



## **EDUCATION NOW TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE**

### **Global Campaign for Education Briefing Paper for The Johannesburg World Summit**

**No matter how many policies are agreed in Johannesburg to reduce poverty, achieve the Millennium Development Goals, sustain the planet and create a better tomorrow, all of them will ultimately fail unless governments and international institutions enact bold new measures to get children back into school today. Governments must provide a quality education free of charge to every girl and boy. Donors must back their efforts with the extra USD \$5bn per year needed to launch the EFA Action Plan, which has been endorsed by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, the G7 Education Task Force, as well as developing country finance and education ministers.**

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## **SUMMARY**

Failure to end the global crisis in education makes sustainable development impossible by denying nearly a billion people the ability to make informed choices about their lives, their families and their societies. The Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development recognises that education is critical to sustainable development, and reiterates existing international commitments to the Education for All goals and strategies agreed in Jomtien in 1990 and again in Dakar in 2000 - including universal primary education by 2015.

However, the world leaders gathered in Johannesburg must do more than repeat old promises. Two years after Dakar, aid to education still languishes at pitifully low levels and 125 million children are still out of school. In order to ensure that all girls and boys can complete a full course of schooling, governments attending the summit must take decisive new steps to deliver on the promises they have already made.

The Global Campaign for Education, a broad alliance of child rights activists, NGOs, and public sector and teachers' unions, with members in more than 150 countries, demands that in Johannesburg:

### **DEVELOPING COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:**

- Announce steps to end all fees and charges (including the costs of uniforms and books) for public primary education within the next three years. The massive increases in enrolment in Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi following the partial abolition of charges show that even a modest fee is a formidable barrier to poor children - not to mention a violation of the right to education.

- Commit to a sustained increase in budget allocations to basic education in order to reverse inequalities between rural and urban schools and build an effective public school system that delivers quality education to all communities.
- Pull out all the stops to get more girls into school and keep them there, in time to meet the 2005 target for gender parity in primary and secondary education.
- End discrimination against marginalised groups, such as indigenous people, ethnic minorities, the disabled, working children, and girls. Discrimination can take blatant forms: for example, providing fewer trained teachers, fewer books and fewer hours of instruction in schools or education programmes serving minority communities, or making cutbacks in adult education programmes that benefit marginalised groups. Discrimination can also take a more subtle but equally damaging form when the education system is based on a rigid formal school paradigm with no room for flexibility or innovation to accommodate diverse cultural or physical needs.

## **RICH COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SHOULD:**

- Increase aid to basic education, from the current low level of 2% of bilateral aid, to at least 10% of aid budgets.
- Commit the funds needed to back the Fast Track Partnership announced this June, which would enable high-performing countries to scale up and accelerate their own Education for All strategies, and ensure that realistic criteria are used to select and assess Fast Track countries, so that more countries can participate.
- Launch a financing framework to extend action to tackle the education crisis in countries beyond those included in the fast-track process.
- Clearly state their active opposition to fees and levies for primary education, and work with governments to find more equitable and sustainable ways to finance primary education.
- Suspend efforts to promote greater private sector involvement in the delivery of basic education - such as the World Bank Private Sector Development strategy and the USA's Millennium Challenge Account -until the implications and impact of such policies in a developing country context have been thoroughly assessed.

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## **1. THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF EDUCATION IN POVERTY ERADICATION**

Poverty eradication depends on education - particularly the education of girls and women. It is not only an end in itself but also an enabler for other policies that help to reduce poverty:

### **ACCESS TO SERVICES AND RESOURCES**

Without the ability to read, many people are unable to take advantage of public services because they are unable to understand any published information about how to obtain and quality for these services (such as health, housing, credit, legal, or agricultural services).

Furthermore, education places poor women and men in a better position to demand access to services and resources. The greater self-confidence and sense of entitlement or worth that educated people carry with them

often makes them more willing to request services and use the resources that are offered to them. One example is that women who have attended school are more likely to register for government health services than those with no education.

## **PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY**

Educated men, women and youth are better able to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Democracy depends upon an educated population that is able to express their needs and desires and to be heard. Wider, better-informed participation in the political process is a catalyst for change.

Educated people demand greater accountability from the decision makers. They are better able to follow the decision making process, be it through media or personal observation, and to demand explanations for the decisions that are made. As a result, education supports good governance, which is key in deciding the course for sustainable development.

