectively

implementing the Programme of Action. It was suggested that UNESCO organize a meeting with the LDCs to discuss this further;

- Disseminate the key results of the event and the high-level meeting to UNESCO field offices in LDCs, National Commissions in LDCs and Permanent Delegations representing LDCs to ensure that UNESCO's future work will take the results into consideration and make the information available on UNESCO's website;
- Follow the work of the forthcoming session of the CEB, which will focus in part on the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs;
- Continue to liaise with UN-OHRLLS on all follow-up concerning the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs.

ANNEX 1

PROGRAMME

UNITED NATIONS



MID-TERM COMPREHENSIVE GLOBAL
REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF
ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE
DECADE 2001-2010

SPECIAL EVENT ON:
“PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA) IN LDCs”

13 September 2006, United Nations, New York

10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Conference Room 1



Education for All – Fast Track Initiative
Accelerating progress towards quality universal primary education

Background:

The Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) was adopted in May 2001 by the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs in Brussels. UNESCO contributed significantly to this conference, which included the organization of an interactive thematic session on “EFA and sustainable development in the LDCs.” This session resulted in specific commitments being integrated into the Programme of Action in the context of EFA in the LDCs.

At the 61st session of the UN General Assembly, a mid-term comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) will be undertaken. It will take the form of a two-day high-level meeting on 18 and 19 September 2006, chaired by the President of the General Assembly. In order to contribute to the mid-term review, UNESCO will organize a special event on Education for All (EFA), to be held on 13 September 2006 at UN Headquarters in New York.

Overall objective:

To contribute to the preparation of the mid-term comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for EFA.

Immediate objectives:

- review the progress of the past five years, with regard to EFA, in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs at country level, and identify the lessons learned and key challenges;
- review the effectiveness of mechanisms and frameworks put in place to accelerate progress towards EFA, in particular in the light of the key education goals outlined by the Programme of Action for the LDCs (gender parity - UNGEI; Universal Primary Education - FTI);
- identify how the EFA Global Action Plan, currently being developed by UNESCO and other EFA convening partners at the high-level meeting, can be utilized to implement more effectively the Programme of Action for the LDCs;
- propose recommendations for the mid-term review to be made at the UN General Assembly to be held on 18 and 19 September 2006.

Agenda

Wednesday 13 September 2006	
10:00-10:30	<p>Opening session</p> <p>Welcoming remarks by the Deputy Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO: Mr Qian Tang</p> <p>Remarks by the Director/Senior Advisor to the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, UN-OHRLLS: Ms Zahra Nuru</p> <p>Remarks by the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF: Ms Rima Salah</p> <p>Remarks by the Co-Chair on the organization of the meeting and expected outcomes: Mr Mark Richmond, Acting Director of the Division for the Coordination of United Nations Priorities in Education, UNESCO</p>
10:30-12:30	<p>Session 1 - Review of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs at country level with regard to EFA</p> <p>EFA is crucial for developing human capacity in the LDCs and for contributing to sustainable socio-economic development and poverty eradication. This session will be dedicated to an overall review of the progress made by the LDCs in meeting the six EFA goals and the MDG goals, particularly: 1 on poverty; 2 on universal primary education; 3 on gender equality and education; and 6 on combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.</p> <p>Overview of the progress in implementing the Programme of Action for the LDCs at country level: Mr Nicholas Burnett, Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report Team</p> <p>Review of actions taken by governments:</p> <p>Mr Gabriel Bien-Aimé, Minister of National Education and Professional Training, Haiti</p> <p>Jaqueline Oubiba, Permanent attaché of the Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso to the United Nations</p> <p>Mr A.H.M. Rezaul Kabir, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Bangladesh</p> <p>Discussion</p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:00	<p>Session 1 (Continued)</p> <p>Review of civil society's contribution to the LDCs: Mr David Skinner, Director Education Global Challenge, International Save the Children Alliance.</p> <p>Discussion</p>
15:00-16:00	<p>Session 2 Review of the functioning of mechanisms and frameworks The Programme of Action for the LDCs states that the main orientation for its</p>

	<p>implementation and the prime concern of the global level follow-up includes “<i>reviewing the functioning of implementation and follow-up mechanisms at country, subregional and sectoral levels</i>”. Thus, this session will focus on UNGEI and FTI, which are relevant to the key education goals identified in the Programme of Action for the LDCs, reflecting on how these mechanisms have contributed and will continue to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action.</p> <p>What and how UNGEI has contributed to achieving gender parity in the LDCs: Mr Cream Wright, Global Chief, Education Section, UNICEF.</p> <p>Fast Track Initiative (FTI): Contribution to universal primary education and a forum for donor coordination: Mr Robert Prouty, Deputy Manager, Fast Track Initiative Secretariat</p> <p>Discussion</p>
16:00-16:45	<p>Session 3 Steps forward The Global Action Plan to Achieve EFA by 2015 (GAP) aims at facilitating concerted and complementary efforts by EFA partners, in particular the five convening UN agencies of Jomtien and Dakar. One of the strategic areas outlined in the GAP is focusing efforts on assisting countries with the greatest need. LDCs are a key target group in this respect. This session will discuss future options and strategies to promote the effective implementation of commitments of the Programme of Action for the LDCs, in particular Commitment 3: Building human and institutional capacities, in the light of the EFA Global Action Plan.</p> <p>Towards more effective implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs with the use of the Global Action Plan: Mr Mark Richmond, Acting Director of the Division for the Coordination of United Nations Priorities in Education, UNESCO</p> <p>Discussion</p>
16:45-17:00	<p>Closing session</p> <p>Policy conclusions and recommendations.</p> <p>Co-chair’s summary Mr Qian Tang, Deputy Assistant Director-General for Education</p>

Annex 2

Recommendations

**from the Special Event on “Promoting Education for All (EFA) in LDCs”
convened jointly by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,
Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) and the
United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO)
to the High-level Meeting of the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of
the Programme of Action for the Least-Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010
New York, 13 September 2006**

Representatives of LDC governments, civil society and multilateral organisations recommended that:

- Human resource development through education be placed at the centre of nationally-owned strategies to achieve the MDGs and other development targets in LDCs.
- Over and above ongoing efforts to address universal primary enrolment and gender parity, more sustained action be devoted to improving the quality of basic education and to increasing adult literacy rates, particularly among women.
- Action to achieve EFA in LDCs be integrated with other key interventions in order to maximise impact on sustainable socio-economic development.
- In situations of emergency, natural disaster and post-conflict, educational opportunities be re-established as quickly as possible as a basic human right and as a key means of restoring normality.
- The international community should strengthen its focus on EFA needs and disparities in LDCs through existing international mechanisms such as the EFA Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI), the UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), and the EFA Global Action Plan.
- Special support be provided to ensure adequate and appropriate learning opportunities to disadvantaged groups in LDCs, such as girls and women, ethnic and linguistic minorities, remote and rural populations, indigenous peoples and nomads, disabled persons, street children, and people affected by HIV & AIDS.