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EVALUATION INSIGHTS provides a snap-shot of UNESCO's work in evaluation. Its purpose is to share insights and ideas with all interested stakeholders and to feed into ongoing discussions about the contribution of evaluation to the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Its fifth edition is dedicated to the:

Evaluation of the Education for All (EFA) Global and Regional Coordination Mechanisms

Effective coordination among all key players in education is crucial for the achievement of the global education goals, even more so in the context of the inclusive and holistic SDG4 -Education 2030 Agenda.

The Dakar Framework for Action, adopted at the end of the World Education Conference in Dakar in 2000, stated that UNESCO would "continue its mandated role in coordinating EFA partners and maintaining their collaborative momentum" and that, in doing so, the Organization would 'refocus its education programme in order to place the outcomes and priorities of Dakar at the heart of its work'.



After fifteen years since the signing of the Education for All (EFA) Framework for Action by 164 countries, a number of the global education targets and goals agreed upon still remain unattained. While remarkable progress has been made in a number of areas mainly related to primary education¹, the continued evolution of the international education landscape and the emergence of many competing education initiatives make it difficult to ascertain, to what extent UNESCO's EFA coordination over the last fifteen years has contributed to such progress. This evaluation has shown that UNESCO's values and humanistic mandate, as well as an effective global coordination among key players are crucial for progress towards education targets, and will be even more so in the context of the more inclusive and holistic SDG4 -Education 2030 Agenda.

¹ E.g. 50 million additional children enrolled in primary school by 2010, gender equality in primary school achieved among 90% of countries around the world and, as of 2012, an increase of nearly two-thirds since 1999 with 184 million children enrolled in pre-primary education worldwide, and as a sign of improved transition and retention rates, a secondary gross enrolment ratio at 85% (a nearly 20% increase compared to 1999). (GMR, 2015).

Why this evaluation? Entrusted to continue leading and coordinating the global Education Agenda, SDG4-Education 2030, UNESCO commissioned this evaluation of EFA coordination mechanisms. The analysis focused on UNESCO's leadership and coordination role in the areas of Advocacy, Knowledge Sharing and Dissemination, Resource Mobilization, and Progress Monitoring across three historic phases (2000-2004, 2005-2010, and 2011-2015). Its main purpose is to assist UNESCO in refining and improving the coordination structures and processes established (both within the Organization and internationally) to facilitate the implementation of the SDG-4 Education 2030 Framework for Action.



What have we learned about 'EFA Advocacy'?

UNESCO's advocacy efforts have been successful in influencing the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda and garnered support among its partners to introduce otherwise neglected aspects of education in the global sustainable development agenda. However, the lack of clarity of the role of each EFA partner and convening agency at global, regional and country level, aggravated by the absence of a clear internal strategic framework and a well-defined accountability mechanism, made UNESCO's advocacy work more challenging than expected.

Among the EFA convening agencies (UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank), UNESCO was the international organization that demonstrated the steadiest commitment to the coordination of the holistic EFA agenda, which focused on ensuring the quality, social equity and inclusiveness of education systems, while considering otherwise neglected - and yet relevant - areas such as early childhood care and education, adult literacy, as well as skills development of youth and adults, within a new and more encompassing lifelong-learning perspective. Furthermore, UNESCO ensured that the voice of other key stakeholders be better heard, through the more active involvement and more equal representation of civil society in the global

education discourse. However, the lack of a clear division of coordination tasks and responsibilities within UNESCO and between convening agencies, along with the paucity of resources allocated at the country level, often weakened the relevance of UNESCO's coordination with other development partners on the ground. Furthermore, the global efforts and guidance did not always translate into action at the national level.

What have we learned about 'EFA Knowledge Generation and Dissemination'?

UNESCO's strategies for effectively promoting the EFA-related knowledge were successful. However, the proliferation of compelling research produced by well-resourced global education initiatives, universities and private foundations gradually undermined UNESCO's leadership.

UNESCO strategies of capitalizing on its specialised Institutes², organizing global and regional meetings to facilitate the dissemination of UNESCO knowledge products in EFA-related areas, fostering regional exchanges on EFA-related good practices; and coordinating the development of technical publications proved successful. In-house production and wide dissemination of cutting-edge research work, thematic series, and specialized literature on education topics, further enhanced the credibility of the Organization's intellectual leadership, amply recognized in fields such as youth and adult literacy, educational planning, teachers and statistics. Nonetheless, the proliferation of well-resourced global education initiatives and the strengthening of analytical research capacity on education-related issues within universities and private foundations gradually destabilised UNESCO's effectiveness in generating and disseminating EFA-related knowledge.

What have we learned about 'EFA Resource Mobilisation'?

Given its own increasingly limited resources, UNESCO strongly advocated for increasing funding for education and promoted a more effective use of the existing education funds at national level. However, these efforts were not steadily supported by other convening agencies and globally only fewer of the resources that were hoped to feed into EFA goals were dedicated to the Education for All movement.

At the global level, UNESCO successfully pushed for public-private partnerships and an increase in extra-budgetary support for EFA-related programming and coordination. To call for a more effective allocation of existing resources for education purposes, the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) and other technical publications provided funders and national policy-makers' with the strongest evidence available on what education areas and topics needed to be addressed the most. However, the varying levels of engagement among other EFA Convening Agencies over time, the divide between the six holistic EFA Goals and the Millennium Development Goals, and the emergence of parallel funding mechanisms for

education established outside of UNESCO and supporting only a few specific goals of the broader EFA agenda³, posed significant challenges to EFA resource mobilisation.

What have we learned about 'EFA Progress Monitoring'?

The GMR has been recognized over the years as the most comprehensive statistical publication on national education systems' progress in relation to the six EFA goals, and the provision of education indicators and statistics through the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) emerged as a distinguished comparative advantage of the Organization.

EFA progress monitoring at the global level was ensured through the production of the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), and at the regional level through statistical capacity-building conducted in close cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' regional advisers. As a result, UNESCO could claim a leadership role in the tracking of EFA goals at the global and, partly, at the regional level. UNESCO, together with UNICEF played a pivotal role in the discussions on the post-2015 education agenda at UN-level. Through the Education for All Steering Committee and the World Education Forum 2015 it played a decisive role in establishing the SDG4 - Education 2030 targets.

The Way forward:



Key Message 1: *Effective global and regional coordination of the SDG 4-2030 Education agenda will require a shift from 'traditional leadership and coordination' to a more cohesive 'Shared Coordination Model', based on dialogue and a well-articulated strategy, clear allocation of roles and responsibilities and a mutually accepted and agreed accountability mechanism within and among all Convening agencies and partners. A stronger and more authoritative SDG 4-Education 2030 Steering Committee will be a crucial ingredient.*

Key Message 2: *Strong and unified advocacy for investing in education among all partners will be a precondition to ensure that the allocation of funding for education from development partners and Member States will be fully aligned with the holistic and inclusive SDG4-Agenda 2030 targets.*

Key Message 3: *There are opportunities for UNESCO to clearly position its contribution to the 2030 Agenda, such as a) by strengthening its intellectual leadership through the generation of cutting edge research and dissemination of knowledge and good practices as well as the through the development of targets and indicators and b) by assisting countries in setting up relevant and effective Education Monitoring Information Systems.*

² In particular, UIL (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning), IBE (UNESCO International Bureau for Education), IIEP (UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning), and UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics).

³ E.g. the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) and later the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). While EFA advocated for a universal and holistic agenda, global funding mechanisms (e.g. FTI-GPE) and donors' interventions mostly focused on primary education in developing countries.