

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 381 478

SO 024 935

AUTHOR Naik, Chitra, Ed.; And Others  
 TITLE Education for All Summit of Nine High-Population Countries (New Delhi, India, December 12-16, 1993). Panel Proceedings.  
 INSTITUTION United Nations Children's Fund, Paris (France).; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France).; United Nations Fund for Population Activities, New York, N.Y.  
 PUB DATE 94  
 NOTE 78p.; For a related document, see SO 024 936.  
 PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; \*Developing Nations; \*Educational Policy; Elementary Education; Females; Foreign Countries; \*International Cooperation; Overpopulation; \*Womens Education  
 IDENTIFIERS Bangladesh; Brazil; China; Egypt; India; Indonesia; Mexico; Nigeria; Pakistan

## ABSTRACT

This collection of panel proceedings is divided into five sections each of which is devoted to one panel. Panel 1 focused on mobilization, people's participation, and decentralization for "Education For All (EFA)." Panel 2 was devoted to external and internal financial resources for EFA (Government of India). Panel 3 was on girls' and women's education, women's empowerment, and population issues. Panel 4 was on education and society. The fifth panel was a special panel devoted to India's District Primary Education Program. Participating nations were Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan. After a scene setting discussion at the beginning of a pre-summit session when delegates considered the analysis and synthesis paper prepared by UNESCO, they spent the rest of the three day conference taking part in the four panel discussions that centered on the main themes of the forthcoming Delhi Declaration. Before the conference, delegates had been presented with background papers on the themes that were enlarged upon by panelists from the United Nations agencies and representatives and ministers of the 9 states. Together these 9 countries account for more than half the world's population and 75 percent of its illiterates. They are cradles of civilization and founts of spiritual, cultural, and philosophical knowledge that continue to have a profound influence on humanity. Despite differing cultures and historical legacies, the countries have recognized that education is at the heart of sustainable development. (DK)

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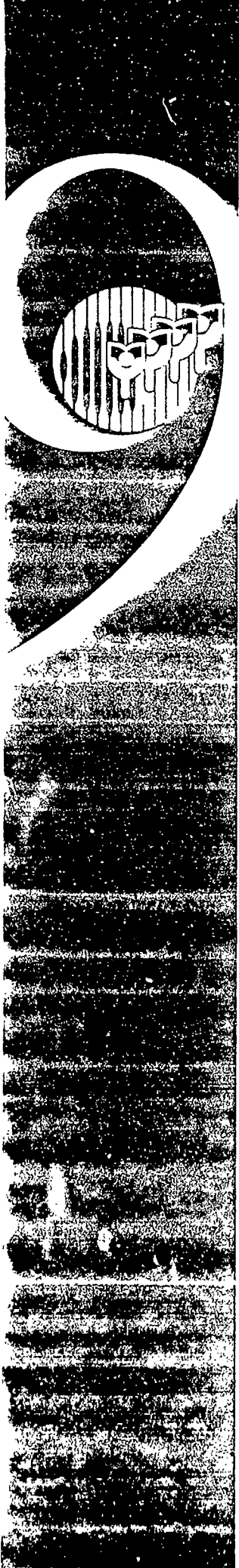
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# Panel Proceedings



# ***Education for All Summit***

***of***

***Nine  
High-Population  
Countries***

**New Delhi, 12-16 December 1993**



**All for Education:**  
***Sharing Strategies and Experiences***

**Panel Proceedings of the  
Education for All Summit of  
Nine High-Population Countries**

**Prepared by an editorial group  
under the direction of Dr Chitra Naik**

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Layout: Gyoza Media, Paris

Printing: Egoprim, Paris

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Printed in Paris, France

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# Introduction

*If you are planning for one year,  
plant rice;  
if you are planning for five years,  
plant trees;  
if you are planning for the future,  
educate your children."*

*-Chinese Proverb*

**B**ETWEEN December 12 and 16, 1993, the world's nine most populous countries came together to plan for the future. At the end of their meeting, they unanimously adopted the Delhi Declaration and a framework for action, pledging to universalize primary education for all and expand learning opportunities for children, youth and adults by the turn of the century.

These nine countries — Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan — are the most important actors in the Education for All movement, born out of the international conference held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. Together, they account for more than half the world's population and 75 per cent of its illiterates. They are cradles of civilization and founts of spiritual, cultural, and philosophic<sup>1</sup> knowledge which continue to have a profound influence on humanity. But they are also struggling against the high tides of poverty, population growth, environmental depletion, widening economic disparities and mounting debt burdens.

Despite differing cultures and historical legacies, these countries have recognized that education is at the heart of sustainable development. Investing in education, and especially primary education, is the key to shaping the future in an increasingly interdependent world. It is not only the fulfillment of a basic human right, but also the bridge toward slower population growth, higher economic productivity and a more peaceful, tolerant and democratic society. In spite of economic hardship, the global environment is propitious to social development: not only are poverty alleviation and human resources the twin pillars of this fourth United Nations Development Decade, but the trend toward democratization offers a historic opportunity to invest in the security of people, ahead of the defense of nations.

It takes careful planning and a long-term commitment to enhance education's place in national development. Education is not only a question of access, but also of the qualitative knowledge that is shared. For a society to develop equitably, education has to enter the lives of girls and women, and reach the most

isolated and marginalized children and adults. This all-encompassing vision is at the center of the Education for All movement. The Jomtien conference injected an urgent challenge into the educational landscape, and spelt out the movement's principles and strategies. Since then, countries have begun to implement their EFA plans, and the fruits of these efforts are starting to appear.

In New Delhi, leaders reaffirmed their commitment to pursue the goals set in Jomtien and at the World Summit for Children. The challenge today is to ensure that these efforts are sustained and even accelerated. Common issues have emerged as prerequisites to achieving EFA, giving the movement direction and cohesion. They form the poles around which an exchange of experiences can occur, enriching the movement and maintaining it in a top position on the international agenda. In this will to exchange and move forwards, ministers, educationalists, donors and other players in the EFA movement participated in four panel sessions held between December 13 and 15, 1993. During each one, panelists offered lines of inquiry that set the stage for examining experiences in the nine countries and suggesting several valuable lessons.

The theme of the first panel, "Mobilization, People's Participation and Decentralization," organized by UNICEF, echoes the philosophical underpinning of the EFA movement: without participation by all, it will be impossible to achieve education for all. From improving curricula to reaching the broadest number of beneficiaries, EFA calls for a broad alliance between different sectors of society, including students, parents, teachers and the community, along with the media, industry and different levels of government. It also

requires enhancing responsibility at the local level for people to feel that education belongs to them. But for this broad alliance to emerge and remain a committed one, participants stressed that education must be perceived as a national priority. Governments have to take the lead in creating the conditions for participation to be energetic and ongoing, and lend their support to a varied range of learning approaches. Because it is a long-term commitment, parents have to perceive the benefits of educating their children, especially their daughters. The discussion underlined the need to give stronger backing to NGOs and link education with poverty alleviation programmes.

In differing measures, the nine countries have introduced various forms of decentralization or community management of schools. As decentralization gains a firmer holding, it is imperative that central governments remain the conductor in educational policy, by developing mechanisms to check disparities between rich and poor communities, and setting national standards for quality. Finally, vision is about change and innovation: it is high time that educational systems in the nine most populous countries exploit the formidable potential of new communication technologies to achieve EFA.

These themes were analyzed in a more specific context during the second panel, devoted to "External and Internal Financial Resources for EFA" and organized by the Government of India. Funding education is and will remain a predominantly domestic responsibility. It is determined by a politics of choice that recognizes education as the highest yielding investment for development. It is a choice to make education a national priority by increasing its share as a percentage of the



state budget and GNP. It is a tough policy choice to reallocate resources from other sectors of the economy. While there was strong consensus among participants on the need to increase investments in basic education, the panel also stressed the importance of making better use of existing resources: numerous studies show that wastage, chiefly measured by dropout rates, is a feature of educational systems in many countries.

In addressing this issue, overriding attention must be devoted to ensuring and improving the quality of teachers, the school and the curriculum. In discussing the mobilization of additional domestic resources, participants underlined the imperative of building partnerships with industry, the media and NGOs in order for education to become an all-encompassing nationwide cause. In the field of external assistance, the importance of capacity building and sustaining the recent shifts in favour of basic education were highlighted. Several participants urged that measures be adopted for structural adjustment policies not to cut into the educational sector, hence acting as a brake on long-term growth.

The education and empowerment of girls and women, viewed as the single most important element for achieving EFA, was the theme of the third panel, organized by UNFPA. Educating girls and women is not only a matter of human dignity, but also the most effective channel for reducing fertility rates, improving health and increasing economic productivity. Over the last decade, the nine Summit countries have implemented policies to increase the enrolment of girls. The panel urged that these efforts be reinforced by ensuring that educational policies be gender-sensitive at all costs. This means making

curricula relevant to the lives of girls, bringing schools closer to them in some areas, allowing for flexible timetables, training teachers to be more responsive to girls' needs, and encouraging access to traditionally male fields of employment, such as science and technology. But women must also participate in this genesis of change. Their empowerment through education is a slow process of gaining awareness.

But in this process, it is just as vital for society to change its attitude towards women and overcome deep-rooted social and cultural traditions that prevent the shaping of a more equitable relationship between the sexes. Communication campaigns can play a powerful role in changing the image of women and promoting their advancement in economic, social and political spheres. Such a change starts at birth by providing the same physical and emotional care to sons as to daughters, and by ensuring their equal access to education. It continues throughout the educational system, crucial years when attitudes and values are shaped. It is why panelists highlighted the value of courses that teach youth, both boys and girls, to adopt responsible attitudes toward one another, toward sexuality, the family and the environment.

Finally, education for all cannot be discussed in a cultural, social, scientific or political vacuum. Because education is about shaping lives, it is imperative to reflect upon the nature of tomorrow's society. A united vision and voice was the most striking feature to arise out of a fourth panel, "Education and Society," organized by UNESCO. In a world characterized by interdependency and globality, paving the way for a culture of peace must be embraced as the foremost mission of



education. Peace-building, rather than peace-keeping, must be fostered by imparting values based on non-violence, social justice and equity. Striking a balance between local cultures, national priorities and global imperatives, namely a society increasingly based on individual responsibility and technological proficiency, calls for a long-term commitment to education as the most vital factor in the development equation.

All the nine Summit countries have success stories to build upon in achieving EFA. One is India's District Primary Education Programme, that is discussed in this volume. Launched in 1993, it is a concrete application of an education for all strategy, which touches upon the themes of the four panels and illustrates the checks, balances and provisions

required to make a programme successful and sustainable.

It is hoped that this companion volume to the Education for All Summit Report will offer valuable insights to policy-makers and educationalists worldwide. A genuine spirit of consensus emerged from the presentations and discussions which this volume is based upon, reflecting a strongly-felt awareness among the world's nine most populous nations that a large part of tomorrow's world rested in their hands. This concern was echoed in a concluding remark by UNESCO's Director-General: "It has been said that what matters is the world we leave to our children. I disagree. I think that what matters is the children we leave to our world."

# Panel 1

## “Mobilization, People’s Participapation and Decentralization for EFA”

(UNICEF)

- **A Time of Opportunity and Challenge**
- **A New Commitment to Human Development**
- **Democratizing Governanæe for Greater Participation**
- **Key Elements of a Strategy to Expand Social Mobilization**
- **Top-Level Commitment to Participation**
- **Motivating Communities and Families**
- **Making Learning More Relevant**
- **Cooperation with NGOs, the Private Sector and the Media**
- **The Record on Decentralization**
- **Making EFA Manageable: A Four-Point Agenda**
- **Conclusion: The Imperative of National Commitment**



***Chairperson: H.E. Mr. Liu Bin,  
Vice-Chairman, State Education Commission,  
(People's Republic of China)***

**The Panelists:**

James P. Grant. Executive Director of UNICEF since 1980. Mr. Grant started his career in international cooperation when he served UN Relief Operation in China after World War II. He later served in U.S. Aid in various capacities and as the President of the Overseas Development Council in Washington D.C.

Dr. Mabbub ul Haq. An internationally known economist and currently senior adviser to the UNDP administration. He was previously finance and planning minister in Pakistan, chief economist of Pakistan's Planning Commission and a director at the World Bank.

Fay Chung. Until recently Minister of Employment, Youth and Cooperatives in Zimbabwe and earlier the country's Minister of Education, she is currently the chief of UNICEF's Education Cluster in New York. She has served as a professor of education at the University of Zambia and participated in Zimbabwe's liberation movement.

Dr. Soedijarto. Director-General of Indonesia's out-of-school education, youth and sports. He heads a large non-formal education programme which has made a significant contribution to EFA in Indonesia. He was formerly director of the national curriculum centre and vice-rector of the National Teacher Training Institute of Jakarta.

*Since 1990, the international community has displayed an unprecedented degree of activism in support of human development, signalling the emergence of a new ethic for children and a focus on people as the key means of economic betterment.*

### A Time of Opportunity and Challenge

"We are, in the educational field, at an unusual period of opportunity and challenge," said UNICEF's Executive Director James P. Grant at the opening of the panel on "Mobilization, People's Participation, and Decentralization for EFA."

"I don't think we have had an equivalent opportunity for education in the past 50 years." The increasing worldwide awareness that education lies at the heart of development is an invitation to action. But the sheer scale of achieving education for all entails an entirely different way of conceiving and managing learning, away from a top-heavy, centralized model toward a more decentralized, democratic one in which all sectors of society are involved. This trend is underway in the nine most populous countries. Today, the challenge is to broaden and deepen people's participation, heighten the mobilization of the whole society and bring authority and decision-making in support of educational goals closer to communities and families in each country.

Figures alone call for an unrelenting and concerted action: according to statistics cited by Dr Mahbub ul Haq, in the field of primary education, there will be a 25% increase in net enrolment in the next seven years - equivalent to 75 million

children - principally in Bangladesh, China, India, Nigeria and Pakistan. More specifically, if the gender gap is to be closed, this additional enrolment will have to embrace 55 million girls and 20 million boys. The task of achieving universalized primary education will require 1.6 million additional teachers and \$4 billion a year of additional investment in primary education or non-formal alternatives.

### A New Commitment to Human Development

Through several landmark events since the turn of the decade, commitment has been made at the highest level to improve the living conditions and future of millions: the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990 launched a worldwide initiative to meet basic learning needs. Countries pledged to meet the goal of education for all by the year 2000 and the achievement of a functional and sustainable level of learning and life skills by at least 80 per cent of their youth. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, that made free and compulsory primary education an obligation of the state and the right of all children, came into effect in September 1990. Since then, over 150 countries have ratified the Convention, beating the record of any other human rights treaty. The World Summit for Children, the first truly global summit ever held, established a range of social development goals, including universal access to primary education and completion of the primary cycle by at least 80 per cent of those enrolled. Upon receiving their joint Nobel Peace Prize in November 1993, ANC leader Nelson Mandela and President Frederick de Klerk of South Africa pledged to make these goals national priorities.

Beyond the issue of human dignity, some common strands tie these various global meetings together. Firstly, the recognition that people are the end purpose and the principal means of development. "A one hundred year programme must be based on the development of education," says a Chinese proverb, reflecting education's strategic position in a country's progress. Research has demonstrated that higher per capita income levels go hand in hand with higher literacy levels. Similarly, numerous studies conducted around the world underline the linkages between female education, reduced fertility and increased economic productivity, thereby providing a key to slowing down population growth.

*"There's no other field of major human endeavour where the primary thrust is still so closely linked to patterns of one hundred years ago."*

*James P. Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF*

Secondly, participation, in its various dimensions, has become recognized as a basic principle of action, an overall development strategy. In the context of basic education, participation implies engaging people, including parents, children, teachers, political authorities and business leaders, widely and actively in defining learning needs, running the school and enhancing resources for education. Such a participatory culture can only grow and be sustained in an environment which genuinely recognizes its value. It requires certain structures, and cannot be applied in the sphere of education alone. Thirdly, there is a realization that beyond high-level political commitment, the goals set at these various summits cannot be achieved without a strong degree of social mobilization, meaning people's participation through organized

and systematic actions. In the context of basic education, mobilization refers to the active involvement of all relevant sectors of society in promoting and supporting education. As the UNICEF background paper underlines, the martial overtone of the term is not accidental. It reflects a sense of urgency about overcoming a common problem or achieving a common purpose through expression of a society's collective commitment, formulation of strategies to achieve results, and engagement of large numbers of people in coordinated and goal-oriented group actions. Social mobilization for education has often taken the form of one-shot, short-term campaigns, around a particular action or goal. While it has been given greater attention in literacy, adult education and the non-formal education spheres, less common are social mobilization

efforts in the context of the regular school system and the basic learning needs of children. This is beginning to change, a process highlighted in the ways countries prepared their EFA national action plans, through consulting a broad spectrum of political and educational interests, including sectors traditionally marginalized from the educational discussion. Fourthly, community participation is perceived as a necessity from a financial point of view, since developing countries cannot finance education adequately without a large measure of support from the community. In China, the giant of the nine countries with a population of 1.2 billion, \$12 billion is allocated annually to educate 180 million students. As a comparison, the United States spends \$440 billion on 40 million children. Last, community participation is vital to ensuring sustainability.



