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Welcome to the EFA Africa electronic Bulletin

SPECIAL MINEDAF

Dear Readers,

It is my pleasure presenting to you the 7th issue of the EFA Bulletin. This is a special thematic edition focusing on the forthcoming Eighth Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States (MINEDAF VIII) to be held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, from 2 to 6 December 2002.

As it was highlighted in the last edition of the EFA bulletin: “The Conference takes place after important recent developments such as the creation of the African Union and the adoption of NEPAD, which sets a new framework for education in Africa. Furthermore it is being held two years after the World Education Forum in Dakar, and it coincides with the 2002 deadline of the Dakar Framework for Action for the development of national action plans for Education for All. MINEDAF VIII should thus constitute a symbolic moment for all partners to demonstrate that the collective commitment to Education for All will be sustained”.

In this edition you will find an introduction to some of the major themes and questions to be raised and for which solutions will be sought at MINEDAF VIII. We hope you will find this edition useful as an introductory briefing, and we invite you to visit the MINEDAF VIII web-site for further information, background documents and debate: www.minedaf.org.

A. Parsuramen
Director, UNESCO-BREDA
a.parsuramen@unesco.org

MINEDAF : Lessons drawn from previous meetings, innovations and prospects

The progressive elaboration of a reference framework for African educational policies represents the major achievement of MINEDAF Conferences.

MINEDAF is certainly the most ancient of the conferences of African Education Ministers. An Inter-governmental conference on education policy and co-operation in Africa, was for the first time held on the morrow of African countries' independence, on 25 May 1961 in Addis Ababa. That conference adopted a "draft scheme for the development of education in Africa", later used as a reference for about two decades. In eight editions, from 1961 to 2002, the MINEDAF Conferences enabled the assessment of the evolution of education in Africa and the orientation of education policies towards new objectives aimed at strengthening various aspects of education issues: permanent challenges such as reforms and innovations, the eradication of illiteracy, and education for all ...

The extension of dialogue to all education partners could also be considered as an innovative gain secured by the MINEDAF Conferences.

It is surely not an exclusive attribute, but it is the culmination of a change in the context of society. Education is a fundamental issue in the political, economic and social sphere. It is quite natural that political democratisation and the liberalisation movement also influence the field of education. The numerous actors involved in that sector have their say, and this also corresponds to the extension of the education concepts: education for all, education throughout life. Gradually, this has led to the involvement of NGOs in MINEDAF meetings just like the institutional partners and inter-governmental organisations. This extension of dialogue to all stakeholders is, indeed, a consequence of the reality on the ground.

Evolution towards collective commitments and responsibilities appears to be the prospect of the MINEDAF conferences. Just like MINEDAF I paved the way for development, MINEDAF VIII could, through education, mark Africa's entry into the 21st century by implementing concrete education plans, developed by African countries to reach the international development objectives of the Millennium. Education for all is one of these goals and certainly the one through which all others could be achieved.

Aimé Damiba
UNESCO-BREDA
a.damiba@unesco.org

Key questions raised in the MINEDAF VIII working document

According to the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments: "the heart of EFA activity lies at the country level... Countries will prepare comprehensive National EFA Plans by 2002 at the latest"

MINEDAF VIII coincides with this deadline. Thus the working document contains series of questions raised by the countries or to be raised by the countries in relation to the implementation of this recommendation with a view to taking up the challenges of education for all in Africa.

The fundamental and global question is: How can African countries with different standards, individually and collectively reach the objectives of education for all by 2015? If the countries have developed EFA global plans, they certainly have asked themselves such questions. The exchange of viewpoints during MINEDAF VIII should be an interesting aspect of the conference in terms of experience sharing and strengthening the axis of co-operation.

Aimé Damiba
UNESCO-BREDA
a.damiba@unesco.org

The position and contribution of Non Governmental Organization and Civil Society to MINEDAF VIII – a prelude

Since The World Education Forum in Dakar, 2000, Civil Society has vigorously pursued its mandatory role to support Governments to achieve EFA. Where this role is recognized and the necessary space given, Civil Society's contribution to the achievement of the EFA goals has been consistent. Some countries are yet to make full use of the opportunity that partnership with Civil Society can offer, as they are regarded as a threat rather than partners in development.

At Dakar, commitments were made to the effect that no country seriously committed to the implementation of EFA would be thwarted in its plans for lack of resources. This has yet to materialize, for not much financial support has come forward to assist countries in the development of their plans. The goal post keeps on shifting from the development of credible national education plans to linking them with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP) or Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs) or other such conditionalities.