Education is especially important to enable women and girls to have a larger say in decisions at all levels, from the household to the nation. Educated women are more likely to become leaders and decision-makers.

Critical to development is the increased participation of the stakeholders in the development of their resources. People who have obtained even the most basic education are more capable of protecting their interests in a resource or in development that affects their interests. They have an increased capability to participate at all levels of the development process with greater knowledge and confidence. They have a greater ability to initiate development plans and coordinate their efforts other interested parties.

Education is usually necessary for people to be able to use the legal process and the courts effectively to defend their interests, for example to secure their traditional land rights and land tenure. Literate people can also read and understand contracts. No longer will their resources be taken from them through one-sided contracts they were unable to read and had to sign by a thumbprint.

## **REDUCING INEQUALITY**

A universal public school system that offers good quality education to all can contribute to greater social equality and will help assure equitable access to resources for all people. Educated people are better able to participate in the economic development of a country and will therefore capture a greater portion of the resources. With greater access to education, the poor will be better able to reap the benefits of development and gain a larger share of the resources. This will have the effect of balancing out many inequalities.

Education, particularly genuinely multicultural education that is flexible enough to accommodate the different needs, languages and cultures of minority groups, can reduce the effects of prejudice and racism by promoting tolerance and opening up opportunities for marginalized peoples.

## **ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR**

One of the direct effects of free and equal education is it gives children an alternative to work. When children are forced into child labor, they have to give up school in order to achieve short-term economic gain for their family. As a result, they are forced to sacrifice the long-term economic benefits that education offers. They are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty that spans generations. The most effective way to offer the 246 million child labourers in the world the promise of breaking out of the poverty cycle is to offer them a future with education. First, a child that is in school is one less child labouring. Second, a child who is educated is more empowered to make meaningful decisions for his or her future that will lead to an escape from poverty. Education creates opportunity.

## **SECURING LIVELIHOODS**

Education is necessary for the impoverished, especially women, to better access markets in which to sell their goods; and to break out of the low skill - low wage - high vulnerability position that can keep families poor for generations. It can help provide confidence and knowledge that is needed to assure a good bargaining position when selling goods at market thus safeguarding their resources from exploitation from those with a stronger bargaining position.

Education will also promote effective use of credit markets for development of businesses and agriculture. People will be less susceptible to losing their access to resources to creditors since they will be able to initiate more effective business planning and agricultural development.

Education can lead to greater productivity in agriculture. One of the key elements to economic development and growth is an increase in productivity, and one of the leading causes for an increase in productivity is innovation. Basic education teaches people the fundamental skills needed to develop new, innovative techniques in agriculture and business. Local innovations are needed in order to develop local technological developments for alternative energy resources.

Education is necessary for the development of the "knowledge economy." The World Bank has estimated more than half the GDP in industrialized countries is based on the production and distribution of knowledge. Some economists believe that most future economic growth lies in the knowledge industry; this trend will leave the uneducated in an even worse position.

## **IMPROVING HEALTH**

Prevention of disease and death is greatly aided by even a basic education. Even after controlling for income and other factors, children born to women with at least a basic education are less likely to die in infancy and less likely to be malnourished. Also, with schooling, women themselves are less likely to die during childbirth and the life expectancy for women is greatly improved.

In many countries, certain illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS, are surrounded by a cloud of cultural stigma and misinformation. Education can help break down the taboo and mysteries surrounding the disease. Furthermore, people who are empowered with an education are more likely to press for access to adequate health care.

## **SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT**

Education can have a strong influence in attaining sustainable consumption and production. A change in the consumption and production patterns of individuals requires a transition into new technology, increased efficiency, and increase in environmental awareness.

Education can lead to community empowerment giving communities, who have more of a vested interest in their immediate environment, more ability to participate in the decision making processes for development. Also, an educated population can be more easily trained in environmental monitoring techniques to take account of their situation and share the information with local, regional or national authorities and other interested parties.

Young people are the agents of change and determine the environmental attitudes for future generations. A basic education will give each and every person greater ability to understand their environment, and they will be better able to participate in ecologically sound economic development.

Population is growing at unsustainable levels and its effects are being felt in all aspects of sustainable development policy. Women who receive a primary education are empowered to make choices about their own reproductive health and therefore often have fewer children than women in the same country without a primary education.