Unless a community, starting with parents, can grasp the short and long-term benefits of the educational cause, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to make the school a true centre for living and learning.

### Democratizing Governance for Greater Participation

In order for people to participate at the local level, structures of governance have to become more flexible and responsive to local needs. In many countries, the trend toward democratization has been accompanied by a gradual decentralization of power from the central government and capital city to regions, districts, towns and villages. Various forms of decentralization - deconcentration, delegation and devolution of authority and functions - have been introduced or are being debated in most developing countries. Although evidence shows that decentralization has often led to the expansion of basic education opportunities, in other cases it has had a negative effect on equity, quality and social cohesion.

Today, this momentum of participation, mobilization and action at global, national and community levels has to be maintained and strengthened. Furthermore, it can be nourished by the success of past endeavours, such as the Green Revolution, in which social mobilization played a decisive role. More recently, the global child immunization campaign, touted as the largest collective peacetime effort in world history, could not have been achieved without engaging large numbers of people, from parents and village leaders to heads of state. Arguably, the task is more difficult in the educational field, since it requires a longer-term and firmer commitment on the part of families, children and

political leaders. But success stories in other fields contain lessons and clues that are potentially valuable to the promotion of EFA, especially universal primary education. Seeking to distill these lessons, the UNICEF presentation distinguishes eight major components of what needs to be done to maximize the impact of social mobilization. To various degrees and according to their needs, the nine high-population-countries have pegged their EFA strategies to these guidelines.

### Key Elements of a Strategy to Expand Social Mobilization

#### *1. A clearly articulated goal and vision.*

For effective mobilization to occur, people need to feel they are working toward a defined goal. The internationally adopted target of access to primary education in a formal or an equivalent programme for all children by the year 2000, with at least 80 per cent of them completing the primary stage, provides an easily and widely understood focus for advocacy, participation, mobilization, programme planning and monitoring. The class of 2000, consisting of all current primary entry-age children, deserves everything their societies can give them to ensure a successful outcome by this date. Providing them with the support they need to stay in school and learn what they need to learn should become the pivot of a nationwide mobilization in each country.

## ***2. High profile and frequent monitoring.***

An education programme of universal scope that aims to reach large numbers within a specific time-table must develop an effective method of monitoring progress. National leaders at the highest level can use the monitoring system as an effective instrument for mobilization and action by personally leading public reviews of progress, deciding on remedial actions and encouraging officials down the line to do the same.

## ***3. Visibility on the national agenda.***

If the whole of society is expected to participate in and mobilize around universal primary education, it must be brought to the centre of national attention. It must be shown how primary education provides benefits across the board, such as better health, labour productivity, greater democratic participation, and slowing of population growth. National leaders have to take the lead in this nationwide dialogue in order to build public awareness and understanding leading to support and involvement of the whole society.

## ***4. Building a national consensus.***

Participation and mobilization on an enduring basis can only be promoted on the foundation of a national consensus on the major goals and priorities, and the main strategies for achieving them. Consensus-building is an ongoing process that needs to be nurtured. Consensus on basic goals and strategies must be non-partisan enough to survive change of government and personalities in high places.

## ***5. Identifying, emulating and creating success stories.***

It is essential to identify promising examples of success — creative and innovative combinations of action that have injected fresh blood into systems and accelerated progress. All of the nine countries have examples of success which need to be studied and adapted for wider application.

## ***6. Decentralization based on shared responsibilities.***

Decentralization of responsibility and functions must be introduced and implemented in such a way that it is not seen as an excuse for abdicating the state's responsibility for basic education or as a means of shifting the burden from the central authorities to the local level. Decentralization works when it is a means of redistributing functions and authority among different levels of government and of the civil society in order to make systems more efficient and democratic, allowing people to participate and contribute. It must also hold them accountable: one of the major reasons for the success of the immunization campaign lay in the number of people held responsible in the effort. In India for example, every district chief, every governor was held accountable for achieving a goal. Chief ministers in states falling short of targets received personal letters from the late prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

## ***7. Building on existing institutions and practices.***

The starting point for promoting popular participation, social mobilization and decentralization have to be the existing institutions, practices and norms in each

society. Local government in one form or another has always existed. There are traditional structures for community efforts, as well as religious, cultural, labour, professional and other types of organizations and collective entities. It is important to identify the potential and shortcomings of these institutions and practices, build on their strengths and devise ways of overcoming their weaknesses.

### *3. Effective use of modern communication.*

"This is the most revolutionary tool that we have. The use of radio, television, videocassettes and tapes provides ways of motivating and energizing populations that never existed thirty years ago," says UNICEF's Executive Director, James P. Grant. Yet, the potential of the communication media for expanding people's access to educational opportunities and for mobilizing people's support for and involvement in education is far from being fully exploited.

### Top-level Commitment to Participation

Over the past decades, educational systems have moved in the direction of greater adherence to participatory norms, more effective social mobilization and increased decentralization of authority and responsibility, but much still needs to be done to bridge the gap between theory and practice. These interrelated and overlapping concepts are guiding forces behind individual countries' Education for All action plans. In many cases, they have been enshrined constitutionally. In

Indonesia, the 1989 Education Law states that education is the responsibility of the state, the community, and the family. In China, the 1985 "Decision on Reform of China's Educational Structure" granted decision-making powers for administration of primary education to local authorities. The 1992 Amendments to the Indian Constitution opened a new chapter in the process of democratic decentralization in India by making it mandatory for all States and Union Territories to establish regular democratically elected bodies for local self-government. "It is a very major step in strengthening our concept of decentralization and giving power and authority to the village bodies," said Ram

*"Modern communication is the most revolutionary tool that we have. The use of radio, television, videocassettes and tapes provides ways of motivating and energizing populations that never existed thirty years ago."*

*James P. Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF*

Niwas Mirdha, an Indian member of parliament. There is provision for a state finance commission to decide upon resource allocation from the state to the village level.

Often, these measures give official sanction to long-held traditions. Community participation in Indonesian education can be traced back to national movements, such as the Taman Siswa (The Garden of Students) in the early 1920s that was based on the conviction that Indonesia could not achieve independence and prosperity unless its people were educated. Indonesia also harbours a core of traditional values, such as arriving at a consensus and assisting the needs of fellow community members which have been influential in shaping national identity. In India, the system of local

*"We should clearly say that it is not for jobs that we are giving education, but for providing you better tools for bettering your lives and your situation."*

*R.N. Mirdha, Member of Parliament, India*

government known as Panchayati Raj has functioned in varying forms for centuries. The Latin American movement of Educación Popular has a historic and well-entrenched stronghold in Brazil, especially rooted in the NGO sector. In China, community-run schools as well as community-paid teachers have played a crucial role in the overall expansion of basic education: about 40 per cent of the teachers in primary schools are paid by the community.

Many educational programmes in the nine most populous countries emphasise community participation: in Nigeria, where the adult literacy rate is just over 50 per cent, a National Mass Literacy Campaign was launched by the government in 1992, under the slogan "Each One Teach One or Fund the Teaching of One." The strategy is aimed at encouraging every literate person in the country to be part of the effort to educate the illiterate population. In China, community support and participation in improving classrooms have contributed significantly to increased floor space per pupil in primary schools. In India, the National Literacy Mission has worked best where there has been a high degree of social participation, involving the forging of a broad-based alliance between the district administration, NGOs and social activists.

As several delegations underlined however, participation does not spring up automatically. How can rural, illiterate parents for instance, be expected to participate? Over and above the important issue of inadequate remuner-

ation, why should teachers embrace new teaching methods and increased community participation? For people to feel the impetus to participate, a participatory culture has to be nurtured. It has to overcome obstacles like rigid legal systems, bureaucratic institutions and attitudes, entrenched political interests, and inequities in the distribution of wealth and power. "There has to be a mobilizing force," said Malini Bhattachavya, a member of Parliament from West Bengal, emphasizing the importance of partnerships. "In our case, we have found that the literacy programme has been most successful in places where local administration, local parties, political actors at the grassroots level and NGOs have acted as a mobilizing agency."

### Motivating Communities and Families

The full benefits of participation cannot be reaped without forming partnerships at the local, state and national levels. Who are the key actors in spreading and sustaining quality education? Firstly, the parents, and mothers in particular. Women are the first and most important promoters of children's education. Their expectations and attitudes towards their children's schooling are an important factor in learning achievement. Research in several countries shows that schools which attain a high level of quality generally also enjoy a strong degree of parental support. Lending this support demands a long-term commitment that can range from five years to more than a decade. Parents must feel that there

are clear economic and social benefits in schooling their children, especially their girls. "Such benefits are possible if the education is high quality, based on modern science and technology, and linked to the national development programme," said Fay Chung, chief of UNICEF's Education Cluster. It takes enlightened leadership to convince families — especially ones with working children — of the value of education. In Bangladesh, mothers' groups have been organized locally in different parts of the country. In many rural areas, "Mothers' Rallies" have been successfully organized resulting in substantial improvements in school enrolment, attendance and retention.

Such efforts are indispensable to foster motivation at the community level and raise awareness toward the importance of basic education. "We all presume that there is a great desire and rush for joining school and the educational system. It is not so," said Ram Niwas Mirdha. "You have to motivate parents that education will bring their family, their children, their boys, their girls the benefits that they desire." In his intervention, Mr. Mirdha noted that in many villages, even people who had been to school feel disillusioned with education, partly because it had not led to regular paid jobs. Two observations stem from this: firstly, the real purpose of education needs to be better defined: "We should clearly say that it is not for jobs that we are giving education, but for providing you better tools for improving your lives and your situation," said Mirdha. "If you are a carpenter, you will be a better carpenter. If you are an agriculturist, you will be a better agriculturist with education." Secondly, the relevance of the curriculum to the lives of village boys and girls deserves close attention.

## Making Learning (v)lore Relevant

The inherently conservative nature of the classroom was underlined by panelists and speakers from the floor, bringing the critical question of quality to the forefront of discussion. The image of the classroom is still closely linked to the school house, the teacher, chalk, blackboard and notebook. "There's no other field of major human endeavour where the primary thrust is still so closely linked to patterns of one hundred years ago," said UNICEF's Executive Director. This traditionalism permeates the content and methodology of the school curriculum. More often than not, parents remain outsiders to the school system, students are passive listeners in the classroom and teachers are passive executors of predetermined curricula. "Such schools are unable to cope with changes in the modern world, or to adapt learning to the cultural and social realities faced by their pupils and parents," said Fay Chung. "The school of today must overcome these developmental problems both in terms of relevance to the community and in terms of establishing a curriculum which is both universal and yet specifically tailor-made for a particular culture and situation."

In this endeavour, participation also plays a key role. "High quality and relevance cannot be achieved without the marriage of the highest level academic and professional knowledge and skills with the interests, preoccupations and commitment of the ordinary community," Ms Chung explained. This requires striking a balance between the national and local levels, and distinguishing in what areas the various partners in education can most usefully participate and contribute. Developing the curriculum should not only involve the best available specialists,



but also the supervisors, teachers and trainers, with inputs from industry, religious interests, and parents where appropriate. Such was the format adopted in Egypt in February 1993: a conference for developing primary education curricula brought together representatives from different parties, intellectuals and cultural leaders, business representatives, parents, teachers, religious leaders, ministry personnel and international experts. The conference represented an attempt to provide a channel for public input and furnished an example of public participation in the decision-making and priority-setting process.

*"There is no need to see only one school type as the answer. It is possible to have a dozen school types. It is possible to marry the formal and the informal approaches. It is essential to have different types of schools for different clienteles."*  
**Fay Chung, Education Cluster, UNICEF**

In this style of endeavour, the end goal is to unite the universal to the specific in both national and local terms, so that national development is not divorced from specific histories and cultures. Again, the imperative of a united vision based on relevance and quality is reiterated. Without the required technical capacity and social sensitivity, locally designed curricula and textbooks may be even more rigid and prescriptive than those produced centrally. They may also be weak pedagogically and lack creativity. The concept of a core curriculum with options that can be changed by communities is a useful one. "There is no need to see only one school type as the answer," affirmed Ms Chung. "It is possible to have a dozen school types. It is possible to marry the formal and the informal approaches. It is essential to have different types of schools for different clienteles."

Some of the most successful educational programmes are ones that are linked to poverty alleviation schemes, and include health services and improved nutrition. In China, for example, local authorities in rural areas have taken an integrated approach toward educational development, combining it with local development plans, namely through technical and vocational training. As a result, "the cultural and technical quality of the rural workforce has risen considerably, agricultural production has been boosted and the rural inhabitant's living standards have been improved," said Mr Liu-Bin, vice-chairman of the Chinese State Education

Commission. "Facts have proven that this system is conducive to combining educational development with the peasant's wish to boost agricultural production."

Some 600,000 school factories and enterprises have also been created, adding income to public resources. In Brazil, municipalities have been behind successful experiences to provide access to basic education in disadvantaged areas of the northeast. In Jaguaré-Espirito Santo, rural schools were created to prevent migration to urban centers, with the option of part-time attendance allowing children to work during the harvest season. In far-flung corners of the country, special emphasis has been given to distance teaching and the training of teachers.

It follows that the involvement of the community in implementing the curriculum and running the schools is equally important. Here, the potential contribution of every sector needs to be scrutinized. "The school and community must reinforce one another."



said Ms Chung. "The school must be seen as an important and valuable asset belonging to the community." Participation from the local community can provide valuable extra resources. It can take the form of helping construct new buildings, renovating old ones, and raising funds for extra teaching materials. Local communities should have a say in the appointment of teachers and on timetables. Although the training and monitoring of teachers is best done at the national level, the resources of paraprofessionals, whom Ms Chung compares to "barefoot doctors", cannot be underestimated. When the government of Zimbabwe was involved in setting up schools in camps for Mozambican refugees, teachers were recruited from the camp. Many had no more than a grade four education at best. Ten years later, these people have become fully trained teachers with nine years of education. Dr. Mahbub ul Haq underlined the necessity for audacious teacher recruiting measures to fill the need for 1.6 million additional teachers in the next seven years. He suggested that some countries consider, for example, drafting university students to work as primary school teachers for a part of their course.

### Co-operation with NGOs, the Private Sector and the Media

Governments also have a valuable partner in NGOs. In the field of education, many have developed innovative programmes adapted to local needs that have reached and empowered the poorest groups. Their links with local networks provide them with unique sources of information and authority. Bangladesh is a pioneer in the NGO sector. Using the simplest buildings and training village women as teachers, BRAC and other voluntary agencies can provide primary

schooling at about one-third the cost of formal schooling through government. In Pakistan, the government's Social Action Programme emphasizes the role of NGOs, although comprehensive research still needs to be undertaken in order to assess the various initiatives and lessons learned from NGO experiences. Many operate schools in homes, improvised premises and self-constructed schools, using para-professional teachers, but such initiatives are not always matched by innovative or non-traditional teaching methods. Again, this fact underlines the need for clearly defined national standards that are a yardstick for measuring quality.

Secondly, the role of the private sector and the mass media still remains underexploited. "The spread of education should be an opportunity for industrialization," said Ms Chung. Besides the manufacturing of technical equipment, school construction and furniture, the expansion of education also produces demand for textbooks: "I have always seen the production of textbooks at the national level as equivalent to the Green Revolution," said Ms Chung. "Just as we reach to have food for all produced locally, so we have to have textbooks for all produced locally." Several countries have taken measures to involve the private sector in the field of basic education. In Brazil, the Ministry of Education is promoting a series of meetings with sectors not traditionally involved in education, such as labour and business. In Nigeria, every registered company that employs more than 500 people must contribute two per cent of its profits to an Education Fund, managed by a Board of Trustees. The funds for primary education are earmarked for the implementation of the Nine-Year Compulsory Education Programme.