A preliminary assessment made by civil society organisations of where we are today in respect of EFA indicates that, quantitatively, some progress has been made and that it might be possible to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015. For the large numbers of excluded children such as girls, the poor, persons with special needs, and those in difficult circumstances notwithstanding, quality continues to be a major challenge. However there is evidence, that learners are not mastering the skills that are required to prepare them for life.

Quality education is not only about inputs but also about the total development of the child and includes gender equity and equality, nutrition, security and environmental considerations and strong school community linkages. Integrated approaches to education both at the internal and external levels that is, linking health and nutrition to education, would greatly contribute to the achievement of quality.

In claiming its role in the realization of the EFA goals, Civil Society calls for strengthened participation between itself and government in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. MINEDAF VIII offers new opportunities for building on this partnership and we look forward to formalization of the processes at this forum.

Civil society organizations will take part in the MINEDAF VIII Conference, will be represented on the panels, engage in a special session between Ministers and NGOs, and

have developed a document for the conference entitled: “The challenge of achieving EFA in Africa. Civil Society Perspectives and Positions to MINEDAF VIII” (accessible on the MINEDAF web-site).

Adelaide Sosseh-Gaye
Chairperson EFA Campaign Network, The Gambia
worldview@gamtel.gm

FAPED: Parliamentarians get committed to education

African parliamentarians intend to be more involved in the mobilization for education. They will set up a network, the Forum of African Parliamentarians for Education, FAPED, for which the constituent conference will be held from 27 November to 2 December 2002 in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, just before the MINEDAF VIII.

FAPED will bring together the 53 African Parliaments and should enable parliamentarians to improve their understanding of education related issues. This development should lead to increased budgetary allocations for education, improved legal environments, increased capacities of the legislative to supervise the executive, strengthened dialogue and cooperation among African Parliamentarians, and a closer dialogue between the elected representatives and the electorate.

The Senegalese and Mauritian Parliaments initiated FAPED. Thus they responded favourably to Ministers who made the commitment at MINEDAF VII in Durban to involve other stakeholders, in particular parliamentarians, in their action for education.

A contact group was established with the support of organizations such as UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, ADB and The World Bank in order to implement the project. The group met twice, in January and in June 2002, to prepare the regulatory documents required for the creation of the Forum.

In addition to adopting the documents, which will result in the institutional emergence of the forum, parliamentarians will take the opportunity to become better informed on educational issues.

They will work on issues such as parliamentary commitment towards educational challenges, the present state of educational policies in Africa, financing of education, education and NEPAD, and parliamentary advocacy. This meeting of parliamentarians will also provide an opportunity for exchanges with the Ministers of Education. A round table of ministers/parliamentarians will be organized on December 2, the last day of the Conference.

Mrs Mame Bousso Diack/SAMB
Member of the Contact Group for creation of FAPED
and member of National Assembly of Senegal

A synthesis of 'Education for All' action plans

During the period following the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000, African countries started developing National Action Plans for Education for all (NAP/EFA,) with the support of the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA), and EFA partners. The goal was to come up with credible and feasible plans, taking into account the six objectives contained in the Dakar Framework for Action.

African countries will have to make the EFA movement consistent with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), on the one hand, and with the Millennium Declaration on the other hand. In fact, education is one of the main priorities in both of these initiatives, and a principal goal is to mobilise the funds necessary for the economic and social development of the African continent.

Since the beginning of the process, EFA co-ordination and consultation mechanisms have been launched, namely the regional and sub-regional forums. They have helped not only to review periodically the status of the progress made, but also to share experiences, and draw lessons, helpful in continuing planning activities.

As the deadline fixed for the adoption of the NAP/EFA expires, some African countries will still have to finalise their plans. Many countries are in the last stages of the process. This does not mean that efforts have not been made, but countries have been facing difficulties they were ill-prepared for. In fact, appropriate measures have not always been taken in order to get sufficient human and financial resources in time, and to cope with the complexity of the process.

The Conference of the Ministers of Education of African Member States convened in Dar-Es-Salaam from 2 - 6 December 2002 will be an opportunity for top decision-makers to assess the situation. They will also work out solutions enabling all countries to complete their planning process and implement the EFA objectives within the deadlines fixed by the Dakar Framework of action. For that purpose, UNESCO-BREDA has prepared a document entitled "Synthesis of the progress made in Africa in the planning and achievement of Education for All". The document can be accessed on the MINEDAF VIII web site.