## **2. QUALITY, FREE PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON POVERTY**

Members of the Global Campaign for Education in many developing countries around the world report a dramatic growth in the number of private schools - both profit-making private academies, and unregulated not-for-profit schools run by NGOs, which, however, often charge fees or require in-kind contributions from parents.

We believe these trends represent a real threat to the attainability of the Millennium Development Goals in education. We are deeply concerned by efforts on the part of some donors, and some governments, to encourage and expand the role of the private sector - on the false grounds that "the market" can provide a "solution" to the education crisis. Many Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers include commitments to increase cost recovery and/or private sector involvement in basic services, including education. The two issues are closely linked, as moves to increase the fees charged by public schools, clinics and utilities are often part of a wider effort to hand over what have traditionally been core government functions and responsibilities to "the market".

The Private Sector Development Strategy (PSDS) recently approved by the World Bank's Board sets out a global agenda to involve the private sector in up to 40 per cent of World Bank concessional (IDA) lending operations - including direct support (loans and subsidies) to private firms to get involved in the delivery of health care, water, sanitation and education. The Millennium Challenge Account, announced by George Bush earlier this year, will also support and subsidise "public-private partnerships" in key sectors of development.

It is true that in many countries, public schools have been allowed to deteriorate to such a low level that parents have been forced into the arms of the private sector. The GCE joins parents, teachers' associations, NGOs and concerned citizens of those countries in demanding fundamental improvements in the quality, accountability and efficiency of the government education system. The necessary reforms may often include mainstreaming or up-scaling the successful elements of private and NGO approaches. However, the desperate state of public education in much of the developing world is a consequence of decades of underinvestment in all aspects of schooling, from management capacity to teacher training to physical maintenance of school buildings. Simply handing over a larger share of responsibility for education to "the market" is likely to exacerbate these problems and may eventually lead to the effective collapse of the public education system.

Experience in the health and water sectors shows that poor people seldom enjoy the much-touted benefits of private provision:

- Private services tend to "cream off" the "best", most affluent and influential service users - leaving the most vulnerable, "difficult" and poorest people behind in the public system.
- It is often impossible for understaffed, under-resourced governments to enforce regulations that are supposed to ensure the quality, equity and accessibility of privately run services. Even rich country governments, with battalions of lawyers and inspectors in tow, struggle to achieve this.
- Those left behind in the public system also tend to be the least organised and influential citizens. An exodus of middle class and wealthy people into private clinics and schools means that "no one" (who matters) cares when public services deteriorate.
- At the same time, resources that used to go into the public system are often diverted into the new private services, leaving public services worse off than ever.

- Unless governments have extremely strong capacity to monitor and regulate private providers, there is an inevitable tendency for the fees to escalate over time, further reducing access for the poor.
- The private sector often lures the most skilled personnel away from the public sector and exacerbates shortages of trained and qualified staff. [i]
- It is often claimed that resources and capacity will be freed up in the public system when the affluent pay for their own schooling or health care, allowing the public system to do more for those most in need. However, the World Bank's private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation, recently admitted that there is no real evidence that this actually happens.

In light of this extremely worrying evidence from the health and water sectors, we call on the World Bank, the IFC, the US Government and others to suspend all proposals that would divert aid funds into the promotion or subsidisation of private sector involvement in basic education. An urgent review of the impact and implications of such policies in a development country context should be carried out for discussion during the Spring Meetings of the World Bank and IMF.

We further call on all governments to announce a timetable for abolishing all fees, charges and "community contributions" for public primary education within the next three years, and to make a sustained commitment to adequate and intelligent public investment in an effective, universal system of state schooling. We call on donors to actively oppose the imposition of fees, charges and "community contributions", and to help governments to remove fees without compromising the quality or accessibility of public schools. Donors should make an upfront commitment to help pay for the additional books, classrooms, and teachers needed to accommodate the increased enrolments following the abolition of fees.

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### **3. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION: AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL**

Getting every child in school by 2015 is the most achievable of all the Millennium Development Goals [ii]. The Dakar conference in 2000 laid the groundwork for a compact, whereby Governments that make quality basic education a priority in their own plans and budgets will receive the additional financial support they desperately need from the international community. Many countries, like Tanzania, have adopted sound education policies, but urgently need financial support.

Donors pledged in Dakar in 2000 that no country seriously committed to Education for All would be thwarted in its achievement of these goals by a lack of resources. After two years of much talk and little action, the past few months have seen a potential breakthrough in implementing this promise.