In several of the nine most populous countries, television and radio are starting to play an increasingly active role in disseminating the message of Education for All. The recent expansion of satellite broadcasting provides an opportunity as well as a challenge to policymakers. But to maximize the usefulness and impact of the media, systematic planning is vital. Experience has shown that specific groups must be carefully targeted, be they teachers, bureaucrats, politicians, or the public at large, with well designed materials on the issues that affect them directly. In India, a media strategy developed with the assistance of a professional advertising agency in 1991-1992 led to an intensive media "blitz" of spots and short films through radio, television and government mobile publicity units in support of the Total Literacy Campaigns. An evaluation of the campaign found that the exposure had an important effect in creating greater awareness about the literacy drives, the need for education, and more generally, helped to place literacy higher on the political and social agenda. In Bangladesh, where no more than 2 to 3 per cent of households have television sets, mass media is most valuable in gaining support of the bureaucracy and allied organizations who have access. Nonetheless, there are several initiatives to raise awareness through the media: an animation film, "Meena", was produced with the intent to sensitize people toward gender discrimination in education. In Egypt, the media have been used extensively to inform the public about policies, explain strategies and mobilize family and student support in favour of various initiatives.

## The Record on Decentralization

Placing responsibility into the hands of communities entails increased financial autonomy at the local level. Greater success in universalization of primary education and expansion of basic education opportunities in the nine high-population countries correlates with a higher degree of effective decentralization in planning, management and control of resources in educational programmes. But although many countries have taken steps to delegate responsibility to local government, the trend toward decentralization is still in its infancy. In its 1993 Human Development Report, the UNDP calculated the expenditure-decentralization ratio, referring to the percentage of total government expenditure controlled by local government. In Brazil, it turned out to be seven per cent and in Pakistan only 4 per cent. Until the introduction of Compulsory Primary Education in Bangladesh in 1990, government primary schools, that constitute nearly nine-tenths of the system, were largely managed independently from the communities. Although the situation has improved with the setting up of school managing committees and parent-teacher associations, the authority and resources delegated to them are still meagre.

Without resources, real authority and proper training of professionals, local systems of self-government will have little chance of fulfilling their basic functions. Striking a balance between centralization of general educational policies and the decentralization of school functioning remains an ongoing challenge in all nine countries.

Shortage of local resources aside, decentralization can exacerbate regional regional disparities. "Richer communities will provide

richer and better-equipped schools," said Ms Chung. "Poorer communities will be locked in lower technology, low skills and low levels of teaching. This is a very serious issue that needs to be addressed. Ways must be found to counteract imbalances." In China, despite a substantial increase in the total budgetary allocations and expenditure on primary education, the real expenditure increase during the last decade has primarily benefitted the urban and better-off rural areas. To reverse this situation, the State Education Commission has been organizing the urban areas and economically developed provinces to assist underdeveloped areas in improving primary education. Additional funds have also been allocated toward the construction of schools and the purchasing of teaching aids in poor areas. In Egypt, the Community Schools Project targets areas in hamlets of poor rural villages. People's participation and management of their own schools is a key element of the proposal. The curriculum content focuses on the development needs of the area and includes health, family life, local history and agriculture. Teaching methods emphasize creativity, problem-solving and learning for service. The Ministry of Education-UNICEF project, inaugurated in 1992, aims at becoming a non-formal multigrade primary education model with potential for replication and scaling-up.

Despite unanimous consensus on the principle of decentralization, the floor raised other concerns regarding its practice.

Malini Bhattachavya for instance, warned that decentralization should not become a pretext for abusive privatization and profit-making, phenomena that could lead to increased inequity in access and participation.

### Making EFA Manageable: A Four-Point Agenda

*In reaction to the scale of the Education for All task, Dr Mahbub ul Haq proposed a four-point agenda to participants:*

1. Each country must recognize that Education for All is a national priority in which everyone has to be involved. All non-formal means, including the mass media, must be used and more steps taken to delegate responsibility to local government. The experience of NGOs must be tapped, and parents and children involved in choosing their education.

*"Let us not forget that the cost of each jet fighter equals one million children in primary school. If only the leaders of the nine summit countries would commit themselves today that in the next seven years, they will buy only 75 fewer jets, the targets of basic education for all would be met. How much more powerful would that one sentence of political commitment be compared to millions of words that flow from such conferences, year in, year out."*

*Dr. Mahbub ul Haq, Senior Adviser, UNDP*

2. The key focus of future efforts must be on education for girls. Removing the existing gender disparities in education will mean that over the next seven years, for every additional boy, three additional girls will have to be enrolled, said Dr ul Haq. This is not just a

question of recruiting more teachers or devoting more resources. It means a transformation of social attitudes. The cost of removing gender disparity is very small. According to one study quoted by Dr. ul Haq, raising the female primary enrolment rate to equal that of boys in low-income countries will cost around \$938 million. This is 0.1 per cent of their combined GDP and less than 4 per cent of their defence expenditure. "History could not have offered a better bargain," affirmed Dr ul Haq.

3. Redirecting existing resources will provide the additional \$4 billion a year required to achieve EFA. The first and most obvious source in the new political atmosphere following the end of the Cold War is a reduction in military expenditure. If all nine Summit countries agree to freeze their military expenditure and subsequently reduce it by one per cent per year for seven years, this would cumulatively provide about \$18 billion which could be directed to meeting basic learning needs. "Let us not forget that the cost of each jet fighter equals one million children in primary school," said Dr. ul Haq. "If only the leaders of the nine Summit countries would commit themselves today that in the next seven years, they will buy only 75 fewer jets, the targets of basic education for all would be met. How much more powerful would that one sentence of political commitment be compared to millions of words that flow from such conferences, year in, year out."

The second main source of funds for primary education is a redirection of Overseas Development Assistance. At present, the education sector receives about one-tenth of ODA but of this, only about seven per cent is earmarked for primary education. If half of existing educational assistance were ear-

marked for primary education, this would release an additional \$10 billion in aid for primary education over the next seven years.

1. The exchange of experience should be encouraged. Any policy maker should be able to pick up a phone, or access a computer database, to collect all the relevant experience on the problem which she or he is facing. The UNESCO secretariat can act as a valuable facilitator in this regard.

*In concluding, Dr ul Haq called for a "grand education compact" based on the above strategies, affirming that the UNDP, under its new flagship of "sustainable human development," was aware that "it will have to do more -much more- to help meet basic learning needs."*

### Conclusion: The Imperative of Top-Level Commitment

The common strand running through this agenda is the central necessity for a firm commitment to basic education at the highest level. "The story of many developing countries is that education is felt by the leaders, not by the people in the community," said Dr Soedijarto of Indonesia, adding that widespread illiteracy remains an obstacle toward fuller participation. Egypt has defined basic education as a matter of national security, implying that it is a national obligation, shared by all sectors and citizens in the country. Keeping the commitment toward education for all high on the national agenda requires ongoing advocacy efforts as sectors compete for scarce resources. "The education cause should be put at a strategic position in national development," said Mr Liu Bin. "We have to raise the awareness of leaders at different levels toward education. A lot of

people look at interests in front of them instead of long-term interests." National leaders and the administrative and legislative organs of central governments must continue to define the overall objectives and priorities for educational development. Moreover, the exact location of responsibilities between different levels of government can vary from country to country. Each situation must be analyzed individually and suitable systems accordingly devised.

Are countries ready to throw themselves wholeheartedly behind EFA, like they did for the immunization campaign? It is clear that educational systems tend to be conservative forces that take a long time to change. "To the extent that we fall short, it means that the population explosion will continue for that much longer, that children will die at higher rates, that in the absence of basic education, farmers will not be as good farmers," said UNICEF's Executive Director. "We must take advantage of the new willingness of leaders to support these issues. Since education is the

single most important part of the development complex, I would urge that we leave no stone unturned in building a movement."

Education provides a platform for unity and an investment in the future. Over the past decade, the nine most populous countries have taken initiatives to lift education out of a centralized straightjacket and make it the concern and the responsibility of a broader number. The most successful programmes have all involved a high degree of social mobilization. This momentum cannot continue without support at the highest levels, increased resources and the forging of long-term partnerships between different sectors of society. "We live in an age where we have seen Sarajevo and Somalia. We should see education in the interest of our children as the common factor that joins together human beings," said Ms Chung. "Despite our differences, I think we have to see education as a humanizing influence leading on the one hand to greater economic productivity and on the other to greater humanitarian values."

# Panel 2

## **"External and Internal Financial Resources for EFA"**

**(Government of India)**

- **National Educational Expenditures: The Current Scenario**
- **The Financial Implications of EFA**
- **Investment in EFA and Economic Growth: A Positive Relationship**
- **Reviewing Current Methods of Educational Financing**
- **Strengthening Management Systems**
- **Mobilizing Resources for Education**
- **Building Partnerships**
- **External Assistance: The Role of Donors**
- **New Directions in Funding**
- **Resource Mobilization Schema for Basic Education**
- **Conclusion: EFA - A Crucial Investment**





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***Chairperson : Shri Arjun Singh,  
Minister of Human Resource Development  
(India)***

**The Panelists:**

**Professor Hussein Kamel Bahaa El-Din, Minister of Education, Egypt. Professor Kamel has played an instrumental role in stepping up resources for education in Egypt by prevailing upon his government to consider education as an integral component of national security.**

**Dr Arjun Sengupta, a distinguished economist and Member Secretary of the Planning Commission of India.**

**Wadi D. Haddad, Senior Adviser for Human Development, World Bank, Office of the Vice President, Africa Region. Mr. Haddad was Chief Co-ordinator of the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990.**

*Although developing countries and donor agencies no longer question the long-term economic and social benefits of financing primary education, a large gap prevails between this recognition and current levels of funding.*

Under-investment in elementary education has been noted as one of the most important factors responsible for the failure of its universalization in many countries. There continues to be a dire lack of qualified teachers, learning materials and adequate physical infrastructure. Large gender disparities prevail. External public debt of the education sector has been very high in some of the African countries. The stabilization and structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund/World Bank have produced several undesirable effects on primary education in many countries.

### **National Educational Expenditures: The Current Scenario**

Since the Jomtien conference in 1990, only 13 countries have increased their educational budgets, out of the 121 countries for which information was available. In most developing countries, less than four per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) is allocated to education, compared to six per cent in developed countries. Some of the 'poorest' countries however, allocate higher proportions of their national income to education than certain richer ones. The background discussion paper prepared by Jandhyala Tilak points to the example of Egypt. Although the World Bank classifies it as a low income country with a GNP per capita

of \$610, it invested as high as 6.7 per cent of GNP in education in 1990. Very few developing countries invested even a half of the \$324 per student world average. China spent nearly \$13 per student, Bangladesh \$16, while the sum reached \$133 in Brazil. In some of the countries, the real expenditure per student has declined over the years. Relative to the needs of the primary education system and in comparison with other levels of education, expenditure on primary education per student is trivial in many developing countries. The present levels of spending are inadequate to provide meaningful quality education for all. Despite some recent improvements, the amount invested in primary education hardly touches one per cent of GNP in most developing countries, except in a few like Brazil and India. Although the intrasectoral allocation of resources in favour of primary education has improved over time — one third to half of the recurrent budgets on education in the high population countries are being allocated to the primary level — this is still insufficient to reach the goals of Education for All.

In the coming years, persistent high fertility rates in many countries will continue to spawn rapid population growth, taxing the education system and creating more demand. The populations of the developing world are predominantly young and are urbanizing rapidly. While economic growth is forecasted to be significant in a number of the developing countries, it will be much lower in others, making the education sector vulnerable to continued underfunding unless a firm commitment is adopted to work towards the goals of EFA. Faced with these facts, any discussion on financing education for all revolves around three issues: better

utilization of existing resources, the mobilization of additional resources for education, and increased support by multi-lateral and bilateral agencies. "Availability of resources will ultimately determine how all the ideas that are being articulated and the vision that is being expounded are translated into practice," said Shri Arjun Singh, Indian Minister for Human Resource Development. "For in the absence of adequate financial resources, EFA would be long on rhetoric and short on action."

### The Financial Implications of EFA

What are the financial implications of EFA? As a strategy of development, it envisages a holistic approach to education, encompassing the formal and nonformal streams, adult education, and literacy. Most importantly, it prescribes quality education for all. The discussion paper prepared for the panel by Jandyala Tilak puts a set of figures on the table: first the number of pupils in the 5-14 age group to be enrolled in schools by the year 2000 in the world will be around 1255 million. With no improvement in quality or efficiency, the amount of public current budget resources devoted to primary education in the world would need to increase from \$160 billion in 1985 to about \$400 billion by the year 2000, in 1985 prices, at an annual rate of growth of 6.5 per cent in real terms. In the developing countries, the real expenditure should increase by 3.6 times from \$23.4 billion in 1985 to \$83.4 billion by the turn of the century. The share of the developing countries in the world expenditure on EFA will have to increase from 14.6 per cent in 1985 to 20.5 per cent in the year 2000. This is a bare minimum. In the spirit of Jomtien, which puts access and quality on an equal footing, Wadi D. Haddad, Senior

Adviser for Human Resource Development at the World Bank, suggested that unit student costs should be based upon the level of learning achieved upon graduation. This would raise resource requirements for EFA to a much higher level than those estimated by Mr. Tilak. The President of the OPEC Fund stressed that the relevance of the educational system to a country should receive specific consideration. "Education is not like other sectors," he said. "It takes up to age 8 or 12 before one can adequately measure the kind of education that a child has received during primary school years. The measurement of relevance and the value of education should receive more attention so that we don't make mistakes that take a very long time to correct, and in fact, might never be corrected at all because it is not easy to reeducate the educated."

"Meeting the demands of Education for All requires creative thinking, very tough policy decisions and long-term commitments," said Mr Haddad. Economists, sociologists, political scientists, thinkers and planners in development unanimously recognize the high returns gained from investing in primary education. Several studies show that rates of return to primary education are higher both to the individuals and the society at large than the returns to investment in physical capital and those in secondary and higher levels of education. "Many truths once accepted as truths have been given up, but one element has proved to be consistent in its ability to withstand the empirical test," said Dr Arjun Sengupta, an economist and member of the Indian Planning Commission, referring to changes in economic thinking. "Education is a fundamental element in sustaining economic growth in any country."

Highlighting the importance of Education for All, Professor Hussein Kamel Bahaa El-Din, the Egyptian Minister of Education, stated that EFA is not only a critical factor in increasing productivity and advancing development in general, but that it is also crucial for internal and external security, and thereby in the overall global peaceful environment. "EFA is a

bulwark in countries to avoiding internal conflicts. It will also be a factor in international understanding, paving the way towards the mutual understanding

of civilizations." In the end, he noted, "it can solve the issue of fanaticism that is such a problem in today's society."

### Investment in EFA and Economic Growth: A Positive Relationship

The case for financing primary education is no longer solely built around arguments such as education for promotion of human values, more democracy and better citizenry, but also around economic payoffs. This is a major shift in thinking from the early 1960s, when Professor Malcolm Adiseshiah, current director of the Madras Institute of Development Studies, recalls being asked by the executive director of the World Bank to provide a case on why the Bank should lend to education. The analysis of education's effect on income levels is not new: in the 1920s, the Russian economist G. Strumulin demonstrated that investment in primary education yielded the highest economic returns to society. Today, studies done in East Asia show that education has contributed substantially to economic growth. It is recognized that education is a

critical factor in poverty reduction that enhances the participation of the poor in development and strengthens democratic institutions. It also contributes to better environmental protection. Most importantly, the impact of education, and especially of female education, on health, infant mortality, reduction in fertility rates and population

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**Professor Hussein Kamel Bahaa El-Din,**  
Minister of Education, Egypt

growth has been estimated to be positive, high and significant. Education, and more specifically primary education, is associated with a large set of external economies and is a crucial factor for sustainable development.

If the allocation of resources were based on these facts, funding of primary education would be well above current levels. "Choices are not technical. There is a politics to choice," said Mr Haddad. "The allocation of resources is not made on the basis of technical formulae, otherwise resources would automatically go on rates of return, and we know that primary education rates are very high." Funding EFA has several disadvantages: it is characterized by long gestation periods and high current/capital investment ratios. Benefits of education tend to be less tangible than ones from other sectors. The lobby for the human resource sector is not always very strong within Finance Ministries. Furthermore, the discussion paper suggests that the benefits of primary education tend to favour the masses while those of higher education accrue more to the elite, often leading powerful classes to discriminate against the primary level.