Benoît Sossou
UNESCO-BREDA
b.sossou@unesco.org

Universal primary enrolment – a goal for all

In april 2000, the World Education Forum and the United Nations Millennium Declaration reaffirmed the Universal Primary Enrolment (UPE) as a goal for 2015, as it had previously been proposed at the Jomtien Conference in 1990. The international community committed itself to supporting all countries presenting a credible plan for basic education. The UPE challenge is huge, given the fact that hardly one African child out of two completes six years of schooling. And that is the essential minimum of schooling necessary to ensure sustainable literacy at the adult age. Quantitatively, Africa will have to enrol 180 million children in 2015 while only 100 million are currently enrolled. Many countries will have to ensure over the next 13 years as much progress as has been achieved for the past four

decades. This challenge deals mainly with the enrolment of the most disadvantaged groups of the population (girls, rural and/or poor children, orphans). The quality of the delivered education service will require a particular attention as well, in order for pupils to attain a satisfactory level of achievement.

The link between the input in terms of education resources and the outcomes produced is quite weak. Thus, only a lesson-learning, empirical analysis enables us to identify the key factors of success, from the best achieving countries. Besides, this approach has been used for developing the indicative framework of the EFA 2015 Fast Track initiative, a process recently initiated by the World Bank, adopted by most financial partners and validated at the last G8 meeting. Provided the framework is followed (regarding quantitative targets for domestic resource mobilisation, efficiency gains and education quality improvement), the external financing gap in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to be at US\$ 2.1 billion year on average until 2015, adding up 3.9 billion available by countries on their own.

Achieving the UPE goal will also depend on the progress made in system management (stimulation of the demand for schooling, resource distribution and pedagogical management) in order to improve the transformation of means into learning outcomes and to absorb the expected impressive flow of new pupils and teachers. A monitoring process, focused on both global and local progress achieved, should ensure that the system is managed according to outcomes criteria and no longer only by means.

The theme here described is dealt with in the statistical document elaborated for the 8th Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States (MINEDAF VIII), to be held in Dar-Es-Salaam (Tanzania) from 2nd to 6th December 2002.

The document has been developed by Mathieu Brossard, Marie Dorleans and Nicolas Reuge, education sector policy analysts at UNESCO-BREDA, in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the World Bank. For any further information please contact them at poledakar@yahoo.fr

Education for All seen as crucial in the fight against AIDS

“Education can be a powerful force – perhaps the most powerful force of all – in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS” (Dakar World Education Forum Report)

Since there is still no cure for HIV, a vaccine is only dimly coming into sight and treatment is still too costly, education is the world’s single most powerful weapon against HIV transmission. Research has shown that in general the more education people have received, the more they have access to resources that can help them to support healthier lives. The combination of ‘Education for All’ along with gender equity goals and HIV preventive education, including reproductive and sexual health information, promises to be the most effective means of stemming the epidemic’s spread.

This perspective adds a new dimension to the drive to provide Education for All. “Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs” (article 7 (iii), Dakar Framework for Action) is in effect, an undertaking to establish a scenario that will render the transmission of HIV/AIDS less likely. Therefore, countries are urged to take seriously the international commitment to achieve universal education in 2015.

Unfortunately, HIV/AIDS is very effective in attacking the education system. Research has shown that absenteeism is increasing among school staff as infected teachers fall ill or take time off to care for sick family members, attend funerals, or mourn the loss of relatives and friends. Death of teachers and education administrators also appear to be rising, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. The response of the education sector to HIV/AIDS should thus not be limited to the prevention of HIV transmission, but also take into account the care and support for those who are infected or affected and the protection of the education sector. Because “Without education AIDS will continue its rampant spread. With AIDS out of control, education will be out of reach”, as said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) at a meeting in Washington with the members of the UNAIDS Interagency Task Team on Education. Peter Piot will be one of the keynote speakers at the opening session of the MINEDAF VIII (3 December 2002).

