

World Education Forum, 2000

NGO Declaration on Education for All,

International Consultation of Non-Governmental Organizations, Dakar 25 April 2000

Ten years after the World Conference on Education for All, the World Education Forum in Dakar provides the opportunity to take stock of the achievements, the lessons and the failures of the past decade. The most disappointing lesson is that the objectives from Jomtien have not been achieved. Yet for 125 million children the right to education is violated every day, leaving them trapped in poverty. For millions more children, lack of teachers, classrooms, and/or books means their education is cut short and little is learnt. Girls account for two-thirds of the children out of school. One in three adults in the developing world - 880 million people - is still illiterate.

The World Education Forum provides an opportunity to deliver on the commitment to **quality education for all**. Governments and international agencies have to make a concerted effort to mobilise political will and financial resources. The price for realising Education for All is an additional USD 8 billion a year. This amount is the equivalent of four days of global military spending and 9 minutes of international currency speculation. Nearly 300 NGOs gathered in Dakar on April 24 - 25 to discuss Education for All believe that Education for All is achievable if Governments and international agencies commit themselves to the following:

- There is a need to renew the commitment to **education as a right** as expressed in UN's declaration on human rights paragraph 26, The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 13 and the Convention of the Right of the Child, Article 28.
- There must be a commitment to providing free quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. Equity in quality must be ensured at all levels. All direct costs of basic education have to be removed.
- There must be a clear commitment to ensure that quality education for all includes all the marginalised and excluded groups like the disabled, ethnic minorities, internally displaced persons and refugees.
- There must be a clear statement that education is a core responsibility of the state.
- Education for all depends on the existence of a sound democratic system, with effective structures and mechanisms, that ensure space and voice to all stakeholders and benefits to be equitably shared.
- Governments, the international community and all stakeholders should commit themselves to establishing and reinforcing democracy, social justice and peace, as no learning can take place in times of war or conflict.

- Education systems must respect and be based on local culture and respond to local needs.
- Quality and learning for all must be at the centre of the education process. A concerted effort must be made to draw up quality indicators that set standards for EFA.
- There must be a clear commitment to ensure gender equity in education at all levels. Specific action plans with time bound targets including those based on affirmative action should be in place to eliminate all forms of discrimination of girls and women.
- Adult literacy must be integrated with a wider process of community development and empowerment. The right to education starts from early childhood and continues through adulthood into old age. Governments must commit themselves to reduce adult illiteracy by 50% by 2015.
- Governments must commit themselves to developing national plans of action for education by 2002. These plans must be transparently and democratically negotiated with all significant national stakeholders and set out how to achieve national education goals within the broad framework of the 2015 targets and within government expenditure framework. A central part of these plans should be the agreement by 2001 of clear and binding mechanisms for the ongoing democratic participation of civil society, including teachers, parents and learners, across all levels of the education system.
- The national plans of action must be developed within the broader framework of a global action plan, ensuring that no government with a credible strategy for achieving education will be allowed to fail for lack of resources. Donor governments should finance their contribution to the plan through increased aid and debt relief. Clear mechanisms for financing, implementing and monitoring the plan must be established by 2002.
- Governments must commit themselves to develop and improve mechanisms and structures of democratic participation of, and accountability to civil society, including teachers and their representative organisations, in education decisions at all levels.
- Governments must commit themselves to guaranteeing their part of the necessary resources for quality basic education, including increases in proportion of GNP allocated to education. Governments need to spend at least 6% of GNP on education. Governments have to secure increases in revenue from progressive taxation, reduce excessive military and other unproductive expenditure and put an end to corruption.
- Governments should immediately identify and reverse existing disparities in per capita funding which discriminate against rural communities, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and underdeveloped regions, in order to achieve equitable spending per learner by 2005. They should further commit themselves to delivering extra funding to meet needs of schools in poor and marginalised areas, in order to bring all schools up to agreed standards by 2015 and to ensure that curricula, teaching

materials and methods are responsive to the needs of marginalised groups. There must be a commitment to end child labour and to ratify the ILO Conventions No. 138 and 182.

- Governments must develop innovative responses to ensure that learners in families affected by HIV/AIDS will not lose their access to education. Plans need to be made now to cope with the loss of teachers and with the new pressure on children. A close link has to be established between education and health as education has comparative advantage to support the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the population.
- Governments must ensure that new information technologies can be equitably accessed to promote quality of education. However, it must be recognised that indigenous knowledge and traditional forms of media are equally valuable.
- A core code of conduct for donors should be agreed within the framework of UN in partnership with civil society by 2002 to bind donors to following good practice in the relationship with partners and in disbursement of aid to education. Governments should have single accountability lines. The monitoring and control of aid programmes should be turned over to government in partnership with civil society.
- Positive changes to aid and international commitments must not be contradicted or undermined by wider institutional policies of international financial institutions. Policy advice and financial support from IMF, World Bank or regional development banks must be designed with education as an integral part of poverty reduction and human development.
- Donors must ensure that all governments that are serious about education have access to the necessary resources to achieve basic education for all. A key step toward this must be to increase aid to basic education to at least 8% of total aid budgets.
- Donors should commit to increased and rapid debt relief, improving progress of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country initiative (HIPC2). Debt relief should add to aid flows and not undermine them, and be linked to national education plans in the context of wider poverty reduction plans.
- A strong representation of southern governments and civil society has to be ensured in international EFA structures set up after the World Education Forum in Dakar. Resources, technical expertise and monitoring of progress must be decentralised with major investment in a regional level EFA capacity. These structures have to be effective, accountable and transparent.
- National civil society alliances should have the right to call for the international EFA structures to investigate cases where there are clear violations of the right to education. The EFA structures should have the power to call an investigation by the UN Special Rapporteur on Education or the regional Human Rights Commissions.
- A comprehensive review should be planned for 2006 to identify progress against the major international targets of education. Both national and donor action plans should specify mid-term targets for each EFA goal, and specify explicit additional

resourcing and contingency commitments if these targets are missed. If the mid-term review shows that a substantial number of countries continue to be off-track then an official UN Conference on Education with Heads of State should be convened for 2010.

We the NGOs gathered in Dakar from all over the world are committed to work and co-operate with governments and a wide range of groups, individuals and institutions to reach our goal of **quality education for all**.

We want action now!