## Reviewing Current Methods of Educational Financing

Governments are the major financiers of basic education in developing countries. In most states have an explicit policy of providing free compulsory education to all, which requires 100 per cent financing of primary education by the government. Although raising the share of GNP allocated to education was judged desirable by panelists, equal attention must be paid to how current resources are utilized. In many countries, a sober look at education expenditure reveals a sizeable degree of wastage. "In a period of structural adjustment and economic reform, maximum emphasis has to be put on avoiding wastage," said Dr Sengupta. Drop-out rates and repetition are one measurement of wastage. In Brazil, for example, the repetition rate (national average) in first grade is 53 per cent, reaching 73 per cent for children from poor families. On average, every Brazilian child needs 2.1 years of schooling to be promoted to the next grade. Annual costs of primary school repetition are calculated to reach US \$2,580 million. The education budget is further strained by increasing bills to meet the retirement benefits of teachers. In a country where the government earmarks a reasonable sum to education — the central government allocates at least 18 per cent of the tax revenue to education, and the provincial and regional governments 25 per cent — measures to increase efficiency could have a significant impact on improving quality.

Recognizing and identifying these areas of wastage is a first step towards better utilizing resources. When asked to review educational financing in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, a committee headed by Professor Adishesiah found that wastage in the budget ran as high

as 15 per cent. "I hope that in this Conference we will have the courage to tell ourselves that such wastage of resources in the education budget should be identified and reduced, not in order to reduce the educational resources that are already inadequate, but to redeploy them into more effective uses in primary education," he said. Policymakers should identify and adopt measures that lead to better utilization of teachers, including multigrade teaching in low-population areas, and more efficient use of space. Nigeria for example, has placed emphasis on school inspections to insure that each school respects required standards and that wastage of scant resources is minimal.

## Strengthening Management Systems

Strengthening management systems through decentralization is another aspect of better resource utilization. "In most educational discourses, management is a neglected dimension and the focus of discussions should perhaps shift from what needs to be done to how it is done," said Mr Singh. Decentralization of planning, management and control of resources is often perceived as a means to improve the quality of education and introduce an element of accountability in the school system to the community. It is expected to result in improvements in school enrolment rates, reduction in wastage and increased resources. The Indian constitution has recently been amended for the purpose of decentralization in development, including education. To date, decentralization has a mixed track record. In China, it has led to a 12 per cent increase in resource mobilization as local governments are allowed to levy an education fee. In India, Village Education Committees have played an important role



in the Total Literacy Campaigns. Wherever these committees have been active, the delivery of education services has been qualitatively better, according to the Indian Minister of Human Resource Development. In Indonesia, the role of local governments has been strengthened in order to cope with the expansion of compulsory education from six to nine years in 1994. Decentralization, however, has to be treated with caution. In many countries, a piece-meal approach was adopted, which did not pay high dividends. The Brazilian Minister of Education pointed out that decentralization often fails to reach the levels it should, and that schools have little autonomy or freedom in planning. In his discussion paper, Mr Tilak cites several studies highlighting the potentially negative consequences of decentralization. In Mexico, the relative contribution of provincial governments and the private sector declined after decentralization. In sub-Saharan Africa, schools built by the local communities were generally found to be inferior in quality to government-built schools. "We have to be very careful that decentralization is not a panacea", said Mr Haddad. Nor can it be synonymous with an abdication of the responsibilities by the national government in education. "Decentralization will make every problem worse if the central government does not simultaneously expand and strengthen its role in at least three areas", said Mr Haddad. "Monitoring of global taxation and expenditure, equalizing distribution of resources across and within regions, and prospecting the education interests of the under-served populations."

## Mobilizing Resources for Education

The critical issue of mobilizing additional resources for education is two-pronged. Firstly, how much of the national cake should be allocated to education? After all, as the Nigerian delegation put it, "all competing sectors know how to argue forcefully for a greater share." EFA cannot be achieved without political commitment at the highest level. "In the ultimate analysis, it is the governments themselves who have to mobilize adequate financial resources for catering to the basic learning needs of their citizens," said Shri Arjun Singh, Indian Minister for Human Resource Development. Recognizing that there are exceptional situations in which internal resources are not sufficient to meet

"For mobilizing higher resources for education, governments have to look beyond conventional budgeting; they can and should imaginatively draw upon community resources."

**Shri Arjun Singh,**  
Minister of Human Resource Development, India

these needs, he estimated that "in the majority of countries, higher allocation of resources for education, particularly basic education, has to be provided for by restructuring budgets."

If decision-makers decide to reallocate existing resources, they will be faced with three "very difficult policy choices" according to Mr Haddad. "The first is how much should be invested in education compared to other sectors. The second is what kind of balance to strike and trade-offs to make between competing demands among different levels and types of education, and third, how to balance expansion and quality." While

**"Many truths once accepted as truths have been given up, but one element has proved to be consistent in its ability to withstand the empirical test: education is a fundamental element in sustaining economic growth in any country."**

**Dr Arjun Sengupta,**

**Member Secretary of the Planning Commission, India**

wholeheartedly endorsing Dr Mahbub ul Haq's proposal in a previous panel to divert funds from the military to human development. Mr Haddad also judged that there was room for reallocation of resources from inefficient areas in the public sector, such as highly subsidized parastatals.

Within the education sector, Dr Sengupta argued that a distinction must be made between higher and primary education. Even in the case of higher education, public intervention becomes necessary essentially to correct market imperfections. One can however think of alternative sources of financing for higher education, such as loan scholarship programmes. Indonesia has introduced cost recovery measures from better-off students even though they are associated with market failures. In Nigeria, about 22 per cent of total spending on basic education is generated by an educational levy on all taxable adults. While underlining the importance of all levels of education to a country's development, Mr Haddad noted that the scope for reallocating resources from post-basic to basic education should be examined, as well as within basic education toward inputs that lead to enhancement in the levels of learning, school effectiveness and teacher quality. Teachers' salaries form the bulk of recurrent budgets, and virtually little is available for investment in items such as textbooks, chalk, maps and other classroom materials that have been found to yield the

highest returns. Insignificant proportions of the budgets are being allocated to items that lead to capital formation, like buildings and furniture. In China, less than two per cent of the total expenditure on primary education goes for capital items like buildings. In Mexico and Bangladesh, as much as 95 per cent of the current expenditure on primary schools was devoted to teachers' salaries alone. The situation is beginning to improve in some countries: in Pakistan, the current expenditure constitutes 88 per cent of the education budget.

### **Building Partnerships**

As the first panel underlined, mobilizing additional domestic resources for education goes hand-in-hand with increasing community participation in support of education. "For mobilizing higher resources for education, governments have to look beyond conventional budgeting; they can and should imaginatively draw upon community resources," said Shri Arjun Singh, citing the example of the Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) in India for which ten million volunteers have been mobilized. "If one quantifies this voluntary effort in financial terms," said the minister, "the contribution of volunteers is at the bare minimum about Rs. 6,800 million or about one third of the governmental allocation." State-community partnerships have flourished in all of the nine countries in recent years, especially in

support of innovative programmes. Bangladesh plans to open some 9,000 additional registered non-governmental schools, most of them run by religious institutions. Pakistan has revived the mosque school, which now provides secular as well as religious instruction, and instituted a system of over 500 home schools run by NGOs. In China, where per student costs have more than doubled since 1985, resources collected from non-governmental sources, including fees and school factories, rose to 38 per cent of the educational budget in 1992, up from 21 per cent in 1991. This, however, has been matched by a strong and sustained political commitment at the central level to the development of education: by 1995, the share of education in China's state budget is slated to rise from 12 to 15 per cent.

Sources of non-governmental finances can flow from voluntary contributions of the villagers and organizations such as parent-teacher associations. In Nigeria and Brazil, companies pay an education tax. Even though community contributions are often not sizeable in quantitative terms, they are important to raising awareness toward EFA. "Our experience is that in rural areas, there is a great desire to contribute," noted R.N. Mirdha, a member of UNESCO's Executive Board. He noted that in spite of financial constraints, communities have often been successful in raising funds, such as for the construction of buildings. Mr Vinod Raina, a member of Eklavia, an Indian NGO, observed that local level participation could have a beneficial influence on the process of education: if the school reflects local needs

and cultures, it has more chances of maintaining the interest of children, parents and the community at large. One of the most positive aspects of the national literacy mission programme has been the demand for primary education in districts where literacy campaigns were successful. In Indonesia, the community also plays an important role in out-of-school education programmes linked to income-generating schemes.

With their proximity to the grass roots level, NGOs are considered valuable partners in expanding access to education and mobilizing resources. "NGOs can assume greater responsibility for resource mobilization and making people feel that primary education is

"NGOs can assume greater responsibility for resource mobilization and making people feel that primary education is a felt need and not just something thrust on them by government policy."

**R.N. Mirdha,**  
Member of Parliament, India

a felt need and not just something thrust on them by government policy," said R.N. Mirdha. "If this happens, they can contribute to reducing dropouts and improving the quality and overall efficiency of the educational system." Through their local networks, NGOs are well-positioned to link alternative educational programmes with those of other sectors, including health, nutrition and early childhood care.

Nonetheless, despite some commendable examples of non-governmental financing of education — in China, more than half the expenditure on primary education is generated outside the government system, with fee contributions — the scope for raising



domestic resources from non-governmental sources is extremely limited in developing countries according to Mr Tilak. A few efforts can be made to generate marginally additional resources for basic education: industries may be made responsible for the education of the workers and their families, or the employers may be charged a beneficiary levy for the same purpose. The discussion paper notes that families in developing countries already spend a very large proportion of their budgets on education. Mr. Sengupta also underlined that family investments in education are high. If opportunity costs are also taken into account, the total family investment in education would be very high. Although the role of the private sector in education received little attention during the panel, the discussion paper warns that policies encouraging privatization in education need to be formulated with caution. Private schools in general do not necessarily reduce the financial burden of the government: many depend upon the state for almost the whole of their income. In Bangladesh, about half the education budget of the government goes to private schools in the form of aid. Mr Tilak's paper also notes the limits for expansion of the private school system and envisages little scope for its increased role in basic education, unless equity considerations are sacrificed.

Ultimately, responsibility for funding primary education lies with the state. While valuable, contributions from the communities should be treated as peripheral sources to supplement government funding, according to Mr Tilak. Otherwise, he warns, as the demand for education rarely coincides in poor countries with the ability of the people to pay for it, extensive reliance on parental and community contributions will produce

serious adverse effects on equity. In his discussion paper, he suggests that the state examine raising the general tax revenue by adopting improved methods of progressive taxation. He also recommends that norms regarding the share of the budget allocated to education, and specifically to basic education, be set in order to promote balanced development of education in the country. In Brazil, the central government is required to allocate at least 18 per cent of the tax revenue on education, and the provincial and regional governments 25 per cent. In Nigeria, a Primary Education Commission was constituted to mobilize resources and ensure their judicial and equitable distribution between several regions and population groups. A National Commission for Mass Literacy has also been established to come up with innovative strategies. In Indonesia, the government has placed high priority on improving the quality of teachers and increasing their salaries, especially of those working in remote and poor areas. In order to reduce disparities and reach underserved students, certain educational programmes have been tied to poverty alleviation schemes.

### External Assistance: The Role of Donors

While governments are being urged to increase funding to basic education, donors are also slowly changing their lending strategies. The importance of investing in primary education has only been recognized since the mid-1980s, when the attention of international agencies shifted in favour of poverty alleviation and human development. Several factors contributed to this shift, including a realization that much of the investment in other sectors could not yield

high returns with massively underinvested primary education systems. At the same time, it is not until recently that countries have showed willingness to borrow for basic education, often despite high interest rates on loans.

External assistance for education takes several forms, including technical assistance in terms of teachers planners and administrators; material inputs in terms of books, didactic materials, furniture, equipment, and construction materials; and budgetary assistance for general and specific programmes such as scholarships, school meal programmes, etc. Of late, international donors have been more inclined toward investments in software, in which payoffs are higher (such as textbooks, teaching materials, etc.), and against investment in hardware (e.g., buildings, furniture and other capital intensive activities). Mr Tilak's paper appeals for a sense of balance between the two: it is necessary to recognize that there exists a threshold level of buildings and other capital facilities for meaningful education activities to be carried on.

Relative to a country's domestic education budget, external aid for education is generally small. The discussion paper notes that external assistance for education amounted to only 4.2 per cent of the \$100 billion spent on education by the governments of developing countries during the 1981-1986 period, except in the African region. It also highlights the fact that high population countries are at a disadvantage when it comes to external aid. Almost as a rule, the more populous a country, the less education aid per capita it receives. Despite a heightened global awareness toward expanding basic education and targeting girls, "education does

not appear in concrete and substantive form when negotiations are held between donor agencies or at a bilateral level with countries," according to Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant for the Pakistani Prime Minister for the social sector.

A strong case can be made for increasing external assistance to primary education in developing countries, according to Dr Sengupta. "Aid in this area has a positive effect on improving income distribution, increasing productivity and expanding trade." In addition, he noted, education strengthens democracy and is the most objective candidate for receiving a share of the peace dividend, even though "how much of the peace dividend is available is a question mark."

Certain countries are, and will continue to be, considerably more dependent on international support than others. Bangladesh, for example, estimates that US \$2,200 million of international support in the form of grants and concessional loans will be required to enable it to carry through its EFA plans in the 1993-2000 period. During the same period, the country plans to invest over \$2.5 billion of its own funds in EFA. The role of the World Bank has become dominant in quantitative terms as well as in relation to the influence on policy and planning of the national education systems. The World Bank's lending for education, including primary education, exceeds by several times the aid of any other multilateral agency. Between the 1986-1989 period and the 1990-1993 period, the World Bank tripled its total lending for education to \$6.5 billion. The share of basic education increased from 24 per cent of educational lending in fiscal year 1990 to 50 per cent in 1993. Within basic



education, there has been a shift toward inputs that enhance learning and effectiveness, and those that target underserved groups, especially girls and the poor. The poorest northeastern states of Brazil have received a \$414 million loan from the World Bank to support a project that is intended to benefit six million primary school students through the training of 625,000 teachers, the distribution of over 1,000 million textbooks and the building or rehabilitation of 119,000 classrooms. Two other programmes are currently running in rural regions of China. The Bank is supporting new areas of lending such as early childhood education in Mexico and Nigeria, scholarships for girls in Bangladesh, recruitment of female teachers in Pakistan, and non-formal education programmes in Indonesia.

**“We have to remind ourselves that basic education for all is crucial enough for all of us to go out, be creative, combative and collaborative.”**

**Wadi Haddad,  
Senior Adviser, World Bank**

In order for these trends to continue, and to move away from traditional mechanisms of assistance that emphasize capital intensive inputs and short-term implementation periods, Mr Haddad called for a consortium of donors that can “bring together their own strengths and weaknesses so that they can cover the different outlays amongst themselves. It needs a commitment, maybe a compact between countries and donors for a sufficient period of time in order to make a difference.” In Indonesia for example, better co-ordination with multilateral and bilateral agencies has been achieved through the National Development Planning Agency.

## New Directions in Funding

In discussing external assistance and urging that recent shifts towards basic education be sustained, delegations from developing countries voiced several concerns:

### • *Structural adjustment:*

Dr. Sengupta warned that structural adjustment cannot be successful if economies deviate from the path of growth. The success of structural adjustment depends on growth, and growth depends on education. In this light, the opposition between educational expenditure and economic adjustment is a “false conflict.” Strengthening education must be seen as part of economic restructuring and reform, and be treated with a long-term outlook. Indonesia’s next Five Year Plan for

instance, is based on Human Resource Development. Unfortunately, a tradeoff is appearing in several countries between structural adjustment and related economic reforms

on the one hand, and the development of primary education on the other. In the course of trimming budgets during the process of adjustment, it appears that education is an easy prey. A study cited in the discussion paper found that in eleven ‘intensely adjusting’ countries, public expenditure on education as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined from 3.5 in 1980 to 2.9 per cent in 1986, while in the ‘non-adjusting’ countries it has increased. Per capita expenditure and gross enrolment ratios in primary education also declined between 1980 and 1985. Net enrolment ratios fell from 76.1 per cent to 74.4 per cent during the same period in 25 intensely adjusting countries.



including Nigeria, Pakistan and Mexico. Mr Sengupta underlined the importance of compact packages of adjustment programmes that include measures to protect human development sectors like primary education, primary health and child care during the process of adjustment. Mr Haddad of the World Bank noted that "safety net" programmes are being launched with adjustment loans in many countries precisely to protect sectors like education from resource cuts.

• ***The role of NGOs:***

Given the potential role of NGOs in the EFA movement, Ms Wazir Ali, special assistant for the social sector to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, raised the question of direct external assistance to NGOs in the aim of strengthening them institutionally and making them more efficient deliverers of educational services, especially in rural areas. NGOs rely predominantly on local community resources and some support from government. Although the World Bank cannot make direct loans to NGOs, it has started to experiment in a number of situations by creating special funds from the Bank from which NGOs can draw resources to provide education. This is worked out in agreement with governments. The Bank has also developed a social fund mechanism that is set up by the government, funded by the Bank, and earmarked for NGOs in the basic services field, including education.

