



Thematic Consultation on Education in the post-2015 development agenda

18 -19 March 2013 -- Dakar, Senegal



Summary of Outcomes

The global meeting of the UN Thematic Consultation on Education hosted by the Government of Senegal, co-led by UNESCO and UNICEF, and co-sponsored by the Government of Canada with additional support from the Government of Germany and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, was held in Dakar on March 18-19, 2013. The event involved Member States, youth groups, the private sector, civil society organizations, experts and UN representatives. The meeting reviewed progress and challenges, proposing a way forward for education in the post-2015 development agenda. A key milestone in the consultation process, the meeting built upon an analysis of existing education proposals, an e-consultation, Education for All (EFA) regional meetings as well as consultations with civil society and the private sector, with voices from over 100 countries and 18,000 individuals.

Education: a human right and the foundation for sustainable development

Participants at the global meeting reaffirmed that education is a human right and the basis for the realization of all other rights. It empowers people and yields significant development benefits. Education is the foundation for sustainable development, promoting inclusive human development, economic growth, environmental sustainability and peace and security. Good quality education, as emphasized by all other thematic consultations, is central for the realization of development priorities, in particular that of overcoming inequality and eradicating poverty. Evidence suggests that each year of schooling translates into a 10% increase in potential income and a 1% increase in a country's GDP; educating women and girls also has a catalytic effect: for example, each additional year of a mother's schooling reduces the probability of the infant mortality rate by 5% to 10%.

Education: unprecedented progress and yet an unfinished agenda

The education sector is unique in that the current MDGs are a subset of the separate, broader internationally agreed EFA goals, both with 2015 end dates.

Since 2000, the MDGs 2 and 3 and the EFA Initiative have contributed to unprecedented progress in education, through enhanced focus, increased commitment and resource mobilization, and coordinated action. 52 million more children are enrolled in primary school and there has been significant improvement in gender parity in access to primary education. New, welcome efforts are being made to accelerate progress by 2015.

However, progress has stagnated since 2010. 61 million primary school-age children remain out of school, 53% of whom are girls. The narrow focus of MDG 2 on access does not address learning outcomes. As many as 250 million children are unable to read or write by the time they reach grade 4, further deepening the gap between education and the skills needed for life and work.

Moreover, our attention on achieving the MDGs has led to the unforeseen neglect of important issues, such as learning outcomes, early childhood care and education (ECCE), post-primary education and training. Many essential elements for good quality education, including adequate financing, infrastructure and sufficient numbers of trained and motivated teachers to support learning and skills development is a significant concern.

Preparing for the future:

Continuing on the same path will not meet the demands of our rapidly changing societies and economies. We have the largest global youth cohort in history and their education and learning opportunities will profoundly influence the development trajectory for the post-2015 period, including the extent to which the world can reap a demographic dividend. Globalization, demographic dynamics, climate change, knowledge-based societies and shifting inequalities raise new expectations and demands on education. It follows that lifelong education and learning for all is our highest common ambition for the future of girls and boys, youth, women and men.

"Equitable quality lifelong education and learning for all" is proposed as an overarching education goal to realize the world we want.

The proposed goal is of universal relevance and is guided by the principles of human rights, equity, gender equality, sustainability, accountability and transparency. The post-2015 education agenda should be firmly anchored in a rights-based approach underpinned by the values of universality, non-discrimination and the indivisibility of rights. The state must be responsible for the right to and protection of education as a public good, paying particular attention to the promotion of equality. We also recognize that the delivery of education is a collective responsibility that involves families, communities, civil society organisations, and the private sector. No country should be prevented from realizing the right to education for all by a lack of resources.

Education and learning should be transformative and foster global citizenship, thereby assuming its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. Our objective must seek to enable people to acquire knowledge, skills and values necessary to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century.

Priorities: Equitable Access and Quality

The consultation to date has identified a number of important priorities to promote a holistic lifelong vision of education and learning but, above all, **access, quality and equity**.

- **Advance inclusion and equity** by reducing and eliminating disparities in educational outcomes among learners. There is a need to redress disparities associated with gender, poverty, disability, location and other factors to promote inclusion. A concerted effort is needed to ensure equitable access to quality education for children and youth in situations of conflict and emergencies.
- **Put quality and learning outcomes at the core of the agenda**. This includes a focus on proficiency in literacy and numeracy. Quality education must equip people with the skills, knowledge and values to obtain decent work, and live together as active citizens nationally and globally. It will help respond to the challenges of climate change and other threats to sustainable living and livelihoods. There needs to be safe and enabling learning environments including sufficient numbers of qualified and motivated teachers, information and communication technologies (ICTs), infrastructure, school-based management, as well as monitoring and evaluation systems.
- **Expand access beyond primary school** for encompassing all education levels (ECCE), basic and post-basic), training, all forms of education (formal, non-formal and informal), and all age-groups, with special attention to the most marginalized.

As the global conversation continues, these priorities need to be translated into appropriate sub-goals, targets, and indicators within a coherent and integrated framework, which takes into account existing processes and proposals. In particular, we will work towards seeking convergence between a revised EFA Initiative and the post-2015 process. Our framework should balance global, regional and national realities as well as capture both the contribution of the education sector to development and that of other sectors to education. Strong and innovative partnerships and well-governed and accountable education systems are vital to achieve our goals and expected outcomes.

Next Steps:

This outcome statement will be submitted to the Bali High-Level Panel meeting taking place on 25-27 March 2013.

The draft synthesis report of the thematic consultation on education will be posted online for broad dissemination and feedback before its finalization in April 2013. Based on this global meeting and the online public comments, the draft report of the consultation will be revised and finalized in April, 2013. A brief will also be prepared and submitted to the UNDG.

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