On the day before MINEDAF VIII, a high level meeting on HIV/AIDS will be organised by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), who is coordinating UNESCO's response to HIV/AIDS since 2001

Lieke Berghauser Pont
UNESCO-BREDA
l.berghauser@unesco.org

Educating Girls and Women in Education for All

Girls and adult women represent the largest group of people excluded from basic education. Sub-Saharan Africa ranked second behind South Asia in terms of gender disparities in education throughout the world, according to a 1990 assessment made in Jomtien, (Thailand.) Since then, initiatives and efforts have been increased. One of the objectives fixed by the Dakar Framework of Action was to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in the area by 2015. Girls' education is considered as a priority on the agenda of the international community, as part of the fight against poverty. It is also included in the Millennium development goals to be achieved by 2015.

Satisfying the basic educational needs of girls and women is a priority for reasons we all know today. On the ethical level (women's rights, sense of responsibility and autonomy) on the social level (family welfare in terms of nutrition, health and education of children) on the cultural level, (respect and handing down of authentic values in countries undergoing transition) on the economic level, (improvement of production, access to new activities, revenue generation) and on the political level (participation in civic life, and access to positions of responsibility).

In the past ten years, several initiatives have been taken as regards the education of girls and woman in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, despite the efforts made, and the increase in the number of programmes and projects destined to improve girls' education, discriminations still exist. The main barriers such as poverty and prejudices about the capacities of women, often internalised, are still present.

A global review of women's literacy programmes and projects in the Region has led to the following observations: Offer of literacy programmes is low; there is little connection between what is offered and the needs of targeted people; the programmes and projects are often experimental or pilot; it is difficult to reconcile the advantages of using national languages and the wish to have access to international languages. Women are under-represented in positions like co-ordinators and trainers; there is a shortage of trained and experienced operator animators; and a lack of a literate environment and weak support to the maintenance of skills acquired.

These shortcomings can be summarised as follows: A weak quantitative and qualitative impact compared to the importance of women who are the targeted public, and their educational needs. This assessment calls into question the developmental strategies in the field of education and highlights the need for a specific approach to girls' literacy to be created. Sub-Saharan Africa is moving slower than expected. Graphic data published by the World Bank with regards to gender equality in primary and secondary education, show a scenario in 2015, whereby many countries on the African continent will not achieve the objective. The data is available at the following address http://www.developmentgoals.org/Gender_Equality.htm.

Martina Simeti
UNESCO-BREDA
m.simeti@unesco.org

Literacy in Africa during the past decade: Analysis

Africa is among the regions where the best results were obtained in terms of literacy, or at least, the total percentage of illiterates has decreased, going from 51.2 percent in 1990 to 40.2 percent in 2000. The last years, the progress of literacy among women has been encouraging and gives a lot of hope. On the whole, even though women still represent a good part of illiterate adults in Africa, their rate of access to education and literacy is steadier than that of men. Within the last ten years, the female illiteracy rate dropped from 61.8 percent to 49.2, while men's decreased from 40.2 percent to 30.9 percent, i.e. respective gaps of 12.6 and 9.3 percent.

Literacy improvement, especially among women, represents an achievement worth mentioning and encouraging. However, it is too early to claim victory, given the slowness of the progress registered, and the number of impediments that remain to be ironed out to achieve the goal fixed by the World Forum on Education (Dakar 2000): to reduce illiteracy by half in the adult world population by 2015. The latest ISU statistics show the inequalities between countries, as well as the gender inequality. The statistics show, on the one hand, that there is an important gap of 20 points between the sexes, and on the other hand, that most countries are still behind, while others have made a lot of progress, and are not far from reaching the goal. For example Mali (74.4 percent) and Niger (84 percent) where more than 90 percent of women aged 15 and above are illiterate, as opposed to Mauritius and Zimbabwe, respectively at 15 and 11.3 percent of the illiteracy rate. One other important thing worth mentioning is that English-speaking countries have higher literacy rates than French-speaking countries. This is also apparent through formal education indicators.

The difference in social, cultural, and economic contexts in these countries explains the major disparities observed. Other factors, such as poverty, the idea that education is not rewarding in the short-term, that girls education is not important, the situation of persisting crisis, lack of resources, the shortage of personnel, lack of reading materials, often inadequate programmes, to name a few, make it difficult for informal education to establish itself.

Literacy-related issues will be the focus of the debates during the December 2002 MINEDAF VIII summit. Despite the difficulties, “we should do even better», UNESCO Director General said during the last Literacy Day in 2002, adding that all actors and partners of education should think about the assessments, make firmer commitments and prepare better plans and strategies for literacy development.

Abdon Sofonnou
UNESCO-BREDA
s.abdon@unesco.org