• ***The need for capacity building:***

Participants underlined that external funding mechanisms must help capacity building in the countries concerned. "Capacity building cannot remain a mere catch word," said Shri Arjun Singh. "It has been said that in order to know something, it is necessary in some sense to have made it. Therefore, the

recipients of assistance should be given adequate scope in the designing, formulation and implementation of the projects. This would mean that the recipients should be allowed to learn through experience, even though it may mean committing some mistakes." Externally aided projects should become sustainable over time. Capacity building includes strengthening the analytical and managerial capacities in countries. Projects that concentrate on capital activities like buildings, furniture, durable equipment, etc. should make adequate provision either from the external aid related budgets, or the domestic budgets, for the maintenance of capital items in terms of their recurring liabilities.

• ***The need for flexibility was emphasized by several participants:***

As the discussion paper points out, the right kind of aid has to be provided to the right kind of countries. There cannot be a single unique pattern of external assistance to all developing countries, although the transfer of innovative ideas and expertise between countries was also encouraged during discussions. For the specific purpose of education aid, the background paper classifies countries into four categories: (a) Countries with low levels of income and low levels of educational development need to receive aid in terms of technical assistance and physical (material and direct monetary) inputs. (b) Countries with low levels of income and reasonably high levels of educational development do not require technical assistance; external aid may be concentrated on direct money inputs, and material support. (c) Countries with high levels of income and low levels of educational development need to be provided external aid in terms of technical assistance. The efforts of donor

agencies in these three categories should concentrate on building national capacities. (d) Countries with high levels of income and high levels of educational development, which do not require any kind of external assistance for education.

Besides the danger of global prescriptions, several participants warned against setting overly ambitious targets.

"Each country has to determine its priorities, what kind of system it prefers and play a leading role in guiding financial institutions in what they want them to do," said the president of the OPEC fund. While external assistance can play an important catalytic role in the development of education, the discussion paper cautions that "it is too much to expect that external aid will solve the financial problems in education substantially in the vast and high population countries, when it could not do so significantly even in small countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia."

## Resource Mobilization Scheme for Basic Education,

presented by Wadi D. Haddad,  
Senior Adviser for Human  
Development, World Bank.

### I) Better utilization of existing resources:

#### (a) Cost Reduction

or four fronts, with unit costs redefined as the cost of a graduate with an acceptable level of learning.

• Maximizing the use of teachers. If student/teacher ratios are low, increasing class size, where physical facilities allow, can result in significant savings. Research has consistently demonstrated that variation in class size within a range of 20-40 makes little or no difference in average student achievement. In low-density areas, schools can resort to multigrade systems or biennial entry.

• Space utilization: to economize on capital costs involved in the creation of student space, in areas of high population density, double shifts may be introduced to optimize the use of facilities and lower overhead unit costs.

• Inefficiencies at other levels. Savings at higher levels of education can be significant and used to maintain an improved level of service at the basic education level.

#### (b) Better Management

Decentralization of basic education to lower levels of government, community and schools has been a dominant trend in policy making since the 1980s. For decentralization to be effective, the central government must expand

and strengthen its roles in three areas: monitoring local taxation and expenditure, equalizing distribution of resources across and within regions, and protecting education interests of underserved groups.

Decentralization of fiscal management also requires transparency. Clear and objective rules to govern distribution of funds are needed so that the system is not manipulated by local politicians. Finally, measures have to be taken to protect the level of allocation under conditions of economic stagnation, stabilization or adjustment.

## **II) Reallocation of existing resources**

Countries need to examine their level of allocation to education as a percentage of GNP and public expenditure. Resources can be reallocated from areas such as parastatals or military to human resource development. There is a strong *prima facie* case for giving priority in public financing to basic education: government must make hard decisions based on a set of criteria, such as levels of services, the likely relative rates of return, private sector alternatives and cost-recovery possibilities of other levels of education.

Within basic education, resources need to be reallocated to enhance learning (textbooks, curricula), increase the school's effectiveness (teacher training) and teacher maintenance. Resources must be deliberately targeted to reach underserved populations.

## **(III) Mobilizing additional resources**

### *On the domestic front:*

Several countries have introduced taxes or levies earmarked for basic education: in Brazil, a federal wage tax is imposed on the total wage bill of most employers. In China, surcharges for education are imposed on three types of taxes. Private sources include cost recovery at higher levels of education and school-generated revenue from labour, factories and rental of facilities.

### *On the external front:*

Donors should be asked to shift more aid to education, and within education, to basic education. The World Bank has taken the lead in this field: from fiscal years 1986-89 to fiscal years 1990-93, total lending to education almost tripled, to reach about \$6.5 billion. The share of basic education increased from 24 per cent of total education lending in FY90 to 50 per cent in FY93. Basic education lending is increasingly targeted at the poor and disadvantaged groups, especially girls. The best use of external resources is to build national capacity to design and implement programmes.

## **Conclusion: EFA, A Crucial Investment**

If the goals of EFA are to be achieved, both national governments and the international donor community must view expenditure on education as an 'investment' that yields benefits for a long time, sometimes even across generations. This investment, as the discussion paper underlines, is "crucial for national development and survival." EFA has to be perceived as a national priority that requires a grand alliance embracing various

levels of government, NGOs, industry, community and the family, among others. Although the financial resources that several of these actors can provide are limited, they can indirectly enhance the value of what is available: the involvement of parents and the community for instance, can make the school more accountable with regard to quality. Low cost, non-formal channels have demonstrated success in reaching the most marginalized groups. They need to be encouraged and supported. Literacy campaigns, involving

massive voluntary efforts, can have an impact on increasing primary school enrolments. Education cannot be seen in isolation from other social sectors, including health and welfare. Each can play a pivotal role in keeping children in schools and improving their well-being. "We have to remind ourselves that basic education for all is crucial enough for all of us to go out, be creative, combative and collaborative," said Mr Haddad. "It is a goal that is humanly noble and economically very wise and sound."

# ***Panel 3***

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## **“Girls’ and Women’s Education, Women’s Empowerment and Population Issues”**

**(UNFPA)**

- **Gender Disparities:  
A Brake on National Development**
- **The Impact of Educating Girls and Women**
- **Overcoming Obstacles to Educating  
Girls and Women**
- **Strategies for Reaching Girls**
- **Linking Learning to Poverty Alleviation**
- **Education and Empowerment for Women**
- **Key Elements of a Strategy  
for Women’s Empowerment**
- **Strategies to Promote Female Education**
- **Conclusion: A Priority With No Single Solution**



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*Chairperson: H.E. Dr Iyorchia Ayu,  
Minister of Education and Youth Development (NIGERIA)*

### **The Panelists:**

H.E. Mr Murilio de Avellar Hingel, Brazilian Minister of Education and Sport. A specialist in education planning, Mr Hingel has developed extensive experience at several levels of teaching in Brazil.

Shahnaz Wazir Ali is special assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the Social Sector. In her present capacity, she is responsible for education, health and population welfare. She has made important contributions to the planning and management of basic education in Pakistan. She was federal minister for education from 1988 to 1990.

Shabana Azmi is a noted Indian actress who is recognized internationally for her talent ("City of Joy," "Madame Sousatzka", "In Custody") as well as for her keen interest in social issues. A strong advocate of gender equality, she travels extensively to champion human rights.

Dr. Nafis Sadik is Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund and concurrently Secretary General for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, scheduled later this year. As a young medical practitioner, Dr. Sadik became involved in family planning and women's issues in Pakistan and was appointed Director General of the Family Planning Programme in 1970. She came to UNFPA in 1971. In 1987, she was appointed to her present position, becoming the first woman in the United Nations to head a major U.N. operational activity.

*Recognizing that gender inequality is the single greatest constraint to achieving universal primary education and the wider goals of Education for All, the Delhi Declaration places the education and empowerment of girls and women at the top of the agenda for the century-end.*

The urgent priority attached to educating girls and women is hardly surprising. Literacy and education are basic human rights that are still too frequently denied to girls. In six of the nine countries participating in the summit, enrolment of girls lags ten to thirty percentage points behind that of boys. Since the United Nations Decade for Women, countries have multiplied initiatives to enhance women's participation in social, economic and political spheres. Governments established ministries for women, constitutions were amended to recognize the principle of gender equality and NGO and state interventions became more sensitive to the specific needs of women. Recently, the government of Pakistan decided to reserve a five per cent quota in all government services for women. Efforts are being made to appoint women in the Supreme Court. In Bangladesh, 10 per cent of parliamentary seats are reserved for women as well as 10 to 15 per cent of government jobs. Still, as the 1993 Human Development Report recalls, women make up just over 10 per cent of the world's parliamentary representatives. In the countries for which data is available, the female human development index is only 60 per cent that of males. "Indeed, for decades," the report states, "life has changed very little for 500 million rural women in the developing world."

## Gender Disparities: A Brake on National Development

In 1990, the World Declaration on Education for All stated that "the most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated."

This commitment to the education of girls and women cannot be sufficiently reiterated. Girls account for 81 million of the 130 million "out-of-school" children. Gender disparities are particularly accentuated in rural areas. There has been spectacular progress in increasing the enrolment of girls - in China, female enrolment rose from 11 per cent to 96 per cent in the past two decades - but pronounced gender gaps still exist in all regions, with the exception of Latin America. Considering the nine high population countries collectively, female enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment increased from 42 per cent in 1980 to 44 per cent in 1990. The pattern of gender disparity also prevails with respect to illiteracy. Of the 948 million illiterate adults worldwide, over 60 per cent are women. At present, one out of three adult women cannot read or write, compared with one out of five adult males. In South Asia, female literacy rates are only around 50 per cent those of males.

The benefits of educating women are no longer debated, but they need to be reemphasized given the gap between rhetoric and achievements." Simply stated,— Education is Empowerment —and women must be empowered to take control of their own lives," said Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the UNFPA. "Education opens the door to

opportunity and choice for women. It is the key to overcoming oppressive customs and traditions that have relegated girls and women to the status of "second class citizens" in their families and in their societies."

The image of opening doors — to employment, social services and participation in political life — captures the importance of educating girls and women. Through an education attuned to their needs and

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Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director, UNFPA*

environment, women gradually become more visible and recognized in mainstream activity, both in the home and in society at large. In the personal sphere, education enhances a woman's self-worth, confidence and sense of capacity. In the public sphere, it increases her income-earning potential and contributes to overall national development. Beyond being a basic human right, the education of women is perhaps the most critical factor in reducing fertility levels and infant mortality and in promoting the overall well-being of the family. "We firmly believe that investing in women is a *sine qua non* for the achievement of sustainable development and that educating women delivers the highest return of any development input," said Dr. Sadik.

## The Impact of Educating Girls and Women

The above stated view is backed up by facts. Findings from a World Bank study of 20 developing countries indicate that countries which allocated substantial resources to female primary education experienced higher economic productivity, lower fertility rates, lower infant and maternal mortality and improved levels of life expectancy for both

men and women, compared to countries with lower levels of women's educational attainment. "You educate a man and an individual gets educated; you educate a woman and generations get educated," said Mr. K.

Karunakaran, the chief minister of Kerala, a state that has been in the forefront of women's education. Investing in the education of women and girls normally yields the highest return. More specifically, educating women has a significant impact on multiple facets of society:

• **Impact on Economic Productivity:** Research indicates that each additional year a young girl stays in school translates into a 10 to 20 per cent increase in wages. Studies in India confirm that women who had completed high school earned one and half times more than those without any education, and women with technical training earned three times more than illiterate women. To be better valued, women's productive contribution must also be recognized at the highest level, in for example national accounts.

**•Impact on Population Growth:**

An abundance of empirical evidence exists showing the relationship between women's education and a slowdown in population growth, recognized as the major brake on progress towards EFA. In several countries, population growth continues to outpace increases in school capacity. Educating girls is three times more likely to lower family size than educating boys. Girls with eight years of education marry later, have a stronger preference for a smaller family and higher rates of contraceptive use. In Brazil, illiterate women have 6.5 children on average whereas women with a secondary education have 2.5 children. The recent Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey found that while only eight per cent of married women of reproductive age (MWRA) with no education are currently using contraception, the figure rises to 47 per cent of MWRA with higher education.

**•Impact on child mortality and family well-being:**

The children of educated mothers have higher survival rates through infancy and childhood. Relatively modest levels of education result in very significant declines in child mortality. Evidence indicates that each additional year of schooling of mothers translates into a decline in child mortality in the range of 5 to 10 per cent. For example, literate mothers with less than six years of education have an average infant mortality rate of slightly over 100 whereas the children of illiterate mothers experience up to 170 fatalities per 1,000 live births. Because education is highly correlated with an openness to new ideas and innovation, educated mothers are more likely to follow sound hygienic and nutritional practices, and seek medical help when their children are ill.

**•Impact on access to education.**

Educated mothers understand the value of educating their children, both daughters and sons. They are likely to take a greater interest in their children's school work, and can help them in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. In India, the Total Literacy Campaigns (TLC) have led to a strong demand for universalising primary education through an awakening and recognition of the value of education. In several TLC districts, elementary school admission figures registered sharp increases.

### Overcoming Obstacles to Educating Girls and Women

Recognizing that women have been neglected is one of the first steps in changing the winds of policy in their favour: for the first time in 1983, the government of Pakistan included women in the national development plan, asserting that "no society can ever develop half-liberated and half-shackled." The next plan goes on to state that "the first imperative for an effective overall national development policy for women is to acknowledge that women have been neglected, and to affirm that the results of this neglect in terms of low productivity, illiteracy and poor health are an unacceptable cost, both morally and economically."

Overcoming obstacles to the enrolment of girls calls for a careful understanding of their causes and the conditions under which they arise. A complex web of cultural, historic, psychological and economic circumstances have contributed to maintaining women at a disadvantage. Drawing from the work of Srilatha Batiwala, Shabana Azmi, an Indian actress, said that "inequality is inculcated in both men and women from birth, before they

can think for themselves." Religion, mythology, social and cultural taboos, behavioural training, rewards and punishments are all used to socialize girls to accept and participate in their own oppression.

*"What we are overlooking is the role and responsibility of men and their attitudes which shape the views of women in most of our societies."*  
*Dr Nafis Sadik, Executive Director, UNFPA*

As the UNFPA paper details, in many societies, girls are only valued for their reproductive function: "From her birth onwards, the girl child is shortchanged in the distribution of the assets of the household — e.g., food, health care, etc. Ironically, even though girls and women are "valued" for their reproductive role, they are not even given the requisite health care and nutrition to make this role a safe one," said Dr. Sadik. Over 500,000 women die every year as a result of pregnancy and childbirth, she said. Parents tend to place a higher priority on the education of their sons in view of their future potential as a source of economic security and status. In many societies, early marriage leads to premature withdrawal from school. Furthermore, when parents are inclined to send their daughters to schools, the school's location is often unfavourable: it may be too far from home, causing parents to worry about girls' safety. The long journey may be perceived as cutting into the time girls need for performing household chores. Facilities may also be inadequate for girls' needs and the lack of female teachers is deemed unacceptable. Frequently, the curriculum is narrowly focused on routine literacy and numeracy skills, bearing little relevance to the needs and lifestyles of girl students. This denial permeates the economic system: women

are generally employed in low-paid, low-productivity work and are subject to many forms of discrimination because of the family responsibilities they have to shoulder. Despite their significant contribution to national economies, women, especially rural women working in agriculture, are often invisible in national accounts and statistics. According to a 1990 UN survey, if unpaid house and family care work were counted as productive output in national income accounts, global output would increase by 20 to 30 per cent.

Beyond the barriers of traditions, customs and mentalities, gender inequalities are also intricately linked to poverty. In Brazil, the situation of girls and women from an educational viewpoint is one of total equality of opportunity. In fact, girls' enrolment is higher than that of boys, and they tend to achieve superior academic performance. The brunt of deprivation, however, in a country where 44 million people live below the poverty line, falls on the weaker strata of society, and especially on female-headed households. Thus, in discussing the education of girls, it is crucial to look beyond enrolment figures at the opportunities an economy offers for the advancement of women. Attention to vocational training and equality of opportunity on the labour market is fundamental to any comprehensive discussion of gender equality.



## Strategies for Reaching Girls

Education plays a pivotal role in any intervention to increase women's participation in development. Over the last decade, a number of countries have taken steps to reach out to women, understand their needs, and integrate them into the development process. The importance of women's issues has been recognized and integrated into the policy-making process. In Pakistan, where the total literacy rate is estimated at 35 per cent, the government established a women's division in 1979 which was upgraded to a full-fledged ministry in 1989. In Nigeria, the government has established a women's education unit in the ministry of education and youth development. A national plan of action for promoting the education of women and girls has been drawn up. In Bangladesh, in order to encourage girls to continue their studies, they are offered eight years of free education as compared to five years for boys. In India, the National Policy on Education and its accompanying Plan of Action devotes particular attention to the education of girls and the empowerment of women.