In March 2002, several countries, including the US, Canada, and EU member states, pledged to increase aid to support the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. In April, the world's finance and development ministers endorsed an EFA Action Plan. A highlight of this plan is a mechanism to fast-track countries with sound education strategies, so that they receive more resources to tackle their education crises immediately. Beyond these star performers, the Action Plan would also create a framework for coordinating donor efforts, to mobilize and channel the necessary resources to meet the education financing needs of all countries on an ongoing basis.

By June 2002, the Action Plan had also received the backing of the G7 Education Taskforce, UNICEF and UNESCO. Clearly, it provides the best opportunity in a generation to get every child into school. Now, donors must commit the funds needed to get this plan off the ground.

### **THE NEXT STEPS**

The World Bank estimates that US\$5 billion in additional donor funds will be required annually to implement the EFA Action Plan, and achieve universal primary education in the 47 countries for which data is available. About US\$4 billion of this should come from the G7 richest countries, US\$700 million from World Bank IDA funds, and US\$300 million from non-G7 donors.

It is vital that donors commit funds up front as callable resources. This would signal intent and act as an incentive to southern governments. It would also avoid delays in the process such as those that have been experienced with the HIPC debt program when countries have not received debt relief on time despite having met qualification criteria.

The World Bank assumes that developing countries will cover 80% of additional costs of providing free and universal basic education. A more realistic proposal would be for developing countries to cover 50% of the financing gap, with the remainder being filled through additional bilateral and multilateral aid and debt relief.

World Bank figures also fail to take account of the full cost of strategies to improve quality, equity, and access for girls and other marginalized groups. Major additional resources need to be rapidly channelled towards efforts to improve equity, such as subsidies or incentives to encourage girls to stay in school, school feeding programmes, and the abolition of both formal and informal fees.

Achieving education for all will also require the abolition of fees and charges, as argued above. The abolition of fees and charges must be accompanied by increased flows of resources so that schools do not re-introduce fees by the back door. As enrolments increase with the abolition of fees, additional money needs to be invested in teacher training, books and elsewhere so that schools do not experience overcrowding and loss of quality.

The EFA Action Plan proposes fast tracking an initial group of 18 countries in 2002/3 with the additional resources they require to get every child into school. We believe that the international community could be more ambitious. A much larger group of countries are being held back from making progress towards EFA by a lack of resources. In many countries public expenditure management is improving, strong poverty reduction strategies are being developed, education has been identified as a priority, and there is a clear education financing gap. Yet these countries are currently excluded from the fast track initiative by unrealistically demanding and rigid criteria.

Although immediate donor action in high performing countries is vital, countries with weaker policy environments must not be ignored. Donors should support and accelerate interim strategies aimed at meeting immediate educational needs and getting countries 'on track' to achieve education for all, while simultaneously working to develop long-term capacity to produce and implement national plans of action. At each stage of this 'escalator approach' countries should be assured of the additional donor resources they need in order to build their capacity, and deliver quality basic education for all.

A global financing framework does not mean the creation of a new education fund or the establishment of a new UN bureaucracy. The Global Campaign for Education proposes a very simple and practical approach:

- Wherever possible financing gaps should be filled through donor co-ordination at the national level (usually through the consultative group process).
- An EFA Donor Consortium should fill remaining financing gaps at a twice-yearly donor financing conference. The first donor conference should take place in November 2002, immediately after the UNESCO High Level Group meeting which will scrutinise progress on the Education for All Goals.
- The financing conference should mobilize financing from IDA, debt relief, bilateral aid, and the private sector.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **DEVELOPING COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:**

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## **REFERENCES**



- i. Save the Children UK, 2002. Globalisation and the Rights of Children. [\[context\]](#)
- ii. The September 2000 UN Millenium Declaration commits all 189 UN member states to achieving the 8 Millenium Development Goals by 2015. They include eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, and achieving universal primary education. [\[context\]](#)

## **ABOUT THE GCE**

The Global Campaign for Education is a worldwide alliance of NGOs and trade unions active in more than 150 countries. Members of the GCE's elected Board are: ActionAid Alliance, African Networks Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA), Asia-Pacific Bureau for Adult Education (ASPBAE), Brazilian National Campaign for the Right to Education, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE Bangladesh), Education International, Global March Against Child Labour, Oxfam International, South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO).

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