But what kind of education is required not only to increase female enrolment but to keep girls in schools? Not only is there a need for more flexible arrangements, incentives and more relevant curricula, but an accompanying profound change in the attitudes of society toward gender stereotypes, traditions and customs that have denied women access to education. The quality of education received is of paramount importance. "We have to overcome age-old barriers of silence, isolation and discrimination by making serious efforts, at all levels, to create conducive conditions for the participation of women and girls in education

on an equal footing with men," said Ms. Kumari Selja, the Indian Deputy Minister for Education and Culture. A more positive political, social and cultural environment must be fostered to promote changes in these attitudes towards women.

Although situations differ from country to country, within countries, and between regions, the common denominator is the need for specific strategies to reach girls. The UNFPA presentation detailed several essential guidelines for putting literacy and education within the reach of all girls and women:

**• *Bring schools closer to the community and increase community and parent involvement.***

Proximity to the home encourages parents to send girls to school: in Egypt for example, where female illiteracy is almost twice that of males, small schools are being sited in rural hamlets where the attendance of girls is low. As schools are brought closer to the home, female enrolment is increasing. Bangladesh is developing satellite schools, small institutions of only two classes located in rural hamlets to promote the enrolment of girls. Parental involvement enhances the schools' accountability for providing quality education.

**• *Lower the costs to parents of educating girls by providing tangible "incentives".***

These could include either the reduction or elimination of direct costs, such as tuition, uniforms and transportation. Incentives could include the provision of scholarships, free distribution of textbooks, provision of mid-day meals or stipends to parents. In China, the government has taken measures to



promote the education of girls in rural areas, by subsidizing their education, establishing boarding schools and improving teaching materials. In Pakistan, the revival of mosque schools has met with an encouraging response: parents who had been unwilling to send their daughters to school find no difficulty in sending them to study in a sacred institution.

**• *Change parents' views toward the value of education for girls.***

Public information campaigns should underscore the benefits derived from educating girls. Since much of the preference for boys rests on the perception of them as a source of economic security, messages should stress that education enhances the income-earning potential of young women. In Bangladesh, 68 "Mothers' Rallies" were organized in 1992, drawing a total of 27,600 mothers. Discussions highlighted the importance of primary education for the child, the family and the society. As reported by the teachers and local education officials, both school enrolment and attendance improved significantly following these rallies.

**• *Design schools and programmes to fit the needs of girl students.***

Adopting more creative arrangements such as flexible schedules enables girls to perform their household responsibilities or seasonal chores without compromising their attendance at school. There is scope for tapping on successful non-formal education programmes that are generally attuned to local needs and take a child-centred approach. In Pakistan for example, mosque schools operate year-round, following the rhythm of the community rather than that of the academic year. This has also favoured attendance and achievement. Since girls often have to care for younger siblings, schools could provide

some form of creche service. The Shiksha Karmi Project in Rajasthan, India, has succeeded in boosting girls' enrolment in remote villages by running night schools for girls who cannot attend daytime classes due to household chores and agricultural work.

**• *Increase the number of female teachers.***

In addition to making schooling more acceptable in certain cultures, female teachers serve as role models to their students. In Bangladesh, 60 per cent of newly recruited government teachers must be women.

In Pakistan, the Mobile Female Teacher Training Unit Project provides a mobile training scheme that meets the need for more and better female-trained teachers of primary education in the rural areas. Under India's Operation Blackboard, 59 per cent of the teachers appointed were women. Nevertheless, there continues to be a concentration of female teachers in urban areas.

**• *Develop relevant curricula.***

The content of basic education must be broadened and become more attuned to the environment and lives of girls and women. The effort to redesign curricula is underway in several of the high population countries: in Bangladesh, a new curriculum is aimed at improving mastery of basic learning and life skills, while at the same time, rendering education more relevant to rural life. Greater emphasis is placed on health, sanitation, hygiene and the development of practical skills. In Egypt, curricular reforms are designed to make education more relevant and interesting to girls. In India, school textbooks are being revised in order to eliminate gender biases. In China, courses on family planning aimed at gradually changing attitudes are included in the

curriculum of secondary schools. Dr Sadik underlined the value of adding population education to the curriculum: "For example, population education is an especially effective modality for dismantling gender stereotypes and for combatting gender discrimination." Population education embraces topics such as violence against women, human sexuality, involvement of boys and men in reproductive matters, child raising and household responsibilities. Dr Sadik noted that because of its many benefits, population education has always been a major component of UNFPA assistance.

### Linking Learning to Poverty Alleviation

But despite the unquestioned necessity of earmarking increased resources towards the education of girls and women, and developing strategies to reach them, one cannot underestimate the formidable barriers that stand in the way of reducing gender disparities and achieving greater social justice and equity. "A word of caution for enthusiastic development planners here," said Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant for the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the social sector. "Despite arguments favouring the pouring in of financial resources from donors, providing easily accessible and segregated schools, female teachers, a relevant and attractive curriculum, high boundary walls, transport, etc. - all the above may still not get the girls into schools. Girls' and women's heavy workload due to poverty, environmental degradation, male migration, gender divisions of labour, domestic and reproductive responsibilities - in addition to traditional male discriminatory attitudes - all militate against female education."

This is why efforts to meet the needs of illiterate adult women and of girls who have dropped out of formal schooling are best achieved through poverty alleviation programmes and integrated approaches to rural development. "There is a need to address women's health and family planning issues within the larger context of women's integrated development strategies, especially education and skills training for remunerative employment" said Ms Wazir Ali. Through the Social Action Programme, Ms. Ali's government has adopted this integrated approach, linking primary education with nutrition, health care, population welfare, rural water supply and sanitation. In Nigeria, programmes have been especially designed to reach rural, nomadic women.

NGOs are a key partner in the success of these programmes. Their experience in the field of non-formal education and reaching out to marginalized, disadvantaged groups needs to be further tapped and supported. "NGOs and advocacy groups at the grass root levels have a major role to play in generating awareness in society about the importance of educating women," said the chief minister of Kerala. In Pakistan, they have played an important role in organizing home schools, consisting of 25 to 30 pupils. An estimated 11,000 girls are enrolled in these schools that operate around flexible schedules. In India, the "Mahila Samakhya" or Education for Women's Equality has achieved impressive results. Part of its success is based on the organisation of women's collectives, known as "mahila sanghas" at the village level. These are forums in which women discuss problems relating to their daily routine, their status and role in society. These groups set out their own agenda for education and collective action and try to seek solutions to their

problems by initiating change and pressurizing the block and district structures to respond. In this way, they become active participants in the process of development.

### Education and Empowerment for Women

The process of awareness-building and gaining greater control over one's life is part of the critical issue of empowerment. Unless education gives women the confidence and skills to participate in the entire development process, there will be little chance of any profound, long-term change in the power relationships that prevail in societies. "Women should not remain merely passive recipients of development benefits, but should also actively participate in bringing about development as agents of change - as development planners, implementors, monitors and evaluators," said Ms Wazir Ali. What's more, unless women perceive the benefits of becoming educated, there is a strong chance they will feel little motivation to attend classes or encourage their daughters to go to school. Literacy programmes that are not tied to improving real life situations have little chance of retaining interest. The actress Shabana Azmi recalls questions put by an illiterate woman in Gujarat: "If I learn to read and write, will my wages increase? Will water come to my doorstep? Will my husband stop harrassing me? No, everything will be the same. So why should I spend the evening with slate and chalk when I am exhausted with the day's work and my whole body is aching? First show me how to solve my problems, then I'll gladly learn to read and write."

Learning how to solve problems is part of the process of empowerment, a process calling for a holistic approach to development and

poverty alleviation. The results of multi-dimensional literacy programmes, which include functional elements such as skills training, have been encouraging in many countries. Furthermore, a major effort is being made in the post-literacy field, with follow-up courses, learning groups and centres, rural libraries and the production of newsletters. In Nigeria, the Better Life Programme for rural women provides training in literacy and functional skills through multipurpose centres. In Indonesia, a special programme known as "Kejar Usaha" (Income Generating Learning Groups) targets women in rural areas who have reached a basic literacy level. Organized into groups, the women are trained to engage in small business activities using borrowed capital from the Village People Bank. A wide variety of learning materials have also been developed for these post-literacy income-generating programmes, while the use of distance education is also spreading. In India, an appraisal of the Total Literacy Campaigns found that "women are participating in the teaching-learning process in much larger numbers and with much greater enthusiasm than men. They have become more vocal, more articulate and more assertive of their needs than ever before."

Without a deep and critical questioning of women's role in society, there is ample evidence to show that just because a woman is educated or earning an income does not necessarily improve her status. In her intervention on empowerment, Ms Azmi shared a few examples observed in her surroundings. She pointed out that a woman who is a bank clerk may earn more than her husband but give all her earnings to her mother-in-law for household expenses. "She doesn't even have the liberty to buy a sari for herself without previous permission from

her mother-in-law," said Ms Azmi. "On the other hand, her husband is free to use his entire salary any way he pleases." Where women do have control over household funds, they generally make much better use of them. In Malaysia, a case study of rubber tappers cited in the *1993 Human Development Report* found that almost all income earned by women was directed to meeting household needs while men tended to devote sums equivalent to 40 per cent of household incomes to their personal requirements. Similarly, affluent middle class women often do not enjoy full equality with their husbands, brothers and fathers.

Can education change these deeply ingrained self-perceptions? "We can argue that the process of empowerment begins in the mind, from the awakening of a woman's consciousness," said Ms Azmi. Drawing from the scholar Mahila Sanakhya Karnataka, she stressed that education must be seen as a dynamic process of learning, in which women gain access to meaningful information, engage in critical reflection and act as a collective to transform the material and social conditions of their existence. Such a transformation entails a shift in power relations in society. This could go as far as changing patterns of ownership. In Kerala, for example, a matrilineal system of inheritance and other socio-cultural factors went into the promotion of women's education. Today, Kerala has achieved total literacy, one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the developing world and the lowest fertility rate in India. "Apart from educating the girl child," said the chief minister of Kerala, "it should be ensured that women get equal rights on the family property."

Through the process of empowerment, an opportunity and a responsibility arise for reshaping values, behaviours and relationships. Ms Azmi cautioned against reproducing present-day notions of power that are based on values which encourage "aggression, competition and corruption." The education of women and the process of

*"We can argue that the process of empowerment begins in the mind, from the awakening of a woman's consciousness."*

*Shabana Azmi, Indian actress*

empowerment, she argued, should "generate new notions of power" and pave the way for a "more humane society for all." Similarly, as they gain control over resources, women should promote their safer and more equitable use, together with efforts to protect the environment.

### Key Elements of a Strategy for Women's Empowerment

Any EFA strategy must include innovative strategies that specifically target girls and women. Parents need to understand the value of educating their daughters. Mothers must feel that learning opens doors to economic betterment. "I would stress the need for providing more access for women to vocational and professional education," said the chief minister of Kerala. "If need be, exclusive technical institutions for women and increased reservation of seats for them in existing institutions should be thought of." Ms. Ali underlined that focus should be put on skills training providing employment (rather than just additional income), such as female paramedical staff, community health and development workers, and literacy teachers. Women's employment can also be

promoted through support structures such as child day-care, family sickness leave, transport, accommodation and security. The question of maternity leave and other rights in the unregulated informal sector needs to be examined, given the significant proportion of women in this field. In Latin America, women make up between 25 and 40 per cent of informal sector employment.

*"There is a growing realization on the part of the government and the NGO community, as well as the international agencies, that, without tackling such vital cross-cutting and interlinked issues as women in development, population, basic education and the environment, the gains made in the so-called 'priority' sectors will be minimized."*  
**Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant for the Prime Minister, Pakistan**

To be effective, an agenda for girls and women must take these different dimensions into account. "The policy goal of achieving women's empowerment and participation in national development requires the formulation of a whole set of intermediate goals and objectives, as well as a clearly defined strategy and action plans with qualitative and quantifiable targets," said Ms Ali. She cited three inter-related elements that should guide the implementation of a women's development strategy:

- *Integrating gender issues into all programmes, in terms of using a gender perspective to identify gender issues, and in terms of addressing these issues as an objective in programme action.*

- *Supporting and expanding the public role of women, especially as producers, income earners, managers, educators, health agents, decision-makers, etc.*

- *Increasing women's participation in the development process, by involving women in the planning, management and implementation of development projects and programmes.*

The effectiveness of such a strategy will be enhanced if all society, including men, change their outlook and attitudes towards traditional patterns of power relations. Men must also take responsibility in adopting the small family norm

and other values conducive to greater equity. "What we are overlooking is the role and responsibility of men and their attitudes which shape the views of women in most of our societies," said Dr Sadik. "This is something that the education system can do because education is one of the tools we use for changing attitudes and value systems."

In this task, all sectors of society must be reached. "A concerted effort must be made to put aside those customs and traditions that are intrinsically detrimental to all aspects of women's lives," said Dr Sadik. Changing attitudes does not only happen in the classroom, but in the home, in the workplace and in political spheres. It demands a culturally-sensitive approach to communication



campaigns. Ms Ali recommended that such campaigns, aimed at improving women's status, should operate on three levels:

- *a recognition of women's real and potential economic contribution. Campaigns should address women's triple role — productive, reproductive and household management — by eliminating current biases in the portrayal of women in the media, and from educational textbooks, starting at the primary level.*
- *an ongoing multi-media campaign providing information about inheritance rights, ownership of assets, access to credit, control over wages, nutrition, health, family planning and other issues. In this task, the print media, NGOs, community groups and larger institutions have a potential role to play.*
- *encouraging the organisation of collectives, co-operatives etc. for transforming the material and social conditions of women's existence. These types of groups can play a key role in sustaining successful initiatives.*

Society cannot fully develop without educated girls and women. "There is a growing realization on the part of the government and the NGO community, as well as the international agencies, that, without tackling such vital cross-cutting and interlinked issues as women in development, population, basic education and the environment, the gains made in the so-called "priority" sectors will be minimized, if not altogether negated in the overall macro-economic framework," said Ms Wazir Ali.

## Strategies to Promote Female Education

The UNFPA background paper suggests the following six strategies to promote education for girls and women.

1. Locate schools closer to the community and increase community and parent involvement with the school.
2. Lower the costs to parents of educating girls by providing tangible "incentives".
3. Promote advocacy and social mobilization programmes, with special attention given to changing parents' views regarding the value of educating girls.
  1. Design schools and programmes to fit the needs of girl students: this includes hiring and training more female teachers, using flexible schedules, providing some form of creche service and making school structures and facilities suitable to the needs of girl students.
5. Develop relevant curricula in order to respond to the context in which girls and women live. Population education is one example of a practically-oriented approach to curriculum development that challenges conventional thinking. It addresses the role of men in family planning and covers topics such as population/environment linkages, family life and human sexuality concerns, and the relationship between demographics and development.
6. Undertake efforts to meet the needs of illiterate adult women and of girls and women who have dropped out of formal schooling. Basic literacy and numeracy



programmes should also include employment-oriented skill training which would improve income-earning capacity. Literacy programmes should feature "advocacy" for female education to convince women to enrol and keep their daughters in school. For adolescent girls who have dropped out of schools, measures such as "second chance" schools and vocational and technical training programmes should be pursued.

### Conclusion: A Priority With No Single Solution

Making girls and women equal partners in the development process and giving them the tools to make informed choices and determine their own lives start with education. If the gender gap in educational attainment and literacy is to be overcome, special emphasis will have to be put on reaching girls and women, defined as "the world's largest excluded group" in the *1993 Human Development Report*. Successful programmes at the micro-level are underway in the nine high population countries. The challenge is to expand them and not let short-term considerations hamper progress toward achieving this goal. There is no single solution to increase girls' enrolment and retain them

in school. While it is crucial to upgrade quality in the mainstream elementary system, it is just as important to recognize and support the role of non-formal education in reaching out-of-school girls and women. Failure to do so will only swell the ranks of adult illiterates and feed the vicious cycle of illiteracy and population growth. Even in countries where the gender gap is minimal, concerted efforts must be invested in order to reach the most isolated, disadvantaged groups of girls and women. Only in this endeavour will Education for All become a reality. It demands vision, creativity and commitment, and a deep-seated belief in the value of girls, women and education. Beyond this, it is fundamental to recognize that young children develop attitudes and values early. From a young age, teaching and curricula must be tailored so that boys acquire positive values and attitudes towards girls, in order to create an environment in which women and men become equal partners in development. "Our religion teaches us to 'Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave', even if seeking knowledge entails going to China," said Ms Ali in closing her address. "An old Chinese proverb says, 'If you are planning for one year, plant rice; if you are planning for five years, plant trees; if you are planning for the future, educate your children.'"

# Panel 4

“Education and Society”

(UNESCO)

- Education for the 21st Century
- Building a Culture of Peace
- Preparing Individuals for Citizenship and Participation
- Fighting Exclusion to Reach all Groups
- Promoting gender equity and Respect for the Environment
- Adapting to Rapid Change in the Workplace
- Improving the Teaching of Sciences
- UNESCO’s Commission on Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Conclusion: To Global Problems, Global Solutions



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***Chairperson: H.E. Mr. Javier Barros Valero,  
Under Secretary of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
(MEXICO)***

**The Panelists:**

H.E. Ms Gennet Zewide, Minister of Education (Ethiopia). Ms Zewide has had extensive experience in teaching business education courses and designing administration programmes.

H.E. Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Minister of Education (Bangladesh)

Mr M. Makagiansar, Chairman, Consultative Council on National Education (Indonesia) and formerly, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture.

Mr Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO. A professor of biochemistry. Mr Mayor has also served as Spain's Minister of Education and Science.

*Mahatma Gandhi's  
philosophy of non-violence and vision of  
education as  
"the basic tool for the development of  
consciousness  
and reconstitution of society"  
has lost none of its relevance  
in a world characterized  
by growing inter-dependence, complexity and  
shrinking distances.*

Despite their distinct cultural identities and histories, the nine high-population countries are faced by global challenges at the threshold of a new millenium. Education is at the heart of development and plays a pivotal role in giving societies the strength and sense of purpose they need to address the problems confronting them: widening economic disparities among and within countries, mounting debt burdens, rapid population growth, widespread environmental degradation, civil strife and armed conflicts, and - least tolerable of all - the preventable deaths of millions of children.

The relationship between education and society is an interactive one. Through education, we have the capacity to shape the kind of society in which we will live tomorrow. Education transmits values, knowledge, skills and behaviour. It is not only synonymous with the awakening of a human being's potential, but also with social and economic progress. An educated and healthy population is a country's best asset for achieving sustained and sustainable development. But to claim that it is a panacea would be to ignore that education has played a role in perpetrating inequalities between men and women, nationalities, nations and ethnic groups. Unfortunately, it is often conditioned by the same social ills, economic obstacles

and cultural inertia which it is trying to overcome. It takes leadership, political commitment to a long-term vision and a strong alliance of society around the cause of education for all to actually mobilize the tremendous potential of education for social progress.

## Education for the 21st Century

In committing themselves to education for all, national leaders are also looking toward a vision of the future in which education plays a critical role. "To make progress, a people, a nation and humanity alike must nurture a common vision of the future it wants to create," said Mr Makagiansar, chairman of the Indonesian consultative council on national education. This vision is a dynamic one, shaped by global and national imperatives. Global because of growing inter-dependency that affects even the smallest and most remote villages; national, because a country's development is ultimately dependent on the education of its people. This is a collective responsibility: "Globality and complexity can only be addressed by a broad alliance between all members of society, including parliamentarians, the media and industry," said Federico Mayor, UNESCO's Director-General. Failure to adopt a long term vision and raise the access and quality of education in countries will result in increasing poverty, migration, marginalization and population growth. China considers education a "milestone" in building a modern society. The Nigerian minister of education defined education as a "catalyst" on society, emphasizing that "education of women is the essence of all educational activity since women are the custodians of cultural heritage and the teachers of all generations." In recent years, development initiatives have

stressed the need to focus on the individual as the foundation for economic growth and overall progress in society. For the first time, the fourth United Nation's International Development Strategy is based on two pillars: poverty alleviation and human resource development. The Earth Summit spelt out the relationship between economic growth and sustainable development, and stressed the need to respect the environment. Agenda 21, its action plan, set detailed goals calling for renewed attention to social investment, including education, maternal and child health care and measures to improve the status of women. More specifically related to the field of education, the Jomtien Conference has stimulated a broad debate on the quality and nature of education best suited to cope

structure and inner spirit, represents one of the most exciting challenges of our times." While the object of any discussion on education and society is to focus on the future, the general assumption shared by participants was that education has failed to serve all members of society fairly and to keep abreast of changes, hence stalling development. With their tendency toward centralization and rigidity, educational systems have too often remained immune or poorly adapted to changing patterns in society. "We are working with tools similar to those at the time of my great-great grandfather, if not earlier, while our circumstances of living show little similarity to theirs," said Mr. Makagiansar. "Rarely the question is asked as to how the new programmes should be made responsive

**W**e must be able to adapt to the pace of life. We must be able to anticipate events. This is the role of education. We must provide an anticipatory kind of education, so that we are not always adjusting to events, but so that we can master our own destiny."

Federico Mayor, Director-General, UNESCO

to the requirements of changed or changing circumstances."

E d u c a t i o n continues to be locked into out-

dated thinking patterns. "In our ordinary day-to-day behaviour, we subconsciously tend to assume that sheer hard work and that doing more of the same thing constitute the sure way towards achieving progress," said Mr. Makagiansar. "This kind of linear thinking, unfortunately, continues to be nurtured by most educational practices, and as such, it has become a dominant feature of the educator's and the teacher's mindset."

with change and ultimately, improve the well-being and living standards of societies.

"In a world hurtling into the 21st century, we are now called upon to make a major shift from disintegration to integration, from compulsive consumerism to sustainable development, from regionalism to globalism, from the exploitative image of man and nature to the cooperative and ecological image," said Karan Singh, President of the India International Centre. "The main instrument for this process will inevitably be the educational system, which alone can facilitate the task of actualising the total potentialities of human beings. This creative reorientation of our educational systems, both in their outer

Education for all cannot be discussed without putting the accent on education as a shared responsibility for and by all members of society and the international community. Its value has to be stressed by all so that positive learning atmospheres are nurtured at all



"Our new era is a witness to the shift from musclepower to brainpower. Functional literacy and basic knowledge should not be static but once acquired, should enable the person to take initiative, to engage in the excitement of creating things, to discover new horizons of knowledge and culture, to become independent, and yet appreciate the interdependency between people."

**M. Makagiansar**, Consultative Council  
on National Education, Indonesia

levels, starting in the home. Educating all means reaching out to marginalized groups, including minorities, children displaced by war, rural and street children, and the disabled. Inside educational systems, established patterns of selectivity against economic, social or cultural minorities will have to be resolutely fought against. The mass media have an important role to play in promoting a global vision that is based on social justice and equity.

But what kind of questions and concerns should policymakers, educationalists, parents, teachers and other representatives of society be asking in shaping this global vision of EFA? These questions are intricately linked to the kind of society we are moving towards. "Fortunately, we are not here to leave the future of EFA either to the exclusive power of uncertainty and or to its corollary of finding ourselves in a state of helplessness. The question is "How do we cope with an uncertain future?" which, in turn, we may reduce to asking ourselves, "How do we cope with change?", said Mr. Makagiansar. To trace lines of enquiry, UNESCO's discussion paper proposed the framework adopted in the work of its Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, chaired by Mr Jacques Delors. The Commission has agreed to focus on education's relationship to culture,

the national state and citizenship, the social fabric, sustainable development, economic growth and employment, research and the progress of science.

### Building a Culture of Peace

From the vantage point of all panelists, the most vital mission of education is that of building and strengthening peace. With the easing of global tensions, secure development will be threatened less by external aggression than by intolerance based on ignorance, tensions between disparate values or the over-assertiveness of certain group interests. Societies will need to be equipped to face and preserve peace. The main defenses of this peace, as the UNESCO Constitution reminds us, will need to be constructed in the minds of men, women and children around the world. UNESCO's Director-General identified peace-building and peace-keeping as the two facets of the agenda for peace. "Until now, an immense majority of efforts have been devoted to peace-keeping. Peace-building is still today, a very secondary aspect. We are unprepared for peace-keeping. We have our defense mechanisms" he said. Today's challenge is to shift progressively toward peace-building. "Peace-building means education and long term action, and preventive

action... Such a shift involves a change in our way of thinking about the future. Peace-building is invisible, because by preventing conflict, no one realizes what has been done, since the event never took place. Preventing conflict is linked to guaranteeing human security, a central concept in this year's Human Development Report. It implies a redefinition of global security, shifting priority from national security to individual security, through jobs, basic rights and a safe environment. Education for all is a key factor of human security. At the same time, to build peace and guarantee this security, we must build a culture of "pace", said Mr Mayor. "We must be able to adapt to the pace of life. we

Zewide, Ethiopia's minister of education, urged that school curricula, teacher training, the media and research incorporate gender concerns and relationships so that a "culture of mutual respect and understanding" is fostered in educational systems. Dr. Karan Singh insisted on the cultural dimension of the educational system. "Instead of clinging to fixed ideas and rigid patterns, what is needed is the recognition of some of the insights of various religious and cultural traditions for a decisive break-through, a quantum jump into a new cultural dimension. We must learn the fourfold art of nurturing the body, the mind, the emotions and the spirit so that the individual can move towards

**"Without education, we shall forget our historical heritage and learn artificial cultures."**  
**H.E. Mr Javier Barros Valero, Under Secretary of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Mexico**

harmonious development." He urged that education articulate a philosophy of life which stresses the social values of love, non-violence, friendship, the small

family norm, respect for the environment, and a basic spiritual awareness.

must be able to anticipate events. This is the role of education. We must provide an anticipatory kind of education, so that we are not always adjusting to events, but can master our own destiny." Building this culture of peace means forging patterns of behaviour that are non-violent, imparting values that stress tolerance, justice, solidarity, equity, and international understanding. "As each society at one point possesses a knowledge-level, I consider that Education for All is the battle of raising knowledge levels in the interest of peace, international understanding and equity amongst nations." said Mr. Makagiansar. The question of values was emphasized by participants. Many societies consider that, in a world increasingly shaped by materialism, a more significant place needs to be assigned to the teaching of ethics, values and culture in school curricula. Gennet

Striking this balance between sensitivity to local cultures and the imperative of a global outlook is a challenge to educationalists. "Without education, we shall forget our historical heritage and learn artificial cultures," said Javier Barros Valero, Mexican under-secretary for higher education and scientific research. The safeguarding of cultural identities will be increasingly critical in the emerging global society. The UNESCO discussion paper recommends studying and building upon the successful experiences with multi-cultural education found in a number of countries. Similarly, attention must be given to the issue of language, which reflects many of the simultaneous and conflicting demands made in the name of globalization, easier

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communication, but also preservation of cultural identity. Various models of bilingual education should be evaluated and the results shared among educational systems.

With their ever increasing role, the mass media have the power to further or hamper the educational cause. Commercial interests behind major communications networks may be conducive to standardizing cultures rather than reflecting their diversity. Mr Karan Singh decried the spiralling number of violent images seen by children in the media, while Ethiopia's education minister emphasized how women's subordinate role in society is reinforced in the media. The Mexican under-secretary for higher education and scientific research warned against the "Penelope Syndrome," by which what is learnt during the day in school has a tendency to be unwoven by the media at night. Instead, he said, the media must complement learning at school.

### Preparing Individuals for Citizenship and Participation

Building a culture of peace also means preparing individuals for citizenship and participation in societies which are increasingly opening up to democratic practices. "This common trend toward democratization is progressively leaving more space for civil society. Until now, nearly all this space was occupied by the state," said Mr Mayor. Countries like El Salvador and Mozambique are seeking to reconstruct and reidentify themselves in the aftermath of civil war. The decentralization of educational systems is but one aspect of this democratization. In the process, new roles are emerging for national,

regional and municipal levels. They involve increased participation and the forming of new partnerships, both to broaden the resource base for education and make it a shared responsibility. "I participate, therefore I exist," said Mr Mayor. Participation is

"Education must not be left in the hands of small local groups or submitted to parochial interests as these interests usually disadvantage some groups, especially women." **Gennet Zewide, Minister of Education, Ethiopia**

synonymous with citizenship, understanding options and making choices, a right that cannot be exercised without education. This will require a thorough and continuous revision of educational contents at all levels, so that both children and adults are made aware of their civil rights and learn to exercise them.

Decentralization also involves the risk of growing disparities in content and quality. In this shifting national and international landscape, the state has a decisive role to play in checking disparities, ensuring equality of educational opportunities and maintaining an overall cohesion in the educational system. "The state must remain accountable for EFA, especially basic education. Education must not be left in the hands of small local groups or submitted to parochial interests as these interests usually disadvantage some groups, especially women," said Ms Zewide. "The state must be responsible for ensuring the propagation of desirable values by all educational agents." The constitution of Bangladesh, for instance, calls upon the state to adopt effective measures "relating education to the needs of the society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs."

"The school curriculum, including teacher training, should incorporate gender concerns and relationships so that a culture of mutual respect and understanding, which eliminates injustice and inequalities, is fostered in educational systems."

Gennet Zewide, Minister of Education, Ethiopia

### Fighting Exclusion to Reach All Groups

"How often don't we say that a person with no formal schooling, as in the case of two of my grandparents, is a source of wisdom," asked Mr. Makagiansar. "If this is true, why then deny him our recognition of being able to stand on his own and assume a lead in his community?"

If education really is to be for all, policies have to focus on reaching all groups and fighting against exclusion and social disruption. This responsibility extends beyond the school system itself and remains a challenge throughout life.

In particular, the education of girls and women is of paramount importance. Insofar as societies fail to educate girls and women, their development will continue to be hampered and skewed. Putting education on the "witness stand," Ethiopia's minister of education asserted that economic, social and technological development had suffered as a result of women's exclusion from the educational systems. Tracing a historical fresco of Ethiopia's various centers of learning, from churches in the fourth century to Koranic schools in the seventh, she underlined that "both traditional and modern systems of education paid little or no attention to empowering women through education." Despite very recent progress in increasing

girls' access to education, women remain in a subordinate role, as reflected in a boy-oriented curriculum, inequalities in access to science and technology vocations, and teachers who are untrained to look at the problems and needs of girl students. Ms Zewide urged that the shaping of curricula and teacher training take women's views into consideration, and reflect a greater concern with mutual respect, social justice and equity.

Similarly, the role of education as an antidote to social exclusion concerns ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as the disabled, whose educational needs cannot appropriately be met by mainstream education. The latest communication technology, especially satellite television to develop distance education, is a valuable tool in reaching remote areas and populations. Governments are becoming aware, hesitantly, that hundreds of millions of street children, who lead a life without a future in rapidly growing cities, constitute an overriding educational challenge. While the long-term objective must be to alleviate poverty, and hence child labour, there is an urgent need to provide immediate support to these children through health services, feeding programmes and informal education schemes.

Reaching these groups requires participation by all. In this endeavour to provide access and quality education to all, a certain parity of esteem between formal mainstream and non-

formal alternatives needs to be ensured. This calls for open and permeable education systems which avoid blind alleys for the least fortunate. Kate Torkington of the Bernard van Leer Foundation suggested that new methods of teaching and education developed in the field of early childcare and non-formal adult and popular education be studied in an attempt to improve the quality and relevance of primary education. It is only by opening up to these alternatives that educational systems will have a capacity to embrace, rather than exclude, to teach tolerance, rather than prejudice. In this field, education at all levels must contribute to the fight against the growing and dangerously disruptive social problems of crime, drug abuse and AIDS. At the threshold of the International Year of the Family, it is also opportune to ask what education can do to strengthen and protect the family.

### Promoting Gender Equity and Respect for the Environment

Sustainable development requires above all human development through education. By expanding educational facilities in rural areas, and especially reaching women and girls, patterns of migration and urbanization can be stalled. A Third World capital like Lagos already has a population density 13 times that of New York city. Besides recognizing and enhancing their capacity to contribute to development, the education of women and girls has a positive impact on slowing down population growth, one of the major brakes on achieving EFA. Young children develop attitudes and values early. Education can and should play an important role in promoting gender equity, respect of the environment and other values. For this, "the methods used in teaching and teacher training must be changed to ensure emphasis

on learning rather than teaching, on the empowerment of students, and the encouragement of critical reflection," said Kate Torkington of the van Leer Foundation, stressing the need for students to participate in their own learning process. This will not only help girls, but also male students to critically examine their own roles in societies. The UNFPA has made population education a major component of its assistance in nearly 100 developing countries. It includes topics that the youth of today will have to confront throughout their lives.

On a global scale and in every single society, preventive action will have to be taken against the overexploitation of environmental resources. "Over-population and industrial technology have contributed in various ways to severe degradation of the natural environment upon which we are completely dependent," said Karan Singh, calling for "a holistic and ecological approach" to education. With their active industrial development, the largest and most populous countries will need to be at the very forefront in introducing environmental education into basic education programmes, strengthening science and technology education and promoting the necessary cooperation and training amongst universities.

### Adapting to Rapid Change in the Workplace

In the domain of economic growth, work and employment, the role of education will increasingly be to help individuals and entire societies to cope with even more rapid change and to come up with a new distribution between learning, work and leisure throughout life. The achievement of education for all will be a requisite, in developing nations, for



the necessary broadening of the manufacturing base. As China shifts toward a market economy for example, it is investing more heavily in technical and vocational facilities, and integrated adult education. More generally, rigid models of technical and vocational education will need to be reconsidered in favour of more effective and affordable partnerships between the state and private industry.

Ethiopia's minister of education decried the "vicious circle between work and education" that maintains women in a subordinate position. Giving women access to traditionally male fields of training and employment is imperative if economies are to develop more equitably. Similarly, Mr Mayor said that societies will have to consider job-sharing, and create jobs linked to the field of ecology and the environment.

Educational practitioners have often failed to apprehend what type of new attitudes, values and visions are necessary to cope with the impact of science and technology. "In this regard, it is ironic that teacher colleges and the teaching profession in general show little interest in matters of the immediate future, not to speak of the distant one," said Mr. Makagiarsar. Instead, he said, MBA professors were the ones who stressed the need for novel educational technologies and greater knowledge of the nature of society we were moving towards in order to respond to changes and anticipate trends.

The strategies of economic growth opted for by the developing countries, should in the future be increasingly based on human resource development, in particular, education for all. If preference were to be given to growth based on capital investments

in certain key sectors only, economic disparities within societies and between regions risk becoming more pronounced. Increasing poverty coinciding with illiteracy and high fertility might then contrast with the technological achievements and wealth generated by a small, privileged sector of society. It is this scenario which educational policies should try to avoid at all costs.

The problem of child labour, both in cities and the countryside, involving hundreds of millions of children all over the world, continues to be deeply rooted in the economic and socio-cultural traditions of many countries. Already, educational experiences are under way which give working children opportunities to learn and obtain qualifications without necessarily cutting off their livelihood. In the Indian state of Bihar, for example, characterized by a high level of illiteracy and a predominantly rural population, children from poor families are rarely able to pursue an education. To reach them, the government has set up Charvaha Schools that integrate learning with work and vocational training.

### Improving the teaching of sciences

For the developing world, learning and mastery of science and technology are seen as pre-conditions for emerging from economic dependency. The research and development gap between the North and South constitutes an enormous challenge for education in developing countries: today the share of their work force in the R & D sector is only one-tenth of what it is in the industrialized North; higher education enrolment ratios tend to be four times less. While developing countries are home to 80 per cent of the world's population, they provide only 4 per cent of its R & D budget.



"Developing countries should participate in scientific research at the global level," said a member of the Egyptian delegation, stressing the need for developing countries to cooperate among themselves. Indeed, this enhanced participation could play a part in halting, and reverting, the brain drain, which deprives developing countries not only of their R & D personnel, but also of the costly education investments necessary to train them. Nevertheless, the largest developing countries do have a critical mass of scientific and technical personnel and thus, a large employment market with considerable holding power.

The required osmosis between education, science and research will have to start as early as primary level, where every society should endeavour to adapt the concept of "scientific and technological literacy" to its own conditions. "Curricula and research should concentrate on the needs of each society in an action-oriented approach and not theoretical abstract research," said a representative of the Egyptian delegation. Educational policies will need to give more attention to science and mathematics education and, in particular, monitor actual achievement levels of students in these domains. Furthermore, Ethiopia's minister of education called for the greater participation of women in scientific development and urged that research and progress be more gender sensitive.

Mastering scientific research also means that societies have to come to grips with the ethical dimensions of scientific progress. The issues at stake in such areas as biogenetics, for instance, have to become the subject of public information, education and debate. At the same time, education must benefit from the

latest results of science and technology. Both have an enormous potential for increasing the outreach capacity of educational systems. "Satellite technology has provided a powerful new tool for the transmission of information," said Karan Singh. "I find that in our generation there is still a curious reluctance to realize and accept the fact that information transmission is going to be substantially changed in the 21st century. The universalization of education, particularly in developing nations, will require new technologies." Already distance education programmes in the large and populous countries go a long way in reaching those hitherto excluded from educational services. They achieve this at lesser cost and, often with better quality, than conventional schools.

The sharing of experience is a first step toward adapting educational systems to a common, universal vision founded on a "culture of peace". International agencies have a key role to play in capacity-building and supporting the long-term development of education systems. In this task, having the courage and farsightedness to maintain a long-term vision is one of the principal challenges faced by governments and donors alike. Short-term concerns tend to cast a shadow upon the intricate and dynamic links between education and society. "Our new era is a witness to the shift from musclepower to brainpower," said Mr Makagiansar. "Functional literacy and basic knowledge should not be static but once acquired, should enable the person to take initiative, to engage in the excitement of creating things, to discover new horizons of knowledge and culture, to become independent and yet appreciate the interdependency between peoples."

To foster this creativity and initiative, educational planners, policymakers and governments will have to show sensitivity and open-mindedness towards improving the quality of education, the training of teachers, as well as their status and role in society. The African Development Bank is devoting 15 per cent of its assistance to education, with specific attention to programmes focused on improving quality. UNESCO is preparing improved Teacher Training Packages.

**UNESCO's Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century is focusing on six major areas of enquiry:**

#### **Education and Culture**

Building a "culture of peace" is the first and foremost challenge facing educational systems the world over. The main defenses of this peace will need to be constructed in the minds of men, women and children. Education must impart values of non-violence, tolerance and social justice. In the emerging global society, the safe-guarding of cultural identities will be increasingly critical.

#### **Education, the Nation State and Citizenship**

Education needs to prepare individuals for citizenship and participation in societies which are increasingly opening up to democratic practice. This will require a thorough and continuous revision of educational contents at all levels. At the same time, there are signs that the role of the state in education is undergoing profound changes, while a plurality of social agents assume coreponsibility for the educational enterprise.

#### **Education and the Social Fabric**

Education has an extremely crucial role to play in strengthening the social fabric, promoting cohesion through equality and fighting against exclusion and social disruption.

Reaching street children, ensuring equal educational opportunities for women and girls and a parity of esteem between formal mainstream education and non-formal alternatives constitute major challenges.

#### **Education and Sustainable Development**

Through education, societies will be able to bring about the new values and the knowledge they need to cope with such problems as excessive population growth or the depletion of environmental resources. The complexity of environmental issues will require much greater emphasis on interdisciplinarity in both education and research.

#### **Education, Economic Growth and Employment**

In the domain of economic growth, work and employment, the role of education will increasingly be to help individuals and entire societies to cope with even more rapid change and to come up with a new distribution between learning, work and leisure throughout life. Technological change affecting even the most traditional occupational fields will require greater emphasis on "learning to learn".

#### **Education, Research and the Progress of Science**

Educational policies have an extremely important role to play in improving the learning and mastery of science and technology, viewed as pre-conditions for emerging

from economic dependency. The required osmosis between education, science and research will have to start as early as primary level where every society should endeavour to adapt the concept of "scientific and technological literacy".

### Conclusion: To Global Problems, Global Solutions

In an increasingly global and complex world, education must become inter-disciplinary and learning more participatory. It should be rooted in values of non-violence, equity and justice. In this task, there is room for calling upon the resources of a broad cross-section of society, as well as the cultural and spiritual heritage of each country. Environmental depletion, population growth, the disruption of the family, technological change and other

phenomena cannot be dealt with in a fragmented way. "In some ways, we are fighting a losing battle. The side of horror and violence seems to be winning", said Karan Singh. "Unless the EFA programme is linked to the propagation of global, universal and desirable value systems, it will not be of any avail. If the nine populous nations can pool their resources, energies, wisdom, then perhaps we can make a better world for all children on this planet." Parents, teachers, the media, and the community all have an important role to play in the EFA movement. The responsibility for shaping tomorrow is held in many hands. "It has been said that what matters is the world we leave to our children," said Mr Mayor. "I disagree. I think that what matters is the children we will leave to our world."

# ***Special Panel***

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**"India's District Primary Education**

**Programme:**

**an Onward March"**

**(Government of India)**

## **Key Elements**

- **Delegating Responsibility**
- **The Need to Listen**
- **Local Teachers**
- **What is Taught and How**

***Chairperson: Dr. A.K. Sharma, Joint Director, National Council for Educational Research and Training, India***

**The Panelists:**

**R.V. Vaidyanatha Ayyar, Joint Secretary, Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, India.**

**Gennet Zewide, Minister of Education, Ethiopia**

**Fay Chung, Chief of Education Cluster of UNICEF, and former Minister of Education, Zimbabwe**

**Victor Ordoñez, Director of Basic Education Division, UNESCO**

**Manzoor Ahmed, Associate Director, Programme Division,  
UNICEF**

**Wadi Haddad, Senior Adviser, Office of the Vice-President for Africa, World Bank**

**Jyoti Singh, Director, Technical and Evaluation Division, UNFPA**

*On the last afternoon of the Pre-summit meeting, the Indian hosts organized a panel discussion around the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP).*

*This gave the opportunity for the Indian participants to share experiences with specialists from the UN agencies, the World Bank, and educationists from other countries, on efforts to achieve EFA.*

As Dr R.V. Vaidyanatha Ayyar, Joint Secretary of the Department of Education, said: "We are, after all, in this great common enterprise of EFA together." The DPEP, launched in 1993, seeks to operationalise the strategy of district level planning, in accordance with India's Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997). Emphasis is placed on local area planning with the district plans being formulated in their own right rather than being derived from a state plan project document. The programme is being built on the experience of previous projects run with overseas assistance. These included the Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project, implemented with the British ODA, which addressed issues of teacher training, child-centred learning and school buildings; the *Shiksha Karmi*, helped by SIDA, which looked at problems of teacher absenteeism and *Mahila Samakhya*, supported by Holland, which tackled women's empowerment and education.

## Key Elements

Key elements of the DPEP are: local planning with community participation; a holistic approach: a 'matrix' of networking between district, state and national institutions as well as between educational, management and social science institutions; an emphasis on capacity building; rigorous professional input and a focus on girls and other socially disadvantaged groups. The DPEP will target some 250 educationally backward districts with low female literacy levels and the districts where the Total Literacy Campaigns have been successful, so the project can take advantage from the increased demand for elementary education. The objective is to gradually extend the twin criteria for coverage. The attempt would be to start the programme in at least 110 districts in the Eighth Plan with an estimated outlay of Rs. 195 million, of which Rs 172 million are proposed to be drawn from external resources.

"In a continental nation like India, universalization has to be in context; what needs to be done in a state like Kerala with social indicators akin to Scandinavian countries is different from that in the Hindi heartland," said Dr Ayyar.

The panel contributions focused mainly on decentralization, participation, motivation and quality. Drawing from her experiences as Education Minister in Zimbabwe, Ms Fay Chung, now Chief of the Education Cluster of UNICEF, said it was essential to delegate responsibility to district level.



## Delegating Responsibilities

A district education officer in charge of 20 - 30 schools should know every school head and every teacher. He or she should know their strengths and weaknesses, should get to know parents and find out if they support their school. All this is only possible at the local level. Personnel must be of high quality, but realistically, it is unlikely that DEOs have much more than two years of secondary education. In Zimbabwe for instance, the government attempted to overcome this deficiency by a distance training programme.

"We engaged the good offices of the Commonwealth of Learning for courses leading to a diploma or degree in education which will not take them away from their jobs", explained Ms Chung.

Mr Wadi Haddad, Senior Adviser to the World Bank, said he was pleased that the DPEP was a home-grown project. "That is very important as no programme succeeds unless there is a local commitment to it". International agencies only had a supporting role and ultimately projects had to be sustained by national governments with the help of the community.

India's ambitious goal of basic education for all to the age of 14 meant that a great degree of decentralization and local management was absolutely essential, asserted Dr Manzoor Ahmed, Associate Director of the Programme Division of UNICEF. This did not mean a shifting of the burden downwards, but of clearly identifying tasks and reorganizing responsibilities. With the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Amendment Act (*Panchayati Raj Act*), 1992, the focus is now concentrated on democratically elected bodies at the district, sub-district, *panchayat* and municipal levels.

These *Panchayati Raj* bodies, which are to have adequate representation of women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, minorities, representatives of parents, educationists and appropriate institutions, will have the responsibility of preparing development plans and implementing educational programmes besides dealing with subjects closely related to education, such as health, social welfare and women and child development. The Act also envisages the formation of *panchayats* for a village or a group of villages. Each one will have elected representatives and constitute a Village Education Committee (VEC) responsible for the administration of education programmes at the village level. Ensuring participation in primary education of every child in every family is one of the prime aims of the VECs. Observing that DPEP had not yet reached village level for planning, management and control, Mr Ahmed suggested that small administrative units with a population of around 50,000 would be necessary to achieve the government's goal. These would have 8 to 10,000 school-aged children with around 2,000 in primary school. Only then would it be possible to get families involved in their children's education and for officers to identify, register and monitor pupils' progress. This would need an integrated plan over four or five years.

The most salutary example of 'how not to do it', was put forth by Ms Gennet Zewide, Minister of Education for Ethiopia. A few years ago her country allocated "hundreds of millions of dollars" to a literacy campaign. It was handled from Addis Ababa, the capital, through government agencies including a national literacy board. The community was forced to help fund it, people were obliged to go to the literacy centres and teaching was

compulsory for students who had completed two years of their degree courses. "After six or seven months, each literacy student relapsed and the programme failed because there was no commitment on the part of the community; no one believed it would help them. That was a big lesson".

### The Need to Listen

She urged her audience to listen. "Let's listen to the students and find out what they want to learn - if students enjoy what they're learning, they'll learn. Let's listen to the teachers. What do they want to teach? This way we can motivate them."

She was also keen for teaching time to be flexible. "Let us find out what is the best time for them. Community participation means listening and incorporating people's recommendations in your plans and in evaluating what is going on."

### Local Teachers

Mr Haddad stressed the need to improve the motivation and the quality of teachers. He floated the idea of 'teacher maintenance', saying that teaching was one of the few professions where it was assumed that training was a one-off, relatively short-term effort. But teachers' skills, methods and knowledge needed updating.

Ms Chung suggested greater emphasis on recruiting teachers from the locality because "they are interested in uplifting their own people". But that raised questions of quality. However, she preferred to start from reality and engage people as para-professionals and take ten years, if necessary, to raise their professional level.

Later in the discussion, Mr Shakti Sinna, Director of Education of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, agreed with this point. He had found that qualified teachers who were strangers to an area were only interested in leaving. It was better to take local people and upgrade them.

With regard to the curriculum, Mr Jyoti Singh, Director of the Technical and Evaluation Division of UNFPA, concentrated on the kind of values that he considered essential to be imparted to boys and girls from an early age. These must form part of the curricula designed by the education authorities to be used in the DPEP, he said.

### What is Taught and How

Some of the most important subjects outlined by Mr. Singh concerned the inter-relationship between the population and the environment, equality between women and men, household responsibilities and a respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings, irrespective of race, caste, colour or sex.

These topics formed part of the population education projects funded by Mr. Singh's organization in 100 countries with around 1.2 million teachers trained to use them. More than 400 teacher manuals had been created in 17 languages of the Indian sub-continent. The project will extend to the non-formal sector over the next four years, especially to young girls who were more likely to drop out of school.

Mr Victor Ordoñez, Director of Basic Education Division in UNESCO, also turned to the content of curricula and textbooks, and, by implication, the quality of teaching.

"What if, at the end of the journey, there is nothing inside the vehicle? We must look at what is happening in the classrooms, what the children are taught and how they are taught. Children walk away from school usually with experiences of how, not what they are taught." He said many people spoke of teaching pupils about peace and democracy, yet where could you find a less democratic place than a Grade One state school classroom?

Most textbooks, he said, were not conducive to real learning. Does the book give the child options? For example if the assignment is to study a flower, is there a choice of flowers? Does it encourage small group work? Does it

make children write? Does it involve the family in the child's learning -hearing a child read a poem, for example? Teachers must also learn to see the children as building blocks - To build on what he or she has learnt before coming to school.

"They will know how to milk a cow, count the chickens and pigs. Build on that. My message is quite simple: let us not think of the vehicle, or the progress of the vehicle, but its contents, what is taught and how. If learning is bringing children from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, it should be an experience of joy and happiness, not a daily grind".



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